**Audio Transcript: Cold t\*ts, warm hearts: the cold water dippers of Maine**

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MUX IN: This Once, Quesa

**Justine Paradis: This is *Outside/In*. I’m Justine Paradis, in for Nate Hegyi this week… with a little extra sparkle for your feed, as our way to say: happy new year.**

**Before we get to the main event — we dropped our annual winter surthrival recommendation show a couple weeks ago. And since then, we’ve heard from some of you sharing your winter tips. We got an idea from James, in Bend,  Oregon.**

*James Bristow: Hey Nate and all the Outside/Inners. Kinda cold outside, doing your daily routine like me out here playing with the dog in the snow. Get in some squats, do some lunges.  You might look a little bit like a tool,  but you know, it’s good for you, don’t worry about what other people think. It’s fine. Alright, have a good’un.*

**Annie in Portland, Maine said: get a stargazing app, to see what’s goin’ on up there. And we heard from Kyra, in Edmonton, Alberta Canada.**

*Kyra Cusveller: Where it is currently minus 33 degrees Celsius. I’m calling to share my absolute favorite cozy winter tip. I’m talking about a delicious treat with a side of danger. That’s right, I’m talking about making smores in your oven.*

**Although Kyra did offer a one word of warning:**

*Just like making smores over a campfire, things are liable to, uh, get engulfed in flame very quickly.*

**Despite the risk, she recommends repeating as often as you need and *at least* once a season.**

MUX OUT

**In that same episode a couple weeks ago, we also talked about cold water immersion.**

**It’s a cousin of the polar plunge, which is itself a popular New Year’s tradition. Diving into the winter ocean, or an icy lake, as a way to start the new year fresh.**

**But cold water *dipping* is different.**

**So, today, we are sharing a little more from those conversations.**

**But, one last thing – if you’re at all intrigued by the idea of cold water immersion, check out the show notes – we’ve shared some safety information that you might want to read first.**

**Alright. Happy New Year. And we’ll be back in your feeds in January.**

MUX STING Disarray, Autohacker

**// BREAK/MIDROLL HERE //**

Kelsy Hartley: I started my cold water swimming journey actually when I was about six months sober, so it was kind of a new experience for me of, uh, living in a way that was, that had a lot more information coming to me. There's a lot more clarity in my life. And that shift from kind of a dissociated life to one that was full of lots of new information was a little bit like information overload. And, um, one of the ways I used to kind of feel better in my body was to start cold water swimming.

MUX IN: Blue Dot Sessions, Soda Baron

The first day I did it, I was like, ‘All right, I'm going to get in the water.’ And it was May, so it was freezing. And I think I got, like, up to my ankles. I was like, that was it. I was like, okay, that was good for today. The next day I was like, ‘Alright, like at least shins.’ And then I got up to my knees and then I think it was like the third or fourth day. I was like, ‘All right, Hartley, like, get in the water.’

Just at that point, I dove in and it was just so exhilarating. You know, that experience of being a little kid again where you're just like everything in your whole body, like, comes online all at once. And I just remember, like, getting out of the water, like, laughing like I hadn't laughed in years. And I was like, I think there might be something to this. So I just kept coming back for it.

MUX FADE

I started posting about it in Instagram and friends of mine said, ‘Oh, we have this other friend that is doing this crazy thing that you're doing. You guys should hang out.’ And so the community started building from there.

MUX IN: Mr. Pontiac

Caitlin Hopkins: My name is Caitlin Hopkins.

Betsy Dawkins: Well, I’m Betsy Lou Dawkins.

Puranjot Kaur: My name is Puranjot Kaur.

Judy Greene-Janse: Judith Greene-Janse.

Kesly Hartley: Kelsy Hartley. I’m a Mainer.

Judy Greene-Janse: Who I am? I am who I am. I’m a painter at the moment.

Caitlin Hopkins: I have like a few different jobs right now.

Puranjot Kaur: I am from Bar Harbor, Maine.

Betsy Dawkins: I moved here in ‘82.

Judy Greene-Janse: My mother’s family comes from here, so I’ve been coming to Maine my whole life.

Caitlin Hopkins: Part-time make oyster bags for a local oyster farmer.

Puranjot Kaur: I belong to a group called Cold Tits Warm Hearts.

Kelsy Hartley: Two Maine Mermaids is a Cold Water Community here in Portland Maine. I’m 38.

