

don't sweat the small stuff

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Luke Gow Photography

So what is it about weddings that makes them such a challenge? I believe one of the biggest problems is the feeling of overwhelm that comes with getting married and the build up of stress as a result of that overwhelm.

Here are my top five tips to a happy wedding....

1 Recognise and understand your stress signals whether it is stomach aches, headaches, sleep problems, irritability or racing thoughts. A great way to reduce your stress levels when you see these signs is exercise. Go for a walk. That's right, a nice calm, stress relieving walk. The more energy you use, the more stress you get rid of. In addition, eat right and take time to out to rest and recharge; it will vastly improve your energy levels and reduce the feeling of overwhelm.

2 Identify and understand the sources of your stress Let's face it; planning a wedding will be like having a second job. Rather than expecting "perfection", expect to have a "terrific" day and set yourself some reasonable expectations. Keep in mind your main goal - to get married to the one you love. Setting expectations that are too high will only create unnecessary stress and lead to frustration and exhaustion. In particular, money and financial issues are almost always stress-inducing, regardless of your budget. Spend time at the beginning of the planning process and agree on how much money you're going to spend.

3 Learn to manage controllable sources of stress You know how difficult it can be to change yourself let alone

anyone else. Plan your own tasks and what you will be responsible for and focus on them - let go of worrying about what others are responsible for. Also as much as possible, avoid timing things while you are in the middle of putting your wedding together. Life happens, and what may have looked manageable six months ago may now become a highly stressful add-on. The less outside stress you have to deal with, the better you'll feel. Another way to make sure that things don't go wrong is to plan carefully. Having a list is a huge stress-buster and can help you sleep at night. When I was planning my wedding I kept a notebook beside my bed, and every time I woke up or couldn't sleep thinking that there was something I had forgotten, I wrote it down. My motto is "Ink it, don't think it".

4 Take time out to enjoy your relationship Realise that friction at this time is normal, as heightened stress levels and the emotionally tense environment can lead people to make mountains out of molehills. Who will sit near who and what songs to play may never have mattered before, but they may become a hot topic of debate during this time. You are planning your marriage at the same time you're planning your wedding, so bad habits developed during this time could sour your marriage. If you

find it is taking over your life then make time for connecting with your partner and just being a couple. Sure today it may be the wedding, later, it may be a house, a baby, a job, or something else in the way. Establishing good habits now for making time to enjoy each other's company will set you up for your entire marriage.

5 Don't sweat the small stuff Avoid arguing over petty things. It's not the minute details of your wedding that will really make your marriage successful. If your fiancé is being quiet or distant, don't take it personally. They may just need some time out. Be understanding and let them deal with whatever it is. And quit worrying yourself to death. Ninety-nine percent of what we worry about never happens. Instead, take action. The secret is in the doing and the acting. That way you feel a sense of achievement, control and moving forward.

So there you have it. There will be stress, you can count on it. Such pressure is not bad or wrong; it just requires you to be aware of what's happening. Accept that little things will go wrong; you are dealing with people and lots of variables. Do your best to keep your cool, after all, no one wants to be a sweaty bride! **W**