

A FREEDIVER'S ODYSSEY

WITH GARY McGRATH

- Luca Malaguti: [00:00:08](#) Welcome, welcome, welcome. My name is Luca Malaguti and I'm your host for today's episode of The Alchemy Podcast. I am super, super excited to be sitting down with our guest today. He is a friend, a mentor, um, man, well known in this freediving community. Um, every time we sit down, we always talk about just incredible, incredible topics, the future of freediving, mental health, and freediving psychedelics and freediving biochemistry. We always have a range of incredible, incredible topics to discuss. This man is, of course, Gary McGrath, British national record holder, and very deep, deep freediver.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:01:02](#) It is my great pleasure to finally be interviewing Gary the Hammer McGrath. That is his nickname, which I have invented and will be stuck forever.
- Gary McGrath: [00:01:13](#) Yes.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:01:14](#) Gary The Hammer McGrath.
- Gary McGrath: [00:01:16](#) Okay. I think that would look good.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:01:17](#) Why the hammer? I don't know. I don't remember. I remember we started with that nickname when we were living together in Andrea Zuccari's house and we were training, and we both got C O V I D and, uh, I don't know why, but there was a lot of diclofenac and a lot of fever at that time.
- Gary McGrath: [00:01:36](#) Yeah. We can, we can wholeheartedly endorse diclofenac, uh, suppositories for covid <laugh>.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:01:44](#) To anybody that ever gets covid 'cause it's still going around now, if you have weakness and fever, you take Diclofenac suppositories. They have to be suppositories <laugh>. And let the record show that Gary the Hammer

McGrath took plenty of suppositories. To anybody that doesn't know what a suppository is, it is what you put up your rectum <laugh>.

- Gary McGrath: [00:02:08](#) Yeah. And it, it does wonders for fever. And if you've got a good friend like Luca to help you apply the suppository...
- Luca Malaguti: [00:02:15](#) I did no such thing. There were no such application on my end. I was taking my own. Thank you very much.
- Gary McGrath: [00:02:21](#) Look, we've been talking for 30 seconds and we've gone way off topic.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:02:24](#) That is the point of this podcast. That is the point of it. But it was amazing because at that time we, you were pushing 112 meters. You were going for the British record. You had trained for months. And we are living in Andrea Zuccari's house. So I felt the good energy.
- Gary McGrath: [00:02:44](#) Yeah. I was by, by osmosis. I was, uh, getting a good equalization through the floor from Andrea <laugh>.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:02:51](#) We were in such a good space. Amazing kitchen. Quiet. We had a pool with the exercises that you were doing in the morning, which I want to definitely talk about later. Those were like a game changer. Such a good approach. So if you're listening to this now, stay tuned, because these are amazing warmup exercises. We had such a good space. We were having good food. We were cooking, and things were going so well. I mean, wow. Like I know my diving was doing better than it ever had. This was May, 2021. You were like crushing it. You'd gone from the 90s to like popping into 110+ easily.
- Gary McGrath: [00:03:30](#) Yeah. But I hit the, my first hundred that year in winter, you know, January in Sharm. It was my 40th birthday.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:03:37](#) Your 40th birthday. You hit a hundred meters. What a present.
- Gary McGrath: [00:03:43](#) It didn't phase me at all. The, the cold weather and there was no one around. It was just me and Tito. That's when I first met Tito. And it was just us going out to train there. They were opening the center for me in January. And it was lovely. The freediving world center. And the cold water I was in, I was in, I was in two old 1.5, just double layer on top and just 1.5 on my legs in my old glide monofin, which was like a lump of wood.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:04:11](#) Um, but yeah, it was May, 2021. You were doing such amazing dives. And then we got covid really, really bad. Delta, full on Delta strain.

Gary McGrath: [00:04:22](#) Yeah. It was the, it was like the original MKI covid. It was good, man.

Luca Malaguti: [00:04:27](#) Exactly. Full South African. And it knocked us out. I mean, it knocked me out hard. But I wasn't pushing my immune system the way you were.

Gary McGrath: [00:04:39](#) No, exactly. I was really probably quite compromised. Yeah. We were eating well though, resting well.

Luca Malaguti: [00:04:45](#) We were doing the ice baths.

Gary McGrath: [00:04:46](#) Yeah. Ice baths were good.

Luca Malaguti: [00:04:50](#) And yet you were on the bed.

Gary McGrath: [00:04:54](#) I mean, we lived in the same house. You didn't see me for about a week. Our rooms were next to each other and I, I couldn't get out.

Luca Malaguti: [00:05:01](#) You could not get out of bed.

Gary McGrath: [00:05:02](#) Walking to the bathroom, which it was in an en suite room, walking to the bathroom was getting me really out of breath. And giving me lactic <laugh>.

Luca Malaguti: [00:05:12](#) That's crazy.

Gary McGrath: [00:05:12](#) It's a three meter walk. <laugh>.

Luca Malaguti: [00:05:15](#) That's nuts. Like going from 112 meters, crushing it to not being able to walk to the bathroom. Being one of the, like an elite athlete with your system, just perfect. And then boom, not being able to walk to the bathroom.

Gary McGrath: [00:05:31](#) Yeah. I'm not, I'm not sure what I could have done, you know, something as aggressive as covid. I think it's gonna get you, no matter, no matter how rested you are and, and how, how good your nutrition is. Uh, I, I perhaps wasn't keeping a, a good eye on my supplementation probably. I have a few more things I'd take now, antioxidant wise and, and just general, general health vitamins that, that, uh, seem to keep me healthy. Who knows? It's wintertime coming now, so let's see.

Luca Malaguti: [00:05:59](#) Sure. Um, something you remedied when you went to The Bahamas for vertical blue.

Gary McGrath: [00:06:06](#) Oh, yeah. A lot of research, a lot of work.

Luca Malaguti: [00:06:08](#) And I think you taught a lot of the community people, a lot of people in the community. And I heard this through a lot of people were like, oh, oh, that's, that's a smart move. That's nice. What Gary's doing. That's good to hear. Cool.

You know? That's good to hear. Uh, well, yeah, that was somewhat of an introduction anyways. A real introduction. Pleasure to have Gary, the Hammer McGrath on. I'm just kidding. That's not his real nickname. I'm just <laugh> the guy who gives people's nicknames. I dunno why. Gary McGrath, British National record holder, one of the deepest people alive today. And it's a pleasure to have you here on this podcast and to interview you.

Gary McGrath: [00:06:52](#) Thanks, <laugh>. Are we, are we done? Can we go?

Luca Malaguti: [00:06:55](#) That's it. Yeah. It's over. We've, we've condensed it all. Um, so yeah. Today, I wanted to chat about kind of what we touched into overcoming Covid, coming back from that mental state and patience and freediving. Taking the time to approach depth, kind of like what we just said. You gifted yourself a hundred meter dive for your 40th, 40th birthday, which is just awesome. Yeah. Um, and that alone inspired a lot of people to realize this is a lifelong pursuit. This is the kind of sport like high altitude mountaineering, which takes time. You rush. You don't enjoy it. You don't do any benefit to your body and your mind. Um, definitely wanna chat about you going to vertical blue, the road to vertical blue, everything you did to get there. Um, the good, the bad and the ugly. And, um, yeah. And a couple of tips that you will give people. And also what you do in the summertime, how you coach. And obviously definitely want to know about what you do in Ibiza, the kind of retreats you run, 'cause that's pretty freaking cool, I think. Yeah. So definitely chat about that. But yeah, back to that, uh, COVID story. So, so we're in Sharm, May, 2021. Some of the best athletes in the world are there for that competition. Freediving world.

Gary McGrath: [00:08:21](#) Yeah. Was a big It was a big one, wasn't it?

Luca Malaguti: [00:08:22](#) Yeah. Yeah. Huge competition. Massive after party where we're all sharing a bottle of <laugh>. Uh, I think it was Vitomir that was passing around this bottle of, of, uh, whiskey. We're all sharing that. We're passing around joints. We're smoking, we're doing drugs. Yes. Freediving world. Guess what?

Gary McGrath: [00:08:41](#) I wasn't there...

Luca Malaguti: [00:08:41](#) The best athletes in the world do everything when it comes to partying, <laugh>, because...

Gary McGrath: [00:08:46](#) I wasn't there. I wasn't there.

Luca Malaguti: [00:08:47](#) You were totally there. <laugh>.

Gary McGrath: [00:08:49](#) I was in bed. <laugh>.

Luca Malaguti: [00:08:50](#) You were in bed. It's true. You did miss the party. Yeah. Yeah. Uh, but that's after that party. Everybody got covid. Uh, it was pretty funny.

Gary McGrath: [00:08:57](#) I was the first one though. I was patient zero .wasn't.

Luca Malaguti: [00:09:05](#) But what's funny is that when you got it, you were completely immobilized. You were bedridden. Is that the word?

