

*Not Your  
Average*

# JOE

*By Lauren Paige Kennedy*

*Photograph by Randall Slaving/August Images*

He's well known for his incredible physique, but actor **Joe Manganiello** was not born with that *Magic Mike* build. It took discipline and determination, the same kind he applies to his on-screen work and his commitment to stay sober.

We talk to him about how he stays motivated and focused



# “THERE IS NO MAGIC PILL FOR STAYING FIT,”

says chiseled actor **Joe Manganiello** of *True Blood* and *Magic Mike* fame, who has convincingly played the roles of a mythically strong werewolf and a built-like-a-truck male stripper. Goals—in and out of the gym, he says—are achieved through self-control and an unwavering work ethic. It’s that simple.

This approach may explain why Manganiello’s success transcends his enviable physique and recognition by celebrity weeklies as one of the world’s hottest bachelors. (But not for much longer—he’s scheduled to wed *Modern Family* star Sofia Vergara this fall.)

Manganiello applies self-discipline to every endeavor. The TV and film star, 38, is the best-selling author of the 2013 book *Evolution: The Cutting Edge Guide to Breaking Down Mental Walls and Building the Body You’ve Always Wanted*, a step-by-step guide to his personal diet and exercise regimen with plenty of autobiographical asides and a promise to deliver big results.

He also runs a successful production company, 3:59 Inc., with his younger brother Nick. The company’s name was inspired by Roger Bannister, the first human being to run the mile in less than four minutes, long believed to be an impossible goal. The Manganiello brothers share a similar mission: They set high-bar objectives and work to exceed them.

Their first release was the 2014 documentary film, *La Bare*, a behind-the-scenes look at the real—as opposed to reel—male stripper scene in Dallas. Big brother Joe was first exposed to this type of near-naked entertainment when he played a character by the name of Big Dick Richie in *Magic Mike*, director Steven Soderbergh’s 2012 box office smash about Chippendales-like exotic dancers. His interest piqued, Manganiello went on to co-produce and direct *La Bare*, which he shot in just eight days and premiered at the Sundance Film Festival.

A formally trained Shakespearean actor who received his BFA from Carnegie Mellon University School of Drama in Pittsburgh, he says he long aspired to direct a film, an experience he intends to repeat soon. “I’ve only scratched the surface,” Manganiello says. “There is so much I want to do. Directing a scripted feature is next, hopefully sooner than later.”

But one topic—“male as sex object”—clearly fascinates the star, enough so that he’s reprising his *Magic Mike* role in

the upcoming sequel, *Magic Mike XXL*, opening in July. Devotees of Soderbergh’s initial outing won’t be disappointed: Manganiello hit the gym hard to flex, glisten, gyrate, and shed his skimpy costumes with the best of ’em.

## Self-Made Man

Sneak a peek at Manganiello’s middle school pictures and you might not believe it’s him. You’ll see little hint of the brawn to come: narrow shoulders, thin frame, and seriously geeky glasses. While he always excelled athletically—“I played soccer from age 5,” he says, “then added basketball, football, and volleyball” as the years went on—he looked like, well, your average Joe.

Today, Manganiello’s appearance is anything but average. Soderbergh once described the actor’s body as “walking CGI”—computer-generated imagery. Manganiello wants his fans to understand just how much effort has gone into his transformation. “Most people believe actors they see on screen have it easy,” he says. “They think we were



## EARLY START

Is the self-discipline Joe Manganiello seems to have plenty of hard-wired? Or does our learning environment as we grow up influence how much discipline we eventually possess? According to Terrie E. Moffitt, PhD, professor of psychology and neuroscience at Duke University, in Durham, N.C., what separates highly successful adults from less successful ones are the self-control skills they master as children. She offers this advice for guiding your own kids.

### FOCUS ON FUN.

“Identify an activity your child enjoys: music lessons, martial arts, competitive sports, art classes—anything that involves setting goals and working toward them, in a context that your child finds fun,” she says. “Let your child know you admire self-discipline and willpower. [Give] praise not just for success, but for trying.”

### TALK ABOUT THE FUTURE.

“Start with young children, planning just until lunch or bedtime. As the child grows older, involve them in planning over longer timespans. Help them identify goals further and further into the future,” she advises.

### TEACH MONEY HABITS.

“When giving an allowance, take time to identify the opportunities that will arise to spend it. Help children grasp that if they don’t spend all their money on candy right away, they’ll be able to buy something really nice” later on. Moffitt likes a program developed by PBS’ *Sesame Street* called “For Me, For You, For Later.” A child’s money is divided into three piggy banks. “For Me” is what a child can spend now; “For You” is for charity to others; and “For Later” is kept for savings.



# CUPPA JOE

Actor Joe Manganiello fought for years to gain traction in Hollywood, accepting smaller roles and living leanly. He transformed a normal, fit frame into that of a professional athlete or bodybuilder. And he's struggled with alcohol abuse, realizing his life and health were spinning out of control when he was in his mid-20s. Now sober for more than 12 years, the star shares how he defines a happy, healthy existence.

**PROTECT YOUR INNER LIFE.** "If I don't take care of my spiritual life, I'm not going to be able to grow in any area of my life."

