

Flex Diet Podcast David Whitley

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SPEAKERS

Dr. Mike T Nelson



Dr. Mike T Nelson 00:00

Hey, welcome back to the flex diet podcast. I'm recording this one from down in Weatherford, Texas. We left South Padre and we are on our way back home stopped by Austin for a little while got to train it on it, which was great. Shout out to John Wolf for gutsy him again, and thanks for having us train. They're always an honor and fun to do that, picked up some club bells from them. And then we're in Weatherford, Texas, here, visiting our friends, Adam Glass and his wife. And then we are headed back home. On the podcast. Today, I've got my good buddy from Tennessee, David, the iron tamer Whitley and we're talking all about cold water exposure, kind of doing another cold water theme here. Last week, we had the more technical breakdown of the narrative review. This week, we're focusing more on Dave's experience, as he was one of the very first people I ever saw do this saw a video of him with a horse trough in his backyard should be nice out of it, to go sit in it. And at the time, my first thought was, that's crazy. And then over time, I was like, Hmm, maybe there is something to that. And then Wim Hof kind of appeared out of nowhere. And it's become more popular since then. I've talked about in the podcast here have been interested in adaptations to temperature for quite a while. We talk about Dave's experience Him crushing coconuts with his bare hands, which is a true story. Just some of the training that he's done in the past as a performing strong man over time. And yeah, I think you'll enjoy this one. I apologize. There's a little bit of dinging from his computer with some of the text messages early on. But that does clear up a little bit later. But I still wanted to get this information out since I thought it was super useful. We also

talk about just protocols if you want to do this yourself. Of course I talk all about this in the physiologic flexibility course. But just some takeaways of how to stay safe and still get the adaptations from it. You don't necessarily need to go bonkers like I did with a huge freezer set up or anything like that. There's other ways you can go about it. Of course depending upon your climate and where you live, this one brought to you by the physiologic flexibilities certification, go to physiologic flexibility calm, you'll be able to get on the waitlist there for the next time the course opens. The course covers the four main homeostatic regulators of how to increase your recovery ability and be more robust human individual. Everything from heat, such as cold and hot, blood glucose, both low and high. I even talked about a ketogenic approach for a while. pH, which looks like different types of breathing techniques and training, both aerobic base building and true high intensity interval training and then oxygen and carbon dioxide. So everything from nasal breathing to mouth breathing, again, different types of breathing techniques and much more. So go to [physiologic flexibility.com](https://www.physiologicflexibility.com). And you'll be able to get on the waitlist if it is not open at that time. So sit back and enjoy our conversation here with iron tamer David Whitley. Hey, welcome to the flex diet podcast. Today I have my good buddy, the iron tamer Dave Whitley, on how you doing?



04:01

Fantastic. Thanks for having me on. Hello, everyone.



Dr. Mike T Nelson 04:04

Yeah, thank you so much for being here. And today, we're gonna talk about all things kind of, maybe you touch on breathing techniques a little bit. Talk about experience with cold water immersion, and just kind of why it's good to train yourself to do hard things. And what are the benefits of that? to give a quick background on just some of the crazy feats you've done and for people listening? I think the last time I actually saw you in person was probably Adams wedding, I think and believe you're correct. Yeah. I haven't seen anybody. Adam glass got married. And was it four or five years ago now? I lose track of time.



04:46

I think it was in 2017.



Dr. Mike T Nelson 04:48

Yeah. And so Dave comes in and he's goes, Hey, check out my hand. And I'm looking at his

hand and I'm like, dude, my first thought was, did you break part of the lower part of your hand because from a distance it looks larger and like inflamed and then I look closer and I'm like, Oh, that's actually tissue. I'm like, What are you doing? He's like, I'm breaking coconuts.



05:11

I was like, with your hand. He's like yeah, I brought some with you want to see later we're like hell yeah. So once you did that was pretty amazing. So yeah,



05:23

actually actually bring actually didn't bring coconuts to the wedding. That was someone else that was there that was a friend of Adams Who said I got to see this and and they went to the store. Oh, they wouldn't?



Dr. Mike T Nelson 05:35

Yeah. Yeah. All I know is like, halfway through wasn't during the ceremony or anything. But now all of a sudden, Dave shows up with like coconuts and we went outside to watch so yeah.



05:47

Cool. Yeah. So give us a little bit of background on just some of the feats and stuff you've done and what you're working on now.



