

# PLANNING A *Wedding* THAT'S TRUE TO YOU

AND STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH PEOPLE  
WHO HAVE OTHER IDEAS



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# LET'S ASSUME YOU'VE ALREADY ENVISIONED THE WEDDING CELEBRATION OF YOUR DREAMS...

I'm so freaking excited for you.

It took work to get here. And long conversations with your partner. And Pinterest boards that you fell in love with but then kind of want to punch through the computer screen when you realized how unrealistic (and expensive) they were. After all that, even though you haven't finalized all the plans, you've created an idea that you're completely in love with.

You're ready to get to work.

**BUT, OF COURSE,  
THERE'S SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T LIKE IT.  
AND THEY'RE NOT AFRAID  
TO TELL YOU HOW MUCH.**

Maybe you're eloping in Italy. Maybe you're having a tiny getaway at a rental home in the Berkshires. Maybe you're having an epic dance party under a tent in the backyard of the house where you grew up. Maybe you want to be married on Christmas day or roast a whole pig or skip the whole thing and get married at city hall.

**AS MUCH AS YOU LOVE YOUR PERFECT DREAM,  
NO ONE TOLD YOU  
THIS IS THE HILL YOU HAVE TO DIE ON**

So let's get down to some real talk about how to deal with the people who want to mess with that thoughtful, beautiful dream that you've created.

It's not always going to be easy and you may have to make a few compromises, but I'm committed to helping you live out a wedding that is truly yours.

# WHO IS MEDDLING AND WHY?

Anyone who is overstepping in the wedding planning process probably loves you and thinks they are being helpful. Unfortunately, their help may not be desired, which can make the situation unpleasant for everyone.

**BEFORE YOU ADDRESS THE PROBLEM,  
ASSESS THE FEELINGS BEHIND IT.**

## *The Problem*

### MEDDLING MOTHER-IN- LAW

She seems to be butting in everywhere, questioning your decisions and putting your partner in the middle.

## *The Need*

### TO FEEL INVOLVED

She *may* feel threatened by your connection to your partner. Or maybe the marriage of her child is making her feel old. But *most likely*, she just feels left out and wants to be a part of your big day!

As unpleasant as this may be, it's a sign of love. Try to remember that when you want to tear your hair out.

## *The Fix*

### KEEP HER CONNECTED

If you can manage it without going crazy, give her updates. Talk about simple things she can't try to change, like which RSVPs have arrived.

### GIVE HER A JOB

Give her a specific task that you don't care much about. (Think flatware, place cards, or anything low on your list.) Tell her repeatedly how grateful you are for her help.

If she's planning the rehearsal dinner, ask a lot of questions and praise her choices.

## The Problem

### GRUMBLING GRANDMA

Maybe a well meaning grandparent "just doesn't understand" why you want an intimate elopement in the woods, instead of a church wedding.

## The Need

### RESPECT

She may feel that you don't respect her traditions or beliefs if you are getting married in a way that's very different from the ways she has experienced.

### REASSURANCE

Grandma may be nervous about tromping through the woods on her bad knee or flying to Europe for your elopement. She may even be worried about ordering her dinner off a food truck!

## The Fix

### MAKE SPACE FOR TRADITION

Choose one thing that reflects her traditional values, but doesn't compromise yours.

You could ask to wear a meaningful piece of jewelry for your "something borrowed" or include a traditional reading or special prayer in your ceremony.

### MAKE A CLEAR PLAN

Share your plan to address her needs. Tell her about the golf cart you hired. Remind her that Uncle Bob will be flying in the seat right beside her. If she keeps asking, just keep reminding her.

*"Use anger as a wake-up call to unmet needs."*

*— Marshall B. Rosenberg*

## The Problem

### PRESSURING PARENTS

Maybe someone in your support system wants to double your guest list. Maybe they hate the entrees you picked or don't understand why a pig roast appeals to you.

Maybe they're helping you out financially and that's making it really hard to say no.

## The Need

### GRATITUDE

Weddings can be expensive, complicated, and stressful. Your parents may need some extra appreciation for whatever resources they are contributing to your event.

### PRIDE

Your parents may want to show you off. They're proud of you! But this can often lead to a rapidly expanding guest list...

### FOR YOU TO BE HAPPY

Check yourself. Sometimes we put too much pressure on ourselves.

But if your parents seem truly skeptical about your choices, it may just be that they don't understand where you're coming from.

## The Fix

### SAY IT. SHOW IT.

A little gratitude goes a long way. Mail them a card. Take them out for coffee. Tell them how grateful you are. Everyone loves to hear it.

### READ ON

Guest list disagreements can be a HUGE issue. Jump to page 7 - 8 for support with navigating your guest list.

### REAL TALK

Be honest about what you want and why it will make you happy. Reassure them that your decisions are well-considered and you may be able to get them on board.

*"We need to receive empathy to give empathy"*  
— Marshall B. Rosenberg

## The Problem

## The Need

## The Fix

### THE DIVA

This is the person who makes everything about them. They breed drama and at their worst, they may try to manipulate your feelings and behaviors. I truly hope you don't have a "diva" involved in your wedding, because, unlike the other meddlers, their actions don't always come from a place of love.

### ATTENTION

I don't suggest trying to appease the "diva." I truly hope that someone takes the time to help this person realize what is missing in their life, but you have enough other responsibilities to worry about right now, without taking that on too.

