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PROFILE

Joe Dillon

A Quest for Health Transforms a Life and Career

by Jon VanZile

Joe Dillon was probably the last kid you would have figured to become a future nutrition and health guru.

Growing up in northern California in the 1950s, he was raised by parents living a typically indulgent American lifestyle. His father, a former athlete and Marine, had become a heavy smoker, and both his parents were overweight. Dillon says he was “one of those chubby, overweight kids” until he was 16, when he embarked on a remarkable journey of knowledge, exercise, and nutrition that has made him a leading motivational speaker and fitness authority.



A Life Altered by Tragedy

Dillon’s transformation began when he joined his high school swim team. In his junior year, a young instructor named Dick Vermeil arrived at the high school to begin his coaching career. Vermeil would later go on to win the 2000 Super Bowl as head coach of the National Football League’s St. Louis Rams, as well as become a leading motivational speaker himself. Even back then, however, his effect on the young Dillon was profound.

“He was one of the first people who believed in me and got me to believe in myself,” Dillon says. “Under his influence, I became an All-American swimmer.”

After graduating high school, Dillon spent two years in junior college, where he was also an All-American swimmer. Then, at the age of 20, everything changed. His father, still relatively young, died of a massive heart attack.

This was the first of several tragedies that would alter the course of Dillon’s life. Scared and upset, he dropped out of college and joined the Marine Corps as a fitness instructor.

It was 1965, and within a year, Dillon found himself fighting in the rice paddies and jungles of Vietnam. Under the extreme conditions of heavy combat, he began smoking heavily and pushing himself to exhaustion.

Once again, fate intervened, this time in the form of a bullet. Two weeks before the end of his tour of duty, Dillon was shot through the thigh with a bullet from an AK-47 automatic rifle.

“I came home on a stretcher,” he notes. “I literally couldn’t walk at first, and my left leg turned to mush.”

The former All-American swimmer was wounded, weakened, and depressed, yet determined to recover what he had lost to enemy fire. He found his inspiration in a book called *Aerobics*, written by Dr. Kenneth Cooper.

“I got really caught up in it,” he says. “I quit smoking in one day and I started running. I was soon running five miles a day, seven days a week.”

This kind of discipline and willingness to self-experiment would characterize Dillon throughout his later life. Gradually, he recovered his strength, and health and fitness began to play a larger role in his life. He returned to college and graduated from the University of California-Irvine with honors.

Joe Dillon’s Daily Life Extension Supplement Schedule

Acetyl-L-Carnitine	2,000 mg	Magnesium Citrate	640 mg
Ascorbyl Palmitate	2,000 mg	Mega EPA	8 caps (2,880 mg EPA/1,920 mg DHA)
Beta-Carotene	100,000 IU		

Bilberry Extract	400 mg	Mega GLA	300 mg
Calcium Citrate	880 mg	Glucosamine/ Chondroitin Sulfate	8 caps
CDP Choline Caps	2,000 mg	Mega Lycopene Extract	60 mg
Chloroplex	4 caps	Melatonin	18 mg, time release
Chromium	800 mcg	N-Acetyl Cysteine	3,000 mg
Complete B-Complex	4 caps	Natural Prostate	4 caps
Cran-Max	2,000 mg	Phosphatidylserine	800 mg
Creatine	5,000 mg	Rejuvenex	morning
DHEA	50 mg	Rejuvenight	evening
DMAE	600 mg	I3C/Resveratrol	1 cap
Echinacea	as needed	SAMe	2,000 mg
Gamma E Tocopherol/Tocotrienols	4 caps	Silibinin Plus	4 caps
Goldenseal	as needed	Sports Ginseng	800 mg
Grape Seed Extract	400 mg	Super Alpha Lipoic Acid	2,000 mg
HCA	8 caps	Super CoQ10	400 mg
Hydroderm	Twice daily	Super Digestive Enzymes	4 caps
Lactoferrin	1,200 mg	Super Ginkgo Extract	480 mg*
L-Glutamine	4,000 mg	Super Green Tea Extract	1,200 mg
Life Extension Mix	12 tabs	Super Saw Palmetto	4 caps
L-Tyrosine	2,000 mg	Super Selenium Complex	200 mcg
		Vitamin C	20,000 mg

*CAUTION: Life Extension recommends only 120 mg/day of ginkgo biloba.

