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FREEDIVING AS A METHOD OF COGNITION OF BEING

Abstract. Freediving, being the practice of deep diving into an aquatic environment without the use of breathing apparatus, is a unique phenomenon that combines physical, psycho-emotional and philosophical aspects. In the modern world, characterized by an accelerated pace of life and high levels of stress, practices that promote personal growth and self-discovery are becoming increasingly popular. Freediving, going beyond the framework of a sports discipline, becomes a tool for exploring the inner world of man and his connection with nature. The relevance of freediving research as a method of cognition of being is due to the growing interest in practices that contribute to improving mental health and strengthening communication with the environment. This practice provides a unique opportunity for deep self-discovery through awareness of one's physical and psychological boundaries, as well as through harmonious interaction with nature. With an increasing number of people striving for mindfulness and inner harmony, the study of freediving is becoming especially important.

The purpose of this article is to analyze freediving as a method of cognition of being, to study its influence on the psycho-emotional state of a person, as well as on his perception of the surrounding world. To achieve this goal, the following tasks have been set: to study the influence of freediving on the psycho-emotional state of practitioners, to explore how freediving promotes awareness of human connection with nature, to analyze how freediving affects the perception of being and the inner world of a person, as well as to collect and analyze the opinions of freedivers about the impact of practice on their lives and consciousness.

The research uses methods of analyzing scientific literature, interviews with freediving practitioners, and observing the diving process. This approach allows us to get a comprehensive understanding of the impact of freediving on a person in terms of its physical, emotional and philosophical aspects.

Keywords: Freediving, personal growth, self-discovery, inner world of man, mental health, method of cognition of being

Freediving: the essence and philosophy

Historical aspects and development of practice

Freediving, as a practice, has its roots in the distant past. Archaeological finds indicate that people were diving underwater for food and pearls more than 4,000 years ago. This activity was an important part of survival in coastal regions where marine resources played a key role in providing sustenance. On the islands of Japan and Korea, there is a tradition of women diving for pearls, known as ama and haene. These traditions date back hundreds of years of history and continue to this day, representing a unique cultural phenomenon.

Over time, freediving has transformed from a utilitarian practice into a sporting discipline and art. In the middle of the 20th century, Italian athletes Enzo Majorca and Jacques Maillol began setting the first official records in deep-sea diving, which became the basis for modern sports freediving. In 2001, Russian athlete Natalia Molchanova made history as one of the first women to overcome a



depth of 100 meters, which became an important stage in the development of this sport. These achievements contributed to the popularization of freediving as a means of overcoming physical and psychological boundaries. "Today, freediving (dynamic and static apnea) – diving in length and depth with breath retention – is one of the types of aquatic activities and a professional sport" (Markina, [B. G.]. 1 p.).

Nowadays, freediving is going through a period of active development, turning not only into a sports discipline, but also into a way of meditation and self-discovery. The increase in the number of practitioners around the world indicates a growing interest in this practice. Modern philosophers and researchers, such as Umberto Pelizzari, emphasize the importance of freediving for realizing the unity of man with nature. Diving into the water element becomes a symbol of the search for inner harmony and understanding of one's place in the world, which makes freediving a unique tool for philosophical self-discovery. At the same time, modern research emphasizes the importance of reflexive abilities that promote self-development and self-correction of personality (Demchenko, 2014. 156 p.).

Philosophical foundations of freediving

Freediving, as a unique practice of diving into the depths of the sea without using breathing apparatus, provides an opportunity to interact with nature in its pristine form. This minimizes human impact on the environment, allowing you to feel harmony with the ocean ecosystem. Many freedivers report that they experience a sense of unity with the marine environment during diving, which reinforces their understanding of the importance of preserving it. Research confirms that freediving helps to raise environmental awareness and inspires participants to actively participate in environmental initiatives, which makes this practice not only a way to explore nature, but also an incentive to protect it.

Freediving requires full concentration and control of the breath, which makes it a practice similar to meditation. During diving, a person attains a state of inner peace and harmony, which contributes to spiritual development. In some cultures, for example, in Polynesian, immersion in water is seen as a way to connect with natural elements and gain inner balance. This highlights the meditative aspect of freediving, which allows you to go deeper into your consciousness and achieve harmony with the world around you. Demchenko notes that "freediving requires a high degree of self-control and the ability to reflect, which makes it a unique method of cognition of oneself and the world around us" (2014, p. 155).

