

Caspar ([00:00](#)):

In today's fast-paced world, having a strong body is important, but cultivating a resilient mind is equally essential for wellness and longevity. Our guest today has a multifaceted background, including wellness tech, revolutionary philosopher, coach, speaker, and author. Notably, he holds the distinction of being the first official non-Chinese 32nd generation Shaolin monk. He has not only impacted lives across 30 countries, but has also pioneered innovative approaches to wellness and mindfulness revolutionizing how we perceive and cultivate holistic wellbeing. This is the Story of the Shaolin Monk with Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi). Walter, so nice to have you on.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([00:47](#)):

My pleasure. Thank you so much for inviting me.

Caspar ([00:50](#)):

I have to add the, the, you know, I was reading through your biography and it's just fascinating. You know, a Shaolin monk, you hear about this in the movies of the past of, you know, someone traveling to China to train into being a Shaolin monk, but you usually don't. This is my first encounter with a Shaolin monk, so I'm very honored by it. But perhaps you could tell us how you went from the Italian Alps, where you're born, which we discussed just a second ago. You're currently in Switzerland on the other side, in the Alps, but how'd you go from that to really getting involved at a young age with becoming a Shaolin monk?

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([01:27](#)):

Actually, it's a, it's a story that intersects a little bit of, of destiny, karma, whatever you want to call it. But by some fortunate circumstance when I was a, a young teenager, one of the first Shaolin Kung Fu schools in Europe opened in the village where I was born, which is a somewhat unusual circumstance because it was a small village, so we're not talking a major capital city. But a, a gentleman from this village learned something during his military service, then returned there. It was, you know, the era of Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan. And he thought that this could be a viable business, <laugh>. And I, I became quickly passionate about this, but I never thought that it would bring me to China. You know, it was a kind of afterschool sport and hobby. And then I became a, let's say, a professional athlete in, in martial arts.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([02:11](#)):

Although in martial arts at that time, professional athlete just means that you trained all day. But there was no income from it. <Laugh>. Yes. And and then eventually the practice got me more and more interested in both the philosophical and the, let's call it the sports sciences aspect of it, and the medical and, and health and wellbeing and fitness aspect of it. And that's when the seed of, you know, studying this at university and then perhaps going actually back to the source to, to the monastery in China, that's when the seed started to take, to take place.

Caspar ([02:40](#)):

Mm. And since that seed was planted, what, what have you kind of, you know, grasped from, from the, the Shaolin monk, I would say, principles and knowledge that now you are starting to apply or are applying within health and wellness, what, you know, what are the, the main concepts, I would say? 'cause Not many people are too familiar with what it takes to become a Shaolin monk.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([03:06](#)):

I think that the most powerful takeaway, at least as I, as I bring, you know, this, this idea of mixing tradition and modernity, because I have inside me two, two souls in a way I have a very scientific soul,

and this very traditional soul is I'm very, in some way relieved and pleased by the fact that modern science and modern medicine and fitness science and, and, and wellness science is rediscovering some principles that I read in 1000 year old texts. You know, for example, the fact that mental and physical wellbeing are part of one ecosystem. Mm-Hmm. And that they impact each other in a tremendously, you know, undetachable way. So you can be, you know, physically unwell and it will have a mental health impact and vice versa in, in many profound and nuanced ways. This was spoken about, you know, 1000 years ago, and the idea was train the body with the mind and train the mind with the body. This is one of the simple, you know, key Shaolin principles. And here we are, you know, a thousand years later rediscovering the exact same principle through scientific research and so on. And this for me is, is one of the most powerful things that I, I think this culture can bring in modern society, but also one of the most powerful rediscoveries of modern science, which is happening right now.

Caspar ([04:20](#)):

I agree with you a hundred percent in that what the ancient civilizations before us understood their knowledge base was quite profound. They just had different words, different technologies, different ways of measuring things. Correct. In science today has become very technical. We have great advancements in technology, but the words of quantum physics and the words of that we understood in the past may be different, concepts are the same. And that's what's so interesting that your tagline, ancient wisdom from modern times is, is the melding. It's the intersection of these and to take everything and not to dismiss what we've learned. Do you feel that a lot of what we're dealing with, with issues of, let's say depression, chronic disease, are in some ways that we're forgetting the lessons taught to us from the ancients of connecting with nature of mind, body, medicine instead of just body, biochemical, medicine? Is that part of the issue that you're trying to solve?