Reaching a Crossroads

In his early thirties, Dillon reached a crossroads. He had started a successful career at a large insurance corporation, but was increasingly focused on personal health. He began finding it harder to maintain the same level of fitness, no matter how much he exercised. Worse, he learned that he had both high blood pressure and elevated cholesterol levels. Mindful that heart disease had felled his father, Dillon once again began looking for a workable solution.



“My favorite expression is, ‘When the student is ready, the teacher will appear,’” he says. “At that time, the teacher was Nathan Pritikin.”

In 1976, Nathan Pritikin published his seminal diet book, *Live Longer Now*. In it, he recommended a lifestyle program based on a diet of extremely low fat, lots of fruits and vegetables, and regular moderate exercise. He claimed this approach could lower the risk of heart disease—a claim that proved to be far ahead of its time.

“I read that book in one night,” Dillon says. “All of a sudden, I realized that nutrition mattered, that degenerative diseases are often self-inflicted. I realized that if I was willing to make lifestyle

changes, I could avoid degenerative disease.”

Dillon embarked on a full-fledged diet and exercise program. He cut virtually all fat from his diet and concentrated on eating whole foods. He dropped 30 pounds, and his blood pressure and cholesterol levels plummeted.

Still, Dillon felt that something was missing from his life. Although demonstrably healthier than before, he did not look or feel “robustly healthy.”

He began to wonder why and to search for answers. As a former swimmer, Dillon was accustomed to statistics and numbers.

Competitive swimmers measure everything, and victory often is measured in hundredths of a second. Dillon began to apply this same kind of quantification to his lifestyle, keeping careful track of his resting heart rate, weight, body fat percentage, and other critical measurements.

Dillon quit his job and founded a company called Body Account-ing, through which he offered hydrostatic body-fat measuring to health clubs, sports teams, and anyone else who was interested.

A New Career Direction

His new career began to take off, and he entered a period of intense self-education. From the world of bodybuilding, he learned about the value of high-quality protein and dietary discipline. From books, he learned new ways to exercise. From Linus Pauling, Durk Pearson, and Sandy Shaw, he learned about the value of dietary supplements.

Before long, he was weighing 3,000 people a month in 400 health clubs across southern California. He also began working out with the Mission Viejo Natadores, a local swim team. Over the next eight years, he worked with 22 Olympic multiple gold-medal winners.

His career as a speaker began almost by accident in the 1980s. After visiting a health club or group to offer hydrostatic measuring, he was often asked to return and explain the results. He found himself delivering impromptu speeches on health and wellness.

“I was standing in front of audiences that would ask questions,” Dillon says. “At first, I couldn’t answer half of them, so I’d go home and dig up the information. It was something I was really motivated toward.”

As always, Dillon was experimenting on himself, carefully monitoring his progress. At one point, he became a strict vegan, but five years later, he reintroduced animal protein in his diet when he realized he was not getting enough protein.



Gradually, Dillon developed a personal health program that drew on all his past experience. He developed a diet regimen based on lean, high-quality proteins and whole foods. Then, by modifying Dr. Leonard Schwartz’s “heavy hands” program, he incorporated a system of walking while pumping light hand weights into his lifestyle.

“I’d read a book and implement the principles in myself, testing it, watching my blood panel, my body fat, my resting heart rate, and other measurements,” Dillon says. “That led to what I preach today. Humans thrive on a high level of lean protein, like chicken, turkey, fish, and whey protein isolate. When you start putting at least 1 gram of pure protein per pound of body weight per day in your diet, your blood sugar stabilizes, you have lots of energy, and you get really lean.”

He combines these proteins with “foods-as-grown carbohydrates” like broccoli, cauliflower, asparagus, and squash, along with healthy raw fats such as nuts, avocados, and Udo’s Choice oil.

Life Extension products are a prominent feature of his health program. “In 1990, I became aware of pharmaceutical-grade supplements,” Dillon says. “Life Extension’s products are really pure. I can actually feel a difference right away.” His daily health program incorporates more than 40 vitamins, minerals, and other supplements.

Today, Dillon jokes about being “my own billboard” for the success of his program. At age 59, he is 6-2, weighs 195, and has only 8% body fat. He travels 20,000-25,000 miles a month to address various groups and organizations, and in 1999 was awarded the Executive Committee’s Speaker of the Year award. His corporate lifestyle program is aimed at improving health and productivity at companies across America.

“I think what it comes down to is that we’re all human,” Dillon says. “If you want to be successful, it’s a commitment.”

To contact Joe or to discuss a possible seminar, you can email him at jdillon5555@hotmail.com or call him at 310-740-2473.

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