Gary McGrath: [00:09:11](#) Yeah. For at least a week. I didn't leave the apartment.

Luca Malaguti: [00:09:17](#) You missed most of the comp.

Gary McGrath: [00:09:20](#) I was the first diver on the first day. You want that first dive to be amazing. And, and it's, it's on my Instagram, when we publish this, I'll, I'll repost, uh, that, uh, video of my surface protocol. Yeah, yeah, yeah. You can see me just shaking like crazy. Having the hugest samba. Yeah. Um, I never managed to get hold of the bottom camera footage, but they, they said that from the camera they could see quite high up and Yeah. Around around 80-90m, uh, my freefall came out of position. It was, it was a really messy dive. Which is, it doesn't happen to me. My dives, my dives are good. They're always, they're always as close to perfect as I, as I can get. You know? And, uh, yeah. I remember one point, I just felt the rope brushing the back of my neck, which at a weird angle, at like a horizontal angle.

Luca Malaguti: [00:10:10](#) Was it the current, 'cause Sharm is famous for current.

Gary McGrath: [00:10:12](#) No, no idea. I think there was current, I remember Tito went deep to check. He does that every day. He, he goes down to like 50 with that scooter and just checks. And he says to me, you know, it's good, good conditions today. There's no current. Potentially it might have just picked up or it might have been a deeper current, or it might have been the beginnings of that covid just, just affecting me, you know? It was nuts. Narcosis was strong on that dive. And that was, at that time, narcosis was a very new thing for me. I hadn't been over a hundred a lot, maybe seven or eight times.

Luca Malaguti: [00:10:46](#) Explain nitrogen narcosis for a, just for the people listening that don't know what nitrogen narcosis is.

Gary McGrath: [00:10:52](#) Uh, yeah. I mean, there's, there's tons of nitrogen in the air we breathe and, and we don't metabolize it. So at depth when we're diving, it gets pushed into our system and, um, and it just sits there. It sits in your system and when you have too high levels of it, it affects your motor functions. And many, it's a huge subject actually. Yeah. Um, that we don't really, we know a bit about how it

affects freedivers. Um, but not a lot. We dunno a lot. And it affects people differently than, you know, some people say they feel narcosis on a 50, 60 meter dive. I don't know about that. Um, maybe it's hypoxia, <laugh>, but, um, I certainly dives over 104, 105m. ,I'll pretty much be guaranteed to have something, get knocked. Yeah. And it was, it was playing on my mind. I was like, I'm gonna be knocked. I don't like it. Ah, well, you know, and it took me a while to actually think what happens when you're knocked and, uh, kind of, it's just audio, uh, uh, audio hallucinations I get. Nothing visual. Uh, I may get a memory blank, uh, where I turn and then I start to make my way up. Next thing I know I'm seeing a safety diver. So I miss a chunk of the dive, but I'm running automatically mm-hmm. <affirmative>, you know, so that's not necessarily a bad thing, you know, especially if it's a hard ascent if you don't remember it. I mean, cool <laugh>, you just, all of a sudden you're up on the surface. But I get this, um, I've tried to describe it a lot and actually, uh, I'm sort of editing a little mini documentary about vertical blue at the moment. And we are going to try and recreate this sound, uh, with a sound engineer. Um, it's like, I, I imagine, you know, those, you know those barbecue trays? Tinfoil trays? Yeah. It's kind of like someone's got one of them on your head and is banging it with a spoon that loud. Not very loud, but it's like, whoa, whoa, whoa. Echoey. Metallic. It's weird. I say it's like a car alarm. It sounds like a metallic car alarm. Kidding. Yeah.

- Luca Malaguti: [00:13:08](#) That's why people like to wear maybe fluid goggles.
- Gary McGrath: [00:13:12](#) This is something I explored because I started to seek advice from a, uh, more experienced people about like, how can I avoid this? Ultimately, I think it's kind of to a point it's unavoidable. You can, you can, you know, you go deep enough for long enough you're gonna get it, but you can ease it off. I think by being a bit more mentally present seems to be one of the main ones, um, being super well hydrated. With correct water, correct minerals. Not just drinking lots of bottled water.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:13:42](#) Pro tip everybody. Gary always says, make sure you're hydrated 24 to 72 hours before.
- Gary McGrath: [00:13:49](#) Yeah. Your hydration is a constant, it's a constant, um, uh, thing you should be checking on. You cannot wake up on the morning of your diving down liter. It will not do the same as slowly getting the water into you for the last 24 hours before. So hydration begins 24 hours before. If, if you, if you are feeling dehydrated, it's kind of too late.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:14:12](#) Amazing advice to the point where I told you the other day, not joking, I was peeing and I looked at the color of my pee, which I do always. I check because I'm always

concerned about being hydrated. Absolutely. And it was orange and I had your voice in my mind. Yeah. So every time I pee and I'm a bit dehydrated and my pee is a little yellow orange, I have your voice in my mind, no matter where I'm in the world. And I think, oh, I'm not hydrated enough. Gary would not be happy right now. <laugh>.

Gary McGrath: [00:14:39](#) I'm honored you think of me at those moments.

Luca Malaguti: [00:14:43](#) But it's funny 'cause those little things are, are what remind you to be consistent and dialed into doing the things you're supposed to be, be doing. You know, like, remind yourself to be hydrated. Otherwise you can be more prone to narcosis, be more prone to a lung squeeze, be more prone to hypoxia. It's a very simple thing you can remedy.

Gary McGrath: [00:15:03](#) Hydration's crucial. And putting the right things in your, in your water. Making sure all the key minerals, you know, salts, uh, magnesium, etc. All the electrolytes. But it's easy to manage.

Luca Malaguti: [00:15:16](#) So it was the days coming up to the competition and you were pushing a hundred meters plus. You were confident you were crushing these depths. You even came outta one point. And like, you didn't even like, like James Bond. You didn't even take a breath. You just grabbed your lady and gave her a kiss. Yeah. And she was like, breathe. You're like, I'm gonna kiss my lady first. Which is super badass. So, but you didn't anticipate that this little variable of covid was gonna really throw things off.

Gary McGrath: [00:15:45](#) So something was definitely off on that, on that journey down. Because that free fall felt completely outta position for whatever reason. I think it's more to do with the, my, my body beginning to fight something. Yeah. Yeah. So the bottom camera footage, that's where we were, weren't we? Bottom camera footage. They, they said they could see me completely, almost horizontal. Which is not right. And to feel that rope like behind my neck and stuff, you know, the rope should be in front of me. It was, it was odd. That's one of the last things of that descent. I remember. I remember the turn and then, and then that, that whole journey up was a memory blank. Crazy. I remember seeing the safety divers. And I think I, I made eye contact. I locked on. Cause this is one of the things I started to develop on my ascent to combat necrosis and just to keep me more present.

Luca Malaguti: [00:16:34](#) Really?

Gary McGrath: [00:16:34](#) Yeah. I needed to wake up. I needed, I played about with, um, having a dive time alarm. But, you know, my dives, they fluctuate, you know, give or take five, 10 seconds

sometimes, you know, I, I do it on feeling then I'm not like, uh, like, you know, William Trubridge doing a no fins dive. I've trained with him. And he can give you his dive time to the second, to the second, you know, every time. But, you know, no fins is perhaps a bit more precise. You know, you put a little bit more effort with a monofin and, and you're gonna go very fast. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Um, so that, so the dive time alarm thing wasn't really working for me, but I needed some kind of a mental anchor on the way up. And I chose to use the safety divers as that.

- Luca Malaguti: [00:17:18](#) Super cool. So opening your eyes more than you normally would on a dive. And making contact.
- Gary McGrath: [00:17:23](#) Exactly. And really thinking, oh, that's Tito, that's Roberto. You know? Kind of waking my mind up a bit.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:17:30](#) Who's that? Oh, that's my safety diver Tito, safety diver Roberto.
- Gary McGrath: [00:17:33](#) But I've got a bit of GoPro footage of my ascent usually, you know, by 20 or 15 on the way up, I'd bring my arms down, I'd dive quite light, so I'd let buoyancy take me up. And, um, and I kind of kicked quite high. Uh, I just kept kicking. I was on autopilot. Cause of the narcosis, hypoxia, all of that. So I arrived to the top, you know, <laugh> caught with quite a splash. And then, yeah. You can see I, I'm smiling as I'm shaking. Yeah. As I'm having my LMC I'm smiling, but then, yeah. I didn't dip. I didn't dip. And I'll show you guys on the video. Um, yeah. I was shaking like crazy. I'm over leaning over holding onto this line.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:18:14](#) How high was your hand?
- Gary McGrath: [00:18:16](#) My, my hand was high. Proper rock climbing high. Uh, not crazy high, but my hand was up. Um, but there was, the waves were going up and down a bit, but I didn't dip. No, but I was over, over 15, over 15 seconds. So I got the red card for it.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:18:30](#) So what's a valuable lesson you learned from your friend Luca?
- Gary McGrath: [00:18:36](#) I, I must punch myself in the face. <laugh> Anyone who hasn't, who hasn't seen these go on Lucas's, uh, Instagram page. There's a video of him doing the most awesome surface protocol ever. It worked.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:18:52](#) And I didn't dip either. Yeah. And I felt hypoxic.
- Gary McGrath: [00:18:54](#) Was that the same day or a different competition?