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([05:24](#)):

Absolutely. I think we are in some way forgetting or we, we did forget them, and we are now rediscovering them through, through science and through medicine. And surprisingly enough, the ancient methods were themselves very scientific. You know, when I, when I went to Shaolin and I, I learned how methods were developed. It was absolutely kind of a scientific approach where a bunch of monks will test on themselves different practices for decades, and document the impact of these practices and then make adjustments. No, this, we're gonna get rid of it because it's not working. And oh, this had a surprising positive effect. Let's delve deeper into this. So as I mentioned this, this rediscovery, it's in my way in, in my opinion, very powerful. And it's in many facets of wellbeing. You know, you, you mentioned mental health and physical health, but it even goes so far as, you know daily, let's say practices like fitness.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([06:20](#)):

If you think of western fitness, it tends to be quite monotomatic, at least until recently, you know, people either did cardio and they were running every morning, or they were, you know, bodybuilding and then weightlift and so on. Very often men will gravitate more towards these muscle practices and women towards the, the keep slim cardio practices. You know, and again, going back to, you know, what the ancients tried and tested on themselves was there are texts mentioning how true physical wellbeing and longevity has to come from a kind of trium of practices, which are mobility and flexibility, because as we get older though, we get stiffer. You know, they use this metaphor of like a young green plant and a dry stick, you know? Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> Cardiovascular health, so aerobic training, because our cardiovascular system needs to be kept active and, and energetic and efficient and muscular health to prevent what, again, with metaphors, they called it the decaying fruit, but we call it now sarcopenia, but it's the same thing.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([07:20](#)):

You know, it's a kind of ripened fruit, which becomes soft and doesn't have any, any tension anymore. So again, here a little example of how this combination of, you know trial and error and and scientific approach in a primordial way led us to find the same things that we are now rediscovering through scientific research. And I think that there is a lot of beauty in that, and there is a lot of, a lot of beauty in rediscovering some of these old methods on how to more than cure, prevent the onset of, of issues.

Caspar ([07:52](#)):

You know, one of the things that comes up when people talk about this idea of living a healthy life, a balanced life, one of, you know, mind, body, spirit is the idea of the, the time they have to do so, one may point to, well, I don't have time to train in the Shaolin monk ways and devote myself to such things. I have a nine to five, family, mortgages. All these things that people get bogged down in their modern day life. How do you take what you dedicated yourself and start to apply it to the average person that that lives in this very, you could say busy, modern world.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([08:32](#)):

Frankly, first of all, modern technology offers us ample tools to be able to do these type of things in a very effective and also time effective way. But if we wanna hyper simplify the habits, so without even mentioning now apps and all kinds of other tools that we have at our disposal to track and adjust our, our habits and our behaviors let's, let's use the example of movement, because it's a classic example where people say, you know, I have no time to train, or at least to train as holistically as, as I perhaps should. Well, first of all, let, let's go high level. If you go to a gym and you observe somebody in the gym who is there for usually more than an hour, because they made the effort to go to the gym, between scrolling on their phone, chatting with the person on the machine next to them, you know, checking themselves in the mirror, waiting for some equipment to be available, the real training time is perhaps 20 minutes.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([09:24](#)):

And that means that you could probably do 20 minutes of very intense training, and you will observe, you will obtain quite similar results to this huge time investment, which is very dispersive. But let's get even smaller, you know, because habit forming starts hugely with very small commitment. I think everybody, no matter how busy their lives can commit one minute at the beginning of every hour from when they wake up to when they go to, to sleep, to doing some kind of physical activity. And let's imagine that today's choice of physical activity is squats, standing up and down from your chair. In a minute you can probably do around 30 quite easily. Okay? So if you are at work, for example, for 10 hours, that's 300 squats, that's a reasonable legs workout. You know, you are not gonna get, you know, deficiencies in your leg muscles if you're doing 300 body weight squats a day.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([10:17](#)):

And that's just one minute at the end of every hour. You know, that's training from 8:59 to nine, from 9:59 to 10, and so on. So this is just an example on how I think that all practices, first of all, they can be distilled in small pills. They don't have to be a, a huge amount of time investment. And secondly, they can be interspersed throughout our daily life in a very organic way. It doesn't have to be this, you know, block where now I invest, you know, two or three hours of time to do my practices. In fact, I think that sometimes that becomes a little bit overwhelming and it seldom leads to a long lasting practice.

Caspar ([10:53](#)):

Yeah. And like you mentioned, most of us you know, spend our times you know, at work or at the gym, somewhat inefficiently. I saw a stat that we really about work, truly work about two hours and 30 minutes or so out of a out eight hour workday. And like you said, it's water cooler talk. It's walking around, it's checking online, going through emails that really aren't work, other things. And looking at the internet

and social media, you know, the, the interesting part about you is, is that you have a background in wellness tech as well, and, and you have a background in corporations and you know, you've, you've done some big things in the corporate world, and yet there is this, this body, mind, this, this Shaolin ancient tradition upon you as well. How, how do you meld the two? Because I find that is, you know, somewhat challenging for people to stay connected to technology, yet meditate. To quiet their mind, yet everything's busy on their phone and, and, and using technology, and you become addicted to one and you release the other in a sense. How, how do you meld that and balance it out as someone who has an appreciation of both sides?

