

**EPISODE 197**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[0:00:02.7] PF:** Welcome to episode 197 of Live Happy Now. This is your host, Paula Felps, thanking you for joining us again today. This week, we're joined by surfing legend, Laird Hamilton, who has transcended his surfing roots to become an international fitness icon, nutrition expert and entrepreneur.

What you may not know is that he's also used his connection with nature to expand his inner wisdom and define greater happiness. His new book *Liferider: Heart, Body, Soul, and Life Beyond the Ocean* looks at the five key pillars he's found instrumental in creating happiness. Let's hear what he has to say.

[INTERVIEW]

**[0:00:38.6] PF:** Laird, I am really happy and honored to have you on Live Happy Now. Thank you for joining us today.

**[0:00:44.0] LH:** Well, thank you for having me.

**[0:00:45.9] PF:** It's so interesting, because you're known first and foremost as an athlete, and you're also a businessman. You have all these different sides to you. I think a lot of people wouldn't realize that you have such enlightened spiritual side. Obviously, that's not something that happens overnight. Can you tell how that journey began for you?

**[0:01:05.9] LH:** Well, I would have to attribute a lot of my inward reflection to well, my upbringing and being raised in Hawaii in such awe, inspiring, incredible environments. I think I have to always give my mother a huge amount of credit. The DNA is from her and just her as a person. I think it's a combination of a bunch of things and I think it's evolved over time.

I think I started with an open mind and an interest and then through some all the different things that I've experienced, whether it's life-threatening things, or just life lessons, those of all influenced my spirituality.

**[0:01:53.8] PF:** I really like how you defined these five pillars. What really amazes me with this book *Liferider* is that you cover so much ground and you do it rather efficiently. You get through this book and you really feel like you can understand. I can understand each of those five pillars and how they relate to me. Can you kind of for people that haven't read the book, can you talk about what those five pillars are and really how you define those for yourself?

**[0:02:16.9] LH:** Yeah. I always talk about life like a tire, like spokes. You have all of these pieces and if any one of the spokes is out, then the tire doesn't roll and doesn't roll well. I think that people think, "Hey, I'll just be in great shape and that the physicality will be one," or there's the spiritual aspect to things, there's emotional, your relationships, how important that is. If things aren't right at your house, how can your tire roll correctly? If you're physically not healthy, how can your tire roll correctly? If you don't have aspects in your career going, or how your survival, how can it roll correctly?

I think there's more than just the five pillars. I think we just chose those, because those are the main hub of existence. The fact is is that what you watch, what you read, who you hang out with, I mean, all of these things influence your wellness. I mean, you just can't – I think we think, "Oh, well. I'll just make a bunch of money and that's going to make me – I'll be happy." I'm like, well you see a lot of wealthy, unhappy people out there and you think that I'll just be the best.

I mean, I always thought if I just was the best at something that that would be sufficient, then you realize you can be the best at anything. If you don't have good relations, if you don't have beliefs and hope and faith and all of those pillars, life is lacking something. There's an emptiness to it. It's an ongoing struggle. It's easy to just lay things out. I mean, I think the book is just – it's our attempt that's sharing some of the things that have benefited me. This is an ongoing struggle that I think we all are constantly in. The struggle ends when you die.

**[0:04:05.8] PF:** You know what? I really was impressed with in this book is how honest you are and how raw you are at just laying yourself out there. Instead of setting yourself up as like, "Well, this is how you should do it." You're advising us, but you're also saying, "I am so human and I have fallen short so many times." Does that make you feel vulnerable, or is that just important for you to be able to show people that you are just someone else who's trying to follow these same principles?

**[0:04:31.0] LH:** I think it wouldn't be truthful if I tried to say that I don't have these struggles and then it's not a continual process. That wouldn't be honest. I think people can sense insincerity. I feel that I can be more effective. If I have one person and if one person takes one piece from this and it benefits their life, then it makes it worthwhile because I know I've benefited from the things that I've learned from other people that I respect or admired.

I might not respect everything that they do. I might not admire everything that they do, but there may be an attribute that I took from them and I said, "Wow," and it made a difference in my life. I feel that's – because I'm a father and a husband and a friend, but as a parent you can say whatever you want, but they're just watching what you're doing. Let's try to at least at times the best we can make those two parallel. Let's make what we're saying, what we do run together. It's a lot more effective and then you don't need to look back as well and be a hypocrite.