Luca Malaguti: [00:18:57](#) Different competition different, yeah. That was November, 2021. It's hilarious. My surface protocol was 14.9, eh,

Gary McGrath: [00:19:05](#) On that dive?

Luca Malaguti: [00:19:06](#) Yes. Catherine's official gauge 14.8.

Gary McGrath: [00:19:12](#) Wow. Wow. <laugh>.

Luca Malaguti: [00:19:15](#) National record. It was good. So if you would've slapped yourself...

Gary McGrath: [00:19:19](#) Yeah. Maybe I would've got that.

Luca Malaguti: [00:19:21](#) You would've gotten it.

Gary McGrath: [00:19:21](#) Yeah. But, you know, I, I was okay with not getting it because it was, would've been my first ever national record in anything. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And I wanted it to be perfect. I just wanted it to be the, I wanted it to be the most, the best dive I've ever.

Luca Malaguti: [00:19:38](#) That's fair.

Gary McGrath: [00:19:39](#) Um, I'm quite, I'm quite strict. I mean, you know, I'm not saying aim for perfection. 'cause you know, we break that down and perfection's unattainable. But you should be the best, uh, you can be. And, and it, and it wasn't, you know, it wasn't... I could've, I could've fought through that and got it. But there would've been a little voice, a little stone in my shoe, you know?

Luca Malaguti: [00:19:59](#) Yeah.

Gary McGrath: [00:19:59](#) Niggling at me for that. And it's okay. You, you, it was a big life lesson. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> about learning to, learning patience. Patience in life, and patience with my diving. It didn't feel like failure. I don't think I had time to process it, because that, that afternoon, I, I just fell asleep on the sundown during the middle of the afternoon, which I don't do. I just, I just, everyone people were there. We were, it was social. And I, I literally, my head nodded and I, I fell asleep for like an hour, and I like, yeah. And I was like, that's a bit unusual. And then that night, that's the covid guy.

Luca Malaguti: [00:20:39](#) Yeah. And then it was a week of being bed...

Gary McGrath: [00:20:41](#) I was in it. I was in it fully done. Fully sick.

Luca Malaguti: [00:20:43](#) It was, it was the first day of the comp.

Gary McGrath: [00:20:45](#) It's the most expensive dive of my life.

Luca Malaguti: [00:20:49](#) Yeah, exactly. One, one dive 500 euros.

Gary McGrath: [00:20:53](#) And, and not to mention accommodation training time, you know? But it was a 500 Euro dive. Yeah. Crazy, crazy, crazy.

Luca Malaguti: [00:21:01](#) But it was an amazing time. And, you know, that story reminds me of our good friend John Munoz of Columbia. Who, I mean, he almost died. He was bedridden for 18 days. He, he was on the edge mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And if it wasn't for, we like to, I like to say at least if it wasn't for his apnea breath holding training capacity, he would've probably died. His skydiving instructor, this guy who was an ex-Navy Seal, freaking six foot plus monster who got covid with him at the same time in, in Florida, died after 22 days in bed, he passed away. And it's crazy. Some, you know, like on one hand we don't know anything about C O V I D and the effect on lungs and depth and pressure, let alone the, the mix of hypoxia, covid and nitrogen ssis that you just described. But, um, we can definitely say that having trained the lungs the way you have and other free divers, it saved your ass.

Gary McGrath: [00:22:12](#) I think so. Yeah. Yeah. I still coughed blood. I coughed blood.

Luca Malaguti: [00:22:16](#) You coughed blood?

Gary McGrath: [00:22:17](#) Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That's crazy. And you've never squeezed.

Gary McGrath: [00:22:21](#) At that point. I, I've had one squeeze. But it was, it was, it was way after that, you know, so it's not, it's not like I had, um, uh, I was a squeezer.

Luca Malaguti: [00:22:32](#) You're not someone to have a squeeze, aka a lung barotrauma in 15 years of diving.

Gary McGrath: [00:22:37](#) 16 years i've had one, yeah. And I know exactly what happened on that dive.

Luca Malaguti: [00:22:43](#) Yeah. Whereas we know people that squeeze every other day and keep diving, and it's the stupidest approach.

Gary McGrath: [00:22:48](#) Yeah. That would scare me. Yeah. <laugh>. Yeah.

Luca Malaguti: [00:22:51](#) So, so it was incredible. I mean, again, we were, yeah. We were staying at, and Andrea Z's house, we were having an amazing time eating well, uh, doing our training in the pool outside, and then boom. Yeah. We both got hit pretty hard.

Gary McGrath: [00:23:08](#) Yeah. But that's all right. As I say, the lesson, the lesson I take away as patience. It didn't feel like failure. It felt like

another obstacle to climb over. And that's, that was fine. I abided my time.

- Luca Malaguti: [00:23:23](#) Um, it made it all the much better when you got to Bahamas.
- Gary McGrath: [00:23:27](#) Yeah. It made it all the more sweeter when I finally got that record, even though I had to wait, uh, a year over a year. It's like 14 months I had to wait.
- Gary McGrath: [00:23:39](#) But not only you did it, you crushed it in the end. You went beyond. Like 114m...
- Gary McGrath: [00:23:46](#) No, sorry. It was one 112. I did one 112. I had one more dive left in the competition, but I was burnt. I was, I was done. Yeah, I was done. Psychologically I was done.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:23:55](#) You were happy.
- Gary McGrath: [00:23:56](#) Yeah. You were. So I said, uh, you know, I had that dive and I didn't wanna waste it. I wanted to get in the water, and I announced 90, but it was the day after the 112. So it, it was hard <laugh>. It was a hard 90. It still, it was a hard 90. Yeah. It was a lactic burning 90. Yeah.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:24:14](#) Good for you though. That's, that's, that's the right way to do it.
- Gary McGrath: [00:24:17](#) Yeah. And that was, you know, I, I don't wanna say it was a tough decision to make, but it was a decision to make. There was the voice inside my head saying, um, saying, "do one 115, come on, try it".
- Luca Malaguti: [00:24:28](#) Ah, you were thinking 115.
- Gary McGrath: [00:24:35](#) Well, there was a little voice saying, but then the louder voice was saying, "don't <laugh>, just have fun".
- Luca Malaguti: [00:24:41](#) Yeah, exactly.
- Gary McGrath: [00:24:42](#) And I'm glad I made that decision because the 90 felt so hard. I would've, if I'd gone over a hundred, I probably would've had a wobble. So I trusted my body, you know? Yeah.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:24:52](#) So, let's chat about this next segment on the road to Vertical Blue. I mean, this is super interesting story. Uh, a lot of people are inspired to go to Vertical Blue. I know I am. Vertical blue is the, the biggest competition of the year. It's known as the Wimbledon of freediving. It's held in The Bahamas, at the famous Dean's blue hole. Yeah. It's hosted by the famous William True Bridge. And it's an incredibly powerful place to be, I assume.

Gary McGrath: [00:25:21](#) Yeah. It's, it's the comp I've been watching for 10 years. I think the was the first one, 2008 or something like that. It's been around for a while. Yeah. And, and back, back then, it was kind of like just a bunch of friends, but they, they did each other's safety. They had a couple of people who were safety, but Yeah. You know, the, the athletes were expected to do a couple of days safety and stuff. It's crazy. It's quite, quite a sweet kind of community story there.

Luca Malaguti: [00:25:52](#) You know, do your a hundred meter dive and then get on safety. That's pretty funny.

Gary McGrath: [00:25:56](#) Yeah. So the journey to VB really started, uh, around Christmas. Christmas, yeah, 2021.

Luca Malaguti: [00:26:04](#) By then, you had already healed. You had gotten back.

Gary McGrath: [00:26:08](#) It was plenty of time after that. And I was, I wanted to get back to it, you know, I wanted to push and, you know, vb, I finally felt okay. I was valid. I wanted, I, I, I belonged at VB. I finally felt as, as a hundred plus meter diver. I thought, okay, come on. If it's not now, when is it gonna be? Yes. And I had this period in my life where me, both me and Lynn were just like, really gotta just make stuff happen for yourself. You can't wait around for stuff. You gotta, you gotta kick things into gear., And do it. So that was the philosophy that we were kind of trying to, to live our, trying to live our life by. And it was good things were happening, you know? That's cool. If you make them happen, you, you gotta make it. You gotta really work. And, uh, yeah. Then I, I got, uh, uh, I, I sent a message through to Will and, and was just like, what's, he was like, yeah, there's, there's, there's a place. So I just thought, okay.

