How to Survive Being Married to a Musician.

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So you're married to a musician?

If you've made it that far, you probably already know everything you're about to read here, so it may be a better use of your time to have a nice relaxing bath, practice yoga or whatever rocks your boat.

If you continue to read, please appreciate that this applies equally to girlfriends, lovers, or whatever name represents your partnership.

Disclaimer: I'm a woman writing from a female perspective. I'm fairly sure what's written here is not gender specific, but to be on the safe side, I'm not making claims to represent the guys.

Here's the deal: rolling with your hot muso, you will inevitably spend a lot of time traveling to gigs (think long car rides, airplanes, boats and trains sometimes, frantic taxi dashes), waiting around during soundcheck, running out to get your beloved coffee/tea/whatever during soundcheck. Then, there's the show itself. By the time the actual performance begins you may be exhausted from the day and you may not have had the chance to eat anything since breakfast (assuming you had breakfast). The band may not have either, but they are getting adrenalin from the high of performing and being the main event. You, on the other hand, are neither a band or audience member; you're somewhere in between.



This becomes very apparent when, after the show, the band is getting lots of love from fans and you are hanging around trying to smile and be gracious when all you really want to do is go and eat. You may be selling merch' after the show and here, smiling is very important. You make every effort to remain not just good-humored, but warm and gracious. All the while you are starting to fall apart because you are hungry and strung out.

Oh, and realize that you are being watched.

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I'm speaking from experience here. Many times I've had people say to me, 'Oh yeah, I saw you at _____ Festival. So and so pointed you out to me and said that you're _____'s wife."

Assume your demeanor and behavior are being noticed, not from an egotistical angle, just because that's how people are.

Given your status as girlfriend/wife/whatever of the band, fans will be bending your ear about how much they love your honey. And they're right, your honey is amazing, but right now you'd like a beer and a bite to eat with said honey, but there's no way that's going to happen. You'll be hanging around for a while yet—post gig schmooze, pack up, smoke outside the venue, then food with the band. *Learn to love the band!*

By the time you do finally go for the post-show hang, you are close to melting down because you haven't eaten for hours, you're exhausted, and you really need a few minutes to connect and feel the love with your guy. I know, I know, the band is exhausted and hungry too, *and* they've put out a lot of energy during soundcheck, performance and post show schmooze. But the band is high from the show and the attention of the fans, and they get to share the intimacy of playing a show together with all the attendant highs, lows, sick drum solos, sweet harmonies and eye contact with the crowd.

So what to do? How do you navigate this delicate dance and remain resplendent and smiling in your own skin, support your guy and enjoy yourself?

I've been doing this for eight years now and have learned a few things along the way.

1. Take Care of Yourself.



I know that you want to be the devoted wife/girlfriend/main squeeze of your hot musician dude, but here's the thing, if you don't take care of yourself, you'll end up strung out and depleted as per above. The best way you can support your man is by looking after yourself (at the appropriate time) so that you can be the smiling goddess he wants you to be. The last thing he needs is someone else to take care of. He already has enough to deal with and needs you to just be chill. You can best be that by making sure your own needs are met.

No one else will do this for you because they simply won't think about the fact that you have needs. It's not about you—it's about the band and the show. So do yourself a favor: during soundcheck make sure you take a little time for yourself, have a snack or something more substantial and spend a few minutes resting. This way you will feel relaxed and grounded for the show, but more importantly for afterwards.

2. Have Clear Boundaries.

It's okay to have boundaries. In fact, it's a good thing. Knowing what you are willing and not willing to do means you won't end up feeling resentful. Things like driving band members to and from the airport, running for coffees during soundcheck, packing up after the show while the band are schmoozing (crucial if you want to get out of there faster) can all become sources of resentment if you don't do them with an open heart and attitude of helpfulness. More often than not, you won't be thanked for your efforts. So, if for whatever reason, you're feeling like you can't do it with good grace, better to refrain and keep your vibe clean.

3. Love the Band.

Or at least tolerate them with good humor. I'm lucky in that, for the most part, I do love all of the musicians my husband plays with; they are stellar individuals.

But there will always be folks that you just don't completely resonate with. In this case, try to keep your mouth shut. Musicians have a very deep bond and share an intimacy that you will never be part of, no matter how much you are around. What happens onstage is profound and complex; it's a form of communication, the language of which you don't speak. Additionally, bands spend long hours together on tour buses, airplanes, etc., and endure the hardships of the road which can be deep bonding experiences. You're not part of that, but it's better if you can include it in your field of awareness and sensitivity.

4. Develop a Thick Skin.

If your fella is somewhat famous you will need to learn to deal with that and it's not always easy. You will find yourself in public situations that are quite challenging. Realize that fans are shameless and many of them have no qualms about interrupting you and your dude at anytime—for example, while having a drink together, or just about to start eating a meal that you've been served in a restaurant. Fans are very important and hey, they help pay your rent, so you need to be gracious even when you feel like tellling them to piss off, which you frequently will.

