


HOW TO HAVE A STRESS-FREE WEDDING

...And Live Happily Ever After!



*Make Planning Your Wedding
Stress Free, And Learn Some
Great Relationship Success Tips
In The Process* 

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HOW TO HAVE A STRESS FREE WEDDING...

AND LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER!

A Guide To Low-Stress, Worry-Free Weddings And Marital Success

By

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FORWARD

When two people become engaged, their lives change dramatically. New demands, problems, and conflicts can arise almost immediately. Who should we tell first? What if our parents disagree? How will our friends respond? What kind of wedding should we have? How much will it cost? Who will pay? Where should we honeymoon? Etc.

Even if you and your partner have lived together for many years, the moment you decide to marry, life will be different for both of you. You and your respective families will have lots of opportunities for joy--and also for stress. Doubts, fears, hopes, and dreams will all become more prominent. Decisions will have to be made; contracts signed; religious issues addressed and resolved. Money issues will surface. Friendships and family relationships may become strained. Feelings of anger, fear, jealousy, or even sadness may arise. You may lose weight, gain weight, or suddenly develop sleeping problems.

Despite all these challenges, planning your wedding doesn't have to be stressful. Even though it does become stressful for many people, you can still have it be easy and lots of fun.

With that goal in mind, the guidebook you are now holding is a treasure chest of helpful insights, tools, and practical advice. More than any other book on the subject of planning a wedding, it will help you better understand yourself, your partner, and the complex process you have both just initiated. It will help you recognize and deal with potential problems and stresses before they get out of hand. In many cases, it may even show you how to prevent or avoid certain problems entirely.

Don't throw this handy guide away once your wedding and honeymoon are over. Save it, and read it from time to time. As you become more familiar with the stress-reducing principles it contains, you will find they can also help you build and maintain a successful marriage.

INTRODUCTION - WHAT MAKES THIS GUIDE DIFFERENT?

Twenty-six years ago, Christina and I got engaged. Our engagement serves as an excellent example of why a guidebook like this is useful.

First there was our invitation list, with over 900 people. Since we couldn't afford to feed everyone, we decided to have an outdoor wedding where our guests could bring their own food in place of gifts.

At the time we became engaged, Christina and I were living 45 miles apart. She was in Washington, D.C. and I was in Baltimore, where my parents and family reside. Her dad, a widower, agreed to pay for most of our wedding. But he lived in Florida, introducing added geographic problems.

Then, my parents visited the outdoor site we selected, without telling us, and they hated it. When it came time to send out invitations, the printer we hired failed to deliver them on time. When they finally did arrive, we were so rushed to get them all stuffed and in the mail that one of us made a mistake. Pre-wedding dinner invitations (for a small catered affair my parents agreed to pay for) were sent to all our relatives who had been carefully and painstakingly left off the list! Everyone on the dinner invite list was mailed one too!

A few days later, my mother broke down and cried when the first few relatives called to confirm, and she tried to explain that they had been invited in error.

If that wasn't bad enough, the day of our wedding, June 10, the temperature was 101 degrees! Hundreds of confirmed guests canceled out because of the heat. Fortunately, our affair was held at a beach club, so those who did attend were able to cool off by getting into the water. But that didn't help Christina or me, or our bridal party, who were all dressed up in formal gowns and tuxedos.

Despite all these problems, crises, and unexpected events, we actually experienced very little stress. I know this sounds impossible, but it's true.

Both Christina (a veterinarian) and I (a physician) relied very heavily upon a few basic principles that helped us cope very effectively. These important principles are not widely taught in most stress management programs available today. Yet they are extremely valuable and potent principles which we still use in our lives every day.

Since we've married, Christina and I have continued to expand our stress-reducing skills. I've taught seminars and workshops about stress for thousands of people. I've lectured to doctors, lawyers, housewives, nurses, and other professional groups. I've even written an award-winning book about stress, called *The 14 Day Stress Cure*, which was voted an outstanding book-of-the-year by the National Association Of Independent Publishers in 1992.

Christina has lectured on various health and stress-related topics for thousands of individuals as well. She has many friends, clients, and professional colleagues who regularly call upon her for emotional support.

From our own personal experiences, as well as working with thousands of other individuals and couples during the past 26 years, we've both observed that much of the stress people experience planning their weddings can be eliminated. We also know, from personal and professional experiences, that much of the stress couples encounter later on in their marriages can also be reduced.

So we decided to co-author this guidebook to share what we have learned.

HOW THIS GUIDE DIFFERS FROM ALL THE REST

While many books are available to help you plan and organize your wedding, none addresses the subject of stress as we do. And while hundreds of books have been written about stress, few if any are likely to help you.

The reason for this, as you'll soon learn, is that managing stress isn't the answer. Instead of advising you to use exercise, diet, or relaxation techniques (or other symptom-oriented approaches), we're going to show

you how to eliminate stress by gaining a better understanding of its causes. This approach can enable you to eliminate 75% or more of the wedding and marital stress you might otherwise experience.

By reading this guidebook, you and your partner will learn how to:

- avoid nasty relationship conflicts
- resolve any conflicts about money and budgets
- have fewer emotional ups and downs
- avoid losing sleep as your wedding day approaches
- find out if a wedding consultant or coordinator is right for you
- deal with unexpected problems calmly and creatively
- have a "perfect" wedding no matter what happens

In addition, you'll also learn how to:

- plan your marriage so it will last a lifetime
- chose a purpose for your marriage that will ensure its success
- plan your marriage to accommodate future growth and change
- eliminate the fear of commitment on your wedding day
- have a glorious, romantic, stress-free honeymoon

Not only will this guidebook serve you well during the planning stages of your wedding, but it will also benefit you as a married couple for many years to come.

CHAPTER 1 - COMMON MYTHS ABOUT STRESS

WHAT STRESS IS... AND WHAT STRESS IS NOT!

Before we can teach you how to deal with stress more effectively, you must first understand that "stress" is just a word people use to stand for hundreds of specific problems in their lives.

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS DEALING WITH STRESS PER SE! There are also no such "things" as "wedding stress" or "marital stress" or any other such nonsense.

When we say we are "stressed," what we really mean is we are having problems or conflicts that are painful, harmful, or troubling to us. These include everyday problems such as: feeling angry or frustrated, feeling worried or depressed, having concerns about money, concerns about loved ones, problems getting along with other people, doubts and insecurities, fears about the future, concerns about illness or old age, etc.

Thus, in order to deal with any type of "stress" effectively, we've first got to get rid of this term and focus on the specific problem or problems that are troubling us. Usually we will have multiple problems troubling us all at once. Each of these needs to be identified separately and addressed.

With regard to "wedding stress," here is a partial list of problems and conflicts that brides and grooms frequently encounter:

- conflicts with parents, family members, bridal party members, and friends
- arguments and disagreements about decisions that need to be made
- arguments and disagreements over money, including how much to spend
- increasing demands on your time
- fears, worries, and conflicting desires of grandparents, parents, and other interested parties
- fear of the unknown, fear of changing roles and lifestyle
- feeling overburdened or overwhelmed

- having more things to do than time allows
- negotiating and dealing with suppliers, vendors, and other merchants
- arguments over the guest list, who sits where, or who shouldn't be seated with whom, etc.
- where to go on your honeymoon
- religious differences
- dealing with divorced parents, ex-spouses, step-children, etc.
- dealing with unexpected crises and last minute changes
- dealing with other people's opinions, feelings, needs, and desires
- dealing with emotional, physical, and psychological problems within yourself
- dealing with emotional, physical, and psychological problems in your partner
- poor sleep, poor nutrition, exhaustion and fatigue
- trying to appease two different family groups, each with differing values, beliefs, expectations, and attitudes
- dealing with second thoughts, self-doubts, and negative feelings about your future
- loss of freedom and independent control

And this is just a partial list of problems! The same type of list, with modifications, could also be made for "marital stress."

THE SECRET TO DEALING WITH ANY TYPE OF "STRESS" (I.E. PROBLEMS)

The best way to deal with any type of problem in life is to accurately identify and deal with its causes. Unfortunately, most advice people receive for dealing with "stress" encourages just the opposite behavior!

Basically, there are three main ways you can choose to cope with "stress":

a) The Band-Aid Approach: using alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, food, sex, or anything else to temporarily relieve the symptoms of your problems. While these coping strategies may seem to "work" in the short run, they have harmful long-term effects which make them undesirable;

b) The Stress Management Approach: using diet, exercise, meditation, biofeedback, or other relaxation techniques. While these coping strategies have many advantages over band-aid methods, they still focus mainly on just the symptoms of your problems;

c) The Ideal Approach: making your problems naturally disappear, quickly and easily, by modifying or eliminating their underlying causes. This is by far the most effective way to deal with "stress." The difficulty with this approach, however, is that most of us have not been trained to correctly understand what causes our "stress" to occur.

LEARNING TO RECOGNIZE THE HIDDEN CAUSES OF "STRESS"

Most people are being told today that the best way to deal with "stress" is to manage it. THIS IS UNTRUE!

The best way to deal with "stress" is to attack its causes. Here again, most of us have been misinformed about what really causes our problems to occur.

The causes of "stress" come in TWO VARIETIES. Obvious causes and non-obvious causes.

Obvious causes are the one's most of us easily see. Someone disagrees with your viewpoint, fails to keep a promise, or treats you rudely or uncaringly. Your maid of honor or best man cancels out at the last minute. Your father's car breaks down on the way to the church and you're late for the ceremony. Your photographer doesn't show up, the name cards for your guests are different from what you expected, and your caterer's chef got sick so the menu for your reception had to be changed and there wasn't any time to notify you!