Luca Malaguti: [00:27:03](#) This was the Christmas before. This is Christmas 2021. Yeah. And VB is held, was held in August, 2022.

Gary McGrath: [00:27:12](#) No, no. This was Christmas 2022. Same year. Yeah. Last year.

Luca Malaguti: [00:27:19](#) Last year?

Gary McGrath: [00:27:20](#) Uh, sorry. <laugh> this year.

Luca Malaguti: [00:27:23](#) Too much hypoxia.

Gary McGrath: [00:27:24](#) Too much.

Luca Malaguti: [00:27:26](#) The Christmas before, because VB's held in the summer. And yeah, it was the summer of 2022. So this past summer at the time of this recording.

Gary McGrath: [00:27:35](#) Yeah, that's right.

Luca Malaguti: [00:27:37](#) And it was Christmas 2021. Months after getting covid and recovering. Then you said, I'm gonna go for it.

Gary McGrath: [00:27:44](#) Yeah. And I just, I just, uh, all of a sudden I just found myself one night just making that decision and, and transferring the money. And it was like, oh, it's, I've, I've thrown my, thrown my hat into the ring now, now I've gotta make it happen, now it's real. Now I had to make it happen. I love, because it cleaned my bank account out, paying that money.

Luca Malaguti: [00:28:01](#) Hunter S Thompson, buy the ticket, take the ride, baby.

Gary McGrath: [00:28:03](#) Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Literally. And then I started to think, okay, how am I gonna make this happen? I worked out a rough budget. First person I spoke to said, yeah, stick a couple of thousand on top of that, next person I spoke to, Stig, he said, yeah, stick 4,000 on top of that. And I'm like, what? The budget is 4,000 <laugh>? Geez. What, what are you talking about?

Luca Malaguti: [00:28:26](#) You did a GoFundMe thing too.

Gary McGrath: [00:28:28](#) I had to do a GoFundMe friends in, in January of that year. Friends said, why don't you crowdfund it? And that, I don't know, I'm probably a bit stubborn, stubbornly independent. Yeah. And that idea didn't sit right with me. I'm like, like, it's too low.

Luca Malaguti: [00:28:44](#) It's too beneath me to get <crosstalk> <laugh>. No, no, it's true.

Gary McGrath: [00:28:50](#) I just, I, I felt in, I felt indebted to people, and I didn't like that, money's a funny subject for me. You know? I don't like, I don't like it. Money's horrible, what it does to people. And our relationships and stuff, you know, but it's also necessary. So, um, so they started, some good friends started really talking to me about it, and I was just, instantly, I was like, nah, nah, that doesn't sit right. And then I played around with a lot of ideas. I was like, well, anyone who gives me money, I have to give something back to them. Like, I'll sell online EQ courses or training sessions and stuff. And that was the plan. I had this whole thing written out, and I wanted to record a video saying, this is what I'm offering. And then, Dan Verhoeven, I spoke to him, and he was just, was just like, you know what? You, you are kind of, you're borrowing money from yourself. Because you've gotta work that off.

Luca Malaguti: [00:29:47](#) You kind of realize how much work that would be after <laugh>.

- Gary McGrath: [00:29:50](#) Yeah. And he broke it down to me. He was like, okay, let's round numbers. Let's say it costs you 10,000 and you're selling, you know, uh, an hour's coaching or, or a coaching session for a hundred Euros. That's, you work that out. How much, how many hours of work you have to do to make that money. And I was like, yeah. I'm setting myself up for a lot of work there, and a lot of work that will be going on through the competition. The, the feeling of really anxiousness of wanting to give that back to people, how to pay back. And which, which, you know, it's a great thing to, to sell your, your services for, for money. That's, but, but I was borrowing money from myself, you know? Uh, so I started to come around to the idea of just saying, you know, my gift to people giving me money was them just accompanying me on the journey. And, and that's why I, I, I tried to be as good as I could with social media. It doesn't come very naturally to me. But, um, the feedback I got the connection with people. That's what took me through VB. That's really, I felt like I had the world behind me, and it was a wonderful feeling. Any, anyone, anyone listening you, you know, you see, you see a post and you think, oh, I'll reply to that. And you half type out a message and then you think, oh, I'll come back to that in a minute. I don't wanna send it. They won't be listening. People are listening.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:31:10](#) You know, people are listening and, and they appreciate really, I've had some messages for this podcast, people saying, "what I just listened to just saved my life this week". "Your photo and what you wrote, or that little cheesy quote made my day. Thank you. I'm going through some mental health issues. You have no idea how much that just helped". And you helped a lot of people.
- Gary McGrath: [00:31:33](#) That's, it's such a wonderful thing to get back from people.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:31:38](#) So, because I think you realized without guilt, that gratitude is best felt when given. And we could talk about the dopamine behind this to get nerdy, but that's the truth. People wanted to give to you because they knew what you were gonna do with it. And also knew what you've done for this community.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:31:55](#) Yeah. It was, it was a wonderful lesson about accepting as well. You know, uh, the whole process about, about taking, you know, accepting something from a stranger. Um, one of the, one of the greatest donations I had someone, someone sent me five pounds, and I was just like, that's, that's the one that I remember. Because that person thought, this is the maximum I can give. Five, five pounds. What can you buy with five? You can buy a coffee. And a piece of cake if you are lucky. But that five was a lot of money to that person. And that five is, is in my

head, almost every day. Five, five pounds, you know. It was nice. That was, that was the nicest one. Obviously the other donations were, were incredible. And, and it was like, it took months for me to publish that GoFundMe campaign because it was a personal battle. Yes. It didn't, you know, with me and my relationship with money and stuff. And, and once I did, I checked back 45 minutes later, someone had put a hundred quid in. I checked back four hours later. It was up to 250. I was blown away. Cause 250 quid for me is a lot of money. That's, that's a lot of money. And I was just like, wow. <laugh>. So people have given me this. I don't even know who they were. It was anonymous. And, and then it just steamrolled. And, and I kept up with the social media stuff and people were helping, man.

- Gary McGrath: [00:33:23](#) Big thank you to the incredible wisdom of Daan Verhoeven. Dan and George were absolutely, uh, crucial in, in the great greatest year of my life. They're good people, man. Yeah.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:33:40](#) I was with Daan for a project in Greenland. And I won't say what he told me, but he said a few words to me that completely like, made me realize something. Which changed essentially the outcome of how I saw the project <laugh>. Which it was something that was so obvious and was in front of my face, but I would've never seen it otherwise. Daan Verhoeven, amazing human being. Great advice.
- Gary McGrath: [00:34:08](#) I say he's the dumbest smart guy I have ever met. And he has music, tastes like a 14 year old girl.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:34:16](#) Does he?
- Gary McGrath: [00:34:16](#) He does.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:34:19](#) Poor Daan. And that's, that's wonderful. That's the, the, and when I read about that from a psychological and, and a neuroscience point of view, how gratitude is truly appreciated more when you give, and it has to do with, um, yeah with, with the dopamine levels that increase mm-hmm. <affirmative> when you give gratitude more than you receive it. When I read that, when I understood that, I was like, wow. Okay. That makes sense why people are philanthropic. Why people want to give and support other people. You, you brought that to the next level. And, um, and at VB, you were saying you kept up with the social media. You were introducing the world to your point of view of it, which was really nice. You were, uh, you were getting the shot from behind the vertical blue, so it was kind of cool from like the cave. Yeah. And you said something really, really cool, which I know it impacted me. Um, you said you only get one first dive of vertical blue.

So no matter what, enjoy it. When, where did that come from?

