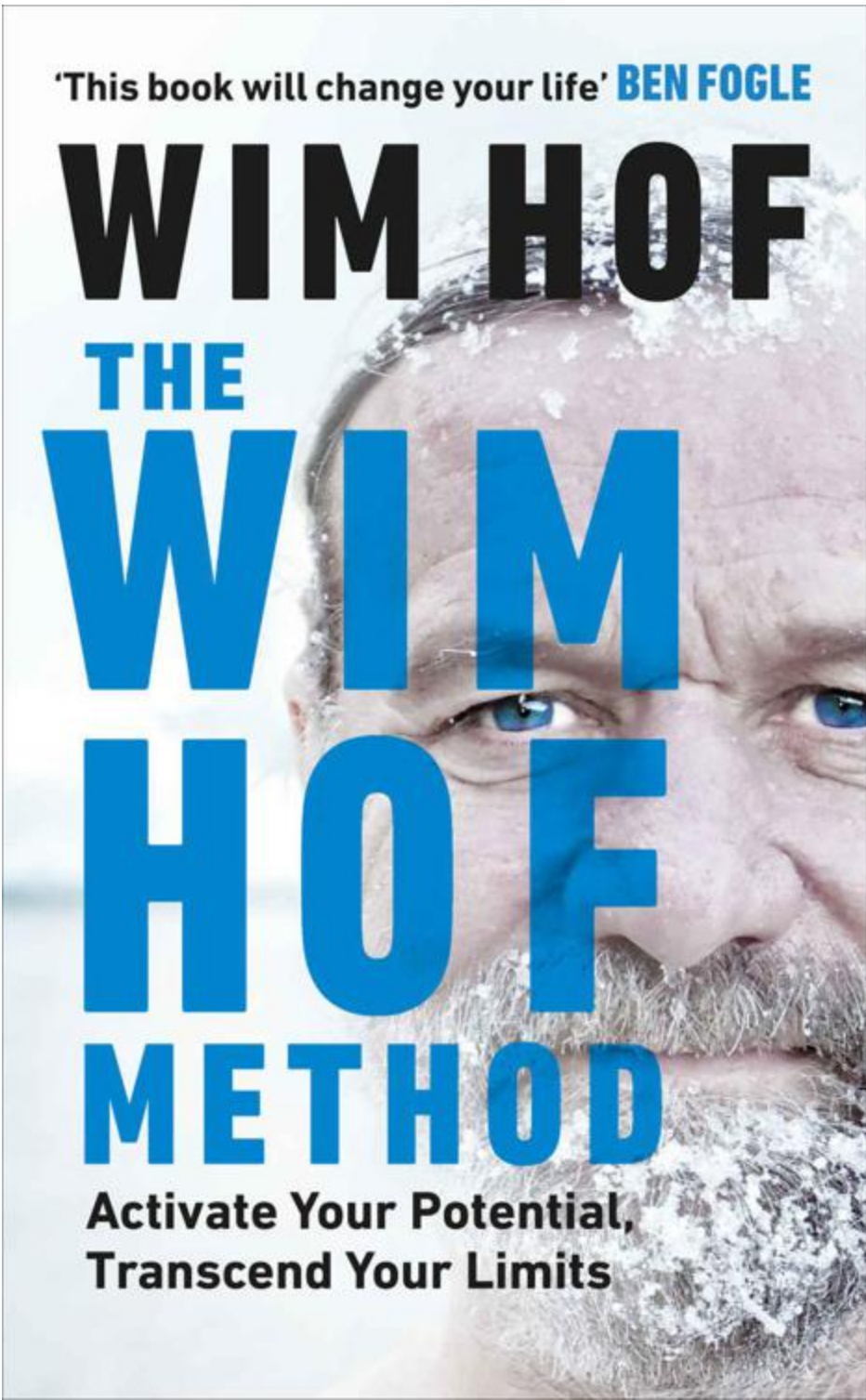