Betsy Dawkins: I’m 72.

MUX OUT

Puranjot Kaur: … an ultra distance open water marathon swimmer but also a cold-water dipper, throughout the whole year up in Maine.

Betsy Dawkins: Winter immersion, we call it dipping, is we go in in the absolute bracing cold. Maybe you move the ice aside, and get in the water and just go up to my neck. And I have a wool hat on and I still just have my bathing suit on. I don't have a suit, neoprene suit, on – just gloves and booties. And then just stay in the water as long as you can.

Judy Greene-Janse:  it's so weird if people who would see us, who would walk by, even though it's super early in the morning, it's like women in a hot tub. I mean, some of them had like the towel wrapped around their head, like, you know, like a turban and just just sitting there and chatting about like their weekend and stuff.

Caitlin Hopkins: I get excited about the thought of, like, slushy ocean. Which I didn’t even know happened!

Betsy Dawkins: And you know, the biggest question is: ‘is it cold?’ You bet your sweet ass it’s cold!

MUX IN: Forgot His Jam, Blue Dot Sessions

Caitlin Hopkins: Before you touch the water, lay a towel out. Put your dry towel on top of that towel. And think about, genuinely take a beat to think about: Okay, my hands are going to be numb. I can't tie my shoes. I can't zip. And think to yourself like what you're going to do when you get out.

Kelsy Hartley: You wanna know where everything is, yeah. You wanna make sure that you can get into your car as soon as possible.

Betsy Dawkins: Well, the hardest part for me is the moment you take your warm coat off and you're standing in the hopefully not a breeze, but many times it is a breeze… and you're freezing!

MUX IN: Blue Dot Sessions, Ether Variant

As you hit the water, like, first foot into the water, it's that like initial jolt of, okay, this is really happening to me at this point.

Betsy Dawkins: I know when I step in that water, it's going to be a wonderful shock. A jolt of lightning or something, probably going through you – [gasp]

Caitlin Hopkins: A lot of the danger in plunging or, like, when you hear people like jumping into an ice hole and dying is because there's a cold shock response and so you're gasping once you hit that cold water and inhaling water.

Puranjot Kaur: I’ll see videos of people jumping into cold water and my first reaction is oh my gosh, don’t do that. Especially having the face go in first.

Caitlin Hopkins: And so to counter that and to also, like, encourage like a super embodied experience, we encourage people to take a nice slow walk in.

Kelsy Hartley: This slowly walking in, at least in the style that we do it… it's allowing a conversation with the nervous system.

Caitlin Hopkins: Oh, that’s cold, okay. Yup.

Kelsy Hartley: Getting the toes in.

Caitlin Hopkins:  I’m here by choice. This feels good.

Kelsy Hartley: And then knees, and then from there the negotiations get a little bit, a little bit harder.

Caitlin Hopkins: Tits and pits, that’s the hardest part, right? But once you get past that, there’s this really amazing –

MUX IN: Kind of Regret, Blue Dot Sessions

– feeling that happens.

Kelsy Hartley: Once you’re up around your shoulders, the body starts to take its blood supply in the muscles and will turn it to the core… and that's your body saving you from dying. But that's where it starts to feel really good. So you'll get this really warm, um, people have called it like blossoming.

Caitlin Hopkins: A blossoming warmth inside of you. And you tend to not experience that if you run in, dunk, and then get back out.

Purajot Kaur: There’s nowhere else to be. There’s nowhere else to, nothing else to think about. You’re just forced into that present moment of, like, here I am in the cold.

Kelsy Hartley: It's almost like the heat source turns on in your midline and you almost feel like you're radiating warmth, so your hands and toes will continue to always be freezing. It's not that you're not cold, it's just that there's a new sensation and, like, a new directionality in your body. So, you know, everything that we're doing in general is processing outward information in. And this shift takes the information that you're very aware of is coming from inside. And that's just like a very, very enjoyable experience and pretty novel and very grounding in my opinion.

Judy Greene-Janse: Because you just feel so alive. It's like the cold water is exhilarating, you know? And it's just, it's, like, you're super aware. It's almost frightening in that you can keep going like that longer than you should, you know, because at a certain point, you don't even notice that you're cold at all. So I really, I rely on my watch. If I can't find my watch in the morning, I don't go.

Betsy Dawkins: We time ourselves. In the dead of winter, when the water temperature is maybe 38, you know, I can stay in, I think it’s about 5 minutes.