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([12:06](#)):

I think a key element is discipline, but we very often associate discipline with a kind of negative connotation. You know, to be disciplined is a synonym for being punished when in fact the discipline is in some way the greatest enabler. You know, for example most people like money not because of the pieces of paper, but because it's a very powerful enabler. It enables you to get material things, experiences, safety and so on. You know well, discipline is in some way the greatest enabler. It either enables you if you apply yourself with discipline to your project or your career or whatever. It probably enables you also to get more money, which is this other secondary enabler that I mentioned. So, discipline viewed as a very powerful and very positive enabler. It's a way to create habits, and the discipline actually usually needs to be applied only at the beginning of the habit forming.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([12:53](#)):

And then the habit becomes just a natural part of who you are. So, you know, I have moments of, let's call it contemplation or meditation every day. And I intersperse try that in a very organic, natural way. They're not big moments. That may be a few minutes, or there may be longer if I'm, you know, on a Sunday hiking in the mountains, but I intersperse them in a very natural, organic way. So I'm not actually setting time out for meditation. It just happens naturally when I'm sitting on a taxi or I'm on a flight, or I have five minutes between two zoom calls or whatever else. You know, the same with training. I, through discipline, learned to wake up earlier, and I created a big buffer in the morning where, which allows me to start a day in a very positive, powerful way by engaging the body first, which also creates a kind of big energy boost for the whole day, both in terms of physical energy and mental health energy.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([13:44](#)):

So I wake up earlier in the morning and automatically I have a big buffer zone over a couple of hours before I have to actually get going with the daily tasks. And in those couple of hours, of course you can do many, many, many things in terms of training and practices or whatever else. So I think it's a matter of structuring a very naturally throughout the day, start with a little discipline, make small commitments, don't impose on yourself, you know, some kind of drastic life change. And then slowly, as those small commitments become natural, the habit no longer will even need the discipline.

Caspar ([14:14](#)):

I'm interested you, you speak about, you know, having this organic, sort of shifting a little bit dynamic in some ways, ability to intersperse these mindfulness practices. And you have this, you you say, a focus somewhat on morning routine in some ways, let's, let's just call it that. I don't know if it's a routine. That's what I'm trying to get at here. Because you look at some of the most, let's say, successful or healthy per people, and the way they start their day is incredibly important. Most of us start our day where we get up a little bit late. We either go directly to coffee to wake us up 'cause we didn't sleep well, or we lean over and start perusing our phone and get into a sympathetic nervous state and stressed already about emails that may have come in overnight, not exactly the healthiest way to get started. So how, how do you,

Walter, as a Shaolin monk start your day? Is it routine? Is it 30 minutes meditation, 30 minutes movement, or is it also, like you said, more organic based on how you're feeling?

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([15:14](#)):

I would say that the morning is very structured, although, as I said, I, I don't have an application of discipline because it comes totally natural to me having done it for many, many, many years, you know, for, for more than 30 years. But my morning usually starts with physical training. So I will get up, have a very light breakfast, just a kind of very light food that will digest very quickly, do a little meditation before the breakfast, just to kind of clear my mind and prepare for the day ahead. But we're talking about five, 10 minutes, not a very intensive practice. And then I train, I go running if I can, if the weather allows it, I run outdoors in the mountains or wherever I am. I do weightlifting. I do martial arts. So altogether is like an hour and a half to two hours of training.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([15:57](#)):

But clearly I wake up early enough to be able to do all of this and then have a shower and a healthy breakfast, and then begin the work day as, as it should begin. And I think that one of the most powerful habit, you've already mentioned, that a lot of people that tend to be very driven in, in where what they're pursuing have this habit is to wake up earlier in the day, which however, should not mean to sleep less. I'm a big proponent of quality sleep and quantity also of sleep. Then of course, it's variable subjectively to within a, a reasonable range. So if you wake up at 6:00 AM or at 5:00 AM to do your practices, clearly you have to go to bed earlier.

Caspar ([16:36](#)):

Absolutely. No, I think that's one of the things that high performers miss. It's that balance of also understanding that your performance can't stay high forever if you don't have adequate rest and regeneration, which is sleep. That's when it happens. Now, a big portion of, you know, what you mentioned there was this, you know, outdoors. You are, you're in the Swiss Alps. These are all, you know, being closer to nature. A lot of people nowadays are the opposite. They live in cities. I, myself lived 20 years in New York City, one of the largest cities, you know, in the world. And you know, I noticed that it wasn't always the most beneficial to my health. And that sometimes you don't have that connection to nature. What do you tell to people in those scenarios that are living in a city which is going to be higher levels of stress in general, less connection, probably to nature, a little bit more of a hectic lifestyle. How does one find the balance within such a, you could say, chaotic state?