05:54

Okay,



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I



05:57

the short version of a long story is as a kid I wanted to be a superhero. Saw Lou Ferrigno and television started lifting weights as a result of Lou Ferrigno, his portrayal of the Hulk that started a lifelong on again off again, fascination with strength training, since about 2003, or 2004, it's been my main or it was my main source of income as profession in about 2008 2007. somewhere around there, I met Dennis Rogers and got fascinated with the idea of being a performing strong man started learning how to bend steel and rip decks of cards and, and that sort of stuff. In addition to the kettlebell workshops and gym that I was running, somewhere in that period of time, met our friend, Adam glass online, and I started that relationship with Him. And that's been a wonderful thing. And in about 2013, I decided that I wanted to be full time on stage as a strong man, so started working in that direction, somewhere in there at around that time. I heard about Wim Hof and the stuff that he was doing a cold exposure and that interested me because I had been doing cold water dowsing, and then saw Wim on television, swimming, I think either 60 or 80 meters under ice in a frozen lake. And I'm like, well, this, that puts my my five gallon bucket of water. In a perspective, you know, it's like you, you deadlift and you get to where you pulled to 25. And you think you're doing pretty well with it. And then you see Eddie Hall, right, you know, oh, okay, so, so it just it, it moved the line of what was possible, which is something I'm very interested in about what is actually possible for the human body to accomplish. And so I immediately ordered to sign up for his website, got into his online course, started doing that. Did that for a couple of three years, I think in 2016. He did a workshop in California. It was a weekend long, I went there with about 50 or so other people that went through this fundamentals workshop loved it so much that I signed up for an instructor course, which was a week long in the winter in November, October, November of that year 2016 went and trained with Wim and 26 or 27 other people we were the first group of Wim Hof Method instructors in the US. And I've done workshops and continued my training and done some one on one stuff with that. And in the midst of all that to pivoted my speaking business into a more of a personal development approach, coaching using mindset stuff that I learned from doing strongman things, and from Wim Hof Method, like, you know, like you said, doing things that are hard and learning the lessons from that. Sorry, I'm getting a little ding ding here because my my computer's picking up text messages as they're coming in. So I apologize for that little ding Oh,



09:25

I forgot. I thought it was mine. I'm like, I don't think it's mine.



09:29

I don't know I don't know how to turn that off on my computer. And I don't ever think about it until I'm actually recording. So, so if you hear a few more things like that, I apologize. I'm just getting



09:39

popular man.



09:41

Apparently.



09:44

Really? Yeah, I



09:45

am. The bulk of what I do now with coaching people is online and using the mental approach of being a performing strong man bending steel doing these things that the human body shouldn't be able to do. Along with the lessons that we learned in cold exposure and from the breathing exercises, and helping people apply that stuff to other areas of their life to achieve their goals.



Dr. Mike T Nelson 10:12

Got it? What is the for someone listening? What is the benefit of doing stuff with cold water? Like for people who have let's pretend they're two groups of people, I find the people who are like, that's just rude and kooky. I don't get it. And then other people who I think are kind of into it, and already kind of doing it, but maybe for different reasons. So well, how would you kind of respond to both of those groups in a loaded question?



10:45

Well, there are multiple benefits, from cold exposure, and from the breathing and meditation stuff that I do along with that they complement each other. The breathing exercises, the meditation, and the cold exposure all fit together and become to use a worn out expression hold, it's greater than the sum of its parts. From a physiological standpoint,

since that's very relevant to the stuff that you do. The first thing that comes to mind is that the cardiovascular system is trained in a way through cold exposure that it cannot be trained in any other way, as far as I'm aware of it. And that is, if we look at the cardiovascular system itself as a network of blood vessels, and we know that that's, however many hundreds of 1000s of kilometers, if we lined them all up into in, you know, the arteries and the veins, all the capillaries and all the blood vessels in the body, make up this incredibly long, complete network that delivers blood to every cell of the body, pretty much, you know, they're the, there's obviously like, calluses don't get blood, but you know what I'm saying. So there are tiny, tiny, little, involuntary sphincter muscles in the cells that contract or expand based on what's going on in the environment. So if you take your hand and look at it, and note the color that it is, right now, it's kind of a, you know, it's whatever color it normally is. And we'll use, we'll use a white person's example here, because it's, it just makes more sense. To explain it that way. Right? If you've got darker skin,



12:38

harder to see changes,



12:40

it's harder to see the changes because of the pigmentation there. But let's say that, you take your hand and you look at it, it's kind of a, you know, whatever, pinkish color, right? If you take that hand, and you stick it in a bucket of ice water for, say, 60 seconds and pull it back out and look at it, you will notice that it has gone from a pinkish color to a much more pale white color, right? And what's going on there? Well, and then if you put it back in and leave it in there long enough, it will go from that pale white color to a very, very red color, like if you remember, or if you have kids go out and play in the cold they come in their cheeks are all red, the same sort of thing happens. What's going on physiologically there with those blood vessels is the initial response to the cold is the blood vessels contract and constrict and shut off to some degree, the amount of blood flow does go into the extremities, because our survival mechanism when we're exposed to cold is to protect the core protect the internal organs keep the body alive, and it will shunt the warm blood from the extremities to the core in order to preserve that. However, if we stay in the cold for longer than a certain period of time, the body then interprets this message as well, it's not gonna kill me because it's not that cold, but we might lose a finger or we might lose a toe. So or we might lose something on the surface of the skin. So let's start pumping that warm blood back out there. And so the physiological mechanism is going on there is when when you're first exposed to the cold, there's that constriction in the blood vessels where they sort of shut off. And then after a little bit of exposure, in an effort

