



Getting Married

Joyful, Stressful, Manageable

*M*aking plans for your wedding is an important opportunity for you and your future spouse. Together, you can make it a time for developing your commitment to your marriage and for letting everyone know that from now on, your mate and your marriage come first. You can learn to communicate with your mate, learn to plan and to make decisions together. And you can set the pattern of your future involvement with your parents and in-laws. If you're feeling nervous about the challenges of marriage, you can begin building your confidence with a well-planned wedding.

A Well-Planned Wedding

A well-planned wedding is something a couple does for their future. The time before your wedding is a good time to learn to work together on your life. Share your wishes and concerns throughout the process of planning the wedding.

Be aware that, while your marriage is in the future, your future together begins now. Look ahead. Announce your engagement and the topic of wedding plans only after you've seriously thought ahead about how your families are going to react. You can demonstrate that you deserve respect and are willing to show respect in return.

Handling Parents

If it's clear that your parents will want to participate in the decision-making, be tactful and forthright. It'll be important to let them know that you appreciate their advice. But you must be clear that it's your wedding and, though you will seriously consider their advice, you and your mate will be making the decisions. Nothing prevents misunderstanding so well as making yourself clear. It may help to remember that being polite helps people to perceive your maturity and good sense more clearly.



There may be tasks you will decide must be taken care of, and for which you'd be relieved to have your parents' help. Letting them take care of these matters may satisfy many needs, practical and emotional. If this is a second marriage and children are involved, it will be important to allow the children opportunities to be helpful, too.

Avoiding Conflict

Weddings celebrate change. These changes may not be easily accepted by some parents and may bring out some very fundamental emotions. Your parents' healthy adjustment to your marriage isn't your responsibility. However, you do have a responsibility to your marriage to anticipate your parents' needs. They'll still be there after the wedding.

"Power struggle" sometimes describes parents' participation in their children's weddings. But conflicts with your parents—or with any other relations or friends—over your wedding plans are likely to be more subtle. You can expect some conflicts of need.

Parents of engaged couples sometimes feel they're being robbed or abandoned. They need to be reassured. They feel that they're losing a son or daughter. What may appear to be bossy or interfering behavior may be a reaction to their fear of losing you. They may be jealous of your mate, or of your mate's parents, feeling that they're taking you from them. Your wedding seems, to them, to conflict with their needs. If you can see this pattern developing and sense their deeper concerns, you can take steps to reassure them of your continuing care, and give your mate the opportunity to win their trust.

Seeing the future through your parents' eyes can help you to address their needs rather than confront their fears.