In addition to these obvious causes, there are also a whole host of non-obvious causes that most people fail to consider. These include "conversations" and "action patterns" that get triggered within ourselves.

For instance, internal expectations are a common hidden source of "stress." We all have ideas and beliefs about how weddings should be

conducted, how people should behave, how parents should respond, etc. When these expectations (within us) are not fulfilled, or when they conflict with the expectations or beliefs of others, "stress" usually follows. This may take the form of overt or covert hostility, envy, withdrawal, or stubborn uncooperativeness.

If we focus only on the external behaviors of others (obvious causes), however, and neglect the role that our own expectations play (non-obvious causes), we will have trouble resolving such conflicts successfully. If we know, on the other hand, that hidden expectations within us are contributing to a problem, we can address these hidden causes and find out how to resolve them. If we do this successfully, **THE PROBLEM WILL LESSEN OR COMPLETELY DISAPPEAR!**

OTHER POPULAR MYTHS ABOUT STRESS

You may also have been told that stress is an inevitable part of life, that some stress is good or healthy for you, or that the causes of stress are beyond your control. Don't believe any of these myths for an instant.

The real truth about "stress" is you can always do something to prevent or eliminate it. How successful you will be depends on whether you take into account both obvious and non-obvious causes.

The main purpose of this guide is to help you better understand the hidden causes of wedding and marital stress. Many of these causes are exactly the same. If you fail to recognize them and learn how to deal with them early, during the planning of your wedding, there's a very good chance they will have a destructive effect on your marriage as well.

On the other hand, if you successfully learn to master these hidden causes during the months and weeks preceding your marriage, you'll be way ahead of most other couples. You will also gain a better understanding of yourselves as unique individuals, and the hidden patterns and beliefs that determine your feelings, emotions, and behaviors toward each other.

As an added bonus, the more you understand the hidden causes of "stress" within yourself and your partner, the more you will understand how the same types of hidden patterns cause "stress" to occur in other people.

You will also discover new and creative ways to protect your health, increase your happiness, and enhance your success in your marriage and other important aspects of your life.

In summary, the best way to deal with any type of "stress" is not to manage its symptoms but to deal with its underlying causes. In order to do this successfully, you first must "let go" of the idea of dealing with "stress" and focus instead on the specific problem or problems that are troubling you. Then, for each of these problems, you must identify both its obvious and non-obvious causes. Once you know (or have a general idea) what both types of causes for any given problem might be, you will then be well on your way to solving that problem effectively.

So let's get familiar with some of these hidden causes . . .

CHAPTER 2 - 25 HIDDEN CAUSES OF STRESS

This chapter lists 25 hidden causes of "stress" that contribute to problems and conflicts for all human beings.

Each of these causes plays an important role in the "stress" people experience as they plan their wedding. Each also plays a role in most of the "marital stress" couples encounter after they are married.

Many of these causes contribute to other types of "stress" as well, such as work-related stress, the stress of raising children, the stress of public speaking, etc.

The more you look for these hidden causes in yourself and other people, the better you'll become at dealing with them. Most of the recommendations, tips, and suggestions offered in this guidebook are based upon these 25 causes.

NOTE: The purpose of this chapter is simply to introduce you to these hidden causes. How they apply to specific wedding and marital problems will become more clear later on. From time to time, however, you might want to review this chapter to refresh your memory. You may also want to make photocopies to keep in convenient locations.

EITHER/OR THINKING

Much human stress stems from "either/or" patterns of thinking. These include common patterns such as GOOD/BAD, RIGHT/WRONG, CREDIT/BLAME, WIN/LOSE, etc. Most arguments, for example, are caused when two people believe each is "right" and the other is "wrong" about a particular issue. Usually, however, both people are "right" from their own perspective. Neither can recognize the validity of the other person's point of view, because they've become trapped within an either/or, right/wrong way of thinking.

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS (TOO HIGH OR TOO LOW)

Another common cause of "stress" is unrealistic expectations. As we mentioned in the previous chapter, all of us have expectations about how life should work, how people should behave, how weddings should be conducted, etc. Sometimes these expectations are appropriate and realistic. Often, however, they are too high or too low. Overly high expectations can lead to failure, frustration, anger, and depression. Overly low expectations can lead to poor self-esteem, unassertive behavior, or the false conclusion that one's problems cannot be solved.

An important part of reducing stress in any interpersonal endeavor, whether planning a marriage, wedding, or honeymoon, involves clarifying expectations before you begin to proceed. Realizing that each person's expectations (including your own) may be hidden means you must take certain actions to bring them into the open. Methods for doing this will be discussed in later chapters.

PERFECTIONISM

If you really want to have "stress" while planning your wedding, try to do everything "perfectly." Better yet, expect or demand that everyone involved with you, from your partner to your parents to vendors and suppliers of key services, also function "perfectly." Add a desire for perfect weather, the perfect ceremony (where everything goes as planned), and a perfect reception and honeymoon to boot, and you have an excellent formula for "stress." (Of course, you'll also probably want the perfect divorce lawyer to represent you.)

While you may be thinking "I would never do any of those things," you'd be amazed how often hidden desires for perfectionism creep in. They lurk in the background of our thoughts and feelings--staying hidden from view so we don't notice we are unconsciously functioning this way.

Perfectionism can also appear in your partner, your parents, your partner's parents, or any other member of your planning team. Even if you don't succumb to the clutches of perfectionism yourself, others around you can easily fall prey.

CONTROL

Next to perfectionism, excessive needs for dominance and control are the second leading cause of stress in interpersonal relationships. Whenever we are "stressed," there's a very good chance issues of control are involved. Either we are trying to control the wrong things, or we are not taking control of things we could influence, or we are trying to control things in ineffective ways.

Trying to change other people (usually for their own good) is a subtle form of control. So is trying to solve other people's problems, trying to make other people happy, or trying to prevent other people from getting into trouble.

Wanting things to always go as you'd like--or resisting things and people being just the way they are--are also subtle forms of control.

Control also has a positive side as well. Being organized, being efficient, and taking charge of a difficult problem or situation are all positive forms of control. This type of control, which helps you solve or prevent certain problems, is stress-relieving, not stress-producing.

FAILING TO ANTICIPATE BREAKDOWNS AND DELAYS

Another common cause of stress in life (and planning a wedding) is failing to anticipate unexpected breakdowns and delays. If you schedule things too close together, for instance leaving only thirty minutes between connecting flights for your honeymoon destination, you're setting yourself up for trouble. Similarly, if you expect everyone you hire to show up on time (or show up at all) and you haven't planned for the possibility of unexpected breakdowns (of people, equipment, traffic, weather, etc.) or delays, you might run into serious problems that could have been avoided. We'll come back to this principle many times in later chapters. It can't be emphasized too much!

FAILING TO ASSESS THE COMMITMENT OF OTHERS

This pattern has to do with our tendency not to notice or not to accurately assess whether people are really committed to what they say they are. For example, sometimes you might ask a friend or family member to do something for you or to take over some important function for your wedding. Though they might agree, don't overlook any subtle signs of reluctance or hesitancy on their part. You might be so happy to hear the words you want to hear that you fail to consider the person's sincerity. Later on, when things don't work out or when the other person fails to follow through, you may blame them as the guilty party, even though you detected a potential problem early on, but ignored it.

Failing to assess the commitment of others can also come into play when you hire people to provide services for your wedding. What they say they are committed to (in words) might not be what they deliver (in actions). Often, we get a vague sense of this possibility early in our relationship with certain suppliers, but we fail to address it and suffer as a consequence.

FAILING TO UNDERSTAND OR COMMUNICATE WITH OTHERS

Two other causes of "stress" in working with other people are failing to understand their wants, needs, and desires; and failing to communicate about certain problems altogether. Often, people won't tell you exactly what they want, need, or expect from you. You might think you understand, but more often than not you may be mistaken. Whenever you run into major conflicts with other people, it's always good to assume you might have misjudged their true wants and needs.

There may also be problems that arise between you and other people that don't get communicated at all. People's feelings might be hurt, they may resent you, your partner, or the way you've been acting, or who knows what else. If they are too embarrassed, angry, or proud to admit their feelings openly, you may never know what is bothering them unless you encourage them to open up.

The best way to do this is to approach the person in an inquiring manner, without being harsh, defensive, or judgmental. For example, you might go up to someone with whom you feel a certain amount of tension and say, "I

notice you've been a little distant with me lately. Did I do anything to offend you?" The first response is usually "no," but if you keep exploring the matter non-judgementally, most people will eventually open up (if they are truly holding something against you).

FAILING TO ASK FOR HELP

Most Americans have a hard time asking for help. For some reason, we grow up believing that it's better to do things ourselves or that it's somehow a sign of weakness or incompetence to request assistance from others.

When you're planning a complex affair like a wedding, it's a great stress-reliever to have lots of people supporting you.

Yes, you do introduce additional problems when others get involved. But if you select your helpers wisely, if you empower them to be successful, and if you acknowledge them and let them know how much you appreciate their efforts, they will literally "leap tall buildings" on your behalf.

More importantly, it's a gift to other people when you let them help out. Many want to show their gratitude and friendship to you by working to make your wedding a success. When you reject their offers of help and admiration, you do yourself and the other person a great disservice.

This pattern is important to watch out for after you've gotten married too. Often, couples will begin to experience problems in their marriage, but they won't ask for help, feeling they've got to "work things out themselves." By the time they realize they could have used some help, the damage to their relationship may be irreparable.

