

Something Borrowed, Something Blue, Something Stressful, Here's What To Do!

Planning a wedding can be one of the most stressful time periods in your life. Don't be fooled by the fact that you're happy to be getting married. Positive stressful events can be just as distressing as negative ones. In fact marriage was listed as the 7th most stressful major life event in one study (death of a spouse and divorce ranked 1st and 2nd on the list, while pregnancy ranked 12th highest).

Stress occurs when demands exceed capabilities, and this most commonly translates into your dream wedding costing more than your budget. It can be very frustrating and disheartening to cut the guest list down or to give up your dream gown in order to stay within your limits. [It may not be consoling now but also consider that exceeding your budget and dealing with credit card bills after the wedding can be just as stressful if not more!]

Of course money isn't the only stressor. One of the things I found most overwhelming when I was getting married was to have to make so many decisions about so many things, some of which I cared about and some of which were unimportant to me but I had to think about anyway. In theory it seems like fun to have to pick out items for a registry or to plan a dinner menu from a selection of many choices, but after months of this I was in "I don't care anymore" mode. The decision-making process is a little easier when you and your future spouse are on the same page and much more difficult when you're not. It's also much easier when it's only the two of you as opposed to everyone else trying to get in on the planning process. Even when you try to keep things simple you still have to tend to many details.

Time was also a factor in two ways. On a day to day basis, it took a lot of time to research vendors, locations, dresses, etc., while trying to work full-time. If I had to do it all over again, I would either elope (ha ha) or use a wedding coordinator to simplify the search process. The second time-related pressure is the length of time between engagement and ceremony (months to years). That's a long time and a lot of energy to be focusing on one event and it can be easy to lose perspective.

So now that you're all stressed out planning your wedding or thinking about planning a wedding, here are some suggestions for combating wedding-related (and other life) stressors:

Delegate – Don't be afraid to ask for help from your spouse-to-be, family, friends or a wedding planner. Even if you want the final say, ask others to help research your options.

Take a break – Have a no-wedding day where the topic of the wedding is off limits! Talk about anything else. Go to a movie or play. Do an activity together that you enjoyed when you first started dating.

Break larger tasks into manageable chunks – There are many wedding resources that provide timelines and to-do lists to help you to space out your tasks so that you're not left with a big list last minute.

Keep things in perspective – Pick your battles and prioritize what elements are the most important to you. Let the rest go and surrender control where you don't have it (which is basically everything but yourself).

Nurture the body and mind – Good nutrition, sleep and exercise will do wonders. Besides helping you to look great in your dress or tux, exercise helps

to burn off excess adrenaline in the body and it can boost your serotonin levels in the brain to keep your mood positive. Think about adding some yoga or meditation to your routine. Stress hampers your immune system so keeping as relaxed and balanced as possible will decrease the likelihood that you'll get ill, have acne break-outs or cold sores rearing their ugly heads on your special day!

Breathe – I'm talking specifically about a technique called *diaphragmatic breathing*, which means to breathe from the gut. The basic technique goes like this: Close your mouth. Inhale deeply from the nose and think about pulling your breath all the way down into your abdomen. Pause. Then slowly exhale through the nose. If you are doing this correctly, you should feel most of the movement in your abdomen and little in your chest and shoulders. It may take a while to master the technique so don't give up if it feels difficult or unusual at the beginning. Practice makes perfect. Once you learn this technique you can use it in all kinds of stress-provoking situations

to bring your body back into balance. For example, it may come in very handy while walking down the aisle, saying your vows, making a toast, etc!

Ideally your wedding day will be one of the most fun and memorable days of your life. Don't allow yourself to get caught up in the minor details, family dynamics, or uncontrollable factors so that you are too overwhelmed to enjoy it. The china in your registry or the linens on the banquet tables will hopefully play a minor role in the big scheme of your life. Focus on the most important thing – you're about to start a new chapter in your life with the person you love.

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