to warm those extremities, they open up bigger than they were before the cold stimulus was introduced. And so what we wind up doing is exercising those tiny little sphincter muscles that exist throughout the entire network of our cardiovascular system to contract or to relax much more effectively, much more efficiently. It's literally a form of strength training for those tiny little muscles that are generally involuntary after you've done this for a long enough period of time and incorporated the breathing into it which also can affect the blood vessels in the same way because of the oxygen to carbon dioxide ratio in the blood changing your and I don't know all the science behind that. But I know that there's something involved with the, the pH level of the blood as you get more alkaline, the a lot of good stuff happens. So we're training those muscles to expand and contract. Well, if we've got, however many 100,000 kilometers worth of blood vessels and all of those tiny little muscles that now are actively participating in blood circulation, it takes off the heart and so short, the place that the conclusion that we're arriving with that is you can just through cold exposure without doing any other cardiovascular training, lower heart rate, because the load that was primarily being pumped by the heart is now receiving assistance from the entirety of the cardiovascular system, particularly the capillaries and the stuff that's in the extremities. So that's one of the big health benefits to it. One of the studies that was done in, in Europe somewhere that Wim Hof, and a small group of other people did, I don't remember the university that it was, but they rewrote part of their science textbook as a result of that their physiology textbook is result of this is that the breathing and cold exposure starts to give us conscious control over the autonomic function of the immune system. So we can breathe and think in a particular way and cause our immune system to either ramp up or suppress itself, depending on what we what we want to accomplish there. The study itself, the famous endotoxin study, they injected Wim with dead endotoxin I think it was ecola. And the the research that they're doing was having to do with



17:02

immune system problems. And so this was how they would test out immune system function. And the predicted response from anyone who got injected with this stuff was over the course of about four or five hours. And and some of my some of my facts may be a little bit off, because I haven't I haven't read this or talked about it for a while. But over the course of about four or five hours, the person would become very ill likely have nausea, vomiting, and just really like really intense flu like symptoms that would last for as long as it took the immune system to go in and deal with this eco lie. And then they'd be fine after that. Well, wims experience was that at the point where he should have been experiencing a peak in the misery of the symptoms, he's like, yeah, my head hurts a little bit. But otherwise, I'm pretty much okay. And so there was no real effect that this had on him. They're like, well, you're an outlier. You're an anomaly. We need to study your genes

and limbs like, no, I can teach anybody to do this. And so they replicated the experiment, I want to say they took 28 people and had a control group of 24 whom train them for four days, I think on breathing and cold exposure stuff that went in and replicated the experiment and had an identical response in everyone. So this is a human thing. This is not a Wim Hof thing. And so just those two factors alone from a health and wellness perspective, being able to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of your cardiovascular system, along with boosting your immune system, and giving it some element of conscious control over something that was believed to be unconscious. That's reason enough for in my opinion, to practice the Wim Hof Method. And to practice cold exposure to practice the breathing that goes along with it. And but then again, it's also fun to do stuff like go and hang out with people when there's snow on the ground and walk around and nothing but shorts and a T shirt, and barefoot in the snow and watch people freak out. Because as we all know, scientifically speaking, Dr. Mike that if you go outside and it's below about 40 degrees, and your head gets wetter, your feet get wet, you will catch pneumonia, and the flu and you'll probably die, right I mean, that's what was drilled into



19:20

my head is that's what my parents always told me.



19:24

So what I what I call all of this is environmental conditioning. You know, we evolved over however many 1000s of years to be able to not just exist, but thrive in some fairly harsh weather conditions. And then over the past, you know, few 100 years, we've gotten more and more comfortable and the comfort zone of our temperature experience has narrowed to the point that that I meet a lot of people if it drops below about 68 degrees Fahrenheit or gets above about 72% 73 degrees Fahrenheit, they're miserable, it's either too hot, or it's too cold. And so they have to exist in that sweet spot. And so they'll either, you know, turn on the heat, turn on the air conditioner, put on clothes, extra clothes, coats, whatever. And I'm like, your body is capable in inherently latently, of being able to not just endure this, but thrive in it. And like I was, we were visiting my wife's family back in the winter, and I was outside in the snow in Southeast Missouri. air temperature, like 17 or 18 degrees Fahrenheit, I was just out there and nothing but a pair of shorts, doing my thing, and her grandmother came over to visit. And she's like, Aren't you cold? And I'm like, Yeah, a little bit. But the mental aspect of the training has taught me that cold is not something to be feared. It's something to be respected and honored, just like a heavy weight or just like exposing yourself to sunshine to get a tan. Respect the stimulus. But don't be afraid of it. Because you know, I'm standing 20 feet from the door inside the house that was in no real

danger at any point, beyond my own. My own willingness to stay out or go back in. And one thing that is very, very vital to understanding how cold exposure works, like if you go into the gym, and you load a bar too heavy, or your techniques a little bit off for the you know, you you, you get a little bit out of alignment, you might hurt yourself, right. But if you go out into the cold, and you make a seemingly minor mistake, you could die. And so it's very important to respect that but not be afraid of it.