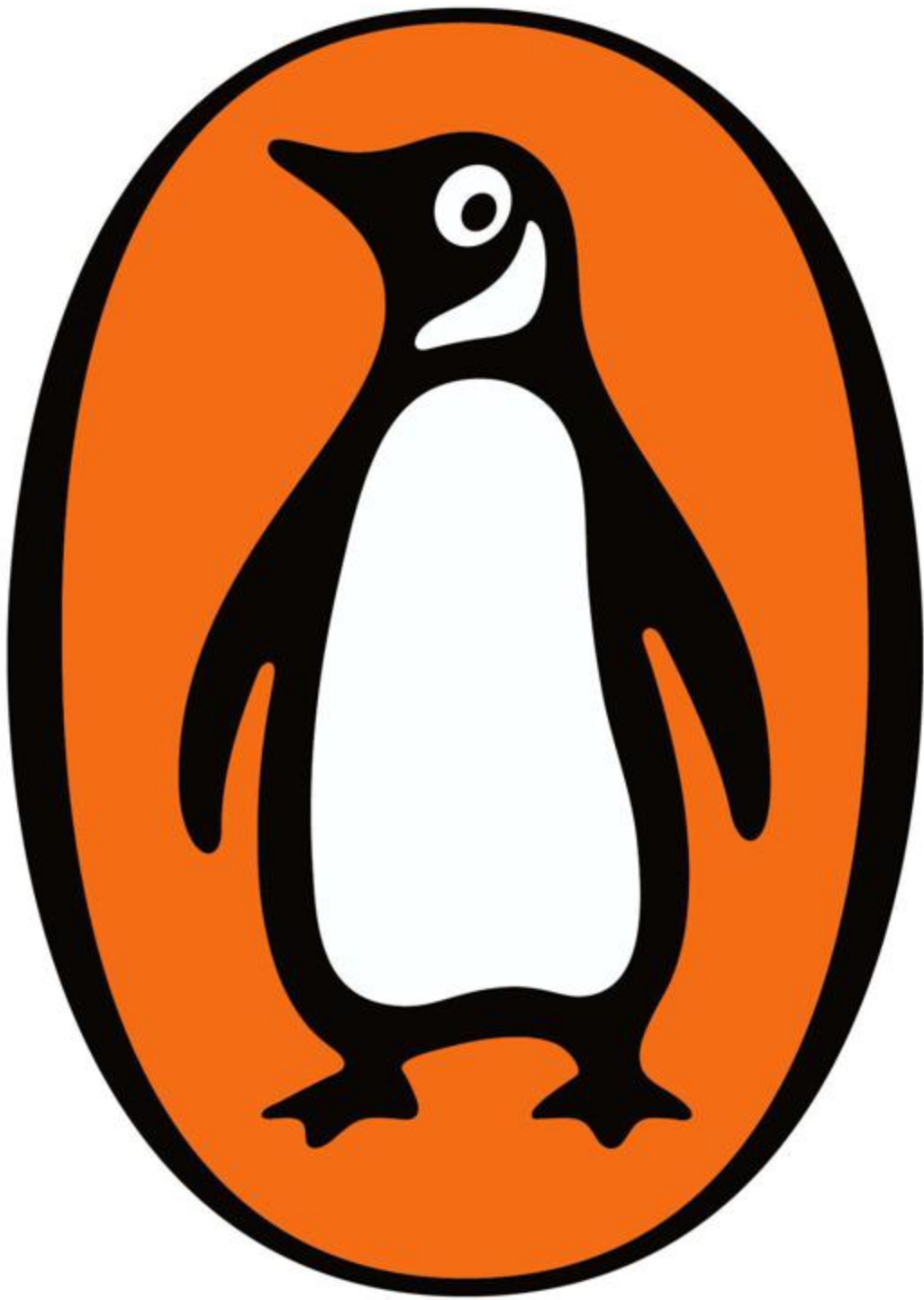