Judy Greene-Janse: You need to know how long you're in the water. I mean, even though you watch all kinds of of top notch people doing these long ice swims and stuff like that, you have to remember who you are and how your body reacts, you know, and what your limits are.

 MUX OUT

Kelsy Hartley: So once that blossoming happens… it's time to get warm relatively soon.

Caitlin Hopkins: I think the most dangerous part is when you get out of the water.

Betsy Dawkins: It’s a mad rush to get dressed as fast as you can. Because for one thing, your hands don’t work very well. They become very clumsy. You can’t zip things. So you have to get what clothes you want on as quick as possible. Then get a big coat on.

Judy Greene-Janse: I mean, I copied immediately what I saw Penny had. I went home and bought some fabric and sewed one for myself. It's, like, uh, basically a giant pillowcase out of fleece. The idea: you put over your head, as soon as you get out of the water and then you take off, because they told me it's important to get the suit off immediately.

Betsy Dawkins: And then afterward, you know, I get to sit here in front of my fireplace. Oh, it feel so good. And then you take it, you get in the shower and that is absolutely heaven to be in the shower afterward. There are some precautions you have to take…  because of the change, [abrupt changes in your blood pressure](https://www.precisionhydration.com/performance-advice/performance/how-to-deal-with-the-dreaded-after-drop/) and stuff.

It’s not something you do frivolously. You know, you have to really give it some thought and be careful and the first times you go, you go with people. Hopefully some people that are knowledgeable.

MUX IN: Blue Dot Sessions, Mr Pontiac

Caitlin Hopkins:  I can tell when I haven't dipped in a few days, like I try to go three times a week and if I get beyond three days, it's not nice. My capacity to be empathetic and, like, responsive rather than reactive is so much lower.

Judy Greene-Janse: 1998. 1999. We had been trying to have a third child and I had a few miscarriages. And so we kind of said, ‘okay, never mind, we're happy. We have two boys. We're happy.’ You know? And then so in 2000, I was 40. And then I did an Alcatraz race in 2000 to 2003, 2004. And they were amazing. I mean, they were just amazing. And then 2005, I got pregnant. So I was 45 at that point. And I really do count that up for, to cold water swimming. I mean, the feeling I have when I get out of the cold water is just tremendous.

MUX FADE

Betsy Dawkins: For myself, I was able to get to the point where I could tolerate it and then it becomes sort of addictive. And it's like you really, you enjoy that cold. I, uh, I'm, uh, uh, in recovery from alcohol abuse and and it's a real high for me and that's one of the beauties of it is, you know, I'm not smoking marijuana or I'm not doing drugs. I'm just getting in the cold water and I get this wonderful high, and I do love that.

Kesly Hartley: One of the things that when I first started swimming in that kind of early sobriety process, it is going to release a little bit of dopamine. It is an incredible mood booster, that’s probably similar physiology to working out or something. It's this kind of internally resourced capacity to make us feel better.

MUX IN: Blue Dot Sessions, Soda Baron

I feel very accomplished after I've done a dip. I feel like the rest of the day is gravy. It does make the cold less scary. It makes the dark less scary. And I think just having this practice and knowing that going into to, this is my third season doing it, I'm looking forward to the winter and I'm not afraid of the doldrums and I'm not afraid of the cold. And just knowing that feels kind of satisfying.

Betsy Dawkins: It's not for bragging rights for me. I, I really like being able to do something that is, is that other people would think would be hard to do. It's just the challenge to me that, you know, can you really go on a day like today? It's it's pretty nasty outside and it's like, yeah, I did it.

MUX SWELL

**CREDITS:**

**Thanks to all the cold water dippers who spoke with me for this piece, and especially to Ginny Majka, Guenola Lefeuvre, and Annie Ropeik.**

**If you’re at all intrigued by cold water immersion, might I suggest checking out the show notes – we’ve offered a few safety tips to keep in mind. //or// I spoke to a professor of applied physiology in extreme environments, Mike Tipton, who helped me understand a few things to be aware of.**

**This episode was reported, produced, and mixed by me, Justine Paradis and edited by Taylor Quimby.**

**The Outside/In team also includes our host Nate Hegyi, Felix Poon, and Jessica Hunt.**

**Our executive producer is Rebecca Lavoie.**

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**Our theme music is by Breakmaster Cylinder.**

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