Dr. Mike T Nelson 21:44

Yeah, and I like how I had a, an anatomy Professor when I was doing my undergrad. He was probably the first person like early 90s I've ever heard talk about this. And it's always kind of stuck with me. He's like, he's like, Oh, yeah, everyone does this all the time. You're like what he's like, well, just think about college campus and you're running around, and it gets towards fall. And the first day that it gets cold, you know, everyone puts on a coat or puts on a jacket. And then you think about what happens in spring. And this is back when you know, you had to walk outside to get to class and you had to be exposed to the elements, you didn't have a choice of staying inside and not being exposed. And he's like, and then it comes spring, the first day it gets to 40 degrees Fahrenheit, and like, Whoa, it's t shirt weather, you know, everyone's like running around and T shirts from one building to the next. I'm like, Oh, interesting. And then you think about the experiment that's gotten worse over time that you know, pretty much most people are running is that they're never exposed to hot or cold much at all. And that on some level where we don't have a ton of data to support it. I think whenever we have removed kind of, like you were talking about an ancestral stimulus hasn't gone well so far. So I have a bad feeling that we by the time we figure out that, oh, this was a really bad idea. You're going to be so far down that path. It's just going to be a lot harder to correct at that point.




23:20


Absolutely.





Dr. Mike T Nelson 23:22


I did find the study to was I thought it was in PNAS, which was voluntary activation of the sympathetic nervous system and attenuation of the innate immune response in humans. The first author is Cox Kate Oh, x from 2014. Solving that in the notes and Coxon Pickler I believe

 23:45
or pickle or something like that.


 23:47
Yeah, bikers was the lab that it was done in correct. Okay. Yeah,

 23:51
so you're spot on with that. And that sticks in my mind because that that that name picker is apparently like Dutch slang for penis. So it was it was a cock and cock.


 24:06
Yeah, I guess I guess the researchers first name. Peter. Yeah.

 24:15
Yeah.

 24:16
Make it back to dick jokes.

 24:17
Yeah, I always gotta get good one in there once in a while.

 24:21
That's what she said.

 **Dr. Mike T Nelson** 24:23
And I think in this study, one of the main things and correct me if I'm wrong here is that. So when you're doing more of a kind of a Supra ventilation method where you're breathing in

fast and letting go or exhaling, that actually ramps up the sympathetic nervous system, which I think most people tend to erroneous. Li assume that oh my gosh, that's that's bad for my immune system. But they're thinking of kind of the long term consequences of leaving the sympathetic nervous system kind of stuck in the on switch all the time. We're acutely up regulating the sympathetic nervous system. Your immune system actually gets a little bit better. Right? So So lifters I always tell them like never remember those times where you just kind of beat the crap out of yourself in the gym, you're probably kind of overreached, your stress was pretty high. And you made it through that it was just like a couple of weeks period. And then you got really sick afterwards. Right? And most people are like, Oh, yeah, are you have like a very stressful event. And then once it sort of passes, then you kind of have to sort of pay for that. So my guess from reading the study is that it's probably working off of a similar mechanism where you're kind of acutely up regulating the immune system to deal with that my, on the right path there.



25:42

That sounds right to me. And I know that I referenced the study that you pulled up, but I have to, I have to caveat, this was saying, I'm not a science guy, and I can read the study. But I don't know how to interpret what I'm reading for to a great degree. So whatever you read, if it if it speaks in science language, and, and you say it, then I'm going to agree with what you said, because that's, that's, that's not my forte there, you know, I can go out and I can tell you what my experience is like, but as far as what the actual science is, like, I'm gonna trust you to interpret that paper.



Dr. Mike T Nelson 26:17

Yeah. And the cool part, would you mention to I liked is that limbs done this a lot with other things is that he's like, well, I can teach other people how to do this. Right. Another study, they compared him to his twin brother. And the short version was, they're not really that different, right? Because people I think, look at them and go, Oh, he's just a genetic freak. He's just a, an extreme outlier. And most of the studies that have been done on him that I've seen, are like, Yeah, he can do some crazy stuff, like no questions, but doesn't seem to be like, he's this weird anomaly in genetic freak. And I think that's what is also part of the appeal, where you can then teach these techniques to other people, it's not just, you're the freak that's able to do them, nobody else can, like he's going around teaching people the techniques and the methods to replicate similar things to what he's done.



27:09

Yeah, absolutely. And it's it. For me, it all comes back to if we do these things, it allows us to enjoy life more, really, is what it comes down to, it allows us to be healthier, particularly over, you know, the past year, year and a half of, of pandemic talk, I, I think that now is a great time to start paying attention to how we can help we can affect our immune system in a positive way, without having to go anywhere outside of our own self in our own environment, you know, like I'm, I'm, I think that that we have wired into us the ability to overcome just about anything that the environment can throw at us, either through our own adaptability or our own reason, which tells us that it's, you know, this is not conditions that we can survive in so we must build shelter or go somewhere else. I mean, that's, that's definitely a part of why we're at the, at the top of the food chain. But I think that in order to get to that point in the first place, back in the early years of our species, we had to be able to endure the elements, before we figured out that we could make it an easier task to endure elements. So for me, just the immune system stuff and and the cardiovascular benefits aren't enough for me to encourage anybody to try it. The breathing and the meditation stuff that goes along with it is actually what I'm more interested in as a just as an individual. But, you know, we're talking about physiology and science right now. So we're not going to go too far into that. One of the really interesting things about it is people will see someone like Wim Hof, do the things that they do. And immediately think, yes, he's an outlier. There's no way I could ever do that, or that's impossible, or whatever. And the mission to be able to educate people on how to train themselves, to be able to do these things that seem like extraordinary feats is a noble one, in my opinion, but something like cold exposure can be very, very simple and very effective in getting skilled at just through an intelligent use of progressive overload, you know, just like when we opened you were talking about my my hand back at Adam's wedding and how it was all you know, puffed up and everything, you know, I haven't trained striking coconuts for quite a while so that my hands are more the same size now, but that is just an adaptation called Wolf's law. We all know that right? I don't know what, what the if there's a law that would go along With the adaptations to the cold, but when my wife's Grandmother Asked me, if I was cold, logically, intellectually, yes, I am cold, but I'm not uncomfortable, because I've conditioned myself to be in this place. You know, it's like asking somebody who's really strong, if 500 pounds is heavy, well, yeah, it's still 500 pounds. But it's not as heavy as it was 10 years ago when I started lifting. So being able to progressively train that is something that we're able to do. And it's very, very simple to, to plan, long term, or even short term on how to do that, you just simply expose yourself to a little bit of cold right now today sometime, and then tomorrow, do it again. And at some point, you do it for a little bit longer and a little bit longer. There's a 30 day challenge that was available on the Wim Hof Method website, which I believe is Wim Hof Method calm. And it starts out with the cold shower, the progression being you take your normal shower as you