**[0:05:33.5] PF:** One thing that surprised me and I think a lot of people would be surprised is that you start this book talking about death and fear, which is not normally what you think is going to be the lead-in in a book that is very much about motivation and enlightenment. Can you talk about how death – your view of death has helped you in your success, both in business and as a human?

**[0:05:54.3] LH:** Well, I mean, the fact is that it's ever-present. I mean, that we're really are – the fragility of our existence is something that should govern our behavior. There's a certain aspect of the presence of death that forces you into some real good behavior, you know what I'm saying? There's a certain humility that is demanded of you when you're under threat.

I also feel we have – human beings have been under threat in our entire evolution. Really for the first time in our evolution, we have diminished the threat. We've never really been better, safer, healthier than we are right now, no matter what's going on. No matter what's happening in the world, we've never had more food and better health and care and less starvation and less disease and all of this that we've ever been.

I was talking to someone the other day about this is almost like why we indulge ourselves in all of this other – all the news about negativity and about death and dying and whatever. It's almost we find that almost interesting and I question why that we do. Is that because we are threatened

by it, but we have this mechanism that is so deeply ingrained in us that we need to continue to indulge ourselves in it? I don't know. I'm trying to figure it out myself. I do know one thing that when you are threatened by death, it brings a value system and a perspective that is extremely healthy. It's extremely good for you.

I have a saying that everybody – if everybody just scared themselves once a day, it would be a better world. I think there's a lot of truth to that. I don't mean just merciless fear. I'm talking about just healthy hey, scare yourself. Just like, “Ooh.” Have that adrenaline effect and have that your system be threatened for a moment just to bring everything back down to like, okay, it's – I mean, it's – we're fortunate that we're not being threatened and that we have – not all of us are being threatened and that we have our health and that we have our family and all of these things.

I think that that – I have a friend who since passed, but he used to talk about in business he said, he made a big deal and people would be flipping out and he'd be like, “Well, this is not life threatening. I was in the war.” That's what he said. He was in the Korean War and he was like – this is after being in war he's like, “This isn't threatening.” You realized this is not – this is life threatening. This is just we're going to succeed or we're going to fail. I think I think having that perspective, that healthy perspective puts you in a position of power. You'll end up succeeding better when you come into the situation with that mindset.

**[0:08:39.5] PF:** Do you think that your time as a surfer, like you have taken on some big waves, you've taken on some dangerous situations, do you think that helped form that viewpoint?

**[0:08:49.2] LH:** Absolutely. First of all, I mean, I've had more than my share of life-threatening situations where I thought, “Well, man. This look like it's going to be the end,” and had time to think about it; had extended ones, like lost at sea scenarios. I've had ones where I was just being held under and I thought well, I'm not going to get back to the surface. Every time I've ever had one of those, it had an influence on me.

I always say that I talk about it rounding the hard edges and then my wife would look at me and like, “Oh, really.” You think that that did that, but I would say that all of those have had an influence on me in my life and there's no way that they couldn't. I know that the ocean has been

one of the greatest teachers in my life, if not the greatest influence and teacher that I've had. I use the ocean as nature, that nature is the ultimate teacher.

I think we've grown so far away from that school, that school of nature that we've stopped studying under that professor and I think that that's affecting us. I think that we need in that school of nature, fear is a big subject. Life-threatening situations are ever-present and prevalent. That's something that we are lacking and I think I use fear and death as a way to talk to people so that we can begin to understand the importance of how that influences us.

**[0:10:20.9] PF:** Absolutely. I'm glad that you brought up nature, because that's something we talk a lot about at Live Happy Now. I know you are huge. You've got to walk barefoot every day. I love that you brought up so much about nature. Can you talk about how your philosophy of how crucial it is that we are out in nature every day and do something to connect?

**[0:10:40.6] LH:** One of the ways that I would describe nature is that we are in it and it is us. It's when you go walk in nature, you go walk with yourself. In a way, having a deeper relationship with nature is having a deeper relationship with yourself, because we're from it and it's from us. I mean, we're all – it's all one. I think that that relationship harmonizes us.

I think there's a – I mean, listen walking barefoot and breathing oxygen from plants and being in sunlight. I mean, these are all foundational elements of existence. To not engage with those on a regular basis is I think it taints our view of the world. I think it doesn't allow us proper perspective of the planet and of course, of living organisms in nature and living plants and animals and all the things that we're related to.

