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**Movin' On: Taking Transhumanism in Stride**

**By Maya Talisman Frost**

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Back in the seventies, we watched "The Six Million Dollar Man", a popular television show about a trained agent who was critically injured and given the gift of technology—bionic legs and super vision.

Lee Majors portrayed a man capable of leaping tall buildings and scanning the landscape at night. We marveled at the possibility of creating a human with superior qualities. In the opening sequence of each episode, we heard the phrase, "We have the technology." The implication was that we could—and should—use it to transform a high market value man into a formidable man/machine mix.

My definition of an excellent human is someone who is mindful of maximizing his or her own potential for creativity and compassion. That seems like plenty to tackle, but there is an emerging school of thought that suggests we ought to become excellent superhumans.

Transhumanists believe that the continual evolution of humans requires the—key word here— ethical use of technology to help us live better, longer lives. For them, a life span of 80 years may be what "nature intended" for this decade, but our role as 21st century humans is to use what we've learned to improve upon nature.

These aren't doom and gloom types who live in a fantasy world or anticipate a future run by robots. Transhumanists are passionately optimistic about the role of humans. They're excited about the possibilities for people to truly maximize their potential. They believe that human development is limited only by our current technology.

We're seeing evidence of this every day. Fertility clinics offer a range of effective treatments unthinkable a few decades ago. We're captivated by the extreme makeover shows featuring dramatic physical transformations of those willing to endure multiple surgeries and painful recovery periods. We know people who have benefited from pacemakers, cochlear implants, laser vision surgery, prosthetic devices, and cosmetic dentistry.

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Transhumanists embrace these techniques and many more as a desirable progression toward utilizing technology as a tool for human improvement. They envision a time when we can eliminate disease, enhance memory, develop superior senses, and create physical bodies resistant to aging.

This build-a-better-human view isn't universally accepted, but it's important to look at how our ideas of "improvement" have changed over the years. Eyeglasses were once viewed as an unnecessary and unwelcome manipulation of our God-given eyesight. The current hot topics such as stem-cell research will one day elicit the same yawns with which we greet news of eyebrow lifts or fertility drug-induced twins.

What does it mean to go beyond human? As long as humans are in charge, is it possible to do anything that might be considered beyond the realm of human potential? Is there a need for ethical controls or legal restrictions if advances in science are seen as the desired result of natural human

achievement? Is all fair in love and war—and science?

We love ethical debates about the nature of nature. Instead of focusing on a particular new-fangled technique, we'd do well to frame our rejection or acceptance of transhumanism in terms of the bigger picture—is technology a natural part of human evolution? Do we have a responsibility to use science as a tool to improve the human experience— including the human body?

I'm always open to improving, and that goes for my definition of excellence. If we can develop superhuman brains and bodies, can we also look forward to tremendous gains in creativity and compassion? Transhumanists get us thinking about the potential for humanity over the long haul.

Now that's excellent.

Maya Talisman Frost is a mind masseuse. Her work has inspired thinkers in over 90 countries. She serves up a satisfying blend of clarity, comfort and comic relief in her free weekly ezine, the Friday Mind Massage. To subscribe, visit

### **Training Technique**

**By Matt Russ**

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Having an effective training plan is very important, but if you are reinforcing bad habits or technique with your training you are working against yourself. Technique, form, and skill are often overlooked facets of training. Athletes should spend a portion of each season perfecting their form, just as they work on strength, endurance, and speed.

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Proper technique not only makes you more efficient and faster, it can prevent overuse injuries. Endurance athletes repeat motions thousands of times in a single work out. Improper leg tracking on your bike or a bad foot strike at best wastes energy, but could lead to a visit with the orthopedist. Here are some guidelines for perfecting your form and technique...

- Seek instruction. You can not work on better form if you do not know what it is. A cycling or running coach can video your stride or spin and give you exact feedback on what you need to work on. Books and video tapes are helpful, but they do not have a discerning eye and can not give you the specific instruction you may need. Most coaches charge an hourly fee for one to one instruction.
- Get Feedback. Visual feedback is the best. If you own a video camera set it up on a tri-pod to record your form. Playing it back in slow motion allows you to break down each portion of your stride or spin. A mirror in front of the treadmill or trainer is another inexpensive way to give your self feedback.
- Conscious then unconscious. The process of reinforcing proper form is to consciously repeat a proper motion until it becomes automatic and unconscious. This process takes thousands of repetitions, and you must regularly focus on and check your technique and form.
- Work on only 2–3 aspects of technique per session. If you try to adjust too many things at once it is difficult to focus on performing them all correctly. Take just a few aspects of your stride, stroke, or spin and work on perfecting them.
- Slow then fast. Take a motion or even part of a motion and perform it very slowly and correctly. Gradually bring up the speed of the motion until you are at your race pace. If at any point you perform it incorrectly, slow down again and repeat until you have it.
- Work in base. As intensity increases it becomes harder to concentrate on form. If proper form is not unconscious at this point, it will be much harder to learn. The long slow base work outs are great for working on form. This is not to say you should only work on technique in base. You should work on technique and use drills year round. Base is simply the best time to perfect your form so that you carry good technique into the season, and it adds variety to your base work outs.
- Get the right equipment. If you are running in the wrong shoe for your stride mechanics, or you are improperly fit on your bike, it will make it more difficult to have good form. Make sure you have the right equipment and that it is adjusted correctly.

Learning and using proper technique is "free speed." Often you can lower your energy usage and increase your speed without greater exertion. In fact, your exertion level may go down and your speed or power up. Proper technique is no less applicable to an amateur athlete than it is to a pro. In fact, amateurs can usually benefit the most from technique instruction.

Matt Russ has coached and trained athletes around the country and internationally. He currently holds licenses by USAT, USATF, and is an Expert level USAC coach. Matt has coached athletes for CTS (Carmichael Training Systems), is an Ultrafit Associate. Visit [www.thesportfactory.com](http://www.thesportfactory.com) for more information.

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