would, and then at the very end of your shower, turn the water on cold for five seconds. Anybody can stand in cold water in a cold shower for five seconds. Even if it seems unpleasant, even if they're slightly afraid of it, they can do it for five seconds. Well, this 30 Day Challenge adds five seconds per day. So by the time you get to the end, you're comfortably doing two and a half minutes. And that's the recommended guidelines. And I always tell people to individualize that as needed. Like if, if you got up to 30 seconds today. And it was really really distressful to you don't attempt 35 seconds next time, just because that's what's written on the paper. I mean, Mike, you know, a great deal about kind of stuff just through and



31:53

completely lost my thought, Oh, you know, a great deal about this stuff through practice of biofeedback and the gym protocol, you know, the, the idea there being what is the minimal effective dose to get the desired adaptation? Well, if 30 seconds of cold exposure gets me what I need to continue to adapt to this today, then I don't need to do 35 or 40, or 50, or two minutes or half an hour today, you know, I can work toward that, by working toward that mean, consistently show up and keep things as easy as possible and as fun as possible while you're doing it.

D

Dr. Mike T Nelson 32:30

Yeah, I think that's the beautiful with cold or even hot that most people are. So for lack of a better word decondition not adapted to it. And because of that, that's almost a positive, like, you just don't need that much. Right, it's like the new person who's never lifted before, it's like, you can do lots of stupid stuff, just don't hurt yourself. Don't go too crazy, give yourself rhabdo and you're gonna be fine. Like, you don't need to do a whole lot. And I just as experiment recently, so I took about a year and I started at just like 50 to 53 degrees of cold water exposure in a freezer up to my neck. And once I got up to five or six minutes at that temperature, I would drop it by like one or two degrees. And I just figured out and then I would literally start over again at like, you know, 30 to 60 seconds, right. And I would remember talking to you about this, I would get out before you know, it was too too hard, or you know, anything like that. And what I found was it took me almost a year ish, a little bit over a year and a couple months to get down to, you know, 3940 degrees, I could do comfortably for five to six minutes. And then I went away on vacation went to a warm climate, we were down in South Padre for a while. And I came back and I had left the freezer at the colder temperature and actually put a bunch of ice and even get it a little bit colder, left it down to like 3637 degrees. And you know, you kind of go backwards if you don't have exposure to it for a while. So the first day was horrible. And then I'm like, I just be curious if I go slower at this temperature, kind of get to a lower temperature just out of

curiosity faster. And what I found was almost the opposite. Like to get past a minute and a half, like relatively comfortably was always just really really hard. And I was like oh, because I think I'm probably forcing the adaptation a little bit too much. And it was fine. Like if I wanted to jump in and out for you know, 2030 seconds kind of wake myself up. You know, that type of thing was fine. So I think I see a lot of people because it's just cooler to post on Instagram with you sitting in you know, I use and it's super cold then. Oh, I did 55 degrees today. Oh, you was the that's not that much. Yeah, yeah. This doesn't look of



35:02

course, the difference between those two examples are that six months from now the person who's posting it, that they're in 55 degrees will be down to, you know, 49 degrees or 48 degrees, and the other person's given up and moved on to something



Dr. Mike T Nelson 35:15

else. Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. Is there a recommended kind of start point. So let's say someone is pretty motivated, they've kind of gone through they've, they've done cold showers, and they've moved on to more of the cold water immersion, whether it's a tank or a freezer, or whatever method? Is there any, I guess, practice from all your experience of doing this over many years of kind of where to start and kind of a rate of progression or how you would set that up?