Part of what makes this challenging is that while they feel free to cut into whatever is going on with you and your guy, they aren't actually interested in you. In fact, they don't actually *see* you. Being the object of such attention is of course very flattering, so you're dude will probably love this. Not so much fun when you're exhausted, schmoozed out and really just want to hang tight with the dude. More than that, it's a total bummer.

Learn to accept it and learn to extract yourself, if possible, with a smile. Have somewhere you can go to regroup and recharge, even if it means going back to the hotel and spending some time on your own. Your hubby has earned the fan love and he enjoys it. It's part of the reward for what he does. Let him have it and don't make your frustration an issue in your relationship. It comes back to taking care of yourself, then you can remain gracious and good-humored.

5. Have a Solid Sense of Self.

You will inevitably find yourself in social situations with star-fuckers and sycophants, many of whom won't ask you anything beyond your name and if you go on the road with your guy the whole time.

Breathe into this. Don't be swayed from the certainty of who you are in your being and the importance of your particular gifts and skills. It's better to smile mysteriously and remain gracious as you dwell in the

inner knowing of your fullness and talent. Don't waste your energy getting mad, keep it for your creative pursuits, which are essential to having a strong, separate identity. (Of course, if you are in the role of full time mom, or homemaker, that's great. Breathe into that and know that you are blessing the world by your being.)

6. Be Self Sufficient.

Being in a long term relationship with a musician entails long periods of separation. Get used to it and get involved in your own life.

Unless your guy is a session musician, you will be apart a lot. This can be lonely and difficult and you will be the one holding down the fort at home. On the plus side, you get to have lots of time for yourself to pursue your own creative endeavors. Learn to love the solitude; it contains many gifts, but to get them you have to penetrate the deepest core of loneliness and separation. If you can do this, you may find freedom and ecstatic unboundedness on the other side. Persevere. You will get there.

7. Develop a Strong Support Network.

Life on the road is no picnic. Unexpected situations always arise, group dynamics can be tricky, traveling is exhausting. This means that your guy won't always be able to be there for you in the ways you'd like. Don't assume this means he doesn't love you. Understand there are times when the stresses of the road are too consuming, and dealing with your need for support is more than he can handle.

It's helpful for you to have some friends that you can turn to at such times. Of course you want that loving connection with your man, particularly in these moments, but try to separate the need for support from the need to touch in and feel the love. It can help to be direct; tell him you need a shot of energetic love and a hug. Then he won't feel responsible for fixing a situation from a different city or continent. Not that it's his job to anyway!

8. Skip the Show Sometimes.

You don't have to go to every gig. I know you probably want to, at least for the first five years! Stay home sometimes and do your own thing.

9. Accept That You Come Second.

Relationship with a musician (possibly with any other artist) means that you come after the music. Make peace with this. You'll be happier and thus have a better relationship. Again, don't make this mean that your dude doesn't love you; it's different than that. If he's a successful musician, he is driven by his art and his drive to share that passion and he needs public recognition of his talent and hard work.

Don't get in the way of his creative flow. The more you can support it, the more juice you'll get back. And remember, part of what made you fall in love with him was exactly that passion and creative spark that needs

to be nurtured by his artistic expression. If he were willing to give up his art for you, he'd no longer be the man you fell in love with. Cherish his creativity, support his dreams. You'll both be happier and you'll grow as a person; sacrificing your immediate desires can be immensely rewarding in the long term.

Being with a musician requires a lot. And nobody gives you a how-to manual. That's why I'm writing this article. No one gave me the guide. I've had to figure it out myself along the way. I've made some horrible messes and behaved in ways I'm not proud of. I particularly haven't always been able to remain gracious and smiling at times when it would have been optimal.

But the rewards of sharing your life with a musician are huge. First of all, there's the music itself. Obviously you love music, otherwise you'd never have connected with the muso. Music is part of what makes living. It infuses our lives with joy, beauty, nuance and depth. To get to be that closely connected to a channel for musicality is a blessing.

You'll meet other interesting, talented people. The 'musician hang' can be fantastic, so relish it. You will probably be the recipient of wonderful hospitality and generosity and get to travel to places and have experiences that otherwise would not be available to you. It's a beautiful, complicated, at times crazy, path. It's not for everyone, but for those who stick around, it's a tapestry of wonder, expansion and delight.

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Ed: Brianna Bemel

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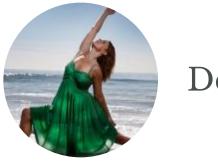
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Born and raised in Ireland, Dearbhla Kelly M.A. is a Los Angeles-based yoga teacher, writer and neurophilosopher. She began her academic training in Amsterdam and received degrees in philosophy in Dublin and Chicago. She is particularly skillful at marrying the more esoteric teachings of yoga with modern scientific insights and the practicalities of everyday life. Her writing has been published in the Huffington Post, Yoga Journal, Elephant Journal and Origin Magazine. A dedicated ashtanga practitioner, she teaches yoga and neuroscience workshops worldwide. Her lilting Irish accent and Dublin wit make her classes uniquely enjoyable.

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