Wedding Planning Nerves — Coping With Anxiety Before Your Big Day

Wedding planning is thought to be the happiest time in a couple’s lives, but for many, dealing with anxiety related to their upcoming nuptials can make it an incredibly stressful experience.

“A wedding must be a beautiful, colorful, tasteful, and awesome celebration,” says Dr. Kay Nelson, a Psychology instructor at South University, Savannah.

“The challenge and fear to fulfill these demands will often send the bride-to-be into a physical and emotional tailspin.”

Nelson says the high expectations that society places on these events puts a tremendous amount of pressure on the person handling the wedding planning duties. She says wedding guests expect to attend a classy affair with good music, dancing, delicious food, a variety of drinks, heartfelt and entertaining toasts, tasteful favors, a beautiful bride, and much more. The pressure to meet both personal expectations for their big day, along with those of wedding guests, puts a great deal of pressure on the bride- and groom-to-be.

“Planning a wedding is a stressor,” Nelson says. “It has the potential of making someone sick. However, planning a wedding for one person may be less of a problem or stressful for another person. It will depend upon how the bride-to-be appraises the situation.”

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Nelson says that when a person appraises their upcoming wedding as something that’s extremely challenging, this can reduce immune functioning or immunosuppression.

“The changes that will occur within the body are a reduction in the number of natural killer cells, T cells, and total lymphocytes,” Nelson says.

She says the bride and groom displaying the most extreme jitters or stress related to planning the wedding ceremony and reception events will show the greatest deficit in the immune response.

“Wedding plans that appear unpredictable and difficult to cope with can lead to problems with thinking and memory,” Nelson says. “Therefore, people may experience the bride-to-be as being angry, snappy, and out-of-control. The consequences of the wedding plans will greatly depend upon the appraisal of the entire upcoming event.”

Managing Wedding Planning Nerves

Andrew Shanahan, editor of men’s wedding advice site, Staggered says wedding jitters can happen to anyone. Shanahan says the two biggest things that make a groom nervous on his big day are fear of blundering his “I Do” during the wedding ceremony and giving a less-than-stellar speech at the reception.

“For the speech, the key is to have it written way in advance,” Shanahan says. “We write speeches for grooms and the unavoidable truth is that every time we write a speech that the groom or best man is perfectly happy with, it becomes a pleasure rather than a burden. They can’t wait to stand up and share these words with people. If you’re nervous about your speech then get some help with it.”

When it comes to pre-wedding jitters, he believes brides- and grooms-to-be often find themselves dealing with anxiety for two reasons.

“One is that it’s a classic performance anxiety,” Shanahan says. “You’re standing up to say words in front of a collection of your closest friends and family. A lot of people feel that because it’s a wedding that everything has to go perfectly. Like on this one day you won’t cough, get nervous or stumble over your words. That expectation of perfection only increases the fear.”
Shanahan says the solution to dealing with anxiety during the wedding planning process is to get involved in the preparations and help to personalize the ceremony.

“Have music you’re looking forward to, faces you can’t wait to see — channel the nerves into excitement and know that if you make a mistake then you’re in front of the most sympathetic crowd you’ll ever see,” Shanahan says.

It’s also hard not to get struck by the emotional enormity of getting married, Shanahan says.

“Although men being afraid of commitment is mostly just a rubbish sitcom trope, it does hit everyone that this is you making a big decision,” Shanahan says. “The key here is preparation. Talk about the commitment. Talk about what your expectations of marriage are. Share your ambitions for your new life together. Once you’ve got things sorted, again it’s something to be excited about rather than to induce trepidation.”