NOT TAKING CARE OF YOUR BODY

Another thing about Americans is that we tend to ignore our bodies. Many of us act as if we don't have bodies at all! We run them at full speed until they get sick. We put anything we want into them, including drugs, alcohol, and other unhealthy substances. We abuse them in athletic endeavors. We regularly deprive them of needed sleep, relaxation, and exercise. We don't even take them to the doctor for regular examinations, even though many of us religiously take our cars in for routine checkups .

These habitual and socially-reinforced patterns can often be major sources of "stress." When your body is run down or deprived of sleep, you don't think or concentrate as well as you normally can. And you are much more susceptible to emotional fluctuations. Remember, when the demands on your time or activities are markedly increased, as they are during the planning of your wedding, your body will need more stamina and more rest to meet these increased demands.

RELYING UPON DRUGS, ALCOHOL, CIGARETTES, ETC.

Another way we add to our own "stress" is to rely upon drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, caffeine, food, or other chemical substances to alleviate the symptoms of any problems we might be experiencing.

The danger of these coping strategies is that they "work" fairly well in the short-run. They can make you feel better temporarily, but they are poor long-range strategies for coping with "stress."

Don't fall prey to these tempting strategies if your "stress" levels rise as you begin to plan your wedding. Instead, follow the strategies we outline in this guide. You can also use stress management strategies, such as exercise, biofeedback, meditation, and other relaxation techniques. These can help, but remember they are limited in what they can do.

NEEDING TO BE RIGHT

Another way to ensure lots of "stress" when planning your wedding (or doing anything else for that matter) is to always try to be right when interacting with others.

In order to be right, everyone else must end up being wrong (unless they agree with you). You may feel satisfied, but others will walk away feeling angry and resentful.

Please be on the lookout for this insidious pattern. If you don't think this is major cause of "stress" in your life, you're wrong! (See, we're afflicted too!)

In fact, this one hidden pattern is probably responsible (all by itself) for half the divorces that occur every year.

The question to ask yourself is this: would you rather be right or have a good relationship? You can't do both, so you're going to have to choose one or the other. (Trust us, there's no way around this.)

FAILING TO ADMIT WEAKNESSES

Along with wanting to be right, wanting to be in control, wanting to do things ourselves, and wanting to act as if we don't have a body, we also tend to deny our weaknesses. We fail to take stock of what we don't do well, for this can make us feel depressed or incompetent.

A good way to head off "stress," however, is to openly admit to yourself and others all those things you do poorly. Instead of trying to cover up this fact or take on jobs that you don't handle well, you can admit your limitations and include them in your strategic planning.

For example, if you're not very organized or good with minor details, have someone else take over these responsibilities for you. (Even if you are very organized, use checklists, wedding planners, or even computerized planning guides to assist you.)

Maybe you or your partner have trouble staying within a budget. Or maybe one of you is better at negotiating with suppliers. Or one or both of you have terrible taste in clothing and apparel. If so, admit these limitations and let other people assist you. Trying to look good or otherwise denying these weaknesses will only get you into trouble.

FAILING TO ADMIT STRENGTHS

Similarly, you may be too humble or embarrassed to admit you are really good at certain things. Or, you might believe that you are weak or limited in a certain area, when in fact you function very well (or at least have the ability to do so).

This too can be a hidden source of "stress." If you do something better than your partner, or if you know you can do something better than you've done in the past, don't be afraid to stand up and admit this to yourself and to others.

NEGATIVE THINKING

Negative thinking is another hidden cause of "stress." Most people have negative thoughts every day. These include negative thoughts about oneself, one's abilities, one's future possibilities, negative thoughts about others, about life, about past events (usually called "regrets"), even negative thoughts about inanimate objects, such as cars, clothes, or computers.

Just about anything in life, past, present, or future, can be looked at negatively. And most of the time, we don't even notice we are thinking this way. (That's why we call these thought patterns "hidden" causes of stress.)

The problem with negative thinking is that it's frequently wrong or misleading. When we think we are "lazy" or "inadequate," this may not be the truth about who we are or who we could become. When we think we are "totally to blame" for something, we may only be focusing on our role in the matter, even though other people or events were involved. This is why you should always look for negative thought patterns whenever you feel "stressed." Once you identify them and examine them honestly, you'll often find that many of them aren't really true.

HOPE

Negative thought patterns are not the only type of thinking that produces "stress." While hope is often a powerful and useful emotion, overly optimistic or too hopeful thinking can also lead to problems.

For example, people who tend not to face their interpersonal problems, but "hope" they will somehow resolve themselves on their own often find this strategy doesn't work. Similarly, if you just assume others will honor their commitments or act with integrity--i.e. you hope things will go as you were promised--you can be in for a rude awakening.

With regard to planning your wedding and managing a long-term relationship (with anyone), never let hope be your main operating principle. Always take the initiative to check things out yourself. Do your homework, and follow up on everything and everyone around you. Only then will the things you hope for likely come true.

STUPID/SMART

Another form of either/or thinking is "stupid/smart." Here, we judge ourselves or others as being either "stupid" or "smart" with regard to some past decision, behavior, or successful or unsuccessful event.

The problem with stupid/smart thinking and other either/or dichotomies is that they are almost always inaccurate as such. Most people are neither mostly stupid, nor mostly smart. Smart people often make dumb mistakes, and so-called "dumb" people often perceive things other people miss.

Watch out for this hidden cause of stress if problems arise in planning your wedding. There will always be a tendency to judge yourself or others as being "stupid" about certain things. This can lead to intense feelings of guilt and anger. It can also lead to strained interpersonal relationships as well.

"I'VE GOT TO DO IT MYSELF"

With any complex task, such as planning and organizing a wedding, you've got to delegate responsibilities and rely upon other individuals. Trying to do everything yourself, or expecting that you can stay on top of every minor detail, invites disappointment, failure, and "stress."

Even though we know this, we can still fall prey to wanting to keep our hands on everything. Watch out for this automatic tendency. It's another version of CONTROL, which leads to lots of "stress" and suffering.

"I SHOULDN'T BE FEELING THIS WAY"

Weddings are supposed to be happy, joyous occasions. We should feel excited about getting married and optimistic about our future. In addition, people expect us to be upbeat, positive, and mostly in good cheer.

Unfortunately, negative thoughts and feelings are a very real part of getting married. Fears, concerns, self-doubts, and feelings of sadness and loss are very common. Don't assume you shouldn't be having these negative thoughts and feelings. They accompany every major life transition, and they

are usually not "abnormal," despite what many people think.

Serious doubts and misgivings about getting married, however, shouldn't be ignored. But the transient types of negative thoughts, feelings, and concerns that most brides and grooms experience should not be taken too seriously.

"I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER"

Planning a wedding involves thousands of decisions, both major and minor. Mistakes will undoubtedly be made, but once they come to light, don't beat yourself up about them (like when we screwed up and sent dinner invitations to the wrong group of relatives).

It's a common tendency to assume you "should have known better" and avoided certain mistakes. Whoever put that idea in your head probably never planned a wedding (or other large event).

"I SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE OR SAID WHAT I DID"

Likewise, there will be thousands of interactions with family, friends, and other individuals during the planning of your wedding (including your ceremony and reception as well). It's inevitable that you will do something or say something that will hurt someone's feelings. Only a PERFECTIONIST would expect to avoid all such mishaps.

Give yourself a break. If you say or do something wrong, admit it, apologize, and then forget about it. Don't ruminate about it or beat yourself up unmercifully. Remember, you're only human, and humans sometimes make mistakes--especially when they've got a zillion other things of importance on their mind.

FAILING TO CLARIFY AGREEMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

Failing to clarify agreements and expectations is one type of "hope" that leads to tremendous amounts of stress. When two or more people form a relationship, or when they work together on a project, mutual agreements and understandings are essential for success. Many times, however, these agreements are not negotiated explicitly. Rather each party assumes or

thinks they know how the other party intends to behave.

The trouble with operating this way is that people frequently have differing opinions about how one should behave. Unless these expectations are brought out into the open, where they can be examined and agreed upon, there's a tremendous likelihood of misunderstandings and "stress."

This important cause of "stress" frequently crops up in planning a wedding. From working with family members and friends to oral or written contracts with vendors and suppliers, failing to thoroughly clarify agreements and expectations is a common source of difficulties.

As you read along in this guide, you'll find there are many things you can do to keep this pattern from causing you to suffer.

TRYING TO CHANGE YOURSELF

Many times, people will try to live up to some image they admire, instead of just being themselves. This can create an enormous amount of "stress," not to mention feelings of frustration and failure when they fail to measure up to their idealized image.

As a rule, it is very hard to change the way you are. If you are negative thinker, for example, it's very hard to eliminate this automatic tendency. If you are compulsive and need to control every detail, you will probably not be able to free yourself from this stress-producing tendency.

Even though you can't easily change your habitual ways of thinking and behaving, you can exercise certain types of control over them. If you are a negative thinker, for instance, you can surround yourself with people who always notice positives. If you need to know every detail of what's going on, you can delegate tasks to others and have them report to you regularly on their status.

The important thing is not to try to change yourself or pretend you are someone you are not. Accept yourself the way you are, and then work with what you've got.

TRYING TO CHANGE OTHERS

Just as it is hard to change yourself, it's almost impossible to change other people (especially when they don't want to change!). Unfortunately, we have an insane desire to try to change and control other people. We want other people to think and feel as we do, we want them to share our standards and values, we even want them to read our minds and know what would please us.

The problem with this strategy is people may not behave just like us. They will do what they want and expect everyone else to agree with them! The sooner you learn to accept other people on their own terms, and to value them exactly as they are (and as they are not), the less stress and tension you'll create in your relationships.