It's like not knowing your family. It's like how is it important to know your family, I think it's quite important to know your family. Maybe some of them you don't want to know quite as well as some of other ones, but this is a family that you get to choose which ones you want to know and which ones you don't, but I would definitely want to understand and spend time with those parts of my family that intrigued me. I mean, the color green alone affects mood and I mean, it's just – there's so many. The list of the benefits of being in nature and having a relationship with nature are beyond count.

**[0:12:10.8] PF:** Yeah. I love that you brought up the fact about the color green. You had some information in there I'd never seen before about what the color green does to you. I found that if nothing else, people need to pick up this book just to find out what the color green is going to do for them.

**[0:12:23.4] LH:** No, exactly.

**[0:12:24.8] PF:** It's amazing.

**[0:12:27.4] LH:** I feel one of the things about anything that you do like this book, because it always feels weird to just, "Okay, hey I'm going to do a book." There's something conceited about that in my opinion, just the thought of it, even if it's not about anything to do with you. Then if it's about you, then it's even more – you're like a poet. The fact is that it ends up being a learning process and you end up when you're able to learn things that you either take for granted or just naturally have done intuitively but then you can get the science behind, like a lot of the things we do, we do intuitively.

You're like, "Wow. Why am I checking to this? Why do I practice this stuff?" Then you get science behind that to back it up and you're like, "Oh, that's why." Then you start to embrace the relationship with your intuition and go and use that more as the governing light in your life. They talk about that stuff that's written in your heart. I mean, you have this intuitive instincts and some of these senses that we have dulled over time. I think through some of these processes and through understanding, we begin to sharpen those.

If not anything, just confirm that stuff like, "Yeah. That's why I like that, or that's why that makes me feel that way, or yes, I need to do that more," or whatever attribute you're lacking, or just confirming.

**[0:13:51.4] PF:** Well, and one thing that I did really appreciate because I haven't seen this – if I've seen it before, I haven't seen it many times. You're not just talking about how nature benefits us, but you really talk about how we need to respect nature. That was a different point. Usually, it's scientifically we're only talking about what we're – what it can do for us. Why is it so important then we have to respect the natural world and what does that do for us?

**[0:14:15.6] LH:** I think the concept of always just taking and not protecting. I think protection comes with respect. I think if you respect something, you'll protect it. Where if you're just trying to figure out how it's going to benefit you and it's all about taking, then you might just take it until there's none left and then be like, "Oh, well. I can't get that. Now what can I get?" It speaks a little bit more to a value system and a mentality of a human condition of again, taking how do we take – a lot of our behavior is connected to biology, and so when you've been something that part of our issues and when we went from the bottom of the – the very bottom of the food chain all the way to the very top and we didn't work our way through the process and only take what we need and all that. We went from having to scavenge to just to having more than we could ever need.

Because we miss the middle process, it's a little about learning a skill where you bypass all the foundation work that will actually really be beneficial when you get to a spot where you where you need to do the right thing in the spot, but you just – you bypass it you went right to the top. I mean, it speaks to so many respect and admiring nature and appreciating nature. I think that that's not only is it mandatory for us to put ourselves in the right hierarchy where we need to be, but it also will affect our behavior and what we do and how we do it. If we respected nature more, we wouldn't be in a lot of the environmental issues that we are in.

**[0:15:53.0] PF:** That brings us to the last point that I really want to talk to you about before we let you go and you make such great points about how everything is connected. You break it down to the amount of water you drink, the food you eat, everything that we do is connected to our outcomes and to the rest of the planet. You make that sound so simple, but it's also so hard for us to master. Can you talk about the philosophy of connection and how we can get better at understanding that?

**[0:16:23.3] LH:** Well for one thing, I heard a statistic one time that they'll never be any more or any less water that is on the planet right now.

**[0:16:30.0] PF:** Yeah. That's scary.

**[0:16:32.2] LH:** Yeah. Just as a concept, just as an understanding. I mean, the only way you can really lose weight is to breathe. You have to breathe the broken carbon out. When you start to understand how the system works, then you realize how connected we are to it. That's only

the visible, right? That's what we can see. The fact is is that energetically, we can't see – I mean, maybe there are a few of us that have the capacity to see energy, but energetically we are – it's all connected. We're connected by what we see, so how connected are we by what we don't see?