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([17:38](#)):

Look where there is a will, there is a way. You know, I'm, I'm very often in cities for, for business reasons, and mm-hmm, <affirmative> I find that actually fascinating to run through the early morning streets in the city, you know, when they're almost deserted and the city is almost an organism waking up. And I observed this organism waking up almost if as, as if the city is a living being. And I think there is something very fascinating in that, you know, we are a part of nature, but we are also nature. We are not detached from nature. We don't go to nature. We are nature. So in some way, millions of humans waking up together and, you know, starting their processes and so on, that's also a natural process. That's also a natural ecosystem. So I think that sometimes we think too much of the utopia, you know, the perfect mountain with the forest, with the spring, with the, and there I would meditate, but in the city, I don't, you know, or when people tell me, oh, in the temple, I must, I would feel so serene in the temple.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([18:31](#)):

Okay, go to the temple, train seven hours a day, sleep on a hard plank of wood with no heating, and then tell me how serene you are feeling, you know? Yeah. So we always think of the grass greener on the other

side. I think we have very blessed lives. As long as we are healthy enough and we can do something, it's already a tremendous blessing. And then it's a matter of using that blessing, you know, and doing our best. And the first person that we should do our best for is ourselves. We should optimize ourselves because if we let our health decay, whether it's physical or mental or overall energy state, we're automatically less of a father, of a mother, of a manager, of a, whatever we are in life, whatever roles we play in life. So we have a kind of duty and responsibility to ourselves and to those we love and we interact with to optimize ourselves and to take care of ourselves, to, to be our best selves that we can be.

Caspar ([19:21](#)):

You know, what you say there is something I espouse and truly believe our greatest wealth is health. And that without it, you know, everything else doesn't really fall into place in our lives. Yet, we have to acknowledge that we're kind of in a state where we have the most rates of chronic disease. We have things rampant like cancer, depression in children, obesity, initial diabe. I mean, again, younger and younger. I work at a medical center and with doctors all the time, and they're saying it's, you know, these aren't cases for older generations anymore. These are people coming in with their whole lives ahead of 'em, yet told they have an incurable disease and they must suffer for the rest of their lives. We, we don't believe in that and believe that health can be regained. But you have to start to, to, you know, wonder why is this, do we not value health as much?

Caspar ([20:12](#)):

Are we kind of in this self-sabotaging way? We know McDonald's isn't good. We know sitting, watching 10 hours of Netflix in a row isn't good, and yet many of us do this and we end up in these places. What would be your recommendation to someone that that's, you know, trying to change, but, you know, does, it doesn't seem that maybe there is a value to it? I, you know, I, I always ponder why so many aren't valuing this thing that is, you know, so significant. And once you lose it, you'll do anything to get it back.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([20:47](#)):

This is a very complex question. I mean let's, let's look at some different elements of, of this question. The first one being that the reasons for, for this situation that you've described so, so perfectly is are many, there are social reasons, there are cultural reasons. There are, you know, commercial reasons. There are lots of reasons. But the recipe to counteract all of that is actually very simple. I mean, you know, it, you know, sleep enough, move your body, eat food that is actual food and is not some kind of processed pseudo food. You know? And if you just apply these three or four very simple rules, you've already done the 80/20. Okay? Then of course, you can fine tune the macros and the micronutrients, and you can, you know, perfect your sleep zones and you can train mobility and cardio and whatever in the right balance for you.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([21:36](#)):

These are all fine tunings, but just move more, eat food that is real food, sleep enough. And you've already done, you know, the, the 80/20. And I think that, you know, in some way, all of these multitude of factors that, that play against us, they make a lever on some primitive instinct that we have. I mean, until not so long ago, so we are talking about for hundreds of thousands of years of us being homosapiens. Life was, whether you like it or not, tremendously active. Hmm. You hunted in the forest, you worked in the fields, you, you know, dug for, for fruits and vegetables. You escaped from wild animals. You, life was tremendously active, and the moments of rest were extremely rare and extremely treasured. So we were programmed to enjoy and really relish and treasure these moments of rest. And same with the moments of abundance.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([22:30](#)):

You know, unlimited tasty food happened maybe once a year, and you truly relished it and enjoyed it as much as you can. There was no fridge to keep it either. So you ate also as much as you can. Now, we are paradoxical in a condition where the moments of rest are almost infinite if we so choose to live a life like that. And the abundance of tasty food is almost infinite if we so choose to live a life like that. So we need to, in some way, reprioritize ourselves and control this primordial instincts a little bit better. And I think that all of these things that we touched on, you know, society, culture, commerce, and so on, they kind of play on that, you know? So we are in a way fighting a battle with a lot of impulses that try to drag us towards some misbehaviors, let's call them. But as I said, fortunately, I think that the recipe is quite simple. So it's just a matter of becoming aware and not doing what people unfortunately usually do, which is wait until there is a problem and then panic and try to fix, you know, but realize that inevitably the problem will come if I don't take care of it before.