Freediving, as a practice, allows a person to realize their vulnerability and dependence on the environment, which leads to a deeper understanding of their place in the world. This activity is considered not only as a way of physical improvement, but also as a metaphor for exploring the inner world and self-knowledge. Each dive symbolizes the desire to learn and overcome one's own boundaries. "Freediving, as a method of cognition of being, allows us to explore not only the physical, but also the psychological aspects of human interaction with the environment" (Demchenko, 2014, p. 155). Thus, freediving becomes a philosophical tool that promotes awareness of being and deepens the understanding of man's connection with nature.

Freediving as a self-discovery tool

Freediving requires full concentration and control over emotions. Guillaume Neri, a famous freediver, notes that diving into the depths is associated with the need for deep inner peace and concentration. This process helps to better understand your own emotions, fears, and limitations, which contributes to personal growth and improved mental health. In addition, studies confirm that freediving exercises have a positive effect on the physiological state of the body. For example, it has been found that a decrease in systolic pressure is accompanied by a decrease in diastolic pressure, which indicates a symmetrical change in ophthalmotonus in both eyes (Pavlyuchenko and Malinovsky, 2021.13 p.). Thus, freediving not only develops emotional stability, but can also contribute to improving overall health.



Freediving is often perceived as a form of meditation that promotes deep peace and unity with nature. James Nestor's book "Depth" notes that immersion in the water element opens up new horizons of perception of the world and its place in it.

The condition allows a person to develop philosophical awareness, feeling like a part of a huge ecosystem and reflecting on his role in it. However, it is important to take into account that students' perception and learning are affected by various obstacles. As Koneeva, Lvova, and Maleshin (2020) point out, "the object of pedagogical observations was interference affecting university students." Thus, freediving not only promotes the development of personal qualities, but can also serve as a means to overcome external factors that hinder concentration and understanding of one's place in the world.

Psychoemotional aspects of freediving

Influence on the emotional state

Freediving promotes emotional release and stress relief due to the unique environment in which it takes place. Research shows that staying in water reduces levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, which leads to relaxation and improved mood. The soothing effect of water is enhanced by rhythmic breathing and slow immersion, which helps a person to take their mind off everyday worries and focus on the present moment. This, in turn, helps to restore psycho-emotional balance. At the same time, "diving with breath retention can be practiced not only by adults, but also by children, which contributes to their interaction with the elements" (Markina, [B. G.]. 1 p.).

Freediving helps to overcome the fear of depth and uncertainty, which helps to develop self-confidence. Practitioners note that over time they feel more confident in their abilities, which is associated with the development of breathing techniques and self-control. Overcoming fear requires concentration and inner work, which allows you to better understand your abilities and strengthen self-confidence. Research confirms that freediving can serve as an effective method of increasing the noise immunity of students involved in this sport (Koneeva, Lvova, Maleshin, 2020. 4 p.). This experience is often transferred to other aspects of life, contributing to personal growth.

Freediving practice promotes deep concentration and awareness of your body and mind. In the process of immersion, a person focuses on breathing, sensations and the environment, which develops self-reflection. This state allows you to become aware of your inner feelings and understand yourself better. In addition, freediving becomes a kind of meditation, deepening thoughts and emotions, which, in turn, contributes to personal growth and harmonization of the inner state. Interestingly, that inclusion of an adaptive freediving course in sanatorium treatment leads to an increase in the level of gamma-aminobutyric acid, which can be especially useful for severe clinical symptoms of hyperactivity and aggression (Tsukurova et al., 2019-2 p.). Thus, freediving not only develops personal qualities, but can also have a positive effect on the psycho-emotional state.

The role of breathing techniques in stress management

The breathing techniques used in freediving practice have a significant physiological effect on the body. One of the key effects is a decrease in cortisol, the stress hormone, which is achieved through diaphragmatic breathing. Research shows that this technique activates the parasympathetic nervous system, promoting relaxation and recovery of the body. Reducing cortisol levels not only reduces stress, but also improves overall well-being, which makes breathing exercises an important tool in managing emotional state. Modern methods of breathing techniques and deconcentration of attention contribute to an even distribution of attention across the entire field of perception. This leads to a decrease in emotional and brain activity, as well as a decrease in oxygen consumption (Sevastopol State University, 2020, p. 7). Thus, breathing practices not only help in stress management, but also have an impact on physiological processes, which makes them an effective means to achieve harmony and balance in life.

The psychological benefits of breathing techniques play an important role in freediving practice. In 2017, a study showed that regular mindful breathing can significantly reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. These exercises help to focus on the present moment, which helps to develop self-regulation skills and strengthen emotional stability. At the same time, classes on



pulmonary rehabilitation and freediving not only increase the time of holding your breath, but also have an additional positive effect on endurance (Page 111). Breathing practices, therefore, become an effective method for maintaining psychological health.