NOTE: The same holds true for accepting your partner exactly as he or she is and is not. Both Christina and I found this a difficult, but important, lesson to learn. The more we tried to change each other the more unhappy we became. When we decided to love and accept each other exactly as we were (albeit with quirks), the happier we became as a couple.

FAILING TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS CREATIVELY

The Chinese have a word for "crisis" that consists of two symbols--one that means "problem" and another that means "opportunity." We, on the other hand, tend to focus only on the problem side of crises, and leave the opportunity side out.

All of us have the ability to deal with problems creatively. The fact that we fail to (or refuse to) use this natural ability is a common source of unnecessary "stress."

There is no doubt that problems and crises will arise during the planning of your wedding. Whether these problems cause you to suffer, however, has much to do with how you and your partner respond to them.

If you anticipate that unexpected problems will occur, and if you respond to them as opportunities to expand your problem-solving skills, you can

derive a great deal of joy and satisfaction from situations that drag other people down.

TAKING THINGS TOO SERIOUSLY

The final hidden cause of stress we'll discuss in this chapter is TAKING THINGS TOO SERIOUSLY. This pattern is not only limited to planning your wedding; it's a common source of stress in many people's lives.

The truth about life is that most things that happen--good or bad--are not terribly important. Viewed from a larger perspective or taken in the context of thousands of years of human existence, whether you hurt someone's feelings today or forgot to do something you promised is not going to matter to anyone ten years from now.

When minor traumas do occur, however, we react emotionally as if they are highly significant. That they aren't really important escapes us for the moment. You can regain this perspective, however, by reminding yourself that most things in life aren't really critical. Those that are critical need to be attended to diligently, but most things in life, including most of the minor incidents associated with planning your wedding, rarely fit this bill.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

These twenty-five hidden causes of "stress" will invariably occur for just about everyone involved with planning a wedding. While they are not the only hidden causes of "stress," they are important to recognize and fully understand.

As you become more familiar with these hidden causes, you'll begin to see them causing mischief in other areas of your life. And the more you practice recognizing and dealing with these twenty-five causes, the better you'll become at recognizing other hidden causes of "stress" as well.

CHAPTER 3 - PLAN YOUR MARRIAGE FIRST!

Before making plans for your wedding, plan your marriage first!. Your marriage, after all, is much more important than your wedding. So take the time to plan it right.

The most important part of planning your marriage is for you and your partner to openly discuss your individual values, goals, and expectations. Failing to do this is a major cause of stress.

PRE-MARITAL QUESTIONNAIRE

After reading this chapter, both you and your partner should complete the Pre-Marital Values, Goals, & Expectations Questionnaire located in Appendix I. Even if you've already discussed most of the issues in this questionnaire, go over them again!

During courtship, many couples avoid talking about some of these issues entirely, or they discuss them only in a cursory fashion. This failure can lead to problems and misunderstandings later on in your marriage.

The Pre-Marital Questionnaire in Appendix I will help you and your partner avoid such conflicts. It's designed to help both of you clarify and acknowledge your deepest values, expectations, and personal goals.

Christina and I completed a similar questionnaire shortly after we became engaged. We were very glad we did, since we uncovered several important problems we didn't know existed. As a result, we were able to make agreements with each other about how we would deal with these problems in the future. After 26 years of marriage, we can say that rigorously going through this process really made a difference!

The best way to conduct such a values, goals, and expectations clarification process is for both you and your partner to write out your answers to each and every question on the Pre-Marital Questionnaire. Do this alone, apart from each other. Take as long as you need to get all your ideas and expectations down on paper.

Then, when both of you have finished this important step, spend time together sharing and discussing your answers. Allow several hours of quiet, uninterrupted time to do this, and don't hesitate to schedule a second or third session to complete all the items. (It took Christina and I three sessions totalling about 6 hours of conversation.)

By the way, Christina and I review these questions every few years. You'd be amazed how much we learn about ourselves each time.

In the remainder of this chapter, we'll provide you with a few hints, tips, and other suggestions for completing this questionnaire.

REASONS FOR GETTING MARRIED (Question 1)

Everyone who wants to get married has reasons for doing so. Some want to have a family and raise children. Some want to escape unhappy or dysfunctional parents. Some want more security, more money, more frequent sex, or the thrill of "possessing" or "controlling" another person.

Whatever your reason or reasons might be, it's important to acknowledge them to yourself and to your partner. Sometimes you will find that your partner is not interested in what you have in mind. Other times you might realize that your reason is not a good one.

One way to clarify your reasons for getting married is to ask: why not just live together? If you think you'll gain more security or have a greater chance of your relationship succeeding by getting married, think again! Divorce statistics show over half of all marriages fail—proving this assumption wrong.

PURPOSE OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP (Question 2)

The purpose of a relationship goes far beyond the reasons you want to marry. Asking yourself "what is the purpose of my relationship?" will help you focus on your underlying assumptions about relationships in general, and how to have a marriage, in particular, succeed.

The reason why you and your partner should clarify the purpose of your relationship is because many purposes are weak, insufficient, or even

destructive. If your main purpose for forming a marriage is to have someone take care of you and satisfy your needs, you're going to be in trouble (even if you find someone willing). Similarly, if your main purpose for creating a marriage is to have your partner entertain you, make you laugh, and or make you feel happy, the chances are good that you will eventually feel disappointed.

Most of the reasons and purposes we envision for our marriages tend to be selfish (i.e. self-centered) ones. The best and most successful purposes for long-term human relationships, however, are other-directed. When two people consciously choose to create a relationship together for the purpose of contributing something useful and desired to each other, the relationship has a better chance of surviving. (There will always be a tendency to revert to self-centered needs. But keeping the other-directed purpose in mind can offset the potential relationship-destroying effects of such unwise agendas.)

NOTE (VERY IMPORTANT): Wanting your relationship to succeed, wanting to have a family, or just wanting to be happy are generally not strong enough purposes to empower a relationship to last. Experience has shown that people who start out with such purposes in mind, whether or not they openly acknowledge them, often end up divorced. To give yourself the best chance for long-term success, come up with a purpose that is bigger than just being happy or having your relationship succeed. Christina and I are very clear that our purpose for getting married is not just to contribute to each other's health, happiness, and personal success. In addition, we want our relationship to be about contributing to the health and well-being of other people as well, and to making the planet a better place for our own and other children to live. While this purpose may seem a little grandiose, it's been much more inspiring and useful to us than focusing primarily on our own personal wants, needs, and desires.

GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE (Question 3)

While most couples don't like to think about divorce in the early stages of their relationship, they should. What behaviors could your partner engage in that would be intolerable to you? What offenses could he or she commit (to you or to others) that would have you demand a divorce?

Better to know these in advance than to violate them and suffer the unhappy consequences.

YOUR LIFE PURPOSE AND GOALS (Questions 4 & 5)

In addition to clarifying (and sometimes freshly creating) the purpose for your relationship, you should also clarify your personal goals and ambitions.

What is your overriding purpose in life? Do you want to be the best at something? Do you want to be rich? Do you want to help other people? Do you want to improve the world or pursue some noble cause?

My purpose in life is to contribute to the health and well-being of other people, including myself. Christina's purpose is the same, with the addition of helping to eradicate the problem of hunger and starvation on the planet. Before we decided to get married, we each knew what the other's life would be about. While the form of our commitments have changed somewhat over the past 26 years, the underlying purposes of our lives have remained the same, and we each are inspired by what each other wants to accomplish.

If you don't know your purpose in life, this could lead to problems in your marriage. Most people have a purpose for their lives, even though they may not be aware of it. To clarify your purpose, look at what you enjoy most in life and what gives you the most pleasure. What are you naturally good at? What benefits do people derive from being around you? What do people pay you for or look to you to supply for them?

Also, list your short-term and long-term personal goals. These usually stem from your purpose in life. (If you're not sure about your purpose, list your goals anyway. Sometimes, your purpose will become clear to you when you look at the types of goals you have chosen.)

Short-term goals are those you want to accomplish in the next 1-2 years. Long-term goals can be broken down into 5, 10, 15, 20, and 30 year intervals. Develop a "picture" of what you want your marriage to be like at each of these intervals and share that information with your partner. It's good for both of you to know, in general terms, what your hopes and dreams are, even though they may never be realized.

NOTE: Purposes, goals, and life ambitions often change over time. Be prepared for this possibility and discuss any changes in lifestyles that might not be acceptable to either of you. One couple we knew broke up when the husband took a job that required him to move to Africa by himself for 18 months. He completed the job, but the marriage didn't survive.

EXPECTATIONS OF SUPPORT (Questions 6 & 7)

Once you are clear about your purposes and goals in life, let your partner know exactly what types of support you expect. Do you want or need certain types of help from your partner? Are there specific tasks or chores you expect your partner to perform? Do you only want encouragement and emotional support, and if so, how would you like these offered?

Also, are your expectations of support realistic? To find out, discuss them openly and honestly with your partner.

Remember, just because someone says they are committed to supporting you doesn't mean they will follow through. In the early stages of your relationship, when everything is "rosy" and you are both very much "in love," it's easy to say you would do anything for each other. After you've been married several years, however, this enthusiasm often wanes.

A true commitment to life-long partnership and support should never be based on transient feelings of euphoria. It must be rock-solid and invulnerable to changes that invariably occur over time.

It's important to assess your partner's ability to make and sustain such a long-term commitment. Don't just settle for promises you want to hear. Ask a few "what would you do if this happened?" type questions and see what kinds of answers you get.