- Gary McGrath: [00:35:29](#) Um, I don't think it came from anywhere. It just came from my realization, you know? Because it, because it was, it wasn't an easy ride. It wasn't like I launched the crowdfunding and everything just happened. I never knew if I'd get enough, you know? Right. Uh, I was trying to work as hard as I could. And, and contribute, you know, as much as I could from my earnings, but I was never gonna get there, you know, um, on my own.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:35:57](#) No.
- Gary McGrath: [00:35:57](#) Um, and I didn't know if I'd have enough money with the crowdfunding plus my own money and stuff like that. So it wasn't easy. Um, mentally, like this has been the nuttiest year of my life. Uh, mentally, it wasn't an easy ride. The start of this year with it, it felt like at times it felt like pressure, real pressure, VB. Um, yeah. It was, it was challenging. I experienced, I experienced, I experienced depression for the first time.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:36:29](#) You did?
- Gary McGrath: [00:36:29](#) Yeah.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:36:31](#) What months was this?
- Gary McGrath: [00:36:33](#) January, February, March.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:36:37](#) That was the winter of my discontent. Where were you during this time?
- Gary McGrath: [00:36:40](#) I was here in the Dahab.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:36:43](#) A lot of questions, a lot of whys and how to ask. Yeah.
- Gary McGrath: [00:36:46](#) Why am I even doing this? Why am I, you know, the feeling of, the feeling of guilt, the feeling of being indebted to a lot of people for helping me, you know? It was strange. Yeah. So, yeah.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:36:56](#) How did you overcome that?
- Gary McGrath: [00:36:57](#) Um, talking counseling? I started to talk to someone and that's what crazy Americans do. Counselors and shrinks. No one does that in England. No. No one does that. Crazy people do that.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:37:16](#) I read somewhere where, where going to see your therapist is a new, uh, dark and tall for women. Dark, handsome, and tall. You ever, you ever hear that? It was a good line. It's like, you know how women like tall, dark,

and handsome? Being mentally open and going to actively see therapy is the new, tall, dark, and handsome. It's a pretty good line. That was the line.

- Gary McGrath: [00:37:48](#) I get that.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:37:54](#) So, so you, you reached out and you got help and you talked to somebody.
- Gary McGrath: [00:37:58](#) Yeah. And, and it wasn't like I reached out. I had to do something. Um, but VB was a big thing. It, it was really stressing me. And, you know, it's easy to give up. It's easy just to say, this is causing me so much stress. So remove the stress, dude. Don't go. Just forget it. Don't go, stay in Dahab. Don't worry about it. And yeah, that would've been an easy ride for sure. But that's not the dream of my life. Is it <laugh>? That would suck. <laugh>.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:38:29](#) Exactly.
- Gary McGrath: [00:38:30](#) So, yeah, I was working through all that, all the while trying to train, trying to raise the money. Um, you know, I did it <laugh>. I got that.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:38:41](#) Who did you speak to? A psychotherapist, a psychologist?
- Gary McGrath: [00:38:44](#) I'm not sure I know the difference, but I spoke to an a counselor. There's, there's reaching out that first step is really hard.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:38:53](#) I can imagine.
- Gary McGrath: [00:38:54](#) Cause you have to admit that you need help. And for, uh, I dunno what it's like for other guys for, but for guys who, who don't have, especially coming from a culture where guys don't talk. Yes, guys are fine. Stiff upper lip. It was, it was hard. But I was at a point where this is like, it's gonna destroy everything around me. It was, it was tough. And the strain on my relationship was tough and strain on mental health. So, and I'm really, I'm really proud to talk about it, to be honest. Um, anyone listening to this wants to drop me a line. I will always have an ear open, a complete stranger, anyone.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:39:33](#) I'm going to pick your brain about this later in private, and I'm gonna get that content.
- Gary McGrath: [00:39:37](#) Yeah. Because we all have ups and downs, man. And, and no one does any of this on their own.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:39:45](#) You could be in heaven and you, but you could be hell in your mind. And it's so easy to feel guilty because you're comparing yourself, oh, what are my problems to

somebody in Ukraine right now who's experiencing war? But the truth is, you could have war in your mind. And it could be just as devastating to you.

- Gary McGrath: [00:40:04](#) Yeah. So, you know, I'm incredibly proud that I did VB, that I got my national record. But I think I'm more proud of, of the way I held it together. With the help I got from everyone around me. It was, it was a good, it was an interesting journey. But yeah, it wasn't, it wasn't easy. So, so we left Dahab, I went over to, I went down to George and Daan's place for a, a week, right? Had a little bit of a holiday. Um, I did a depth workshop.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:40:34](#) This was in what month?
- Gary McGrath: [00:40:35](#) This would've been in May.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:40:36](#) Was this before or after Naples?
- Gary McGrath: [00:40:43](#) This was after Naples. I left Sharm. I left Sharm traveling to the uk. I found a nice flight that gave me 21 hours in Naples. So I thought, get a hotel. Fantastic. Arrive late at night, get a hotel, spend the rest of, uh, the morning.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:41:01](#) Who advised you to go to Naples?
- Gary McGrath: [00:41:03](#) Easy Jet. Easy Jet told me to do it.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:41:06](#) Easy Jet told you to go to Sharm, to Naples. Anybody listening, there's awesome flights from Sharm to Naples, <laugh>, and particularly Naples, because I discovered that after you spent a lot of time in Egypt, where as amazing as Egypt is, the food is not what it is in Italy, let's be honest. Oh, yeah. So to go from Sharm to go to, from Egypt to Naples and eat the food there is incredibly refreshing nutritional thing you could do.
- Gary McGrath: [00:41:34](#) Yeah. I had a pizza almost as big as me for breakfast. It was amazing. But, uh, so I had a hotel, um, took, got my bag off the flight, blah, blah, blah. Had a lovely day in Naples. Went to the airport, checked my bag in, never saw it again. So on my way to the biggest competition of my life and my entire bag with everything, monofin, two wetsuits, masks, snorkel, da da da. All.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:42:00](#) So it wasn't my fault. It was Easy Jet's fault.
- Gary McGrath: [00:42:03](#) Yeah.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:42:03](#) Because I advised, I, I advised you to go to Naples and go eat at these places and take some time for yourself. I want you to go to this pizzeria. And I was so happy when you sent me the pictures and the videos when you were there. It made me really happy. Yeah. I was like, yes, Gary's

eating good food before he goes to vb, you know? Or even worse before he goes to the uk.

- Gary McGrath: [00:42:27](#) Yeah. Um, and then, and yeah, the bag, the bag just disappeared. And it, you know, easy jet screw you guys, man, they ignored me for months. And actually we're, we're, you know, that was May. We're talking now in, um, uh, December. It's Christmas tomorrow. Uh, and um, only last week did they offer me money. That's how long it's taken. Wow. I sent like, I think 50 or 60 emails to them.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:42:56](#) Geez. So you had an amazing day in Naples. You went to all the pizzerias, the coffee, everything I advised you to go to. You had a great time. You get back to the airport. You fly to the uk.
- Gary McGrath: [00:43:08](#) No, no. Sorry. I flew to Ibiza.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:43:10](#) You flew to Ibiza. And when you got there, everything was lost.
- Gary McGrath: [00:43:13](#) Yeah. The bag didn't turn up. Never arrived. Okay. No biggie. No biggie. They took my details. It'll turn up. It happens. Never showed up. Uh, never showed up.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:43:20](#) Monofin, what else?
- Gary McGrath: [00:43:22](#) Two wetsuits, neck weight. Uh, all the stuff that, all the stuff that you pack to live out of that bag for three months.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:43:31](#) So 2000 euros of gear. Which obviously adds to the stress as you are saving money to go to vertical blue. Which has already costed you four or five, six grand.
- Gary McGrath: [00:43:41](#) Yeah. And I was like, what the hell am I gonna do? You know? So in the, in the meantime, it was only gonna be for a few weeks, we were staying with my buddy Dave Phillips, who, who runs a, runs a swordfish freediving in Ibiza Anyone heading out that way, hit Dave up.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:43:58](#) Dave's an amazing freediver. Even better dj. And he runs a beautiful place called Salt Fish. Yeah. He'll show you round.
- Gary McGrath: [00:44:05](#) So, so, you know, he lent me all his kit to train in. I did, I did my, we were going to Ibiza to do my retreat. Our retreat. Um, freediving yoga retreat. That's, that's our business. Um, so we ran a very successful retreat. I did the whole retreat in Dave's kit <laugh> because they had nothing. Um, and that was wonderful. We, we, it was full. Um, we had a really good week with a really bunch of cool people introducing them to freediving, introducing them to Ibiza, good food, yoga. So full immersion.

Luca Malaguti: [00:44:38](#) So you run these retreats in the summertime?

Gary McGrath: [00:44:40](#) We obviously, we've got plans to expand and, and travel a bit more with them. And so many amazing locations.

Luca Malaguti: [00:44:48](#) And you just show up. There's accommodation, food, meditation, yoga, the whole package.

Gary McGrath: [00:44:54](#) We have a chef. Uh, we rent a villa, everyone stays in the same villa.

Luca Malaguti: [00:44:59](#) So it's really like an amazing experience.

Gary McGrath: [00:45:01](#) And it's like an just an introduction week to free diving. Really beautiful. And it's not, it's not training as such. But it's, uh, we teach them, uh, you know, breath holding or you know, all, all the things you need to know. And then we get them in the water. And the idea is we do a couple of days of like line diving tuitio. Where people learn. And then we take them to some cool spots, some caves and swim throughs and, you know, some beautiful secluded bays in Ibiza to use what they've learned. Cause you know, not everyone's into line diving. They just, you know, they want to explore underwater. And it's so rewarding. It's such a lovely way to work and earn your money. It's, it's really nice.