Caspar ([23:36](#)):

Absolutely. And, you know, so much of that also comes from that you know, mental ability to push through tough times and the ability to, it's really adaptability, I would say. As you said, if you go from nature to the city, you don't just break down yourself, you carry it over, you adapt to your new surroundings, you run in the city, you enjoy that as well. And adaptability, a lot of times is, is that ability for your mind to grasp something, to actually change and, and be able to, to take that on in a positive way. So I know you have four specific mindfulness training programs. Could you go into those a little bit and how those can help people with the mental aspects of the world that we live in?

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([24:20](#)):

So, without getting too much in into the details basically they start from two different perspectives. There are people who need to start by activating their bodies. So they are neglecting their physiological life. They are very distant from their physiology. They're very distant from their physical energy. And so the program start by addressing that standpoint. And within those programs, I have a, a variety of them, some of them which take space live within live events, and some of them which take place through technology. So there is an app, for example, that, that I've co-created called Zing AI Coach. And we use AI to coach you into moving. All kinds of movement, flexibility, cardio strength, and so on and so forth. Then there are other programs which address from the mental part, for people who are already activating the body, but somehow it still didn't bridge the gap between the mental wellbeing, whether they have very high levels of stress, or they have some specific programmatic like anxiety disorder or panic disorder and so on.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([25:22](#)):

So we come from the mind side. And then the other two programs, they are more specific to people who have very high level performance wishes. So professional athletes or people that have a very specific performance field. And as you know very well, sometimes actually to pursue the ultimate performance in a very narrow field is not ideal from the standpoint of wellbeing and longevity. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, it might actually be detrimental to wellbeing and longevity, but there is a clear purpose for that. You know, I need to win my gold medal, and to do that, I need to hyper optimize a certain performance in a certain field in a certain moment, although that may have an opportunity cost. In terms of overall, overall wellbeing. One concept that overrides of this, which I'd like to, to touch on, is the concept of energy, which I find very interesting because in all the ancient texts, there's always this mention of energy, energy, energy.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([26:14](#)):

You know, in, in, in Chinese it's called chi chi, life energy. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And very often people think, you know, it's some kind of metaphysical mumbo jumbo that doesn't really exist, but you

know very well that when you go to a doctor and you say that you don't feel well, the first thing they'll ask you is, how's your energy? You know, do you feel full of energy or do you feel no energy? So those metaphors of life force and life energy are nothing more than to try to say on a holistic way. You know, when we look at you as a body, mind and spirit as well, if we wanna touch that element as well, you feel your energy and you feel when you are full of energy or when you are devoid of energy, you know, and even just having the flu drastically reduces your energy level.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([26:55](#)):

You know, if you ask somebody with the flu, do you have a lot of energy, they will for sure say no. So this ability to become mindful of your energy and to just feel when your energy is going in the wrong way, and understand why that is, in my opinion, one of the most powerful effects of any kind of practices, because automatically you becoming in a way your own doctor, not on a problem level, but on a prevention level, because energy usually starts to drop way before you actually get unwell, whether it's mentally unwell or physically unwell. So if you can pick it up and understand where it comes from and make the right adjustments, very often it prevents a lot of worse things from occurring.

Caspar ([27:36](#)):

Yeah. A lot of times, I was speaking with a doctor before this and we were saying how symptoms are really just calls for change. Symptoms are your body saying, something's off here, please pay attention. Pain is that way for the body to say, really pay attention. This isn't gonna be pleasant, but I need you to change, for me to get us back into a homeostasis and a balanced place that is health. But for many, I think the, the, the concept is we've normalized, you know, poor energy, and we, we find it hard to respond to the symptoms. We'd rather suppress them. How do we lean into the pain, into the fear of change sometimes and other, you know, ways that, that we resist. How do, how do we combat that more so, and, and be able to not just run away from it in the way we have in so many things that we do in medicine and health.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([28:33](#)):

Actually, I think that you, you've touched on a very interesting point is acceptance of low levels of energy. Hmm. I would venture even further, and I challenge sometimes, especially some high profile people who I work with who view this low level of energy almost as a badge of honor. It's a proof of success, you know, and think about it, you meet them and you say, you know, how do you feel? I'm exhausted. I'm jet lagged. I sleep three hours. I'm a, I'm a successful person. Okay? And I challenge this by saying, real success, first of all is determined by how you feel. If you feel awful and with low energy, you are not successful regardless of your bank account or any other variable. Okay? But secondly, even if we wanna measure your pure performance, real performance is performance, which is sustainable over time.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([29:22](#)):