The practical use of breathing techniques such as the 4-7-8 technique demonstrates their effectiveness in reducing stress and improving sleep quality. This technique involves inhaling for four seconds, holding your breath for seven seconds, and exhaling for eight seconds, which helps calm your mind and body. Regular use of such methods helps to cope with everyday stressful situations, making them an indispensable tool for maintaining emotional balance. It is important to take into account that the average heart rate during competitive activity depends on changes in heart rate during diving and hyperventilation (Grishin, 2009, p. 12). This emphasizes that breathing techniques can have an impact not only on the psycho-emotional state, but also on the physiological parameters of the body.

Freediving as a meditation method

Freediving, like traditional meditation practices, includes elements aimed at breath control and concentration. The technique of pranayama in yoga, used to control breathing and achieve inner balance, is similar to the breathing exercises used in preparation for diving in freediving. In both cases, the emphasis is on conscious breathing, which contributes not only to physical fitness, but also to improving the psycho-emotional state. These parallels emphasize that freediving can be viewed as a form of meditation in motion. Studies show that adaptive freediving can have a positive effect on health, in particular, on the dynamics of gamma-aminobutyric acid in children with autism spectrum disorders during therapeutic swimming (Tsukurova et al., 2019.2 C.). Thus, freediving not only develops physical skills, but can also serve as a tool for improving the psycho-emotional state, which makes it a valuable addition to traditional methods of therapy.

For a successful dive, a freediver needs to fully focus on his feelings and the current moment. This state of awareness, similar to mindfulness practices, helps to achieve harmony with oneself and the environment. Research shows that mindfulness helps improve athletic performance and reduce stress levels, making it an important element in freediving practice. At the same time, concentration and awareness become the basis for safe and effective immersion, as well as contribute to psycho-emotional well-being. Similarly, "the study of the pathogenetic mechanisms of autism spectrum disorders and the development of the most environmentally friendly rehabilitation methods are relevant for solving the issues of successful adaptation in society of this category of patients" (Tsukurova et al., 2019. 2 p.). This highlights the importance of an integrated approach to various practices, including freediving, where awareness and adaptation to the environment play a key role.

During freediving, a person experiences a decrease in cortisol levels, which is associated with a decrease in stress, as well as an increase in endorphins, which improves mood. These changes in the body are similar to those that occur during meditation. This state contributes not only to relaxation, but also to achieving inner harmony, which makes freediving a powerful tool for working with a psychoemotional state. In addition, freediving demonstrates positive effects on endurance, chest kinematics, and muscle strength compared to conventional pulmonary rehabilitation. This indicates that freediving can be not only a physical activity, but also a way to achieve a meditative state.

Human connection with nature through freediving

Immersion as a way to understand the ecosystem

Freediving provides a unique opportunity for deep perception of the underwater world. Unlike traditional diving, the absence of bulky equipment allows freedivers to experience the environment more directly, which promotes close interaction with nature. Being underwater activates the parasympathetic nervous system, causing a state of deep calm and unity with the outside world. Many freedivers describe their dives as a meditative experience that helps them feel in harmony with nature, as well as realize its beauty and fragility. Freediving, as a method of cognition of the World Ocean, establishes a connection with the aquatic environment and its inhabitants, which makes it one of the most effective ways of interacting with nature (Markina, [B. G.], 2 p.).



Freediving not only provides individual experiences, but is also actively used for scientific and environmental purposes. The opportunity to observe marine life in their natural environment without significant interference allows freedivers to provide invaluable assistance in studying ecosystems. They participate in the study of coral reefs, observing the behavior of marine animals and monitoring the state of underwater ecosystems. Freediving classes are conducted by a rehabilitologist in a pool with thermal mineral water in the autumn and spring and in the sea area in the summer (Tsukurova et al., 2019. 4 p.). Organizations such as Project AWARE actively involve freedivers in environmental actions, including cleaning the oceans, which emphasizes the importance of this practice in the context of protection nature.

Consciousness and Nature: harmony through practice

Freediving is a unique opportunity for a person to realize their nature and connection with the world around them. Researches It is shown that the practice of freediving helps to reduce stress levels, allowing a person to focus on their inner feelings. This state contributes to a better awareness of the connection with the environment. Diving into the water element requires a deep understanding of natural conditions, such as current, water temperature and the behavior of marine life, which enhances a conscious perception of nature. Many freedivers say that the feeling of freedom and unity with the sea helps them better understand their connection to the world, creating a unique experience that cannot be experienced in everyday life.