Luca Malaguti: [00:45:42](#) People get the confidence and the skills. Line diving, and then they can detach from that and apply it to a real situation. Which essentially allows them to live out a dream, which is who doesn't wanna swim through underwater caves and have that incredible confidence.

Gary McGrath: [00:45:57](#) So that was wonderful. And then I had another, like three weeks in Ibiza, um, after that, maybe a month actually, where, where me and me and Dave just trained. We trained as often as we could. And, and, but, you know, I was restricted to 55 meters there 'cause we didn't have a boat. My boat wasn't set up for diving over there and it needed some repair. And obviously I didn't have the money to repair a boat. So we were going shore diving. We can get 50, 55. I used Dave's kit turned out we can stretch monitoring pockets a little bit. He was a size smaller than me, but he had the same stiffness. So with enough, uh, Vaseline, you can squeeze your foot in. And over time those pockets stretched out. And actually, it's a good fit for me.

Luca Malaguti: [00:46:47](#) Let's get that on quote Athanasios, if you're listening to this, Gary McGrath just said, "with enough Vaseline, you can squeeze anything in". So that's a fantastic quote and advice. I love it. Excellent.

Gary McGrath: [00:46:59](#) Correct me on that.

- Luca Malaguti: [00:47:00](#) But still, the stress of losing \$2,000, 2000 euros of gear as you're saving for essentially a five, \$6,000 competition is just nuts. It's just like, it just, but luckily you had those skills. You had developed those mental skills to deal with incredibly stressful situation.
- Gary McGrath: [00:47:18](#) The patience, the patients I'd learned from, from that first, uh, covid dive, you know, and the months that came after it. Beautiful. Chill yourself, you know, and, and take each day as it comes in the, in the beginning it wasn't a problem. 'cause okay, bags go missing. Fine. But 99% of the time they turn up. The frustrating thing was I was being completely ignored by the airline. They just weren't even bothering to reply. And I know they weren't looking for it. I know. You know, it's a huge company. No one was assigned. Yeah. No one was assigned to my case. No one was replying to the emails. And that's extremely frustrating. It's like you're arguing with someone who doesn't care. And you know that feeling of powerless Of being completely powerless. It's, it's a horrible feeling actually. And that it impacted my mental health again. After the rocky starts of the year. Because you are powerless. Someone just takes away any, any, any power in your voice. And that's so, I, I don't know the words, you know, it's, it's like, yeah. I, I I don't know the word. It's powerless. And you feel like you are nothing and they don't care. <laugh> they don't care. Yeah. They don't care. So, so the weeks turned into a month and I was just like, okay. After a month, I was just like, okay, you have to make plans now and assume that you are never getting your stuff back. I emotionally had to kind of let it go. I was like, they're ignoring me. I sent, sent 15 emails. Not one reply. <laugh>, this is rude. It's beyond rude. Tell me you've lost it. I don't mind. But tell me.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:48:58](#) It's funny you bring that up. But my favorite psychotherapist and world renowned therapist, Esther Perel. Mm-hmm, she says two things that destroy relationships in terms of toxicity are indifference and neglect. And they can apply to other things in life. When someone is indifferent to your cause and they neglect you, that affect your mental health.
- Gary McGrath: [00:49:20](#) Yeah, yeah, yeah. For sure. So, you know, I hope, I hope someone from Easy Jet listens to this 'cause it's not good enough the way, and look, I don't want to turn this into a bitching session about Easy Jet.
- Luca Malaguti: [00:49:31](#) That's why we fly with Whizz Air. Yeah. What's up Whiz Air? Hook us up with some ambassadorship. Whiz Air in the house.

Gary McGrath: [00:49:40](#) But, you know, the most humiliating thing coming here to Egypt, the best flight, cheapest flight was Easy Jet. I've never felt so humiliated getting on that plane. <laugh>.

Luca Malaguti: [00:49:49](#) Was it?

Gary McGrath: [00:49:49](#) Yeah. I had to crawl back. And and they know that, they know that that is called an abusive relationship with Easy Jet. And they're just like, they know. They're just like, what are you gonna do? We've got cheap flights, you're gonna come, you're coming back.

Luca Malaguti: [00:50:05](#) And you're gonna pay a lot for that luggage again.

Gary McGrath: [00:50:08](#) Yeah, yeah, yeah. So yeah, I was, I was, um, a few weeks out from, from Vertical Blue and I had no kit. So I had to start to, uh, try and get kit. Luckily Dave was super kind and he said, take my monofin.

Luca Malaguti: [00:50:26](#) Amazing.

Gary McGrath: [00:50:26](#) Yeah, it was great.

Luca Malaguti: [00:50:29](#) And maybe it was meant to be, maybe you could have only done that national record, super deep dive at Vertical Blue with that monofin. Who knows, right?

Gary McGrath: [00:50:38](#) You roll with the punches, don't you? You roll with the punches and it all worked out in the end. So I trained in Dave's wetsuit in Ibiza, um, trained in Dave's Monofin, uh, trained in Dave's bifins, you know. Um, but it was a good period in Ibiza because I was able, uh, I was financially, I, I wasn't having to like work every day. I could ease off and just focus on going to the gym, putting some muscle on in preparation. Um, and then I went from Ibiza to, to Cornwall to George and Daan's place, and did a, did a depth workshop for them. And then had a week's break, a week's holiday. And then I flew out, flew out to VB like a month before, three weeks before.

Luca Malaguti: [00:51:21](#) And that was cool 'cause you were, you were already, um, broadcasting and recording your experience by then. Let's chat about, just real quick, about like all the supplements. 'cause I remember you did a video where you're bringing all of this food 'cause food is so expensive there. But you're also like, dialed in with all your supplements. I'm bringing this, this, this, this, this. Because I'm gonna be stressing my body for the next month. And I need to maintain a balance, essentially.

Gary McGrath: [00:51:52](#) Should we take a break?

Luca Malaguti: [00:51:53](#) Yes, of course.

Luca Malaguti: [00:51:57](#) And we are back from a break. I am incredibly happy because I just had the first hard poop in a long time. And for anybody that lived in Dahab knows that is special. Cause I just came back from being sick. And then the other day we went to the chicken place place...

Gary McGrath: [00:52:14](#) We went to the chicken place...

Luca Malaguti: [00:52:15](#) And intoxication. Liquid coming out of every hole.

Gary McGrath: [00:52:21](#) This, this might seem like a weird thing for people who haven't visited the Middle East and Dahab. Um, but it's a very normal conversation here. Bless it.

Luca Malaguti: [00:52:31](#) We often talk about what comes out of what whole.

Gary McGrath: [00:52:34](#) Anyway, I apologize in what we we're supposed to be talking about freediving...

Luca Malaguti: [00:52:40](#) Um, but honestly, I was thinking about it yesterday. It was a good time to meditate. A good time to relax, to be what you were talking about. It took you a year patient. Because if you cannot be patient on a micro scale, no way are you gonna have the mental focus and fortitude to be patient on a macro scale. Mm-hmm. So it it, like I find myself actively noticing I'm impatient because I'm losing a day of training because I'm sick. And then stepping away from myself and being like, "really, dude"? Like, your body is intoxicated or sick or tired or whatever. Take a step back, rest. Clearly your body's telling you something. Why feel guilty about it?

Gary McGrath: [00:53:22](#) Yeah. Be patient. This is, this is a, a patience and, and enjoying the journey is, is like a training sort of cornerstone for me. It's, it's something super important when you apply that thinking to the actual diving. And it's, it's, you can see people that don't have it. They're the people that are constantly squeezing. You know, they're the people that are having blackouts on 60 meters, 70 meter dives or less, you know. I think if you, if you've got your technique and, and your mental game right or partly right, Uh, a 60 meter free immersion dive is achievable for most humans.

Luca Malaguti: [00:54:03](#) Yes. I think so.

Gary McGrath: [00:54:05](#) Cause in terms of breath hold, uh, is not that challenging. It's two minutes. The eq is, is challenging of course. That, that takes time to learn. But you gotta do your homework for that. Learning, learning the patience, um, to enjoy the journey. You can see when people don't have it, you know.

Luca Malaguti: [00:54:23](#) Because that's what the freefall is. The ultimate test in patience.

Gary McGrath: [00:54:27](#) Yeah. Yeah. And being and being present. You know, I love that. I love that. Being in the exact moment. No past, no future. It's just you now. And you know, you speak to, speak to Buddhist, uh, people who know about Buddhism and stuff, and people who meditate. That's all there is right now. <laugh>. That's all there is. The past has already happened. You cannot change it. The future hasn't happened. All there is is like that moment. And that's what freediving is. To me. It's that freefall that, that just you alone and the universe. This is a, this is a three o'clock in the morning conversation, isn't it?