35:49

Um,



35:51

yes, the, the cardinal rule for me is always get out. Before you feel like you need to Yes. Because when you feel like you need to, you've you've crossed the line, physiologically, and your your conscious perception of it is playing catch up with that. And so you are already in a potentially hazardous place when you feel like you need to get out. So it's the, it's the thing that we talked about in, in lifting, where if you, if you go in and completely destroy and decimate yourself, every single session, you're going to get diminishing returns, and then eventually you're going to get sick, and you're going to have to stop. If you go in and lift and leave the gym feeling as good or better than you did

when you got there. You can progress indefinitely, and it'll be slower, but it'll be indefinite. With cold exposure, again, there's, there's more potential for something bad to happen than there is in in most lifting scenarios. Because it is a it is a deadly stimulus if it gets too cold. Whereas like with lifting, if the weights too heavy, you just can't pick it up. But anybody can jump in, you know, you can crack ice open and jump into cold water, anybody can do that, whether they're prepared for it or not. So the way that you laid it out with that simple progression of doing a little bit more each time, and paying attention to what your your body tells you as a result of that is the way to go. If you are the kind of person who really, really does well and kind of craves numbers and specificity of like next Thursday, my target is to hit this amount of time, then you can do that. Just be very incremental and very cautious about going too much too soon. Always, always, always approach it from a standpoint of what's the least that I can get away with today, to be able to get where I want to get with this. Because to to go back and talk a little bit about your experience where you were conditioned, and you decondition for a while and got back in and you can tell the difference in it, even after you've been involved with it for a considerable period of time. And you can do say 10 or 15 minutes in very cold water that that may you may even have to break the ice to get into it. The first 30 seconds or so, are a big slap in the face. Hey, wake up. This is happening right now. Right? And then. And then net and 60 seconds are the this is very uncomfortable. This sucks. I don't want to be doing this. I got to get out of here. Then after about 90 seconds or two minutes, you start to settle into the Oh, this is not so bad. I feel pretty peaceful. This feels pretty good. That's the time to get out for for most people, the health benefits start to rapidly diminish after about the two or three minute mark I think so you don't really need more than about two or three minutes. However, from a What can I do? How can I expand my mind and and you know, develop my mental acumen with this. going longer is fine. Just be very intelligent about it. And one of the really important things about it is if you get in and let's say that yesterday, you were in for three minutes, and you get in today and you hit the 92nd mark and it's not getting better get out. Yeah, ready for it something something your body is telling you Hey, this is a bad idea to do right now run away from this. You know, it's just it lines up perfectly with the stuff that that goes along with the gym movement protocol. It's It's where are you today and what can you do today? What's the minimum effective amount? Not even today? Where are you right now? Not Where were you this morning? Or where will you be this afternoon, but where are you right now? All while you're subjecting yourself to this.



Dr. Mike T Nelson 40:03

Yeah, and everyone's had those experiences I exactly what you said in the gym, right? You've today should be an epic day and you've got everything planned out and you get there and like, today's socks, I just need to leave. You know? And like, at the time, you

don't know why you may never know why. I mean, cold is the same way. You know, I had days where that was pretty easy to do four to five minutes, like 42 degrees. It wasn't a big deal wasn't that hard? And you get in and by like, a minute 30 I'm like, Nope, that's that's it for today. And, yep, it. Yeah, because it's not a big deal. Because there's no, unless you're trying to compete with Wim Hof or something, there's no metal for more gunmetal fortitude to stay in there longer, right, like you said, if you're looking for the benefits of it, especially on the physiologic side, just consistency, just like lifting, you know, still wins, and you'll have some days are easier, some days are harder, if you always leave, and it feels better than when you started. That's when, you know, you're there's no race to get anywhere within a specific amount of time.



41:16

Definitely, definitely, and I think that there's a kind of a conflicting thought process between physical expression and physical training, and then the the mental aspect of things because, you know, people in the, like, the personal development realm, or, or in the motivational realm talk about, you know, you have to get outside of your comfort zone to grow and all that kind of stuff. Well, emotionally or, or doing something that is not physically threatening, but you know, is mentally uncomfortable. Yeah, there's, there's a degree of truth to that, physically, it's an incredibly terrible idea to constantly, constantly be not only outside the comfort zone, but right on the ragged edge of attempting to, quote, push my body past its limitations. Because if you're telling me that you push the body past its limitation, and you don't have some sort of injury to show for it, then you're wrong.



42:14

You didn't push



42:16

definition, your body's limits mean that if you exceed them, you've damaged it in some way. way that shows up and cold exposure at its extreme, is obviously the hypothermia and you slip into a coma and die, right, and no one is going to logically train in that way, no matter how ego driven they are with it, where the the line happens is if you and and, and I've done this, I've done this several times, before I realized that this was where I was having my my breakdown. You know, it's the old saying about good judgment comes with experience and experience comes with bad judgment, right? Yeah, bad. had put in cold water outdoors in cold air as well for longer than I needed to be. And when I quote, push

past that limit, just to see what I could do, I wound up for several hours afterwards experiencing what is known as an after drop, which involves shivering, it involves chattering teeth, it involves like being disoriented. And it's, I think that that that is what happens. Right before hypothermia sets in and you get in serious trouble when your core temperature starts to drop down. The the tingling and the shivering and all that sort of stuff, all of the stuff that is associated with the after drop is a negative indicator is that you did too much you did more than you're able to handle that day. And I believe the physiology behind that is you have cooled the blood to the point that your body is in emergency mode now and it starts shivering in an effort to produce heat to warm the blood up in the extremities, as well as allowing it to warm as it circulates through the core, you get to that point you are right on the edge of messing up. And if you've ever been in that place, then it is not a pleasant place to be. And having been in that place a few times. Through my own ignorance or my own ego. I realize why people are so terrified of the cold because if you've ever experienced anything like that having your body uncontrollably shiver and being disoriented. That way it's it's not a place that I recommend anybody goes ever if they can avoid it. However, things being what they are and Facebook and Instagram being what they are is just like you said, here's this hardcore picture of me in this you know, tub of ice and I've been sitting in here for 20 minutes and then three hours later, I can't type a new post out because you know, so it's just dumb. So that's the main thing is do smart stuff when you train. Yeah, smartest way to go.