**ASSESS YOURSELF HONESTLY.** "I was lucky enough to catch my alcoholism at a point where I could find a way to start dealing with it," he says. "It's not something that ever goes away or is curable. You have to get ahold of it; it's a constant thing. An addict is never cured."

**GIVE BACK.** "I grew up in Pittsburgh. I have a soft spot for kids who are struggling, so I spend time at the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. When I see their hardships and how they're suffering and valiantly fighting, it gives perspective to my own life. It makes my heart swell."

**BE DISCIPLINED.** "I had a lot of obstacles to get over. I learned discipline from sports." Applying those lessons is how he works toward achieving his goals.

**DON'T GIVE UP ON LOVE.** Manganiello reportedly pressed *Modern Family* star Jesse Tyler Ferguson for now-fiancée Sofia Vergara's phone number after she split in 2014 from her longtime partner Nick Loeb. Vergara initially demurred, thinking Manganiello was "too handsome," but she finally agreed.



born with these genetics; we just pop out of the womb built this way. Not the case! No one wants to schedule exercise into their lives. They say, 'I don't have time.' Really? You don't have one hour out of each day to do something that can change your life? An hour is all you need. For years I would rent apartments across the street from 24-hour gyms. If it was Friday night at midnight, I had no excuse. I made fitness a part of my life."

Self-discipline is a skill that's difficult for many people to develop, while others such as Manganiello seem to have it in spades. But why?

Bill Cole, MS, MA, peak performance mind coach and president and founder of the International Mental Game Coaching Association, says the key to achievement is enthusiasm for your goals. Cole coaches both Olympic and major-league athletes, and teaches his disciplinary techniques to corporate America.

"People who struggle are forcing themselves," he explains. "Those who succeed come at a project from an inner joy and excitement. Create inspiring goals, and they will *pull* you toward them, without you having to push." Lesser goals, he continues, won't motivate you. "But if you shoot for the stars and miss, at least you'll hit the moon."

Cole agrees with Manganiello that scheduling fitness—or setting aside time for whatever you aim to achieve, from writing a book to switching careers—is key. "Set a reminder to work out at a certain time each day, so you can't forget. Then turn what you do into bragging rights—'I just ran that killer hill yesterday!'—and that will motivate you." Celebrate even incremental gains, he suggests, and "don't call your workout system a program. Call it a training mission."

Manganiello follows this same, tiered approach: Aim for fun, cheer on the

results, and never, ever blow off taking care of yourself. "There is so much in life that is out of our control," he says. "I don't fly the plane. I don't drive the other cars on the street. I'm not in control in terms of my career. What I *am* in control of is my physical well-being. I'm not sure there's anything else that immediately gratifies you for your efforts in the way health and fitness does. Other people see it as a chore. I enjoy it."

Still, while he often trains at a high level, eating lots of lean protein and mixing "cardio and weight resistance with pull-ups and hanging," he does so only when his profession demands it.

"I've only been in this kind of shape for five or six years. Not every role requires me to have supernatural strength or to be ready for a strip scene in a *Magic Mike* movie," he explains. "I put on 25 pounds for one role. For each role I play, I sit down and talk with my trainer about what I want to look like, what the goal is going to be, and how we can alternate my eating and working out—or not working out." Good health, he insists, is his priority.

Right now Manganiello's training is light because he's recovering from a bicep injury to his right arm. It happened last fall on the set of *Magic Mike XXL*, and it was serious enough to potentially derail production.

"My [scene] partner in my finale routine did something unrehearsed on the first take, and the result was that my bicep tore," the actor says. "There were a thousand extras there. I had to stop the camera. I heard it rip and pop. I couldn't lift my arm. But what are you going to do? Shut down a studio movie?" He scoffs at the thought. "By some miracle the bicep stayed down and looked normal. You couldn't tell. I finished the movie, came home to LA, and went straight into surgery. If I'd gone into



surgery [during the shoot], the movie's over, done. We wouldn't have been able to make up that footage."

The healing process has been slower than he'd like. "I had a cast on for 10 days. Then I wore a brace for six weeks. The bicep is a tricky muscle. Before [my injury], I trained like a professional athlete. Now, it's three or four months of no resistance after surgery. I'm icing it, heating it, using electrical stimulation. There's not much else I can do," he says, but allow it to slowly bounce back.

Another muscle—the one in his brain that flexes self-control—is what drove Manganiello, even through discomfort, to complete the film. "I just powered through," he says. "All of my sports growing up kicked in. You finish the game."

## Role of a Lifetime

Landing the role as husband to the talented and funny Vergara is his newest aim in life. The actor just hopes his wedding day isn't crashed by pesky paparazzi hovering in noisy helicopters above the ceremony.

"It's like a CIA operation to keep things quiet so they won't ruin it," he says. But unlike some prospective grooms who drip nervous sweat before saying "I do," Manganiello calmly and sweetly predicts success for their union.

"We knew right off the bat, very early on, that this is it," he says. "You meet that person who you know right away was put here for you. I was put here for her. We're very good with each other." His only goal for their shared future is "to continue to explore the love that we've had right from the beginning."

It won't take much discipline to kiss the bride. And make no mistake, Manganiello is training hard for it right now.

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