Luca Malaguti: [00:55:05](#) I love it. We haven't even taken drugs. We gotta do this again on psychedelics. One of the most beautiful things I've ever heard Alan Watts say is obsessing and trying to look into the past as it has answers. Not in the sense to, to learn from it. 'cause that's a good thing. But to try and change the past and obsess with the past is like standing in the back of a ship and trying to make out the wake of the boat. Make out the wake that the boat has created, trying to keep it, keep the waves alive as they dissipate into the distance. You go to the front of the ship and look at what's coming. As you're the present moment, look at what's coming next. Don't go to the back of the ship.

Gary McGrath: [00:55:45](#) Yeah. It's like trying to steer steering uh, steering wall facing backwards, isn't it?

Luca Malaguti: [00:55:48](#) Exactly. Steering wall facing backwards. Yeah. So that's beautiful. You know, that, that was, this is fundamentally one of the big themes about, uh, our conversation today. The patience you've had, your philosophy to taking time, that lifelong pursuit that people really need to listen and hear because, um, that's not just what pays off in terms of results and being successful as an athlete, as a person, but it's what makes it truly enjoyable.

Gary McGrath: [00:56:13](#) Yeah. It's enjoyable. Uh, could, because there's, you know, I've been doing this 16 years, you'd think I would get to a point where I say, oh yeah, I'm a finished free diver now, done. No one ever gets to that stage with anything ever. So we're all on the journey. You never get and say, okay, freediving, completed it next. It doesn't work. It doesn't work. No.

Luca Malaguti: [00:56:37](#) Amen. Anyway, supplements. Let's start with the penis pills, <laugh>.

Gary McGrath: [00:56:42](#) Yeah. So Viagra, Luca gave me his stash of Viagra. Good. Um, and, and it works. It works of course. It's great. I wonder about Viagra and freediving actually. 'cause Viagra, Viagra dilates everything.

Luca Malaguti: [00:56:54](#) Yeah. It's a vasodilator. That's right. Fun fact, there is nitric oxide in Viagra.

Gary McGrath: [00:57:01](#) Which I was speaking to my buddy who's a breath coach. Nitric oxide is created in nasal parts of the brain.

Luca Malaguti: [00:57:10](#) Nasal nitric oxide is produced in the endothelium cells in the nasal cavity. And it's a powerful vasodilator.

Gary McGrath: [00:57:18](#) Yeah. And this was, he used this as a reasoning, uh, of doing breath holds, uh, on exhale. Because the first thing you do is inhale, inhale, inhale, all that, all that gas. Um, but I, yeah, I don't know much about that. But anyway, we're talking about Viagra, uh, and I wanna talk about creatine, <laugh>.

Luca Malaguti: [00:57:34](#) Yeah. Yeah. Let's talk about creatine.

Gary McGrath: [00:57:36](#) Okay. So, so one of the things I take, I'm not particularly like scientific, uh, but I know what the body needs. These are, you know, standard bodybuilding supplements also, I'm 41. I'll be 41 or 42 in about 10 days.

Luca Malaguti: [00:57:48](#) An old geezer, I would say.

Gary McGrath: [00:57:49](#) An old geezer. So, so creatine. Your body naturally produces it. And as you get older, certainly for men, we, we, if you're doing physical work, you should supplement with it. It's cheap. It's, it's probably the world's most tested supplement. I mean, there's so much research.

Luca Malaguti: [00:58:07](#) Makes sense. Right? We get that energy molecule. The, the A T P C P cycle. Creatine phosphates. So we need the creatine. Yeah. Fantastic. So you take some of that.

Gary McGrath: [00:58:19](#) Yeah. creatine's great. It, it, it gives you the little, a little edge for, uh, endurance, for pushing at that point, at that point where you know, your muscles are burning and you want to press that barbell higher. It just gives you that extra, uh, ability. It's like a standard one that everyone should take.

Luca Malaguti: [00:58:38](#) I'm writing this down because as I head to Dominica to continue training, I know I'm gonna need supplements. Creatine. This is good.

Gary McGrath: [00:58:46](#) I've got tons of it there. If you're out at the moment, I can...

Luca Malaguti: [00:58:50](#) Yes, please.

Gary McGrath: [00:58:51](#) So it's cheap. You can get it anywhere.

Luca Malaguti: [00:58:54](#) So do you take BCAAs as well?

Gary McGrath: [00:58:56](#) No. No. I did.

Luca Malaguti: [00:58:57](#) You did? Why no more?

Gary McGrath: [00:58:59](#) There is, there is some conflicting evidence about whether they do anything, uh, and it's not, it's not concrete enough. Uh, and I'm, I'm tight with my money <laugh>, so I thought okay. If it's not like a definite green light, uh, it's helping then, you know, don't take it.

Luca Malaguti: [00:59:20](#) But creatine is a definite green light based on research.

Gary McGrath: [00:59:22](#) Creatine seems to be pretty, pretty clear that it works.

Luca Malaguti: [00:59:26](#) Um, you take protein as well, or just?

Gary McGrath: [00:59:29](#) Yeah. Protein. I try to get vegan proteins. I try to stay away from whey it doesn't mix well with my stomach. Um, which is, I think is the same with a lot of people. Fair enough. Um, yeah. Hemp protein I had in The Bahamas, I got hold of hemp protein doesn't taste very good, but you mix it in with a smoothie or something. Or if you smash it back in a shaker, you know, I've got, I've got given, uh, thank you Young D, a great student of mine. She gave me a jar of protein. It's, it's mohito flavor.

Luca Malaguti: [01:00:03](#) Oh!

Gary McGrath: [01:00:04](#) It's awful. I think I'm very grateful for it, but it's one of the worst things I've ever tasted. Why do they make something taste like mojito, unless it's a mojito. I don't know why.

Luca Malaguti: [01:00:15](#) Nevertheless, thank you Young D for the thought <laugh>.

Gary McGrath: [01:00:20](#) And, uh, other things like magnesium, just general body function, you know, magnesium's great. And then I've got like, I've got like, uh, an iron kind of mix. It's got vitamin C bit of B 12, folic acid. Standard stuff.

Luca Malaguti: [01:00:35](#) Yeah. Cause in order to metabolize iron, you need that folic acid. Shout out to Adam Freediver for teaching me that. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> didn't even know that was a thing.

Gary McGrath: [01:00:45](#) Yeah. Um, one thing I, I've been taking beta alanine for the best part of a year. You know, beta, beta alanine. It's, it's an amino acid alanine.

Luca Malaguti: [01:00:56](#) Why is it better alanine? Something useful?

Gary McGrath: [01:00:58](#) Um, yeah. Body function. I, I, I'm, I wish I was, um, a bit more up to the science of it, but there's a few key people

that I listen to. Uh, I've bent, I've sort of bent vitamins here about, um, about supplements and stuff like that.

Luca Malaguti: [01:01:12](#) If there's a guy in the game who's been doing a lot of science, Vitomir is extremely knowledgeable. He's been working a lot with a university out of Croatia. Which is one of the few universities that does a lot of research on free diversity, like peer reviewed clinical trials. Vitomir & Thibault have had their blood drawn at 60 meter depths. It's really interesting stuff. So he told you to do beta alanine?

Gary McGrath: [01:01:42](#) Uh, no, but, but he's, he was an example of, of some of people I, I, I listened to listen to a lot of stuff. You go on YouTube, Jesus or Instagram and, and there's so many people giving advice and, and it's too much. I think half of it's bullshit.

Luca Malaguti: [01:01:56](#) Yeah for sure. We need to remember that we're individuals and what works for one person might just not work for another person.

Gary McGrath: [01:02:04](#) Yes and no. See, I people say this a lot, especially with freediving training. Yeah. Oh, you've gotta find what works for you. I'm not, not really, uh, uh, you know, there is an individuality to this, but I think also it's a cop out, a little bit. People say, oh, find what works for you. And they end up finding nothing. There's certain things that you have to do, like, you know, do your eq drills, do your, give yourself time to acclimatize. And it's not, it's not that much of an individual approach. If you are an intermediate level freediver, you just gotta do the work. Um, so this like, you know, hyper tailored individual approach, nah, I think that's people, that's people not being sure about what they're doing and, and, and looking in all directions rather than following a coach who tells you do this, you know, and sticking to it.

Luca Malaguti: [01:02:59](#) That is really good advice.

Gary McGrath: [01:03:01](#) Mm-hmm. Um, antioxidants super important as well. I started to take astaxanthin, um, which is like a, an algae. Uh, um, uh, this was, uh, Alessia takes this, Alessia Zucchini. Zucchini takes this. And, and it really smells like it as well, but it comes, it comes in capsules and stuff. It can kind of give you a bit of funny burps afterwards.

Luca Malaguti: [01:03:29](#) Spirulina, all of these or those things have a lot of, lot of things that we need.