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Dr. Mike T Nelson 45:01

Yeah, and I think sometimes people and I try to emphasize this in the physiologic flexibility course, too, is that if you look at the actual numbers for Frank hypothermia and death, you may erroneously assume that there's a big safety margin. And to some degree, that's kind of true. But the calculation or where I think some people have gotten into errors is one, like you said, you can have a horrible after drop afterwards, to your sensations are already altered. Once you're in three, you can actually have a loss of just motor and limb function, where depending upon if you're out by yourself in a lake, maybe you can't get out now. Right? Like you're, you're now at that point where you may not die for maybe an hour, a couple hours, but you've kind of already sort of passed the point of no return, if you can't crawl out of the situation you got yourself in because your arms don't work.

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46:02

Absolutely 100%. And the idea of, of breaking out of the comfort zone being as silly as it is, what's the alternative to that the alternative to that is gradually and intelligently expanding the comfort zone to engulf what your old limit was. So let's say that, that you can, you can get in the cold, and you can you can stand it for 90 seconds right now. But at

91 seconds, you're you're completely freaking out, you're going to have an after drop, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, right? Well, if you start out at 15 or 30 seconds, and you consistently stay in that comfortable range. And by comfort, I don't mean that it feels good. By comfort, I mean that it doesn't completely derail you physically or emotionally, right. So I'm not saying without, without a little bit of discomfort, I'm saying that being in a level of discomfort that you can intellectually process as being just as comfort Not, not going down that weird rabbit hole of you know, trying to, like you said, getting stuck in a lake and not being able to get out. If you can gradually over time 510 second increments, add to that 15 or 30 seconds that you started with. And you can do that consistently. Not even every day. But if you can do it, say four or five, six times a week, every day is will get you there, Senator, but it doesn't have to be every day you don't beat yourself up and start over if you miss a day. But if you can do that consistently over time, within a couple of months, the minute and a half that used to be your your limit is now just the point that you notice that you're starting to get relaxed and settle into the into the cold and experience the euphoric feeling that comes after that.



47:55

Yeah, so it's just about



47:56

intelligent expansion of the comfort zone.



Dr. Mike T Nelson 48:00

Yeah, and we got like about five or seven minutes left, but I, I would guess that you can then transfer that same idea into kind of the personal development range. And when I started doing cold stuff, maybe like two years ago, now, maybe somewhere around there, my first thought was I was very big on Oh, look at all these physiologic reasons and stuff that happens. Whenever I've done it for quite a while. I'm convinced that the psychological benefit probably far outweighs the physiologic benefit. In that I am deciding to do something that is difficult. Because when you first get into cold water, even if you've been doing it for a long time, I always find it still feels horrible, like the first few seconds like it just there never is a day I wake up and I'm like, Yes, cold water. Oh, yes. I'm so excited. I want to do the thing. And I know I'll feel better afterwards for doing the thing. But that second right before you get in, I'm never like, Oh, yes, I'm so stoked to do this.



49:03

Yeah. Well, it's that's the thing about cold is it's never not cold. No. One of the one of the interesting physiological benefits that that they measured with Wim is they were taking blood samples from him. Prior to one of the cold experiments that they were doing, and they measured whatever markers they were looking at, and then he went into the room where he was going to get into this tub of ice water. And he started, you know, setting his mind and setting his intention. And they took another blood sample. And prior to getting into the water, he was already showing changes in his blood markers that would indicate that he had been in the water. Yes. So so his mind is sending out the message to his body that this is about to happen. Go ahead and start the preparations now. Yeah, and that if that's not the true nature of adaptation, then I don't really know how else you could describe it. You know? So the the mental aspect of that, yes, there is the aspect of I'm doing something that is that is difficult or is uncomfortable. And if you have a room of 100 people and you say, Hey, everybody, let's go jump in this cold leg, you know, 92 of them are going to leave the room before we get in the eyes, right? So so there's the, there's the understanding, intellectually, that I am doing something that most people aren't willing to do. And so there's a sense of competence that goes along with that. There's a sense of confidence with knowing that whatever minor inconvenience in our, in our first world situation that we live in, that may rear up that we have been in touch with a primal side of ourselves, that goes back through hundreds of 1000s of years of evolution, that says, you know, this isn't really that big of a deal, because I just spent, you know, six minutes in 40 degree water, and I know what difficult feels like I know what a potentially real threat feels like. So when you know, you, your skype connection drops at the beginning, that you're off in traffic, it is not that big of a deal, because it helps us to, to even out the ups and downs of the distress response. So I think that there's a definite mental aspect to it that way. And then, when I work with people that want to do cold exposure, as part of the personal development, coaching, I don't, I don't, I don't recommend that to people. But I don't make that as a requirement of any of the, of the personal development coaching stuff that I do. But the people who do it almost always come back to me first, saying, you know, this difficulty presented itself, but I had the confidence to handle it because of the training. And part of that training is I was just in an ice bath for seven minutes, three hours before this thing happened, this really isn't that big of a deal. And so they're able to translate the physical expression of, of the environmental conditioning and the meditative aspect that goes along with that into a focus that allows them to do better at things like you know, growing their email list or, or improving the way that they interact with, with their spouse or something with that on the surface would seem completely unrelated. But the cold can teach you things that no one else can teach you. There are things to be learned out there that another human can't teach you. But it can learn by you just by getting in the cold and shutting up if you can just shut your mind off. That's that's one of the beautiful, beautiful