Real performance is not performance where you squeeze every drop out of yourself until there is nothing more to squeeze. And then something gives up. As you know, whether you get physically unwell, you know, arrhythmias and all kinds of physiological disease, whether you get mentally unwell, burnout, depression or whatever else, you know, something will eventually give up. Sometimes physically, mentally, you hold it together, but then you break down emotionally. And so what happens is relationship relationships fall apart. So something eventually gives up within this three oht of, you know, body, mind and, and spirit or emotions. So the idea is to have sustainable performance that lasts for long and, and possibly for a lifelong period of time. And sustainable performance does not come from that attitude. Sustainable performance comes from an attitude where every day I'm cultivating my energy by engaging my body, my mind, and my spirit, my emotions into perhaps little practices, but each one counts maybe

10%, but altogether they create a 100% recipe of caring for my personal ecosystem. I think that that's the way in which we have to view this journey towards wellbeing or towards maintaining our wellbeing for, for a long period of time. And in Shaolin, the, the, the old text to again mentioned these old texts and how they bridge to the modern scientific outlook, they are never about longevity. They're about prolonging quality of life.

Caspar ([30:49](#)):

Mm.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([30:50](#)):

The idea is never about, you know, try to live 10 years more, try to live until the last day, ideally actively brightly, joyfully engaged, and so on.

Caspar ([31:02](#)):

This really hits on a subject i I talk about a lot in modern medicine, is this idea that we've elongated life, but prolonged suffering. You get the chronic disease at 40, and yes, you could still live till 70, but each year will be a little bit worse, where you'll need a little bit more medication, a surgery mixed in there, one or two, you know, some help getting around, ending up in a nursing home, probably, you know, where you can't do too many things yourself. And that quality goes incredibly down. Is it your belief in the, in the Shaolin, and, you know, belief as a whole that we can live higher quality and longer, because some people would say, well, you need to sacrifice one for the other. It's an either or, where you, let's say, sacrifice your happiness to live longer and your qu you know, or anything like this or the other way around. But you know, others would say you can absolutely do both. You could live very long and high quality life. Is that the, the, the belief that you have that you can live quality and quantity?

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([32:11](#)):

Absolutely. I think that the things that create quality create also quantity. Mm-Hmm.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([32:15](#)):

So the, the ingredients of the two recipes are the same. So I think that quality and quantity come together. And the idea exactly as you, as you mentioned before, is to start as early as possible, to not wait until that there is all kinds of degenerative processes in place, because many of them also cannot be fully recovered. You know, if you are totally un mobile and you have, you know, severe mobility problems at 50 or at 60, you are not gonna recover your mobility when you were 20 ever. It's impossible, no matter the quantity of practices and stretching and healthy nutrition and anti-inflammatory lifestyle that you have. But if you, for example, start flexibility and mobility practice in a small form at 20 mm-hmm, <affirmative>, you will at 50 still have the same flexibility and mobility. You just maintain it throughout your life and you will start degrading only around 70, 80.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([33:10](#)):

It's surprising actually, how a lot of the things that we start to thinking of as a natural consequence of aging, they are not, they're a natural consequence of inactive aging. You know, for example, before I mentioned earlier on in, in, in our conversation I mentioned sarcopenia. And sarcopenia was thought that it's a almost, you know, a, a, a sentence that starts happening at 30 or 40 and creeps on, and by 70 you basically lost all your, your muscle power. And now there is plenty of modern research, which again reflects something that was written in this ancient text where the peach can remain very firm and ripe well into the sixties and seventies and eighties. But you need to train, you need to do stuff, you know, if you

are not doing your pushups and squats to use to bundle examples, of course, of course it's gonna go away, you know, use it or lose it. It's a very simple but very correct very correct phrase.