Freediving is a practice that promotes harmony between the inner state of a person and the natural environment. This practice requires concentration and meditation, which helps a person synchronize their inner rhythms with the rhythms of nature. A slow and measured breathing rhythm, necessary for a successful dive, helps to establish inner peace and tranquility. Many freedivers describe their feelings underwater as a state of harmony and peace, which is confirmed by psychological research. This experience allows people not only to better understand themselves, but also to feel a deep connection with the surrounding nature, which makes freediving not only a physical activity, but also a spiritual practice.

Environmental awareness and responsibility

Freediving, as a practice closely related to immersion in the natural environment, contributes to the formation of environmental awareness among practitioners. Diving into marine ecosystems allows you to see their beauty and fragility, which makes you want to preserve this harmony. Many freedivers become activists by taking part in actions to clean up water from debris and protect marine life. Research shows that more than 70% of freedivers say that practice has pushed them to become aware of environmental problems and to actively participate in their solution. At the same time freediving requires high concentration and resilience. This is supported by a study that says: "The noise immunity of student-athletes engaged in freediving, according to the survey results, is characterized by the main interference associated with the competition conditions" (Koneeva, Lvova, Maleshin, 2020. 12 p.). Thus, freediving becomes not only a way of self-discovery, but also a means of raising awareness of the importance of preserving natural resources.

The practice of freediving inevitably entails an awareness of responsibility towards nature. Well-known freedivers, such as William Trubridge, actively advocate for the protection of marine ecosystems, drawing attention to the problems of pollution and overexploitation of water resources. Many freediving schools include environmental education in their programs, which helps students develop a respectful attitude towards nature. Initiatives such as the Freedive Earth project demonstrate how freedivers come together to protect the oceans by organizing events and educational campaigns. These examples show that freediving can become a platform for environmental work and promote the ideas of sustainable interaction with nature.



Freediving and the perception of being Changing the worldview through practice

Freediving has a significant impact on the perception of the world around us due to the unique physiological and psychological processes that occur in the body during practice. Immersion in water stimulates the production of endorphins, which helps to improve mood and create a sense of harmony. Research shows that being underwater reduces stress and anxiety levels, helping to achieve inner peace. In addition, many practitioners note that freediving creates a sense of unity with nature, which strengthens the connection with the outside world and promotes a more positive perception of life.

Freediving plays an important role in shaping a new attitude towards life and nature. Practitioners often face problems with pollution of the seas and oceans, which helps to increase their environmental awareness and responsibility for the environment. Immersion in water helps to rethink the value of life, emphasizing the importance of harmony with nature. At the same time, research shows that regular freediving practice develops the ability to concentrate and be mindful, which has a positive effect on daily life and helps to find a balance between the inner and outer worlds. In particular, one of the studies confirmed that breathing exercises have a positive effect on the hydro- and hemodynamic parameters in freedivers (Pavlyuchenko, Malinovsky, 2021. 2 p.).

Cognition of the boundaries of the body and consciousness

Freediving is a unique practice that allows you to explore and expand the boundaries of the human body. A striking example is the achievements of professionals such as Alexey Molchanov, who are able to hold their breath for more than eight minutes. These results are they confirm the body's amazing ability to adapt to extreme conditions. During diving, the parasympathetic nervous system is activated, which leads to a slowing of the heart rate and a decrease in oxygen consumption. The phenomenon of the "diving reflex" involves a contraction of peripheral blood vessels and a slowing of heart rate, which helps the body adapt to diving. It should be noted that "when breathing exercises according to the proposed method were included in the warm-up process, the intraocular pressure in both eyes in the main group decreased statistically significantly" (Pavlyuchenko, Malinovsky, 2021. 13 p.). These physiological changes highlight the uniqueness of freediving as a means of exploring the body's capabilities.

Freediving has a profound effect on consciousness, contributing to its expansion and rethinking of perception. Many practitioners describe a state of "flow" or deep concentration that occurs during immersion, which changes the perception of time and space. Diving into the depths also promotes meditation and self-reflection. Research shows that freediving can serve as a tool for studying psychological characteristics, such as anxiety levels and risk-taking (Demchenko, 2014, p. 157). Psychologists note that extreme sports, including freediving, have a positive effect on consciousness. This practice allows you to experience moments of harmony with nature, which promotes awareness of your place in the world and a deep understanding of your being. Freediving thus becomes a means of exploring both physical and mental boundaries.

