

Wedding Stress



Jo Ann
Volk Lederman

FAMILY MATTERS

Dear Jo Ann,

I just got engaged. I am a young attorney and my job is quite stressful. My friends tell me the period between engagement and marriage is fraught with tension. I cannot bear any more. Do you have suggestions? I have heard that you are an expert in Behavioral Medicine.

Eliza G.

Dear Eliza,

Your timing couldn't be more perfect. In a recent interview with *In Style Magazine*, I discussed anticipated wedding stressors and how to successfully navigate the period between engagement and wedding.

Which of the following would you consider stressful? Being audited by the IRS? Building a house? Getting married? Getting fired? If you answered yes to all of these, you would be right and here's why. Stressful feelings come from an event, which we call a stressor and how we feel about it, how we interpret it and what we do to cope with it.

A certain amount of stress is stimulating, making life more interesting by challenging us to think creatively and find innovative solutions. I would put weddings in this category. Stress expert Dr. Hans Selye defined stress as "a reaction to any change in the environment." Because positive or pleasurable events such as getting married or job promotion can require as much adaptation as negative or painful events such as getting fired or a relationship break up, they can be equally stressful. For many brides, feelings of powerlessness and dependence on others create worry. Worry is relieved by planning and action. You will minimize your discomfort and enhance your joy by taking these few steps:

- Visualize your wedding just as you want it to be. Imagine the details: Your setting, whether it's a hotel, a home, a beach. See it laid out before you, just the way you want it to be. Imagine how the flowers look. Imagine the tastes you will want to enjoy down to the personal choice of chocolate wedding cake that your groom would adore. Imagine what sounds you will want. Do you want pre wedding violins, and organ or chamber music during your walk down the aisle?

Perhaps you have a friend who is a musician, making it more personal. Do you want to dance during the reception? Imagine your first dance, and just what music you would like to have. Do you need dance lessons? Who do you want to officiate? Are you both of the same faith? Do you need to make special arrangements? How many guests will you have, and who will they be? Who will be in your bridal party? What events will surround your wedding? Will there be a pre-nuptial dinner, a brunch the following day?

- Personalize your details. This is what makes the event so memorable. Liz and Gregg faced their guests during their vows to provide greater access and intimacy. She chose individual arrangements for the tables. Kelly had chocolate wedding cake to surprise John, they wrote their own vows, Tonya wore a dress Michael would love not the one she preferred. Michael's band played, him included, during the wedding, Katie and Lory wrote their own vows and took Ginger and Fred dancing lessons.

- Think of the amount of input you will want. Is it your wedding or your mom's? Would you like to plan your entire wedding, would you like her to remove stress and do the planning? What role do you want your parents to play? Who will pay for what? What are the expectations from the groom's family?

- Imagine what you want or need from your friends. Who will be in your wedding party? What clothing will they wear? Will you have an engagement party? Shower? Weddings are a time for joy-not a time for exclusion. Don't use it as a time to escalate relationship issues. Use this time to relieve and heal. Fifty percent of brides and grooms come from divorced families. Plan to honor your parents and request détente in your honor.

- Eat and sleep well
- Exercise regularly
- Visualize your ideal day and create corresponding plans
- Engage in relaxation exercises regularly and also when needed, breathing in deeply to a count of four and exhaling to a count of four, ten times.

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