Caspar ([34:07](#)):

Is that something you witnessed in, in the Shaolin culture and in Shaolin monks that many of them grew to an old age and still kept their wick, kept all their, you know, faculties in that way? Or is there a point of, of course, at, at 80 or so you'd start to, you know, decline? People do don't know this. I think there's the, the thought process that Shaolin monks may live for hundreds of years or so, but I mean, they're still humans. <Laugh>

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([34:34](#)):

Actually, what what was interesting to me when I observed that the older generations is that there is an onset of diseases eventually, you know, the organism that generates on a cellular level, and eventually there is an onset of disease, but usually it's quite sudden Mm-Hmm, <affirmative> and at a very advanced stage. So the typical journey through life of, of a Shaolin monk is until around the late seventies, early eighties, they are absolutely super active. You know, they will hike every morning up the mountain, you know, we're talking about 1000 meter altitude change, to then do some practice on top of the peak. Then they will come down, they will be active all day, they will teach. So mentally they're very bright. Then around 80, 85, 88, there is a sudden decline. There is an onset of some illness, whether it's cancer or heart disease or whatever, and very rapidly they will leave life and they will do so.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([35:32](#)):

So I guess perhaps the repetitive, because they don't want any medical, let's say, say emphasis, they don't want you, you know, over Mm-Hmm, <affirmative> therapeutic themselves. They accept that I've made my life journey. It's been wonderful, you know, I was active. I served my purpose in this world. Now I'm old. Something has come to my organism that's telling me, you know, this, this body, it's time that it finishes, it's its journey. And so they accept it very serenely. They don't, you know, try in any possible way to, to elongate further, as you said, with a very, very degraded quality of life.

Caspar ([36:09](#)):

It's a, it's a very counter approach, I would say, or at least you know, the, the, the way people go about things as to the westernized side, westernized, you hear something and your initial reaction is non-acceptance or acceptance of some medical intervention right away. As we know, people when they're told they have cancer at any age is a shock to the body. And suddenly you have almost this no SIBO effect of, oh my God, negative information. Even though many times you, you know that if you're younger, especially if you are vibrant, you should be able to bounce back again these are symptoms and signs, and your body has amazing self-healing capabilities, but we then accept the fate that we are there. It seems like this idea of acceptance, of letting go is very important in not just the Shaolin way, but also in just a, a successful way of doing it, whereas we hang on to things where we're in fearful states for so long. Do you think those levels of consciousness that so many live in, of fear of, of non-acceptance are, you know, part of the reason we see so much disease today?

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([37:21](#)):

Partially, yes. Partially yes. Because as I think we are discovering more and more our mental state, you know, whether it's even something as simple as stress, when it's prolonged over long period of times, it has a substantial detrimental effect to our organism, even on a physiological level. So, you know, high spikes of stress are actually in some way beneficial. The trigger, all kinds of responses that we are trained to have, because once upon a time, you know, from behind the bushes would jump the lion, and I need to very quickly react and very quickly be able to manage these, these dangerous situations. So these kind of

brief spikes are actually in some way beneficial to us. They're a form of training, but the very kind of underlying deep seated fears and worries and concerns for months and years, or perhaps lifelong concerns and fears, they are deeply damaging to our organism, I believe.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([38:13](#)):

And I know that science is also more and more finding some proof of this. And therefore I think that part of this healthy journey through life is also this very serene sentence. And now we're going a little bit towards philosophy and perhaps even religion. So everybody has their own beliefs, but within the Shaolin monastery, there is this idea that life is a temporary journey within an organism. This body that I inhabit and this journey has two very big moments of change, birth and death, but they are not beginning and end. They are big moments of change, of transformation. And so in a way, there is a very serene attitude to death. It's not something scary, it's an integral part of life. You would not be alive if you would not die. So as long as I've lived long enough and fulfilling enough life to, to do something, to have a purpose, to, you know, enjoy whether I have a family or I, I do whatever projects and, and missions, I dedicate myself to this life, then as this life comes to an end, it's almost expected. And what is interesting is then when monks pass 80, 85, and they still didn't get some kind of sudden, you know, disease and rapid death, they actually start talking about it very serenely like, you know, my time is a bit over, you know, I, I've done this, you know, <laugh>, right? Let's go to whatever is next. You know, that's, what am I gonna do, have another dinner with my friends, you know, and <laugh> go for another hike up the mountain. I've done it already. You know, it's time to go to the next.

Caspar ([39:42](#)):

Right? The the temporary physical body is, is the ride is over in this one, you know, it's time to elevate.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([39:48](#)):

They feel that. Exactly, exactly. This ride is getting old. It's boring. It's starting to creak a little bit when this merry-go-round is creaking and rusty, you know, maybe it's time to go.

Caspar ([39:59](#)):

This, this is a belief I've seen in my travels around the world that sometime there isn't this fear of death. There isn't this, it's, you know, it's, it's the end of everything. And, and it's something that I've noticed as, as western civilizations step away from spirituality. You could say religion, but I believe it's not just based in any singular religion. It's in spirituality and understanding of something bigger than yourself that we're spiritual beings in this body, you know, for this time that we have in the physical plane, and there are other planes. But I will say that, you know, the, the more we get away from that belief system, the more fear there is because it's only this time, it's more of that fomo, as we say, fear of missing out, because it's our only time. We only have this, and then we go in the ground, and that's it forever. I think that, at least in my understanding and seeing how others have lived without that belief that this is energy never really dies. You just continue on in different planes and, you know, this is just part of the ongoing journey, makes life more enjoyable, makes it so that you don't have that constant fear of something happening and it all being over. And that was it. That was your only try at this life.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([41:12](#)):

But, you know, even, even if you have this deep seated fear, let's, let's for a moment, remove any kind of spiritual belief. Let's become purely clinical and logical. Does it make any sense to have fear for the inevitable?