### SET CLEAR BOUNDARIES

Give them the minimum information necessary about your day. The less involved they are, the less they will be able to meddle. Get really good at changing the subject.

### KEEP YOUR COOL

Don't give the Diva the reaction they are seeking. Once they realize you won't meet their need, they may get bored and move on.

### FIND A BUFFER

Recruit someone to help you distract the Diva, so you can stay focused on more important things.

*“Every criticism, judgment, diagnosis, and expression of anger is the tragic expression of an unmet need.”*

*— Marshall B. Rosenberg*

# GUEST LIST ISSUES



One of the most common challenges for intentional couples is navigating the guest list. Perhaps you're envisioning something intimate or modest, but your parents have other ideas. What might they be feeling that is pushing them in that direction and what can you do to help meet that need, without sacrificing your vision?

## *The Need*

### PRIDE

It's pretty likely that your parents are **proud of you** and they want to show off your happiness, success, and this special event, to all of their family and friends. This comes from *such a loving place*. Try to keep that in mind as you make decisions about your guest list.

## *The Fix*

### BONUS RECEPTION

For those who are eloping or have moved out of their home state, it's increasingly common to have a laid back reception for friends and family at a later date. Some opt for a tiny ceremony and a larger reception to preserve the privacy and intimacy of their moment, while also appeasing the masses.

### MOMENTOS

Ask your photographer if they can deliver a few special images shortly after the wedding. That way, your parents will have something they can share right away with those who weren't on the guest list.

Every Golden Door Couple gets a blog post and a mini gallery full of sneak peek images within a week of their wedding, because we know how hard it can be to wait!



# MORE GUEST LIST ISSUES



## *The Need*

### EXPECTATIONS

Your parents may feel **guilt** or **obligation** to include certain people in your celebration. E.g. "The DiCenzos invited us to their daughter's wedding last year."

## *The Fix*

### BONUS RECEPTION

If this is an option for you, your parents can meet their sense of obligation and you can be (mostly) unburdened from their overlong guest list.

### CLEAR PARAMETERS

Attempt to be very clear about your ideal guest list. For example, "I'd prefer it if all the guests have met both me and my partner on multiple occasions."

### HONEST APPEAL

Explain *why* you want the wedding you do. Maybe your partner gets massive anxiety when there are over 40 people in a room. Maybe you're worried about the budget or the venue has specific limitations.

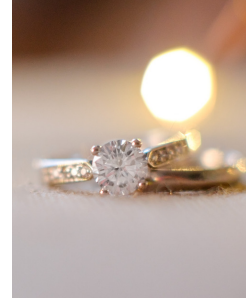
**Be clear and honest.** Hopefully your parents will realize that you're not just being stubborn or ungrateful. Plus, it provides a **convenient excuse** they can give to their friends. You *may* even be able to find a compromise that appeases everyone. It's worth a try!



# WHAT IT ALL COMES DOWN TO

## THEY WANT THE BEST FOR YOU

Remember, most people who give you advice truly have your best interests at heart. If they offer something in a polite way, thank them graciously, say you'll think about it, and move on.



## LOOK FOR UNMET NEEDS

If someone is expressing a negative feeling about your wedding (anger, doubt, frustration), try to identify the unmet need behind the words. Listen compassionately and try to repeat back what you are hearing. Once the feeling or need is identified, **you don't have to meet it**, but it will be much easier to find a mutually agreeable solution (if you want to).

## COMPROMISE, RINSE, REPEAT (YOURSELF)

Sometimes we think a problem is solved, but for the other person, the feeling remains or reoccurs. Don't feel the need to keep compromising, but do gently remind your detractors of the solution you devised and try to reassure them that they have been heard. After all, isn't that what most of us really want?



## REMEMBER WHAT MATTERS

I want you to create the wedding of your dreams, but more importantly, I want you to create the *life* of your dreams.

If wedding planning gets stressful, make time with your partner to *just be*. Remember what got you here and remember where you're going.

Nothing is more important than that.

If you're intrigued by the concepts in this guide, consider reading **Nonviolent Communication** by Marshall B. Rosenberg. It provides a simple framework for communicating more compassionately.

*It's a game changer!*

# HEY THERE!

## I'M SHAINA

I'm a Boston-based documentary wedding photographer for intentional celebrations.

I love working with couples who aren't *wedded* to tradition. (Ba dum ch!) They create thoughtful, beautiful events that reflect who they are together. They think beyond the wedding and into the marriage. They usually love adventure, travel, family, and a great meal.

## GOLDEN DOOR PHOTOGRAPHY

Before I became a photographer, I worked in a hospital, with patients who had difficulty with memory.

That's why I believe that pictures are worth so much more than the sum of their Facebook "likes..."

A powerful image can pull you right back into a moment, a feeling.

A powerful image can release hidden memories we thought we had lost.

## I BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF IMAGES

I would be honored to help shape and preserve your memories.

Let's make something beautiful together.



## AT YOUR WEDDING:

- I believe you should spend less time posing and **more time celebrating**.
- I believe your most beautiful moments are **the real ones** - the nervous hands, the tears of joy, the belly laughs, the wild dance moves.
- I'll be **shaking it** out on the dance floor with you.
- I'll cry because I'm so happy about **the rest of your lives** together.

## CONNECT:

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