

## How Rock Stars Stay Healthy On Their Never-Ending Business Trips

When I go to concerts by musicians who are in their sixties and seventies, I am impressed by their level of fitness, their flexibility, and their energy. I wish I could dance like Mick Jagger. When I was 25. According to Dr. Gabrielle Francis, a naturopathic doctor, chiropractor, acupuncturist, and massage therapist, rock stars act young in part because they are rebels. "They don't believe they're aging, they don't buy into that philosophy."

Rock n' roll stars are great ambassadors for a health revolution Francis has been touring with musicians for the past thirty years, helping them maintain a healthy lifestyle on the road. She believes we can learn a lot from how they stay healthy despite their demanding lifestyle. "Rock and roll stars are great ambassadors for a health revolution," she said.

In her book, *The Rockstar Remedy*, she draws from her experience with rock n' rollers to advise how the rest of us, whether we are frequent business travelers, sedentary technologists or busy working parents, can look and feel great.



Here are the key issues rock stars deal with on the road and how to help:

**Digestion.** Road food options are limited, and people easily come to rely on fast food and caffeine. As a result, says Francis, musicians on tour often suffer from constipation, heartburn and reflux. To get more healthy, she gets musicians to clean up their diet, eating vegetables and drinking lots of water. She teaches them to eat healthy snacks, like hummus with vegetables, yogurt and fruit, nuts and dried fruit and healthy frozen meals from Trader Joe's. Also, she gives them herbs and digestive enzymes to help them recover from whatever junk food they are consuming. "I encourage them to not be eating while they're walking around and to be in a relaxed state when they're eating," she said.

**Insomnia.** As touring has replaced recording as a primary source of income for artists, tour schedules have become especially grueling with multiple shows every week. Artists suffer from exhaustion and fatigue caused by the rigors of the schedule and lack of breaks. "There was one tour where it was like 300 shows a year, it was unbelievable," said Francis. But sleep doesn't come easily because the artists are wound up from the show for hours. Late night parties don't help with this problem. "To help them wind down, I usually give people protein as a food to eat before they go to bed because it helps to stabilize the blood sugar. Like a snack that has some kind of cheese or nut protein, nut butter or hard-boiled eggs," she said. She also gives them herbal teas and essential oils to help calm down the nervous system.

**Anxiety.** Being away from home and families contributes to depression and anxiety. Instead of partying and drugs as a distraction, Francis encourages them to stay connected with their families by talking with them on Skype and on the phone. "Artists that don't tour with a big entourage tend to get more lonely, so some of them bring different friends on tour with them. And it's always good to have stops where the family comes to meet them or little breaks in the tour so they could go back home and reconnect, but that's not always possible." Many artists have adopted meditation as a practice to alleviate anxiety. The good thing about meditation, other than benefits to creativity, is that you can do it anywhere. "You can do meditation while you're in the taxi on the way to the airport, while you're waiting for your plane, on the plane, on the bus, before bed." Massages, acupuncture and herbal teas also help with anxiety on the road.

**Alcohol and drugs.** Musicians party. One of the reasons they like having Francis around is that she doesn't judge. But she does help minimize the damage, like dehydration and headaches, that result from alcohol and drug use. "About 50 to 60 percent of the artists that I have worked with and still work with are in recovery," she said. "But the ones that aren't, sometimes we're dealing with hangovers and the morning after partying."

She calls them her “harm reduction strategies.” She gives them protein to prevent a “blood sugar meltdown in the middle of the night.” She encourages them to drink lots of electrolyte-enhanced water. And the day after the party she gives them herbs to alleviate their hangover and to detox their liver. “We negotiate and then it ends up that they realize ‘I feel better so next time I’m maybe not going to do that. But on the times that I do, I have something that’s going to make it so it’s not so bad.’”

Francis feels that harm reduction while on tour is more effective than postponing “getting healthy” to the end of the tour. “You can be on a pendulum and you can still be fairly healthy. You don’t have to do all-or-nothing,” she said.

**Getting focused to perform.** Touring artists often have a ritual that helps them get in the right frame of mind to perform. They pray, meditate, practice martial arts or do yoga. Many bands will have a joint ritual where they huddle and pray together. “Those kind of health, body, mind, kind of rituals are grounding when someone is moving all the time,” said Francis. “And it gives them a rhythm despite what seems like a chaotic life.”

Rock stars maintain their high energy and youthfulness by eating and living healthy. Many of the older artists have rich spiritual lives as well. Despite the stereotypes of partying and debauchery, there is much we can learn from them about how to make our own lives healthier.