

FROM THE MOM:

Hints on Having a Very Happy Wedding

By Maureen Hart

Author and columnist Anna Quindlen wrote a marvelous little book back in 2000 called “A Short Guide to a Happy Life.”

It doesn't look like much, coming in at only 50 very short pages, but it condenses Ms. Quindlen's lifetime of experience and learning into such succinct lessons as taking time to smell the roses, appreciating family and friends, and keeping in mind that life, no matter how long, is really short.

Those lessons sound self-evident, but most of us forget this wisdom in the rush of day-to-day living.

I don't have anything to add to her advice about living a happy life, but I can give some hard-earned advice on how to have a happy wedding, which should, in turn, translate itself into the young couple also having a happy marriage (we can only hope).

So here goes:

1. Keep it in perspective. No matter how wrapped up you get in tulle and tiaras, remember that the wedding is only one day, and the marriage is supposed to last a lifetime.
2. More money does not always translate into better. Let's face it, some of the fanciest weddings we have attended did not reflect the pure joy of getting married, but rather the depth of the father's (or couple's) wallet. Take time to personalize your day to reflect your personalities and relationship and everything will flow from that. Don't think about impressing your guests with the lavishness of it all, but instead show them the beauty and strength of your couple-ness. They'll be talking about what a fabulous couple you are long after they have forgotten what your dress looked like or the taste of the hors d'oeuvres.
3. Put your relationship first. Some brides do all, or most of the planning. Some couples make the decisions together. But weddings certainly have a way of taking on a life of their own, adding stress over time and money issues, and making it feel as if the universe revolves around picking the flavor of a wedding cake or choosing favors for the guests. Set aside time to spend doing non-wedding related activities with your fiancé, which will give both of you some wedding R&R. You'll need it.
4. Treat your friends and family well. Some brides transform their best friends, moms, sisters, and cousins into servants to do their bidding throughout the engagement parties, showers, and the big event itself. That's no way to treat the people you love. Be considerate at every turn—after all, you don't want some of the most important people in

- your life to resent your behavior and call you a “Bridezilla” behind your back. Go back to Hint Number One and try to keep it all in perspective.
5. Don’t sweat the small stuff. Wait—somebody already wrote that book as well. But, really, when all is said and done, how much does it matter what color the flowers are, or how many bridesmaids you line up? If you serve some nice food (it doesn’t matter if it is a formal sit-down meal, an ethnic buffet, or old-fashioned picnic fare), provide some festive and fun music to get people up and dancing, and have a good time yourself—your guests will have a great time. All the rest is detail.
 6. Be organized. One way not to freak out is to plan ahead and put all of your information into what we like to call a “Wedding Bible.” This can be one of the fancy ones you buy at Borders, or a plain notebook in which you mark down all of the to-do lists and contacts you have made. Do not leave things until the last minute. The truth is, no matter how organized you have been—even to the point of obsessive—the last month, and particularly the final week before your wedding will be somewhat frantic as you re-contact all of your vendors, pick up your dress and tuxes, attend the rehearsal party, and try to find time to spend with your family, friends, and the bridegroom.
 7. Personalize things. This is an outgrowth of Hint Number Two. The way to make your wedding memorable is not by having the biggest and fanciest, but by making it truly your own. Serve food that reflects your ethnic background. Choose music that you truly love. Select a setting that reflects your interests—woodlands, a lake, or a beach for nature enthusiasts; a museum for history nuts, a country inn, a mansion, a wedding palace... The choices are endless and do not have to be a cookie cutter copies of every other wedding you’ve attended in the past few years. Think outside the box. You want guests to say, “That wedding was really them.”