'This book will change your life' **BEN FOGLE**



WIM HOF **THE** **WIM** **HOF** **METHOD**

**Activate Your Potential,
Transcend Your Limits**





Wim Hof

THE WIM HOF METHOD

Activate Your Potential, Transcend Your Limits

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wim Hof got the nickname “the Iceman” by breaking a number of world records related to cold exposure. His feats include climbing Mount

Kilimanjaro in shorts, running a half marathon above the Arctic Circle on his bare feet, and standing in a container while covered in ice cubes for more than 112 minutes. Having embraced the majestic force of nature, Hof resolved to share his discovery with the rest of the world. He is convinced that everyone can tap into this potential without having to invest decades worth of study, travel, and daring as he has. And so he developed the Wim Hof Method: a natural path to an optimal state of body and mind.

Hof teaches his method in seminars all over the world, but he maintains a spartan training camp in Przesieka, Poland. He resides in Stroe, The

Netherlands, with his family. To download the free Wim Hof Method app or

[enroll in one of our courses, visit wimhofmethod.com](https://www.wimhofmethod.com).

ALSO BY WIM HOF

Becoming the Iceman (with Justin Rosales)

De Top Bereiken Is Je Angst Overwinnen (Dutch)

Klimmen in Stilte (Dutch)

The Way of the Iceman (with Koen De Jong)

I dedicate this book to my children, your children,
your mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters.

But most of all, I dedicate it to YOU.

The YOU that resides beyond fear,

The YOU who is willing to dive deep.

My hope is for you to regain your personal power, help others,
and ultimately lend your hand to Mother Nature herself.

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PRAISE FOR *THE WIM HOF METHOD*

‘Wim Hof has inspired millions of people to use just their bodies and breath to heat, then heal, themselves of a laundry list of chronic illnesses. Dubious,

you say? I certainly thought so, until I discovered the real scientific research from real scientists around the world proving these ‘impossible’ claims were in fact true. This book is a valuable guide to anyone looking to take better control of the health, heat, and untapped potential locked away within us all’

JAMES NESTOR

‘I enjoyed this book immensely! Get inside the mind of Wim Hof and learn why millions of people worldwide feel the freeze and do it anyway. Breathe in, chill out, and enjoy the ride’

PATRICK MCKEOWN

‘Wim Hof’s program has become an essential part of my daily regimen for self-care and grounding. I warmly recommend it’

GABOR MATÉ

‘This book fortifies that the mind is the most powerful tool we possess, however very few use it like Mr Wim Hof. A positive and persuasive read’

ANT MIDDLETON

‘Thor-like and potent ... Wim has radioactive charisma’

RUSSELL BRAND

‘Wim is a legend of the power ice has to heal and empower’

BEAR GRYLLS

‘This book will change your life’

BEN FOGLE

‘A fascinating look at Wim’s incredible life and method’

FEARNE COTTON

What lies behind us, and what lies before us are but tiny matters compared to what lies within us. And when we bring what lies

within us out into the world, miracles happen.

HENRY STANLEY HASKINS

FOREWORD

AN UNLIKELY MEETING

BY ELISSA EPEL, PHD

It was an unlikely place for a somewhat conservative medical school

researcher to be: a business-oriented wellness conference in Palm Beach, Florida. I wondered if I should have come, and I reminded myself to be open — that you never know what the world has in store for you, who you might meet, what you might learn. And then, my reason for being there was unveiled. There he was, walking up to the podium, wearing a T-shirt when most were in suits, a beard that implied “I have better things to do than spend time on a manicured trim.” Wim Hof told us part of his story. He led us through the breathing part of his method. And I was absolutely struck.

What he described of his experience was exactly what I had been

searching for—ways to increase hormetic stress in our bodies.

Theoretically, a stressful exposure can have harmful effects at high doses, but at low doses it can actually create changes in our body that make us healthier and stronger — that’s what we call “hormetic stress.” Stress researchers like me spend a lot of time exploring the dark side of stress, how chronic stress and depression wear us down, shorten our telomeres, and contribute to disease. But we also know that stress can be a good thing.

Acute short-term stress can lead to powerful positive changes in our cells.

Heating up a worm just a bit, for example, can increase the life of that worm, although too much heat and it becomes a funeral. Studies on

hormetic stress in humans are scarce, leaving many questions unanswered.

Are there natural ways to safely unlock the positive effects of stress in our cells? Do we already hold the keys to our own well-being? Where do we

start the search for those answers? It seemed to me, hearing him speak, that Wim Hof had created a good map for us to explore.