The air from China arrives on the West Coast of the United States in seven days. I mean, it's not as big as we think it is. We just think there's a vastness to it that there's no end. In a way, we're in one cell and energetically we're connected and environmentally we're connected and spiritually. I mean, we're connected on all these different levels.

If you're observant in life, you start to understand how connected things are. Just observe. I think that a lot of us are fogged over. I mean, myself included. I think life fog just over, just all of the complications, how complicated we've made life. I think we've done something when we were hunting and gathering, it only took us 38 hours a week to survive and then the rest was free time. Now it takes us 70 and we don't have enough time. It's just like, through making things more technically advanced and through all of these things to make everything easier we made it more complicated than it's ever been, and more connected but yet more disconnected than we've ever been.

I think it's really a process of observation. I think that you just – we need to be more observant. I think being observant and some of the of the most intelligent humans that have ever walked the earth were just understanders, observers of nature, understanding and observing human behavior. Again, we always make jokes, common sense the most uncommon sense. I don't even know why they call it common sense. Again, it's about observation and about being observant and being considerate.

In Hawaii, when you grow up in Hawaii you're so connected to the environment and we're real cautious about people's space and respectful. I think when you grow up more connected to our more tribal existence, which would be that we would be around less people, you're super connected because you're connected to nature to survive and you have to be aware, you have to be highly aware of hey, there's a storm coming, hey there's a thing. It's like, why do animals run away from a tidal wave before it even arrives I mean, days before? Animals just all run away and right before a tidal wave gets there, where we're still just hanging out going, “Well, there's a giant wave coming.”



**[0:19:33.0] PF:** Like, “No, it doesn’t look bad out there.”

**[0:19:35.4] LH:** We become numb to our relationship with the earth and we become – we really lack observation and then which results in a lacking understanding. I think it's important to – we have that mechanism in us. I think it's important to continue to develop it. I talk to people about if you have an intuition about something and you see some situation and you go, “Yeah, that's going to be a problem,” well then you should act on that.

What happens is that is actually a skill that you have, a mechanism that you have that you can begin to hone in on again. I think there's a lot of those inside of us that have gone dormant. There's physical ones, there's spiritual ones, there's emotional, there's all of these different levels to that. I mean, we have skills to survive intuitively and we have these reptilian brain that allows us to do all kinds of physical feats. Obviously, there's spiritual ones that we have that will allow us to do spiritual feats. I think that that's something that's it's a field of interest in my opinion and something to learn.

**[0:20:42.0] PF:** Once you start practicing those, once you – as you said, you act on your intuition and you see it reinforced, it gets easier. You build your intuition and you're more likely to act on it.

**[0:20:52.2] LH:** It's a muscle. It's a muscle. It is. If you think it's not a muscle, try, try it and you'd be surprised. These are all just muscles. Vision is a muscle, hearing is a muscle and so is intuition, so is instinct. I mean, these are muscles. A lot of these are just – have been dormant, because we somewhat dominated our environment to the point where we don't have – we don't need them like we've had to to survive. Yet, I believe that they are going to be the thing that allows us to really get through the real challenge, which will be when we destroy, completely finish up what's left of nature. Hopefully, we can stop before then and at least protect what's left and begin to restore and re-cultivate some of it.

**[0:21:41.9] PF:** Laird, this is a beautiful book. To me, it's a reset button for people who might know some of this. We forget. We forget that we know these things. I think for others, it's going to be a completely new discovery.

**[0:21:55.5] LH:** Which will be great. Which will be great. Listen, like I said, if I have one person come to me and say, “Hey, that I really did something and changed everything.” For me, that's sufficient. In a way, I feel a lot of these things are things that were given to me. I'm just passing it on and are trying to pass it on in the ways that best make sense to me.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[0:22:18.9] PF:** That was Laird Hamilton, author of *Liferider: Heart, Body, Soul, and Life Beyond the Ocean*. Visit us at [livehappynow.com](http://livehappynow.com) to learn more about how you can follow Laird online and where to go to learn more about his five pillars.

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That is all we have time for this week. We'll meet you back here again next week for an all-new episode. Until then, this is Paula Felps reminding you to make every day a happy one.

[END]