

Creating harmony as you plan your wedding

Any married couple will tell you: weddings bring stress! Nervousness, financial pressure, trying to balance the needs and requests of family and friends; these are just some of the factors that can cause anxiety during what is supposed to be a beautiful and happy time in your life. So, how can you create inner peace during the whirlwind of wedding planning? The most important thing to remember is that you are in control of how much peace you preserve.

The first rule of planning a wedding is remembering that your wedding day is primarily about you and your spouse. It is a celebration of the future that you two have chosen to pursue together. By hosting a wedding, you are choosing to share that celebration with your loved ones, but it is still *your* wedding day, no one else's. During the planning of a wedding, you will have to entertain a lot of questions and input from other people. Family members and friends will offer opinions, they will make requests, they will have their own vision, and often their input will be creative, loving, helpful, even brilliant. But sometimes there will be jealousy and resentment from unrelated issues that people will try to inject into the planning of your wedding. Don't let these outside influences upset you or detract from your own vision of your wedding. Listen to others and show them that they are being heard, but remember that to hear someone doesn't necessarily mean to agree with them. Chances are once you give people the stage to express their thoughts, they will listen more openly to your point of view. If someone other than you and your spouse are paying for the wedding, you may feel more pressure and obligation to acquiesce to the desires of others. So, if you are not funding your wedding alone, it may be helpful to discuss from the very beginning how much planning involvement there will be from those who are helping you with your wedding expenses. It's often very helpful to establish expectations in the beginning of such a complex process; if you don't share your expectations with each other early, you'll probably find that you have to have "the discussion" eventually because one or both parties will have his or her expectations violated somewhere during the planning process. Open and early communication can help both of you to feel more peaceful during the planning process. Remember: you can't expect other people to change, and only sometimes can you expect circumstances to change, but you do have control over yourself and what you're willing to change in you. And when you demonstrate open-mindedness and flexibility, you will often inspire these qualities in others.

Even the most organized and efficient people can benefit from help, especially when it comes to planning a wedding. One way to help alleviate pre-wedding stress is to hire a professional wedding coordinator; it is rare to hear a bride regret that choice. These professionals should be able to:

- *Balance your vision with your budget.*
- *Offer insight into every aspect of planning including the many vendor duties.*
- *Listen carefully to your ideas in order to creatively integrate your unique style.*
- *Promptly execute tasks with kindness and be courteous to your family and friends.*
- *A coordinator is a financial planner, creative director, therapist, coach, and movie producer, all wrapped up in the best maid of honor anyone could ask for.*

In all aspects of life, having balance is a wonderful way to maintain peace and happiness. In the months leading up to your wedding, you might need help achieving balance. Here are some helpful tips for reducing stress that have worked for others....

Remember the calming influence of spirituality

Thank God, the Universe, or your higher power each day for bringing you to the connection and commitment of your future spouse. In this era of much non-commitment and abundant choices, consider yourself blessed to have connected with your soul mate.

Maintain a healthy perspective and expectations

Remember, whatever will be, will be. If someone important to you doesn't make it to your wedding, don't allow yourself to become upset about it. You did your part and invited your guests to a wonderful celebration filled with laughter, joy and beautiful memories. Allow them to do their part to arrive with a loving attitude. If they don't, that is their choice and is no reflection on you. If, during the planning process or on the wedding day, life interjects pesky little unexpected "surprises," don't worry about them. If the band can't remember your favorite song, if the doves refuse to fly out of their cages, if the cake designer delivers chocolate instead of carrot, even if one of your guests causes an embarrassing scene, remember that standing beside you is the person you want to spend the rest of your life with.

Take care of yourself physically

Remember to breathe. Deeply. You will face several challenging times during the planning process, and taking deep breaths throughout the day will help minimize the impact of potential stressors. Exercise, eat right, and indulge yourself in massages. A good massage will help you remember to breathe and be in the moment.

Be financially realistic

Work out a budget that works with your vision and that doesn't leave you feeling strapped. Most often a budget from the Internet is not realistic for a wedding, certainly not a wedding here in Los Angeles. Usually the lower the budget, the higher the amount of duties that will have to be taken care of by the couple and/or their families. A wedding with quality vendors can cost \$200 and up per guest for everything. (i.e. for 100 people plan on spending about \$30,000 for anything close to what you may see in some of the wedding magazines). Once you and your spouse do a little research, you can make realistic decisions about the kind of wedding that is right for you. You can reduce the stress that often accompanies the financial burden of an event this size by setting a realistic budget that you can afford, and including in that amount some padding, so that you will feel flexible and prepared to accept unexpected expenses.

Remember why you're doing it all

Remember to spend time with your future spouse, without discussing the wedding plans. The planner (usually the bride) can easily become caught up in the details of a "perfect" day while the partner (usually the groom) just wants to enjoy life with the future spouse, like he did before the proposal. Try not to lose sight of the very important fact that the union, the marriage itself, is much more important than the wedding. Finally, stop planning one week before the wedding day. Complete your favors, seating assignments, vendor payments, gift baskets, etc. at this time. This will free up time to spend with your future spouse, family, and out of town guests. Pamper yourself, wrap things up at your job and most of all, allow time to be joyful and enjoy the beauty of the moment.

MARY DANN