After the talk, a couple approached me, Victor and Lynne Brick. Victor, having tragically lost his brother to mental illness, was looking for ways to support research on natural methods to prevent or even cure depression and other serious mental health issues. (Despite the many antidepressant

medication ads on TV, several meta-analyses suggest Big Pharma solutions do not have benefits beyond the placebo effect.) From that meeting, a study was born.

When I returned to University of California, San Francisco, and told my colleagues about Wim Hof and his method, I didn't exactly jump to, "Can we study the Iceman?" That's the first thing you might have learned about him: his nickname. In the many documentaries about Wim, you see people practicing the method in small circles with him. You can feel their

adrenaline and group cohesiveness, fueled by exercising the limits of their body's regulation, exposing themselves in shorts to the ice—maybe during a cold Poland winter—while heating up their bodies with their mindset and breathing method. You see people doing push-ups while holding their

breath, more push-ups than they thought they could do. You see young

people flocking to him, especially men, high-performance machismo in the air. You hear accounts of miraculous cures from people with disease who practice the method. All these are red flags for conscientious medical school researchers. But the potential of unleashing novel potent hormetic stress effects overrode the alarm of extraordinary claims, the skeptical reaction to his growing popularity. My colleagues saw the potential, just like I did. To our delight, Wim Hof was 100% supportive of our rigorously controlled trial.

With the fame that comes with breaking twenty-six world records, and the documentaries and popular books that feature him, Wim knows the limits of anecdote, of story, to giving a method validity in the medical world. He knows that the research path—slow, painstaking, and with the necessary attitude of objectivity and skepticism — is the only path to understanding and applying this method to health care. Research can help us unveil the method’s mechanisms, document safety and efficacy, and

determine in controlled clinical trials how it affects people with disease states. The method has been tested in small pilot studies so far, showing improvement of the immune system response to endotoxin¹ and in

inflammatory arthritis of the spine, suggesting that it can reduce chronic inflammation and symptoms. [2 It is being tested in people with spinal cord](#)

injuries who cannot easily activate their autonomic and cardiovascular systems with exercise. It is being practiced among the elderly, with some members of the Wim Hof Method practice group over ninety years old.

Wim knows that rigorous research is the path that will lead to discoveries that give more people control over their health and well-being.

I have been following the emerging peer-reviewed research on the Wim Hof Method closely. My conclusion is that we need more serious

examination of this method, as it has unique potential for improving health and slowing the aging process. In our study at the University of California Department of Psychiatry, we have spent the last year teaching people with high levels of life stress the Wim Hof Method and closely examining how it impacts their daily emotional reactivity, autonomic stress reactivity, and cellular indicators of aging. We don’t mention his name or label the method, because that would invoke what we call a “guru” effect — a strong belief about the method — that we could not match in the other conditions we are studying (exercise, meditation). The trial is expected to be completed this year.

This is the beginning of a new field. We already know some specific things about the method, such as how the breathing method can temporarily change the pH of our blood. The method has inspired many theories of how it works. But what we think the mechanisms are today may change over time with more research. I am so excited to learn more, for the benefit of us all, and for the much-needed shift of health care toward self-care.

The truly remarkable story here is Wim's own, as revealed in these pages.

It is not a search for fame that drove Wim to accomplish feats such as swimming more than 100 feet under the ice of a frozen lake or hiking with a group to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro in twenty-eight hours. But these feats speak volumes. They show the method can push us past our assumed limits, that we can unlock the vast potential of our bodies and minds. The true story is of one man's passion, his love for nature, for all living beings, for his family, for humanity, and thus his drive to share what he now knows to hopefully heal sickness. (As a boy, he felt deeply connected to nature, so much so that he stopped eating animals at thirteen years old, completely on his own, in a culture of omnivores.) It's also a story of human suffering and striving—the humanizing experiences and insatiable curiosity that drove Wim to explore the limits of mind and body.

The true story is that Wim has shown us what we all can do. The underlying method requires something uniquely human—the power of belief in ourselves, the power of strong intention combined with directed attention. The unique dialectical state of relaxing into physical discomfort and pain—of ice, of cold water, of breath-holding—I find this to be a remarkable state. As someone who loves meditation, I believe it is an especially interesting state from which to observe the mind. It is different from sitting meditation alone — it has sharp, acute effects, demanding our full attention and interoception. Training the mind and body in this way seems to have great potential for developing stress resiliency.