Gary McGrath: [01:03:36](#) And also things like coffee, coffee's a good antioxidant. Coffee's a great supplement now <laugh>.

Luca Malaguti: [01:03:46](#) Absolutely. I've heard the same, making sure your antioxidants are being well taken. And even if it's a form of berries Yeah. If you can, that's even ideal.

Gary McGrath: [01:03:55](#) And, and, and you know, it took me through VB, an intense mental period, intense training period. And I didn't get sick. Uh, which can happen. I just pick up a sore throat. It happened to me in Turkey this year. I went to the World championships and got sick 'cause I traveled through the night, you know, traveling through three o'clock, four o'clock in the morning. You got to Kas CMAS world Championships. You were gonna do another an amazing dive. And boom, there's another tester to the patience game.

Gary McGrath: [01:04:24](#) Paid 500 euros for the privilege as well. Didn't do a single dive. But, you know, there you go. I'll be back next year.

Luca Malaguti: [01:04:32](#) But it was good because you were there, you got to network, you got to meet people. You just come back from vertical blue.

Gary McGrath: [01:04:39](#) Yeah. It was an unreal trip. It's just a shame I couldn't really end that summer on a bang, you know? But that's okay. So supplement wise, it's kind of simple and just, and just try and eat varied, which is challenging here in Dahab, you know, to, to get good vegetables in and stuff like that. So you've gotta, you've gotta watch what you eat. Um, so nothing too over complicated.

Luca Malaguti: [01:05:01](#) Fantastic. Awesome. So that's a couple of tips on, uh, supplements, which, if you are pushing serious training, you've gotta consider your nutrition and your, um, hydration as a priority, something I really keep in mind. Literally, uh, thanks to Gary.

Luca Malaguti: [01:06:25](#) And if Will Trubridge, someone has methodological as him. Yeah. And I trust a trained microbiologist.

Luca Malaguti: [01:07:13](#) You know, he's done his research.

Gary McGrath: [01:07:14](#) He's got a degree in genetics. He's a smart dude. So, so I'm willing to take that.

Luca Malaguti: [01:07:18](#) If William takes it and Gary takes it, you should take it <laugh>. That's gonna be on a T-shirt. Yeah. Yeah. Beautiful. Awesome. So, creatine protein, BCAAs with a question mark. Definitely keep up your magnesium, zinc, and potassium. Don't, don't forget your potassium levels. We've had some friends go into hypokalemia. And that is dangerous. I actually had a student going to hypokalemia on land. And it was a blackout loss of consciousness. With a recovery time of exceeding 20 seconds. A very odd kind. And when he messaged me saying thank you,

because the only thing he could do, 'cause it was it was his girlfriend, both of them being my students. Uh, the only thing he could do in this situation when she passed out in the bathroom was he could, uh, he could put into training, he could put into effect the training we did in the course. And then afterwards, the blood work revealed, what I had assumed to be, Hypokalemia. Thanks to the story and the research that our friend Thibault has done and gone through, you do not want to mess with low levels of potassium.

- Gary McGrath: [01:08:31](#) Yeah. It's pretty nasty, I remember reading his account of, of, of how he was through that. It's not not great.
- Luca Malaguti: [01:08:39](#) Not great at all. Yeah. Keep up with that. Uh, beta alanine, your algae, antioxidants. Yeah.
- Gary McGrath: [01:08:46](#) And you know, there's, you know how big the supplement industry is. It's multi-billion dollar. There's so much stuff you can take. Um, one thing I wanna look at this year is something called (inaudible).
- Luca Malaguti: [01:08:59](#) Yeah. I read about that. Interesting.
- Gary McGrath: [01:09:02](#) Huberman podcast. He spoke about it's, right. A testosterone booster. Which is interesting as long as they stay within the levels of, uh, of the WADA <laugh> and I don't get busted for excess testosterone.
- Luca Malaguti: [01:09:16](#) True, true, true.
- Gary McGrath: [01:09:17](#) But I think you probably have to be taking something a bit stronger.
- Luca Malaguti: [01:09:20](#) That's for another discussion. The conversation of dopamine, epinephrine, which is derived from dopamine, adrenaline and testosterone levels is fascinating. Really fascinating. And as men our age, uh, you being a few years older than me, <laugh>, it is quite important. It's quite important actually. Um, maintaining your levels of testosterone. There's a bit of people like in fitness industries seem to see 40 as a bit of a marker. And I, I understand that now, from now onwards, it will be harder for me to build muscle.
- Luca Malaguti: [01:09:56](#) Yeah.
- Gary McGrath: [01:09:57](#) Um, you know, I I, I'm not a body builder, so, you know, as long as I keep a healthy lifestyle and stuff, I think I'll be fine. Um, but yeah, I guess biologically, biologically it's all starting to deteriorate. 10,000 years ago, I would've been a village elder <laugh>, you know? The oldest warrior on in the village.

Gary McGrath: [01:10:18](#) Go see the white eye for wisdom and advice. <laugh>.

Gary McGrath: [01:10:21](#) Um, yeah.

Luca Malaguti: [01:10:23](#) Absolutely. Maybe, maybe that would be part two of our discussion. Cause I know we're both fanatics of Dr. Andrew Huberman. Mm-hmm. I really hope he one day listens to this podcast and I can interview him. It would be like, yeah, that'd be cool. It's my personal objective to convince Andrew Huberman why freediving is a very safe sport.

Gary McGrath: [01:10:45](#) He kind of thinks it's dangerous. Huh?

Luca Malaguti: [01:10:46](#) He kind of thinks it's dangerous. But I am sure I can convince him on a biochemical level.

Gary McGrath: [01:10:51](#) Yeah. You gotta you've gotta market it to him.

Luca Malaguti: [01:10:53](#) I gotta market it to him and make Dr. Andrew Huberman understand that on a biochemical level and a well-trained mammalian dive response, like Mr. Gary McGrath has trained over 15 years, is actually quite safe. It's actually doing a hundred plus meter dives, it's actually quite controlled and quite safe. Um, Gary, this has been amazing. I mean, we've chatted about patience, mental state seeking help, which is something that people, I think are really gonna be inspired to. I know I have been the past year and understanding...

Gary McGrath: [01:11:31](#) So just to interrupt, I, I really meant what I said earlier, like, if, if anyone's having a shit time, send me a message, man. I don't care if we've never met, like it's the hardest thing in the world to reach out like that. And, and if you feel like you want to press send and, and, and send me a little note, we'll talk.

Luca Malaguti: [01:11:49](#) Yeah, please do. Yeah. That's amazing. Thank you for saying that. I bet you you definitely will have some people reach out to you. Um, it's, it's amazing sometimes how just reaching out to a stranger and just saying hello and asking a question like, are you okay? Can make a big difference. So yes, please reach out to this man here, uh, on Instagram. You can find him as Gary White Eye.

Gary McGrath: [01:12:16](#) Gary White Eye.

Luca Malaguti: [01:12:19](#) And of course, if you are seeking some of the best coaching in the world, come on over to Dahab for a couple of weeks or a month, ideally. And Gary would be honored to coach you through a transformative experience. And if you are in Ibiza in the summertime, make sure to reach out to him as well for his amazing yoga, freediving, cooking, life-changing retreats.

Gary McGrath: [01:12:45](#) Yeah. Yoga and freediving retreats. Instagram for the business. But you'll, you'll find that through my stuff, so.

Luca Malaguti: [01:12:52](#) Exactly. Absolutely. Um, this has been amazing, Gary. Thank you so much. Uh, I think we covered so many topics from overcoming C O V I D, being patient, reaching out for help, um, you know, seeking advice, generosity, gratitude, acceptance. And, uh, supplementation and penis pills.

Gary McGrath: [01:13:16](#) Absolutely. I think we talked about freediving a little bit in the middle of all that. Didn't we? Did we mention free diving?

Luca Malaguti: [01:13:21](#) We talked about free diving.

Gary McGrath: [01:13:22](#) Did we? I think so. Good. <laugh>.

Luca Malaguti: [01:13:25](#) And even if we didn't, it doesn't matter.

Gary McGrath: [01:13:26](#) Yeah. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter.

Luca Malaguti: [01:13:28](#) You know, 'cause so many people are, are, are coming into this sport, especially after covid. To literally survive or, or, or relive, find a way to relive. They've been through so much in their life. They've lost people. They've had financial troubles. Covid literally destroyed their livelihood. And they find freediving and they have these cathartic moments where it's, it's truly transformative. It it is therapy, therapeutic.

Gary McGrath: [01:13:57](#) Yeah. That's, that's, for me I've always said that free diving is therapy.

Luca Malaguti: [01:14:01](#) Freediving is therapy.

Gary McGrath: [01:14:03](#) Absolutely.

Luca Malaguti: [01:14:05](#) Thank you, Gary.

Gary McGrath: [01:14:06](#) Thank you.