Look at your partner's previous track record with keeping long-term commitments (not just with relationships, but with other areas of life as well). If the past record is poor, what makes you think the future will be any different? (A person can change, but rarely without major growth.)

This is one area where HOPE comes into play as a major cause of marital distress. Don't take your partner's promises lightly. Don't just assume your prospective spouse will follow through because of love. Evaluate the sincerity of the commitment made to you and the likelihood it will be sustained.

YOUR PARTNER'S PURPOSE, GOALS, AND EXPECTATIONS ABOUT SUPPORT (Questions 8-11)

Your partner deserves the same type of understanding and commitment from you as well. Part of forming a strong, lasting marriage is to be absolutely sure that each of you is clear about the other's purpose, goals, and expectations of support. Leave nothing unsaid or unexamined. Take nothing for granted.

CAREER / WORK ISSUES (Question 12)

Career and work issues are a common source of "stress" for many couples. When completing this part of the questionnaire, don't just look at your present situation. Think ahead and discuss any changes that might be likely in the future.

How do each of you feel about the other person working? What other attitudes and beliefs about work/career do each of you have? What types of career changes might you envision in the future? How might each of you respond to new career offers or opportunities?

HOME / FAMILY ISSUES (Question 13)

All of us have beliefs about what married people "should do." These come from the ways our own parents related to each other or from seeing other families (including T.V. "families") address similar issues.

It's important to share any expectations you have about the roles and tasks you'll both assume. Many times, your expectations and those of your partner will not match. It's better to find out now, so you can work things out.

NOTE: When we completed our questionnaires 26 years ago, I listed

"housekeeping" as one of Christina's jobs. She listed it as a job we would both share equally. While each of us was surprised by the other's expectation, knowing we had a mismatch helped us work out a successful compromise.

MONEY ISSUES (Question 14)

Money is a big source of "stress" for married couples. Again, most of us have beliefs and expectations about money, based upon our past experiences. Some people are good with money and some aren't. Some are good at paying bills, keeping records, or making sound investments; others aren't.

Honestly assess your own and your partner's skills in each of the areas listed and create a working agreement that is satisfying to both. Don't be limited by past financial experiences or the ways your parents handled finances. Create a plan that works for you and takes each other's feelings and needs into consideration.

Whatever plan you come up with, be prepared to change it, depending upon how well it performs. Christina and I have modified our financial arrangement several times during the course of our marriage. Our present system has worked well for several years. But we're always open to exploring new possibilities, whenever the need or desire arises from either one of us.

SEX ISSUES (Question 15)

Another common source of "stress" for married couples is their sexual relationship. Here again, we have many false impressions, unrealistic expectations, and other crazy ideas that get us into trouble.

Sit down with your partner and openly discuss your sexual needs and desires. Allow for the fact that your sexual appetites might diminish or increase as time goes on. Also allow for differing needs for intimacy, touching, and frequency of sex.

As your relationship grows and matures, so may your sexual desires. If the frequency of sex declines, this may not be a problem. Also, if the quality

of sex changes from wildly passionate to more subdued and mechanical, don't be surprised. While there's much you can do to keep your sexual relationship fresh and exciting, the novelty and spontaneity you enjoyed in the early stage of your relationship may wear off.

As your lifestyle and work routines change, so may your sexual habits. Being pregnant or having children can alter your sex life dramatically. So can extreme fatigue or the development of a physical or emotional illness.

The key to maintaining a satisfying sexual relationship with your partner over time is to shift from reactive sex to creative sexuality. When your reactive, spontaneous desire wanes, you can use creativity, playfulness, and good communication to keep your love life enjoyable.

The importance of good communication about sex cannot be overstated. As a general rule, any sexual problem can usually be worked out through open, honest, and respectful communication.

Many couples have trouble accepting the fact that changes in sexuality commonly occur. Changes are not necessarily a sign of trouble unless one or both parties feels dissatisfied. If either of you is not satisfied with your sex life, communicate with your partner until the problem is resolved. If your partner is unresponsive or uncooperative, don't give up. Keep trying and communicating until you work your problems out. Don't be afraid to seek professional assistance if necessary. If your partner won't go, get help yourself. Like any other type of problem in your relationship, sexual difficulties can almost always be resolved as long as you don't give up.

NOTE: Never compare yourselves sexually with what other couples say, do, or believe (most of what they say isn't true anyway). As long as both you and your partner feel satisfied with your sex life, that's all that's important.

CHILDREN (Question 16)

Discuss all issues related to having and raising children. When deciding who will be primarily responsible for raising your kids, don't assume a 50-50 proposition. Christina and I agreed, in advance, that she would be 80% responsible for raising our children, while I would be available only 20% of

the time. This arrangement fit each of our needs, desires, and career responsibilities very well. (As things turned out, I've been more than 20% available, but Christina doesn't feel cheated or upset when she has to assume most of the child-raising duties herself.)

RELIGION (Question 17)

If you and your partner have different religious backgrounds, you'll need to decide how to deal with this disparity. How will you raise your children? And how will you deal with the religious expectations of your parents and other family members?

TIME TOGETHER / TIME APART (Question 18)

Be sure to specify your expectations about time spent together and apart as a married couple. Each partner usually has specific ideas which can cause lots of "stress" if not openly discussed.

HANDLING GROWTH, CHANGE, AND OTHER PROBLEMS THAT ARISE

(Questions 19-23)

Questions 19-23 deal with issues related to growth, change, and how you will handle problems that arise from time to time in any relationship. Many couples fail to address these questions in advance. When problems occur later on, these couples may be poorly prepared to deal with them.

Give these five questions serious consideration. They may make the difference between success and failure in your marriage.

CHANGE OF HEART (Question 24)

What would you do if after all this planning, promising, and working together, your partner suddenly decided not to go through with the marriage? While we hope this never happens, both you and your partner should discuss the possibility and consider how each would cope with it.

OLD RELATIONSHIPS (Question 25)

The last point to consider in planning for success in your marriage is to review all old relationships, especially the ones that ended poorly. When looking at past relationships, honestly assess the role you played in causing them to fail. (The other party probably played a role as well, but here you want to focus on what you specifically did or didn't do.)

If you don't identify your own basic tendencies to destroy your interpersonal relationships, and if you never learn to deal with these tendencies within yourself, they may crop up again and interfere with your marriage.

It's a good idea to let your partner know exactly how you ruined previous relationships. It's important to let your partner know that you do have these tendencies, and that both of you will need to be on the lookout for them in the future. The more you know about each other's destructive patterns, the better you'll both be able to cooperate to defeat them.

Whether you've just become engaged or have been living with your partner for years, be sure to complete this Values, Goals, and Expectations Questionnaire. Even if you are reading this section after getting married, it can still help you avoid many nasty problems.

It's also a good idea to repeat this exercise every few years. You'll be amazed how much you'll benefit each time.

CHAPTER 4 - THEN PLAN YOUR WEDDING AND HONEYMOON

Once you've planned your marriage, your next task is to create a vision, purpose, and game plan for your wedding and honeymoon.

A vision is a picture or image of the final result you intend to produce. It can be very detailed, including elements like the dress you'll wear, how the church or reception hall will be decorated, how many people will attend, even what types of expressions will be on their faces. Or, it can be vague and imprecise, like "a small, cozy gathering of family and a few friends."

In addition to your vision, also co-create a purpose for your wedding. Agree upon a one-sentence statement of why you chose the particular vision you did. For instance, if your vision is "we plan to have a huge, lavish, catered affair," your purpose statement might be something like this: "we want a wedding that our wealthy friends, parents, and relatives would approve of."

NOTE: Our purpose was "to have an event where all our friends and family members could attend, have a great time, and contribute to a worthy charity (if they desired)."

Once you've decided on a vision and purpose for your wedding, the next step is to create a game plan for making these into realities. This includes coming to agreement on all sorts of issues, such as:

- what date, time of day, and location should we choose?
- what type of ceremony do we want?
- who will officiate?
- who will be invited?
- what type of food will be served?
- what type of music or entertainment would be best?
- will there be a special theme? If so what?
- how much will we spend?
- who's going to pay?
- who's going to do all the work of making arrangements?
- etc.

WHY PLANNING A WEDDING IS STRESSFUL

A wedding is not just of joining two individuals: the bride and the groom. It's also a merger of two different families (including step-families and distant relatives), as well as two large networks of friends and associates. It is therefore a multi-person event, and this makes it both wonderful and problematic.

Much of the stress associated with planning a wedding comes from needing to work with lots of other people. This not only includes family and friends, but also advisors, suppliers, consultants, etc. Each of these people has their own set of values, goals, needs, and opinions. Each also has their own patterns of responding to adversity and change.

You and your partner must get this large, diverse group of individuals to function as a team. Although the challenge is awesome, there's much you can do to minimize potential problems. Here are some tips you should find helpful.

CLARIFY! CLARIFY! CLARIFY!

One of the best things you can do to prevent "stress" in planning your wedding is to realize that other people often have ideas, expectations, feelings, and agendas different than yours. If you don't find out about these agendas in advance, you're asking for trouble.

Starting with your partner first, sit down and make a written list (individually) of your wedding ideas, beliefs, wants, and desires. (You may want to use the Bride And Groom Wedding Questionnaire in Appendix II for help with this process.)

Once you have done this, share your ideas and preferences with each other. Identify any conflicts areas and come to tentative agreements on as many of these as you can.

SCHEDULE A MEETING WITH BOTH SETS OF PARENTS

Then, schedule a meeting with both sets of parents to go over your tentative plans. This can be done with the bride's parents first, and then the

groom's, or you can attempt to do it as a combined group meeting.