The method shows clearly that what we believe determines how much we can do. As Wim points out, “Whether you think you can or you think you can’t, you are right.” The research group from Radboud University in the Netherlands, led by Dr. Kox and Dr. Pickkers, published a study showing that optimistic outcome expectancies are associated with some of the physiological responses to the method. [3](#) The method requires engagement of body and mind, and at least some belief.

I am so glad I attended that meeting in Palm Beach. I am honored to introduce you to Wim Hof and what may be one of our big revolutions in health and self-care, our ability to apply and self-prescribe our own levels of hormetic stress. The next generation of answers lies in science. I remind myself, and you, that science is a slow process of incremental knowledge building where no one study proves anything. We should look very carefully at this method, and those derived from it, with both safe self-experimentation and rigorous scientific inquiry. I therefore suggest that you suspend any automatic judgments of dis-belief and, rather, turn toward your curiosity and openness. Allow yourself to experience the Wim Hof Method in your own body and make your own discoveries. Enjoy!

PREFACE

IT’S ALL THERE FOR YOU

Would you like to have more energy, less stress, and a stronger immune system? Would you like to sleep better, improve your cognitive and athletic performance, boost your mood, lose weight, and alleviate your anxiety?

What if I told you that you can achieve all these things and so much more by unlocking the power of your own mind? And that you can do it in only a few days?

As humanity has evolved and developed technology that has made us

more and more comfortable, we have lost our innate ability not only to survive but to thrive in extreme environments. In the absence of

environmental stress, the things we have built to make our lives easier have actually made us weaker. But what if we could reawaken the dormant

physiological processes that made our ancestors so strong?

My method, which I have developed and refined over the course of

nearly forty years, is based on three simple, natural pillars: cold exposure, conscious breathing, and the power of the mind. I have employed this

method to accomplish feats believed by many to be impossible, setting more than two dozen Guinness World Records and confounding medical

professionals in the process. That includes running a half marathon above the Arctic Circle while barefoot, wearing only shorts, and a full marathon through Africa's Namib Desert, without drinking any water. It includes swimming underneath a thick layer of ice for more than two hundred feet and standing packed in ice for hours at a time without my core body

temperature dropping. I've summited some of the world's highest

mountains dressed only in shorts. It's true.

Doing these things has earned me the nickname the Iceman, but I am no superhero. I am no genetic freak. I'm not a guru, and I did not invent these techniques either. Cold exposure and conscious breathing have been

practiced for thousands of years. I do not mention my accomplishments to boast, but as a reminder that there is so much more we are capable of. I want to ignite your awe of your body, your mind, and your beautiful

humanity. I invite you to witness your own being blossoming, to push past your conditioning. This method is accessible to all. Anything I can do, you can do just as well. I know this because I have spent the past fifteen years turning skeptics into believers. I have taught the method all over the world

and seen the remarkable results firsthand. People who have embraced my method have been able to reverse diabetes; relieve the debilitating

symptoms of Parkinson's disease, rheumatoid arthritis, and multiple

sclerosis; and address a host of other autoimmune illnesses, from lupus to Lyme disease. [1](#)

The secret to a lifetime of health and happiness is within your grasp. You can safely practice the Wim Hof Method by yourself, at your own pace, and within the comfort of your own home. No pills, injections, vitamins,

supplements, equipment, or specialty diets of any kind — all you need is yourself and a desire to unlock your body's hidden potential. This book is your guide.

Are you ready? In the pages that follow, I will share the story of my journey, from the small Dutch village in which I was born to the world stage I now occupy. I will explain the ins and outs of my method, the philosophy that underpins it, and the science that supports it. And I will present examples of practitioners who have used the method to radically transform their lives. In doing so, my hope is to inspire you to retake control of your body and life by unleashing the immense power of your mind. It's all there for you, and there's no time to waste.

Let's go.



1

THE MISSIONARY

The breath is a door. Without the breath, what is there? It's where you and I and everyone else began. It's where all life begins.

I am a twin, but at the time of my birth in 1959 in the Netherlands, there were no echo devices to detect that there was a second baby in the womb.