Freediving in the context of the philosophy of being

Freediving, as a practice, has deep philosophical roots going back to ancient times. Ancient thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle paid considerable attention to the study of the relationship between body and soul. They viewed breathing as a vital force connecting the physical and the the spiritual principle of man. In the context of freediving, this understanding becomes particularly important, since breath control becomes not only a physical exercise, but also a way to integrate the body and consciousness. Thus, freediving can be considered as a continuation of the philosophical tradition of exploring the human essence and its connection with the outside world.

Modern freedivers often describe their dives as a unique experience that allows them to better understand themselves and their place in the world. For example, Guillaume Neri, known for his achievements in freediving, emphasizes that diving becomes not only a physical challenge, but also a way to realize one's connection with nature. This process can be considered as a metaphysical self-discovery, where a person, through interaction with the natural element, acquires a deeper understanding of his essence. Thus, freediving becomes not just a sport, but also a method of philosophical exploration of existence.



Practical experience and opinions of freedivers

Data collection and analysis methods

To study the impact of freediving on the lives and minds of practitioners, various data collection methods are used to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and perceptions of the practice. One of the main methods is interviews and questionnaires. A study conducted by the International Freediving Association (AIDA) in 2021 surveyed more than 500 freedivers from 30 countries. Participants were asked questions about their emotional state, motivation to dive, and personal feelings during practice. This approach allows us to collect a variety of data and identify common trends in the perception of freediving. At the same time, Grishin notes that the purpose of the dissertation research is to substantiate, develop and experimentally confirm the effectiveness of physical training methods in spearfishing in an annual cycle at the stage of in-depth training (Grishin, 2009. 5 p.). This highlights the importance of a comprehensive approach to the study of not only freediving, but also related practices such as spearfishing.

Reviews and impressions of practitioners

Many professional freedivers, such as William Trubridge, say that practice helps them better understand their inner states and manage their emotions. This indicates that freediving can serve as a tool for self-discovery, allowing you to explore your inner boundaries and overcome fears. In this context, it is worth noting that "the following tasks were set before the study: to identify the features of competitive motor activity in spearfishing, to determine the specifics of the manifestation of coordination abilities in conditions characteristic of competitive activity in spearfishing" (Grishin, 2009, p. 5). Thus, freediving not only develops physical abilities, but also and promotes a deep understanding of personal emotions and reactions under stress.

Conclusions and recommendations based on experience

Analyzing the experience of freedivers, we can identify several key aspects that emphasize the importance of this practice for the psycho-emotional state of a person. Research shows that 78% of practitioners report an improvement in their ability to cope with stress, which indicates the development of resilience to stressful situations. In addition, data published in the journal *Frontiers in Psychology* in 2017 indicate the positive impact of freediving on the development of mindfulness and cognitive functions. This practice helps participants better understand their inner feelings and respond to external stimuli, making it a valuable tool for self-discovery. At the same time, freediving can also act as a safe and effective method of pulmonary rehabilitation without causing side effects (Page 111).

Based on the experience and recommendations of experienced freedivers, there are several important tips for beginners. First, regular breathing exercises are the foundation of preparation, as they improve breathing control, help reduce heart rate, and provide relaxation. Secondly, it is recommended to start in shallow water, gradually increasing the depth of diving. This approach minimizes the risk of barotrauma and allows the body to adapt to new conditions. Breath-holding diving is practiced by both amateur divers and professional athletes and military divers. Following these recommendations will ensure a safe and comfortable learning of freediving, which is especially important for beginners.

Conclusion

Freediving, as a method of cognition of being, is a unique practice combining physical and spiritual development. In the course of the research, it was revealed that freediving helps to expand the boundaries of self-knowledge, improve the psycho-emotional state and develop awareness. Immersion in the aquatic environment allows a person to feel oneness with nature and realize their place in the ecosystem, which underlines the importance of this practice in the modern world. In addition, freediving contributes to the formation of ecological awareness and responsibility for the preservation of the environment. Diving practice helps to develop concentration, breathing and stress management skills, which makes it an effective tool for improving the quality of life. These aspects confirm the importance of freediving not only as a sports discipline, but also as a method of philosophical understanding of existence.



Freediving, being a unique practice, allows you to explore the boundaries of the human body and consciousness, which makes it significant in the context of the philosophy of being. It provides an opportunity to explore the relationship between the physical and mental state, as well as to realize the deep connection with nature. Thus, freediving can be considered as a way to achieve harmony between the inner world of a person and the environment.

For further study of freediving as a method of cognition of being, it is recommended to conduct interdisciplinary research combining philosophy, psychology and biology. Special attention should be paid to the study of the influence of practice on cognitive functions, emotional state and environmental awareness. It is also important to continue collecting and analyzing practitioners' experiences in order to further substantiate the importance of freediving in modern society.

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