When you meet with your parents, realize they too may have differing ideas and opinions. Find out how they feel about your wedding, and try to elicit any expectations or visions they might have.

Allow for the possibility that everyone's initial thoughts and feelings (including your own) might change over time. Be willing to respect and accommodate these changes and to incorporate other people's ideas and suggestions into your overall game plan.

Be sure to cover the following additional areas when discussing your wedding plans with your parents:

- What does each parent personally want to get out of the event (very important for each parent to specify and for you and your partner to know)
- What potential problems does each parent foresee?
- Do all parents agree on how much money will be spent and who will pay for what?
- Which jobs or tasks does each parent want to personally take on or supervise?
- How will communication between you and both sets of parents be arranged?
- Are there any other issues that need to be discussed?

NOTE: If either set of parents has been separated, divorced, or remarried, adjustments to these guidelines may be necessary. For excellent advice about handling such issues, see "Planning A Wedding With Divorced Parents" listed in the Additional Resources section of this guide.

MEET WITH OTHER KEY PEOPLE AND FAMILY MEMBERS

Once you've come to tentative agreements with both sets of parents, share your vision and game plan with other key people and family members. This should include siblings, step-siblings, grandparents, other close relatives, and special friends.

Let them know what you're planning to do, and listen to any suggestions or criticisms they have to offer. Find out how each person feels about participating in your wedding, and see if they are willing to help with some of the arrangements.

Allow for the possibility that some people might not be able to attend, might not have the time to help, or might be down on the idea of weddings in general.

As a rule, try to accept and respect whatever people think, feel and want. Don't try to change them, control them, or expect them to fit your pictures. Let them be however they are (allowing for the possibility their desires might change) and move on from there.

CLARIFY YOUR PURPOSE AND MAKE IT KNOWN TO EVERYONE

Make sure you and your partner agree on a purpose for your wedding. Write it down in one clear, concise sentence that everyone can understand. Then communicate your purpose to your parents and other key relatives and see if they can support it.

Assure family members that by agreeing to support your major purpose, you and your partner will endeavor to have their individual purposes and goals realized as well. If there is a conflict or impasse between two different purposes, see what type of compromise you can work out.

For example, Christina and I wanted a wedding where all our family, friends, and associates could attend, have a good time, and contribute to a worthwhile charity (instead of giving us gifts). We made each of our parents aware of this purpose and asked if they were willing to support us in having it come true. We also found out what their specific purposes were, and we committed ourselves to having theirs realized as well.

NOTE: When my parents gave in and agreed to invite their friends, they decided to charter two buses to make the trip more fun. But since they weren't convinced the wedding would be much fun, they wanted to schedule the buses to come back early. We agreed, even though we didn't think this was necessary.

If you fail to clarify your own and others' purposes regarding your wedding, you invite conflict and disaster. Feelings can get hurt, arguments ensue, and other problems can arise, all because people are operating from secret, conflicting purposes which were never brought to light.

DEALING WITH CONFLICTS AND DIFFERENCES OF OPINION

Conflicts and differences of opinion often arise during the planning of a wedding. Once everyone's purposes and goals are openly acknowledged, handling these conflicts becomes much easier.

When you run into a conflict, go back to your purposes and work from there. Regarding issues such as whom to invite, what kind of reception to have, or whom to include in the bridal party, let your purpose statement guide you in making such decisions.

Suppose, for example, that you and your partner have different religious backgrounds. If one of your purposes is to have both families feel included, you could decide to hold two separate services--one a small, private ceremony at someone's home and another larger service followed by a reception. The point is that once your purpose is clear--and everyone has agreed to accept it--creative solutions to any problem can be found.

WHO'S WEDDING IS IT?

In your initial planning meetings with both sets of parents, it's important to wrestle with the question: "Who's wedding is this?"

Commonly, one or more parents will have the idea that since they're paying for all or part of the wedding, it's their's to dictate and control. This may be fine if all parties agree at the outset. But many times, such agendas are kept secret. This can lead to horrible power struggles between parents and the bride and groom, or between one set of parents and the other.

Paying for the wedding and controlling how things go can be separated. As long as a budget is agreed upon in advance, the parties who are paying need not directly control the process. Once a budget is worked out, therefore, a decision can be made as to who will be in control (i.e. who's wedding this will be). Sometimes it turns out to be the bride and groom's wedding; sometimes it turns out to be the parents'. There's no right or wrong way to do it. It all depends on what everyone wants.

DEALING WITH NEGATIVE THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND BODY REACTIONS

In any large project involving lots of different people, feelings will get hurt and somebody will end up angry. It's very hard to avoid this, so be prepared from the outset.

If problems arise with one or more members of your planning party, try to find out what provoked the negative feelings. Don't assume you know, even if you think you are right. Always inquire, even if it's just to confirm your suspicions.

Once you find out how someone felt "wronged," do what you can to apologize or make up to them. Many times, we hurt people's feelings unintentionally. We may be so busy with our own problems and concerns that we fail to notice how we are interacting with others.

Always respect other people's negative feelings and assume they wouldn't be reacting that way without some cause--at least as things appear to them.

The same general principles apply to dealing with your partner. Planning a wedding can place tremendous stress on your relationship. There are hundreds of decisions to be made, details to manage, and disruptions in your normal routines. There are also meetings, discussions, rehearsals, fittings, etc. This can lead to loss of sleep, change in libido, appetite changes, physical exhaustion, and emotional ups and downs the likes of which you may never have experienced.

It's important to realize this will be a period of time in which you and your partner's physical and emotional states will be vulnerable. This is neither "bad" nor "destructive" since it happens with all major life transitions.

Therefore, anticipate that both you and your partner will probably be a little "crazy" or irritable at times. Don't take this personally. Don't add meaning or significance to it. If you openly discuss and acknowledge your feelings, you can even end up laughing about how "crazy" each of you has become.

Christina and I, for example, regularly got into arguments every time we drove to meet with the person who was going to marry us. After the first time or two, we noticed this pattern and began to laugh about it. Most of the time, we got along fine. But when these isolated incidents occurred, we didn't make much of them. Instead, we just called them our "wedding crazies" and quickly forgot about them.

NOTE: Sometimes frequent negative feelings and body reactions do mean something. They can mean you haven't planned your relationship properly, you've taken on too many tasks, you're developing a physical illness, etc. If you're having frequent negative feelings, don't just ignore them. Find out what's causing them and deal with those causes directly.

DEALING WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS

Not only do you have to watch out for your own negative thoughts and feelings, but you've got to be prepared to deal with the negative feelings and opinions of friends and family members.

Other people get "crazy" around weddings too. Sometimes they try too hard to please or become pushy in their attempts to help. When challenged or confronted, they can often feel rejected, hurt, or misunderstood.

Again, it's important to anticipate such "craziness" and not make too much of it. If a serious interpersonal conflict arises, the best thing to do is confront it head on and try to resolve it. Never let it simmer or just hope it will go away. It's better to risk making things worse (temporarily) in order to work things out.

PLAN FOR THINGS TO GO WRONG

As you finalize the game plan for your wedding, don't forget to plan for things to go wrong. Decide in advance how you will deal with such situations. It's better to assume problems will occur (and have some idea how you will cope with them) than it is to assume everything will go well and then be caught by surprise.

PLAN TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY

It's also important to take good care of your body. During the months and weeks leading up to your wedding, your schedule will become overloaded. Given all the physical and emotional demands you'll face, your body needs to be well-rested, well-fed, and otherwise taken care of.

Too many people ignore the needs of their bodies. They cut back on sleep, eat junk food on the run, make excuses for not exercising, and rely upon cigarettes, caffeine, alcohol, tranquilizers, or other chemical substances to "calm their nerves." This only makes things worse. It can also lead to increased physical and emotional strain.

Plan in advance to increase rather than decrease your exercise and relaxation times during the months you'll be working on your wedding. Make out a schedule and stick to it--no matter what happens! Also, eat a sensible, healthy diet and never let yourself go more than one or two nights in a row without a good sleep.

PLAN TIME FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR PARTNER

Also set time aside in your busy schedule each week for you (alone time) and your partner. When schedules become hectic, many people mistakenly drop this out.

Schedule at least one night a week for you and your partner to be alone together, with nothing urgent to do. Don't work on your wedding during this time. Use it for a date or other romantic adventure. Mark these scheduled times on your calendar, in advance, and don't change or cancel them unless you absolutely have to.

PLAN YOUR HONEYMOON TOO

See Chapter nine for helpful advice.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

These tips can help you prevent or eliminate many common problems that typically occur during the early stages of planning a wedding. Once you've successfully negotiated this critical period, it's time to manage all those annoying little details!

CHAPTER 5 - DETAILS! DETAILS! DETAILS!

The most difficult part of planning your wedding is managing all the important details. This time-consuming and often problematic task can be a tremendous "stress"-producer for everyone involved.

Fortunately, you can reduce or eliminate much of this "stress" by following some of the guidelines below.

CHECKLISTS / WEDDING PLANNING GUIDES

Use them! There are many excellent ones available in bookstores, libraries, and bridal shops. Some wedding planning guides are now even computerized, for use on your home PC.

Find a wedding guide that suits your needs. Then use it religiously. Make sure it contains plenty of checklists and worksheets that appeal to you.

WEDDING CONSULTANTS AND COORDINATORS

Consider hiring a wedding consultant or coordinator. Check your local Yellow Pages for listings or ask local bridal shop owners for recommendations.