So, I was still there when my mother was taken back to her bed to recover after delivering my brother, Andre. She felt a strange-ness inside of her.

There was something there still, but she did not know what it was. And, of course, within the turbulence of childbirth, women will experience many disorienting sensations.

But what happened? She felt strange after giving birth to Andre. And as she had already delivered four children previously, she knew she was not mistaken. She had never felt this way after any of her other deliveries. So, there she was in the recovery room, and she said, “There is something else there, doctor.” The doctor, however, was dismissive. “That’s what happens after the birth,” he said. “It’s just some additional contractions, that’s all.”

The doctor went away, and my mother was again left alone in the room to recover. But the feeling inside of her only intensified, and at a certain moment, she knew that there was another baby. She began to yell for the nurses, and *finally*, after several visits from nurses attempting to reassure her that the doctor was right — that it was contractions and she shouldn’t worry, it will all fade away — they found out that, yes, there was indeed another one. But not only that, this other baby was bound to die if they didn’t intervene at that exact moment.

They wheeled the bed back to the operating room to get me out because they determined that I was in too deep to be delivered naturally. And that put my mother into an altered state of consciousness, in which she fixated on the dreadful thought that her child might die. Just before arriving to the operating room, she yelled, “Oh, God, let this child live! I will make him a

missionary!” She feared that they were going to cut into her, that she would lose the birth. In that moment, the power of fear roused the strength of her unwavering belief. My mother was very strong, pious, and intelligent, a devout Catholic. Before beginning our family at age twenty-eight, she had been working in an office and was very independent. Yet in those days, women could not work anymore after having children. They had to stay

home, and the man had to provide the work. She already had three children at home when we were born and proceeded to have another four after that

— each one, she felt, a gift from God. She took to having children as if it were her Catholic duty and carried that same practical, down-to-earth, headstrong attitude into raising her children. She wasn't educated much formally. Her father and mother had been farmers, and she and her siblings struggled with the absence of their mother, who became schizophrenic and was institutionalized. Their father raised the kids all by himself, which at that time was quite rare.

Now my mother, with her very strong belief in God, was attempting

through her faith to invoke me into the world. And in the cold of the hallway, I was born through a force unknown to her or anybody because of the circumstances. Possibly many more children were and will be born like that, in very extreme conditions — perhaps even more extreme. But what is karma? What is destiny? I don't know. And at that moment I was just a little bit of nothing. I was purple because I almost suffocated. I was cold. But I had been invoked by my mother so strongly, like a tattoo on my soul,

without having any point of reference for what was going on. I was just a piece of nothing. Helpless. But then I began to breathe.

That's the way I started my life. I barely survived. And, of course, I can't really remember what happened, but my mother told the story many times.

Perhaps as a result of my unusual beginning, I've always had a yearning for something else, for something more, something deeper, mystical —

something strange. I remember at the age of four, I had a moment of

epiphany that made me stop completely. I just saw light. Light! *What is this?* It overwhelmed me. I wasn't thinking, I was just in the light. But what was it? I didn't know then, and I still don't know. But the memory is indelible.

Andre and I shared a tiny room and the same bed for sixteen years. We shared a love of the unusual and would save our money and spend it on exotic plants. But even with our similarities, I always felt different. I was

fascinated by pictures we had on the walls of the temples of Tibet. By the age of twelve, I was already into yoga, Hinduism, Buddhism — what one might call esoteric disciplines — as well as psychology. But I was not the best student in my family. My mother was loving and caring, but very strict, very eager for us to be cognitively sharp. We had no money, as my father had health issues that kept him from working regularly. Conventional

intelligence was the emotional currency of the time. My older brothers strived to become the best in school, but I had no chance of that. Along with Andre, we were nick-named the PeePee's, and we were inseparable, and at times it felt that we were one. But I always felt something like the black sheep of sorts, a little more strange, excitable, just different.