things about cold exposure is when you're about to step into it, you're not thinking about you know that you've got to pay the cell phone bill later today. Yes, you know, that all that stuff goes away. So when we come back to the idea of what meditation is really about, it's about being in the present moment. And when you're in the cold, you're in the present moment, because one slip of your attention, and it stops being this



53:18

pleasant experience and becomes a terrifying experience. If you're if you're allow your mind to go down that rabbit hole. Yeah. And so that kind of training along with the similar mental attitude that I learned from my strong man, mentor, Dennis Rogers to the quote there is always you have to remove doubt and limitation from your mind because your mind controls your body, and you start to get into the cold, the tub with the ice and everything in it. And your thoughts are Oh my god, it's gonna suck. I hate this. And no way I can do this. And you're probably going to be right. But if you approach it with like, the attitude of this may be uncomfortable. But my intention set I know that I'm capable of doing this. I've done it before. It's wired into my genes as a species, we've survived to get to this place, I'm going to go ahead and go into this then you approach it with a level of confidence that you can't help but have it spill out spill out into other areas of your life.



54:16

Yeah, that's awesome. And tell us about and if people want to learn more about the programs and stuff you do, how would they find out more



54:24

um, the best way to find out about that stuff would be to go to superhuman you that's why oh, you coaching.com I wrote a book a few years ago called superhuman you and the coaching system that I use is built off of the stuff that's in that book. So superhuman, you coaching calm, there's a presentation there that tells a little bit more about what I do and you can just go check that out and if it looks good to you just do what it says and click the buttons. There's a lot of valuable information in the present. If you want a copy of the book superhuman, you go to superhuman you book.com. And I used to sell that for 20 bucks. But now I've decided that it's something that I want to give away. So if you go to superhuman, you book calm and you pay for shipping and handling, which is like 10 bucks. I'll send you the book for free.



Dr. Mike T Nelson 55:21

Oh, cool. Awesome. Well, thank you so much for sharing all your wisdom. And I always love talking to you about just, it's one thing to have the scientific stuff, but it's a whole nother thing to actually have the many, many years of experience. And you're also coaching people through many of the different processes to so thank you so much for sharing with everything today. And we'll put all the links and everything into the notes for sure.



55:46

Thanks a bunch for having me. It's all the process of self discovery. And I wish everyone the best of luck with it.



55:51

Awesome. Thank you so much, my friend. Take care. Thank you. Bye. Bye.



Dr. Mike T Nelson 55:57

Thank you so much for listening to the podcast today. Really appreciate it. Big thanks to Dave, for taking the time to chat. always enjoy chatting with him always learn new stuff, which is great. I'd highly encourage you to check out his book and some of his coaching there. We'll have the link for that in the notes here. Also, as podcast brought to you by physiologic flexibility, it's the fifth flex third, go to [physiologic flexibility.com](https://www.physiologicflexibility.com). If it is not open at that time, you will be able to get on the waitlist. If you want to learn all about, for example, cold water immersion, I have a well over two hour video I did on all the technical components of it, or some of the history, what you should know about the physiology. And we cover everything else from interventions like heat, such as sauna, a high intensity interval training, aerobic base building, blood glucose, a ketogenic diet, oxygen, a co2, we cover all of those in the course, the nice part is that any of the other advanced techniques, you can bolt on directly to the course much you'll be set up with some of the techniques more than enough to get you going and started. So I have action items for each one of the interventions. And more importantly, you'll understand on how these all work together. Because I think that's what is lacking. People see cold water, like Oh, I got to do that. And then I got to go do my sauna and I got to do this crazy breathing technique and the EU ketogenic diet is the thing to do. So planning how to use each intervention when it is needed. And then how do they all fit together? Then once you understand that, if you want to go super far down the rabbit hole into Wim Hof Method or other types of breathing methods, then, in my opinion, you've got the tool set and you've got the big

picture. You understand the physiology, you kind of understand the limits. And then you're just adding a few more techniques which can be useful. I'm not a big fan of adding techniques when you're not understanding or you're missing how to apply them and when to apply them. So go to [physiologic flexibility.com](https://physiologicflexibility.com). And thank you so much for the enjoying the podcast. Leave us any comments, any stars you feel is appropriate. I read all the comments that really helps us out and allows us to get the podcast into more people's your holes. Thank you so much. Talk to you later.