A good wedding coordinator can save you lots of "stress." They'll generally handle most of the details for you, and their contacts and negotiating skills can sometimes save you money (and headaches as well). You'll have to pay more to have a personal coordinator or consultant, but good ones usually earn their keep.

NOTE: Christina and I hired a friend to professionally coordinate our wedding. We paid her about \$1,800. She did a great job, and given our busy schedules, she was worth every penny.

ANTICIPATE BREAKDOWNS AND DELAYS

Whether you hire a coordinator, a consultant, or make all the arrangements yourself, you should always plan for unexpected breakdowns, conflicts, and delays. No matter who makes the arrangements, always check

the following:

- check local and national calendars for:
 - conflicting holidays
 - religious observances
 - other special events

- check with your ceremony and reception sites for:
 - other affairs being held at the same time
 - other events being held in the nearby vicinity
 - any limitations or restrictions?
 - any security problems?
 - who will be in charge the day of your event?
 - what other responsibilities will they have and how long will they be there?

Always have backup or contingency plans in case of bad weather or other unexpected disasters.

NOTE: Let go of the need to have everything go as you've planned. Anticipate as many problems as you can, and then go with whatever happens. View every unexpected event as an opportunity, not a trauma. If things turn out perfectly, consider yourself lucky. If they don't, have whatever happens be "perfect" anyway (see Chapter 7 for tips on how to do this).

DELEGATE ROLES / RESPONSIBILITIES

Another excellent way to reduce the "stress" of handling details is to delegate tasks and responsibilities to others. Break major tasks into smaller, manageable areas and then invite other people to handle them for you.

Never force or impose these responsibilities on others. Make sure people truly want to contribute to your wedding, and then let them express some of their own ideas and creativity. Monitor their progress, but don't try to control every little thing they do. Also, be sure to acknowledge them frequently by letting them know how much you appreciate their help.

DEALING WITH VENDORS / SUPPLIERS / SERVICE PEOPLE

Most wedding books offer excellent suggestions for selecting and contracting with vendors and suppliers. Good advice and information is available from many different sources, which we won't try to duplicate here. The following guidelines, however, can often keep you out of trouble:

1. Do your homework--check references, interview several candidates, know what questions to ask, and know what types of answers will identify the type of vendor you want.
2. Clarify all agreements and expectations in writing--be very, very specific. Leave nothing to chance or interpretation. Note all inclusions and exclusions. Document payment terms and conditions. Specify how unexpected changes will be handled and communicated. Write down any special requests or promises agreed to orally.
3. Again, don't expect perfection--vendors and suppliers are human as well. You're just one of many clients, none of whom receive more special attention than any other. A good, professional job is all you should expect. Any more than that should be considered a bonus.
4. Confirm, reconfirm, then confirm again--keep in touch with your vendors and suppliers. Find out how things are going and if any problems have cropped up. Acknowledge them frequently and nurture the relationship. You might even want to send a small gift before your wedding, as a token of your appreciation.

TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOURSELF AND YOUR BODY

Remember, handling all the details associated with your wedding can be physically and emotionally exhausting. For this reason, take extra good care of your body by avoiding alcohol, drugs, and other toxic substances (e.g. stimulants, caffeine). Make sure you get plenty of sleep, watch your diet, and exercise more to increase your stamina.

DEALING WITH ANGER

Allow for some angry feelings from time to time. While weddings are supposed to be about positive emotions, the planning process often generates negative ones as well.

The best way to reduce the amount of anger you experience is to avoid being overly judgmental, critical, or optimistic about other people. Watch out for hidden expectations that are excessive or unrealistic (like perfectionism, control, and expecting people to operate according to your personal standards).

NOTE: Many of the suggestions offered throughout this guide are designed to help reduce anger, frustration, and other negative emotions. For more detailed advice about how to gain control over your negative moods and emotions, read *The 14 Day Stress Cure* (see Additional Resources section for ordering information). This book is truly one of the best you'll ever find for understanding and reducing emotional distress.

DEALING WITH GUILT

Guilt, like anger, often comes from being overly critical and judgmental--only the target is yourself instead of other people! During the course of planning your wedding, you'll probably make hundreds of mistakes. You'll forget names, leave people off your guest list, sit people with individuals they hate, or make other minor errors that can cause you and others pain.

Don't be too hard on yourself for committing such infractions. Even if other people get upset and make a big deal of things, you don't have to buy into their reality. Forgive yourself, your partner, and your family for anything that goes wrong, and resist the temptation to blame anyone exclusively, especially yourself.

DEALING WITH FEARS AND WORRIES

There's nothing like a wedding to drive up fears and worries. "Will I get through the ceremony? Will we forget the rings? Will the marriage work out? Will everyone enjoy the reception? Etc."

Many of these fears are heightened by poor planning. Others come from unrealistic expectations, which no one could ever realize.

If you are suffering from excessive fears or worries, discuss these feelings with your partner or other confidante. They will often be able to show you how your fears are not well-founded. Even if you do have legitimate fears and concerns, talking these over with others can often help you discover solutions you might not have thought of on your own.

DEALING WITH DOUBTS / SECOND THOUGHTS

Doubts and second thoughts about marriage are very common. They occur for just about everyone, but only rarely do they have significance.

Doubts can even be healthy at times. After all, many marriages don't last very long. So it's good, from time to time, to consider your chances for success. Remember, if the choices you've made are good ones, they should stand up well, no matter how many times you question them.

DEALING WITH OTHERS

Conflicts among parents, family members, and your future spouse frequently occur over details about your wedding. Even conflicts with life-long friends have been known to occur.

What should you do if family members, friends, or you and your partner get into squabbles? First, follow some of the other guidelines listed in this manual. Next, don't get hooked into taking things too seriously. And lastly, remember everyone's nerves are bound to be "frazzled," so don't be surprised if occasional blow ups occur.

DEALING WITH UNEXPECTED PROBLEMS AND CRISES

From time to time, major crises will occur. This doesn't mean that they have to interfere with your wedding, however.

Never assume things will come off as planned. Anticipate that they won't, and make sure you, and everyone around you, is psychologically prepared for this possibility.

NOTE: When the temperature was 101 degrees on the day of our wedding and 200 of our 700 confirmed guests canceled out, we didn't panic because we were psychologically prepared for such a development. Similarly, when we discovered that a mix-up had occurred, and too many people received invitations to our pre-wedding dinner, we took this crisis in stride as well. While we still had a problem (which we resolved by offering to pay for any additional people who attended as a result of our mistake), we weren't "stressed out," because we were prepared in advance to deal with such "catastrophes."

Good back-up plans can also help prevent much of the "stress" of major crises. This is why you should always have contingency plans for all important elements of your ceremony and reception. If the need should arise, you'll then be able to quickly mobilize your network of support to put "Plan B" or "Plan C" into effect.

Also, don't be afraid to spend extra money if problems arise unexpectedly. Setting an emergency fund aside early on for such contingencies is an excellent idea.

SEVERE PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS

While some "stress" is normal during the planning of a wedding, don't ignore signs of serious physical or emotional problems. See your doctor or seek other professional help if this is required. Don't let symptoms such as poor sleep, chronic headaches, indigestion, or chest pains go on for weeks before you do something about them. Jump on them right away and seek help early on.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

These general guidelines can help you prevent an enormous amount of "stress." For additional advice on how to negotiate with vendors, work with consultants, select your attire, design invitations, arrange for flowers, a photographer, a videographer, etc., please refer to many of the excellent wedding planning guides available in bookstores or your public library.

CHAPTER 6 - AS YOUR WEDDING DATE DRAWS NEAR

By now, most of the planning is over. Contracts are signed. Gowns and tuxedos ordered. All the loose ends are beginning to fall into place.

Any "stress" you've experienced up to this point is bound to start tapering off. Right?

Wrong! As your wedding date draws near, things can really get "crazy." Here are some tips that can help you keep your sanity.

PEAK EARLY

Don't let things go until the very last moment. Be way ahead of schedule, so you and your partner can coast to the finish line.

The week before your wedding should be light and easy for you. Have all the details and last minute arrangements completed at least seven days in advance. Then, spend the last few days relaxing, having fun, and spending time with family and friends.

RECONFIRM ALL ESSENTIAL ARRANGEMENTS

If you can't stand the thought of doing absolutely nothing the week before your wedding, spend a little time each day reconfirming all essential arrangements. Call to confirm your booking times, contract arrangements, transportation, menus, flowers, musicians, etc.

Check with all key people in your planning party to acknowledge them and make sure they are following through on their responsibilities. If any of them are encountering problems, see what you can do to help out (but don't take on the jobs yourself).

AVOID PRE-WEDDING PARTIES

Avoid late-night parties and other wild celebrations. Keep your schedule light during the week or two prior to your wedding. Be careful not to over-extend yourself or accept too many invitations.

EXPECT LAST MINUTE CHANGES / COMPLICATIONS

No matter how well you plan, last minute complications will invariably occur. If you're prepared for them psychologically, they shouldn't get you down.

Don't panic or take things too seriously when last minute changes do occur. Deal with them positively, creatively, and with a sense of playful adventure. Consider that the wedding gods have decided to play a game with you. They keep throwing one obstacle after another in your way, and your job is to beat them by overcoming every one.

Above all, avoid negatively, blame, and catastrophic thinking. Mobilize your network of help to assist you. And keep reminding yourself, "Ten years from now, none of this will make any difference."

COMMIT TO EACH OTHER ONE WEEK BEFORE YOUR WEDDING!

Here's a tip that can save you lots of anxiety (and lost sleep)--don't wait until your wedding day to commit yourselves to marriage.

