

Challenges in Planning Your Wedding

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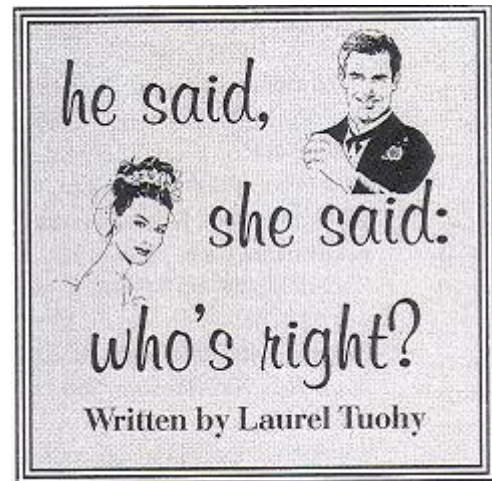
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Even the strongest relationships may feel the strain of planning a wedding and every couple handles it differently. Geraldine Kerr, a therapist who specializes in marriage and family counseling in southern New Jersey said, "Some people become very rigid and won't flex at all. Then their mate may get jitters when they see their partner's reaction and think, 'Oh my God, is this the person I want to marry? I've never seen this side of them,' and that's very real."

But did you ever wonder why sometimes it seems like you are speaking a different language from your fiancé?

"There may be a gender or cultural difference between men and women and their expectations of what a wedding is," said Sheldon Walker, a marriage therapist practicing in Calgary for more than 30 years. "Culturally, women have a much larger map of what a wedding is for and about, and what is going to happen."

Before you let little disagreements spiral out of control, both of you should grab a pad and pencil and make a list of what you each consider the most important part of the day, recommended David Olson, a psychologist practicing in Minneapolis and founder of PREPARE/ENRICH by Life Innovations, a program for premarried couples that evaluates their compatibility and teaches them how to work through problems.



"The importance is in having each partner be able to make some decisions on two or three of the most important decisions to them," said Dr. Olson. Money is a common source of conflict. Set a budget from the onset, said Kathleen Murray, deputy editor of the number one wedding planning Web site, The Knot.com. Agree to focus on one to three elements of the wedding (your dress, his groomsmen gifts, the honeymoon) and scrimp on the rest. If you spend all of your budget on your dress, he can't get angry if you both agreed beforehand that that was your priority.

If wedding planning has suddenly unleashed the inner diva in your fiancé (you want floral embroidered linens and he wants monogrammed napkins), "Throw him a bone and let him decide what the band will wear or the flavor of the cake," said Ms. Murray.

Parents often get involved over the guest list, causing some of the biggest headaches in the planning process. As hard as it is to swallow, let your parents have their way, said William Doherty, director of the Marriage and Family Therapy Program at the University of Minnesota who founded The First Dance.com, a Web site that offers advice on how to deal with the stresses of wedding planning.

Don't make the mistake of thinking the wedding is only about you. Regardless of who is footing the bill, said Dr. Doherty: "A wedding is a big family and community event and loyalties and blood ties have to be taken into account. It's a rite of passage for a family, not just an event for a couple."