

Advice to the Bride

about Interacting with her Groom

Written by
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I sometimes tell couples I don't do perfect weddings - I do human weddings. When you plan any event that involves human beings, perfection is impossible. The best weddings are human weddings, in which the planners have the joyful graciousness to keep the little glitches in perspective and enjoy the people who are sharing their special day.

This doesn't mean you should slack off on your planning. Plan early and plan as completely as you can! Write things down. Get a loose-leaf notebook with sectional dividers with pockets to keep notes, receipts, outlines, and documents. There are hundreds of wedding organizers that vendors would be glad to sell you. However you do it, get organized about the wedding and stay organized. It will help you manage the inevitable stress of this landmark in your life.

Most of the wedding organizers you can buy have a time-line in them. There are most likely different versions of how early to do this or how late you can get away with doing that. But by one month prior to the wedding, try to have the details all nailed down. There's a good reason for this. As you get closer to the wedding day, your stress level may rise. If you have loose ends and unresolved details in these last weeks, they will grow larger and more burdensome by the day! The absolute epitome of this was the bride who wouldn't let the wedding begin because she "wasn't ready." The nail polish on the little finger of her right hand wasn't perfect; and everyone would see!

Securing your wedding professionals [e.g.: Officiate / Minister, caterer, photographer, musicians, etc.] is a big one. The experience of friends with the personnel they employed for their wedding is an excellent resource. Ask several friends or their families about their experience with the attitude and product of wedding professionals they hired. (Both are important. No matter how beautiful the photographer's pictures are, if he is nasty and inflexible on your wedding day, you would have been better off with someone else.)

People in the "wedding business" see others wedding professionals performing their role not just once or twice, but repeatedly, over a period of time. Their recommendations may be invaluable, and could save you some grief! See if the same names crop up, with the same or different evaluations!

Finally, however, no matter how "good" you have heard they are, you don't want a caterer who refuses to assist you in planning the kind of reception you want; an officiant who is inflexible as to providing the wedding ceremony most meaningful to the two of you; or a photographer who doesn't listen to you about the kind of photographs you want of your wedding and reception. Your planning with your wedding professionals should be complete, open and frank. Listen to the reasons they suggest what they suggest, draw on their experience and insight, but in the end, remember these wedding professionals work for you, not

vice-versa.

Involving your Groom: Certainly, it's "our" wedding, but your groom may have very little idea what's involved and will definitely have a different experience of how important the details are. You two aren't going to see the same things with the same importance. He isn't going to experience the same pressures you may feel. Weddings may be foreign territory to him and, not knowing all the "rules of the game," he may keep a low profile.

Some brides attempt to involve their groom and lower their stress level by delegating tasks he surely ought to be able to handle: get an address list for invitations by a certain date; get the tuxedos lined up; make honeymoon reservations. You ask your partner to do these things. He says, "Yes, Dear." When these things don't happen or, more importantly, don't happen on the schedule you're assuming, frustration may rise! Why can't he do it? Why won't he do it? What's going on? Two related things may be operating here.

First, knowing the importance certain facets of the wedding have for you, you may wind up in a position of leadership in the wedding "operations." The pressure of pulling together all the facets of a wedding and reception may cause you to be less diplomatic in your approach to what you ask your partner to do. It may come out sounding like an order. When "orders" are perceived in a relationship between equals, either anger rises or there's a more subtle protest by slow compliance or procrastination. The slowdown often leads to more frustration and more perceived "orders."

Be sure to talk in terms of "I feel" about the looming wedding details and the pressures you feel, instead of what "you [your groom] should" do to alleviate those pressures.

A second part of the problem may be differing styles. Opposites attract. One of you may be "on top of it" and organized; the other, more "laid back" and easygoing about life. Sometimes the bride gives the groom a "simple" assignment in the wedding organization, but expects it to be done on her timetable, in her way. When the groom does the task on his timetable, and his way, there's conflict: "Why did you do it that way? You should have done it right: my way!"

Your partner's pace or style of doing things isn't wrong because it doesn't match your own. (Grooms are from Mars; Brides from Venus?) Style disagreements are a common cause of friction in marriage relationships. There will be two different right ways in the relationship: your way and your partner's. Neither of yours is wrong. You just have two, differing, right, ways... even in doing wedding preparations.

If either of you feels the other is looking at you as "stupid, crazy or wrong," for doing things the way you do, you will fight back. "I'm not wrong for seeing it the way I do; I'm just not you!" Only when both of you feel respected and understood will you be able to move on to negotiating some kind of resolution to your differences. When I feel respected and understood, then I'm willing to compromise. I don't have to have it all my way. But when I feel accused and backed into a

corner, all I can do is say "NO!"

Affirm, respect, enjoy, marvel at the differences in style the two of you have! Then, from a position of respect, work out how the two of you differing human beings can bring off the wedding of the century!

Courtship isn't over when the engagement begins; or when the marriage begins, for that matter! You need to tend and nurture the intimacy that was the basis for the decision to get married in the first place! We all need to know we are enjoyed and appreciated for who we are. Your groom may feel shunted aside in the flurry of wedding preparations. He may be perplexed at the stress level you feel, and may try to rescue you from your feelings. Tell him what you need from him: listening & understanding; and what you don't need: fixing.

This is an important time in the evolution of your relationship. The wedding is important, but planning together for your wedding should reinforce - not distract you from - building healthy, intimacy-building patterns that will nourish you both in your marriage.