

SO LONG STRESS:

How to Take the Worry out of Your Wedding

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Photos by Shrubin Photography

DECIDE HOW YOU WILL PLAN YOUR WEDDING

Your wedding is supposed to be a joyous celebration of your love, not a competition of who can throw the most lavish and perfect party. It is important to keep this in mind so that you look back on the entire wedding experience with fond memories. Many brides-to-be worry about the details of the wedding and begin to lose sight of the bigger picture. The stress of planning has the potential to take over the experience, instead of enjoying the months leading up to your wedding day. Bay Bella Publishing examines what causes stress, why it is bad for you, and how to reduce it.

Take a lesson from other brides, like Janet Johnson, who admits to being a Type A personality and not remembering much about her wedding day because she “was so worried that all of the details [she] worked so hard on for a year came together perfectly that day.” On the other hand, Sharise Williams did not focus on the perfection and over-analyzing planning decisions, but rather enjoyed the entire experience, and the day itself. Williams recommends that brides-to-be “remember to focus on why you are getting married more than the color of the ribbon on the bridesmaid’s flowers, for instance, and take breaks from the planning so that you are fresh when you return to it.” Williams also strongly suggests that you “include your fiancé and other friends and family to help you. It will be more fun and take a lot of the pressure off of you.”



WHY CAN PLANNING A WEDDING BE EXTREMELY STRESSFUL?

Finances. Spending money, especially a large sum at one time, is stressful. It is important to create a realistic budget with which you are comfortable. Do not be pressured, by wedding vendors or family and friends, to spend more than your budget.

Family and friends. While most of them have good intentions, they also have opinions, which will be given to you whether

you ask for them or not. Realize that you cannot please everyone, and ultimately you are in control of your wedding. Also, limit the conversations and their advice whenever you feel overwhelmed. Instead of discussing your wedding plans all day, with everyone, take time to focus on other aspects of your life that are important; such as taking care of yourself and spending quality time with your partner.

You and your partner. There will be tension between the two of you during the wedding planning phase because you are not the same people, do not have the same exact tastes or opinions, and therefore would not design the same wedding. A way to mitigate the tension is to list the top 10 aspects of the wedding that are most important to each of you. Then allow each other to be responsible for the parts that matter most. Resist the urge to plan the entire wedding without your fiancé’s help. You will have less responsibility, and he will feel involved and

invested in the wedding.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE SIGNS OF STRESS

According to Dr. Lynette W. Lissin, a cardiologist at the Palo Alto Medical Foundation, “stress brings up adrenaline levels and can have many implications for the heart and the body.” Signs that you are stressed include: anxiety, fatigue, headaches, back pain, stiff neck, high blood pressure, difficulty concentrating, shortness of



breath, and trouble sleeping (which has been proven to cause weight gain).

Stress will actually make the wedding process more difficult. If you have not slept well and have difficulty concentrating, for example, you are not going to make the best decisions when it comes to important wedding details. This is why it is critical to be aware that you need to limit stress before it harms you -- and your wedding.

Long-term health effects are even more detrimental. Continuous exposure to cortisol, adrenaline and other stress hormones takes a considerable toll on the body, decreasing many aspects of your health and potentially shortening your life. Dr. Lissin explains that "increased levels of stress can raise your blood pressure, which can in turn increase your risk of irregular heart rhythms, stroke and heart attacks." Long-term effects of stress have also proven to cause obesity, memory impairment, decreased immunity and worsening of existing health problems.

Dr. Lissin is adamant that "it is important to develop healthy habits now, because planning the wedding is really only the beginning of the stress." After the wedding there are even more stressors such as: financial discrepancies (the most common cause of divorce in the United States), learning how to live and cooperate with one another, raising children, and increased risk for other health problems associated with aging.

The negative effects of stress on your health and well-being are all the more reason to focus on reducing stress now, and enjoy planning your wedding.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE STRESS

Lauren Forney, a certified Health Counselor and Yoga Teacher, knows that "no one diet works for everyone." Therefore, as the founder of Center Your Health (www.centeryourhealth.net), She helps her clients all over the country make "lifelong changes that enable you to reach your current and future health goals." According to Dr. Ernesto A. Randolfi, a professor of Health Promotion and Stress Management at Montana State University, "it's been proven that you will be more likely to continue exercise and nutrition habits that you perceive as fun." Forney also understands this. "While most dietitians dwell on calories, carbs, fats, proteins, restrictions and lists of good and bad foods," she explains, "I work with my clients to create a happy, healthy life in a way that is flexible, fun and free of denial and discipline." Below we have provided some ideas for relaxing and lowering your stress level, but it is up to you to find what works best for you now, and in the future.

- **Sleep and eat well.** You've heard it a million times, but the health and mental benefits are enormous.
- **Learn how to delegate.** Divide the work between yourself, your groom and your bridal party. Consider hiring a wedding planner if you have the resources.
- **Keep expectations realistic.** Sharon Chism, Catering and Sales Director at the Hotel Whitcomb, is extremely helpful during the planning process and on the day of the wedding. She will tell you honestly, however, "If you think everything is going to be perfect on your wedding day, you are setting yourself up for disappointment." Some of the mistakes that will occur can actually be your fondest memories.
- **Look into Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR).** MBSR brings together mindfulness meditation and yoga. Numerous studies have proven the effectiveness of MBSR in significantly reducing stress levels in the mind and body.
- **Go to counseling.** Either individual, couples, or both can help reduce personal and relationship stress.
- **Embrace your spirituality.** If faith is part of your life, this is an especially important time to not ignore this due to time-consuming wedding planning.
- **Exercise and stretch.** The benefits of exercise are enormous and cannot be emphasized enough. When you are stressed, harmful chemicals are released into your body, but regular exercise removes the byproducts of these chemicals. Exercise also elevates mood levels and reduces muscular pain and tension.