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([41:30](#)):

You know, it is the silliest of fears that you can have. I mean, I'm afraid of the one thing that will for sure happen to me, <laugh>, right? You know, then shouldn't I use that fear perhaps as a data point to inspire me, first of all, to live as much as I can the present time? Because the present time is the only reality that I'm certain of. As you said, it could go in a moment, and maybe it's really all finished. So if you have this fear of missing out in life, well live today, don't exist today, live today. Don't spend the day scrolling mindfully somebody else's life on social media or watching some fictional life on Netflix. Live your own life to the best of your potential. And also as a secondary data point, if this fear makes you so afraid of life ending, well do all those things that we know that the science and medicine teaches us that may prolong the fear, may distance this, this event a little bit.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([42:24](#)):

You know, so if I know that eating A rather than B may make the, the event happen a bit later, well, I'm gonna eat A, not B, you know, or if I know that today to move a little bit more may move that event by a few years, well that should be a pretty strong motivator to move. So I think that to just blindly be afraid of an inevitability, it's rather foolish. But if we have that fear, then to use that fear as a motivator to truly live life to the best of our abilities, that may be actually useful.

Caspar ([42:54](#)):

Yes. I, I think these are, you know, beautiful points to hit on that regardless of your belief systems, see past that and make the most of it, if you truly believe this is the only one life you live, make the most of it. You know, and if you don't, don't use that as a fear of base and understand that things you know, will go on in the continuum, but to continuously appreciate life to the most and live it your healthiest way. Walter, you've obviously got, you know, a lot of things going on. You're chief wellness officer, co-founder, advisor, all these things. What, what are you excited about moving into the future? Out of all these pieces, the apps, the, you know, trainings and everything, what are you excited about?

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([43:40](#)):

I'm very excited about the merging of technology, modern science and medicine and traditions. Hmm. I think that there is a lot of wonderful wisdom in these traditional practices. And I'm not just referring to Shaolin, which is of course the dearest to me because of my history, but yoga and many other traditions around the world, I think there is profound wisdom in that, both in terms of taking care of our bodies and minds on a very practical level. Anything from nutrition to training to meditation, but also on a deeper level, you know, philosophical and and spiritual teachings on how to better manage things like the fears and the, the profound questions that we've just talked about life and death and so on. So I think that there is wonderful wisdom there, and if we can truly intersect that wisdom re rediscovered and intersected with modern science and medicine, and then use technology to make it easily utilizable by everyone, I think that that's the, the ideal scenario for the future of wellness, in my opinion.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([44:40](#)):

And that's what I'm personally working towards as much as I can. And as you mentioned, you know, these contrasting words, I, I love this contrast. You know, for example, last week I was in, in the tech company that, that I helped co-found this Zing AI coach, and it's of course, a very high tech office with very young people who talk about, you know, AI and code and LLMs and all kind of things that I understand, maybe 10% of what they're talking. And tomorrow I'm flying to China and I will be in the 2000 year old temple with my fellow monks and with my master, who is a super traditional guy who never use the computer and who thinks that all this modern stuff is some kind of, you know, strange things and so on. So I love to conjugate these two worlds, and I think that there is something special there that needs to be nurtured.

Caspar ([45:29](#)):

Oh, I love that too. And I really appreciate what you're doing because you can take from both sides and you can find yourself in the middle. I think in a, a day and age where everyone's so polarized about right, wrong, this, that you can still have your own mind to say, what if both, and we meet in the middle and find that compromise of it to help us rather than, you know, point at the other side, say, wrong, bad, you know, all these things. So I love your work and everything you're doing, Walter, where can more people learn about you and connect with you?

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([46:01](#)):

I think the easiest, of course, is social media. There's also my website xingmi.info, but I think just in social media, whether it's my birth name or my monk name, they can find me and reach out, and I will be more than happy to share whatever I can share with them.

Caspar ([46:17](#)):

Well, Walter, this was a real pleasure. I, I truly appreciate the conversation and hearing your story, and thank you so much for your work.

Walter Gjergja (Shi Xing Mi) ([46:25](#)):

Thank you so much for having me. The pleasure was mine.

Caspar ([46:28](#)):

And be sure to visit, that's xingmi.info, Xing Mi for more information. Until next time, continue writing your own healing story.