When I was seven years old, I remember playing in a snowy pasture with my friends, constructing a sort of igloo. You know, whatever you imagine an igloo might look like when you're seven. After a while, all my friends went home, but I stayed behind. And this rosy feeling came over me and made me just sit down in the snow. It got late, and my parents and brothers began looking for me because I wasn't home. It wasn't unusual for me to play outside in the forest near our home in Sittard, making cabins and playing Tarzan and all that like kids do, but now I was in the snow. [1 I loved](#)

the snow then as I do now. But I had been out there so long that they became worried. When they found me, I had already been sleeping for quite some time, and I resisted when they woke me. I later learned that I was experiencing the onset of what's referred to as "the white death" where you can doze off, become hypothermic, fall into a coma, and then the rest is done. I mean, it's [s truly irreversible if no external heat source is applied.2](#) So they picked me up out of the snow and took me home, and it was actually quite terrible getting back because I was hypothermic. But I recovered.

At the age of eleven, the same thing happened. I went to school, and on my way home, I decided that I wanted to sit down. The weather was cold and

freezing, and I just sat down on a neighbor's porch and slept. I don't know what happened exactly, but apparently an ambulance arrived after someone telephoned to say they saw a young kid sleeping in freezing

temperatures outside. I woke up in the hospital, and they kept me there for observation for a week. Again, I recovered, but I was aware that I could have died in either of those moments if someone hadn't woken me and

taken me into a warm area. The strange thing about hypothermia is that you don't want to wake up; you just want to go to sleep. Why that is, I don't

know exactly, but those were my first encounters with the cold. And despite the very real danger they both posed, they were actually quite nice. I felt rosy. You go to sleep, and that's it. Thank you very much, goodbye life. It's okay. No worries. No fears. No nothing. Just a nice, rosy feeling.

Another time when I was young, maybe six years old, my friends and I

were playing near the forest. One of them threw a bottle of dirty water from the local brook on me, which was actually sewer water full of bacteria, and I became very sick. The fellow who had poured the bottle over me harbored no malicious intent, I don't believe. He was just being mischievous, but at the same time imposing his will over me by saying, in effect, "I'm eight years old and much bigger than you, and look what I can do to you." I can still remember that feeling of powerlessness. I couldn't do anything because he was just a much bigger and older guy than me, so I had little choice but to take his abuse and go home. And when I did, I spent the next two nights vomiting green before my parents finally took me to the hospital. As it turned out, I had contracted Weil syndrome (or leptospirosis), which is a

[rare, very infectious disease.](#)³ [The infection was so serious](#) that I remained hospitalized for three weeks, but, of course, I recovered well. Those moments mark my earliest encounters with the snow and bacterial infection, both of which would play big roles later in my life. In that, I suppose these episodes were harbingers of what was to come.

From a young age I have been drawn to storytelling. Whenever people

began to tell stories, *real* stories, of something out there, something strange, something deep, I was completely intrigued by and focused on their words.

They could swallow me in the vortex of their telling. Otherwise, I was a very playful kid. I enjoyed playing Tarzan, and I loved spending time outdoors in the forest. We played by making cabins in the trees and hanging and going from tree to tree with “vines” that we made out of old bicycle tires. We’d tie them to each other, hang them over the branches, and then swing from one tree to another making Tarzan’s jungle call as loudly as we could because we were the apes. We were playing the apes, and we loved it.

We *were* Tarzan.

Because we really loved being outdoors, my twin brother and I would

venture, whenever we had time, into nature, into the forest. We’d be gone all day making cabins, climbing trees, digging under-ground, and baking potatoes in the little fire we’d build. To this day I believe those potatoes

were the best food I’ve ever eaten. With just a little bit of salt, they were so delicious, so exquisite. They represented our freedom, and no restaurant could ever match their flavor because we ate them in connection with

nature. Being outdoors heightened all of our senses. I think nowadays many children miss out on that. They’re so involved with their computers and games and virtual realities that they lose sight of the true reality: nature, which stimulates, develops, and sharpens their senses. This disconnection from nature contributes, I think, to depression and other problems, which is unfortunate.

While it’s true that by the age of twelve I was exploring psychology, Hinduism, Buddhism, and yoga, it’s also true that I served, like so many of my peers growing up, as an altar boy. This, of course, was because of my mother, who was a devout Catholic. She was pious and therefore required her children to attend church with her every Sunday. But while I tried in earnest out of respect for my dear mother, I just couldn’t feel a connection to church and instead found the experience quite boring. Because of this boredom, I always had an adverse feeling toward attending church services,