Hold a private ceremony with your partner and say your wedding vows to each other at least one week in advance. Don't view your wedding as the time when you will commit. In your hearts, commit to each other in advance, and then use your wedding as an event to publicly celebrate (rather than consecrate) your relationship.

The advantage of committing to each other early is enormous. It takes all the pressure off brides and grooms, who've been known to pass out or otherwise get physically sick from sheer nervous tension (usually brought on by the fear of commitment).

THE NIGHT BEFORE

The night before your wedding, don't handle any details yourself. Let others do that for you. (If possible, schedule your rehearsals so that they are over a day or two in advance.)

If you're not having a pre-wedding dinner or other special affair, spend a quiet, peaceful evening with your partner, family, or friends. Get a professional massage, relax in a hot tub, or just take a long, hot bath.

Whatever you do, don't handle last minute details! Your job is done, and now it's time for you and your partner to relax.

CHAPTER 7 - YOUR BIG DAY ARRIVES!

Wedding day jitters are extremely common. The life transition you are about to make can be both emotionally and physically unsettling. Leaving your family or home of many years, taking on a new role as husband or wife, and learning how to live successfully on your own are just a few of the challenges that lie ahead. Add to this concerns about the wedding itself, fears about making a life-long commitment, and doubts about whether everything you've worked so hard on for months will all go well, and you've got an excellent recipe for emotional and physical distress.

There are several things you can do, however, to reduce much of this Wedding Day "stress." Here are a few ideas Christina and I found very helpful.

HOW TO HAVE A "PERFECT" WEDDING

The secret to having a perfect wedding is not to wish that everything goes perfectly. Rather, it's to adopt the idea that anything and everything that happens will turn out to be "perfect" in one way or another.

No matter how bad things look, they can always be turned into an advantage. Your limo breaks down on the way to your ceremony? Perfect. What a great opportunity for creative problem-solving. (Hitch-hiking works well in this situation.)

Someone gets sick at your reception? Perfect. What a great opportunity to express caring and concern for others and to demonstrate that people and loved ones are far more important than ceremonial events.

The point is not that you should wish for these problems to occur, but rather that if they do, they don't have to keep you from having a memorable wedding. While others around you might easily become distressed, you and your partner can remain calm and optimistic by knowing that no matter what might be happening, you'll use it as an opportunity.

USE A CHECKLIST TO AVOID COMMON DISASTERS

Even though you may be psychologically well-prepared to accept anything that happens, there's much you can do to keep certain disasters from occurring. The best way to do this is to use a wedding day checklist. This will ensure that no important details are forgotten in all the last-minute rushing and excitement.

The following Wedding Day checklist can be used by both bride and groom and other key members of the wedding party. Feel free to add additional information, such as phone numbers, back up plans, etc. Also, please feel free to add additional items or delete those that are not relevant to you.

WEDDING DAY CHECKLIST

(Divide these assignments between bride, groom, and key family members. One person--preferably not the bride or groom--should coordinate to make sure all items have been done.)

ON ARISING

- check time (your clocks may not be accurate)
- check weather forecast
- call attendants (list phone numbers, locations, and pre-notify that someone will be calling)
- take a relaxing bath or shower
- eat a normal breakfast

MID-MORNING TO MID-DAY (Depending on the time of your ceremony)

- call minister
- call organist, musician
- confirm other key people
- confirm transportation arrangements
- assign all last minute jobs, tasks, details to others (preferably in advance)
- prepare an "emergency kit" to take with you (can be prepared several days in advance)
 - include: comb, lipstick, hair spray, pantyhose, rollers, makeup, tampon, safety pins, needle & thread, emergency cash, checkbook, medications, etc.
- make a detailed list of all items to be transported with you
 - include changes of clothing, emergency replacement outfits, honeymoon supplies, etc.
- assemble all items to be transported in one convenient place
- load all items to be transported into car at least 1 hour prior to leaving
 - if not feasible, place all items together near door for loading when transport vehicle arrives (don't forget "emergency kit")
- eat a light lunch
- have at least one hour quiet-time for yourself (to do whatever you like)

LEAVE FOR CEREMONY

- leave much earlier than you think necessary (allow for traffic jams, unexpected delays)
- check car before departing
 - gas, tires, spare, jack, portable phone
- have back-up plan in case car breaks down (pre-arrange on a standby basis)
- on arrival, have someone check to see what needs to be done and report to you
 - don't handle anything yourself!

RECEPTION

- have others assigned to worry about last-minute details
- assign one person to coordinate and report to you
 - don't try to coordinate things yourself
- have fun and mingle with your guests
- be prepared to personally acknowledge gifts received in advance
- remember to acknowledge key people who helped and supported you
 - family, friends, suppliers, reception staff, etc.
 - make a list so you won't forget anyone

EXIT

- have someone in charge of clean-up, discharging guests, and transporting gifts
- have them report to you that night or next morning
(this relieves worry, uncertainty about what happened after you left)

If you follow these simple steps, much of your wedding day stress will be reduced!

CHAPTER 8 - THE DAY AFTER

Not so fast! Your problems aren't over once your wedding is complete. In fact, some cynics would say your real problems are just beginning!

The day after your wedding, new challenges can arise. Properly handled, these challenges should be easy to overcome.

NEGATIVE THOUGHTS / NEGATIVE FEELINGS

It's not unusual for brides, grooms, and other family members to have negative thoughts and feelings about how the wedding went. Self-criticism, self-blame, and anger toward others are all very common.

As a rule, don't pay much attention to this "Monday-morning quarterbacking." Simply realize that negative thoughts and feelings commonly occur, and they don't mean very much.

Try to focus on what was good or great about your wedding (and the planning process that produced it). No matter how negatively you feel, you're probably neglecting many good things that happened.

Also, don't let critical opinions of others get you down. Other people, too, can be overcome by negative thoughts and emotions. There's little to be gained, however, from dwelling on what they say.

REGRETS

One special class of negative thoughts and feelings is regrets. Regretting choices you made, people you hired, the dress you wore, seating assignments, forgetting someone's name, etc. are all very common. So are other "could have's," "should have's," and after-the-fact comparisons.

The best way to deal with regrets (about anything) is to realize that once something is over--IT'S OVER! You did the best you could with the information you had at the time. Sure, you can see many things now that you might have done differently. But it's wrong and unfair to judge your

past choices on what you now know or have the ability to observe.

However things turn out, forgive yourself, forgive other people, and let go of the past so you can focus on your future. If all else fails, remember the Ten Year Rule: Will any of this make any difference ten years from now?

BODY REACTIONS

In addition to negative thoughts and feelings, don't be surprised if you have unpleasant body reactions once your wedding is over. There are several reasons for this.

First, suppressed fears and anxieties about major life transitions often surface once the transition has been made. Prior to your wedding, you may have struggled valiantly to keep these fears from surfacing. Once you're married, however, these suppressed fears may suddenly gush out.

Fear and other negative emotions, such as sadness about the life you've left behind, can also surface as physical symptoms in your body. Tiredness, diarrhea, irritability, palpitations, trouble sleeping, headaches, muscle tension, and the like can occur days or weeks following your wedding (including your honeymoon).

The best way to deal with these common physical reactions is to: 1) anticipate them; and 2) don't make them into more than they really are. In other words, don't add meaning to them or take them as signs that anything is wrong. Most often, they are just normal reactions to a major life transition.

NOTE: Similar body reactions are likely to occur with other major life transitions as well, such as starting a new job, having your first baby, experiencing the death of a loved one, or attending your own child's wedding in the future.

CHAPTER 9 - REDUCING HONEYMOON STRESS

After all the work of planning and arranging your wedding, you and your partner deserve a vacation! Honeymoons are great for unwinding, spending time together, and giving yourselves a just-earned reward. But honeymoons can also be stressful for many newlyweds. Here are some tips for making sure this doesn't happen to you!

PLAN WELL AND PLAN EARLY

Begin planning your honeymoon the same time you start planning your wedding. Not only will this give you a better chance to get the accommodations you want (some popular honeymoon resorts fill up more than a year in advance) but you'll also be able to take advantage of low-cost airfares and other discounted packages.

The first step is to sit down with your partner, just as you did for planning your marriage and wedding, and get out all of your dreams, hopes, and expectations. "Honeymoon" means different things to different people. We've all seen romantic pictures of love-struck newlyweds sipping champagne in a heart-shaped bath. Some people want this type of romanticized encounter, while others would prefer a quiet, low-key environment or an athletic adventure with lots of shopping, sightseeing, and glitzy nightclub entertainment. Whatever you desire, write it down and share it with your partner. Look to see what elements you have in common and then try to compromise so both of you get much of what you want.

Another key step, especially if you haven't lived or traveled together before, is to share any personal hang-ups or turn-offs with each other. (Even if you have lived together, you might want to specify what you would consider a turn-off on your honeymoon.) Do you expect to have sex every day or every few hours? Do you hate to see women wearing curlers? Do smelly socks spoil your romantic mood? If so, let your partner know about these turn-offs in advance.

Also, do you have any special honeymoon requests? Would you like to be massaged with a particular rubbing oil? Is there a romantic movie or video you'd like to watch? Is there a particular way you'd like to be treated, or better yet, expect to be treated.

Don't be coy or hope your partner will figure these things out. Spell them out clearly and give him or her a chance to respond.

Carefully plan your honeymoon budget as well. We recommend the book *How To Have A Fabulous, Romantic, Honeymoon On A Budget* for some dynamite suggestions (see Additional Resources section for ordering information).

TRAVEL STRESS

Like any vacation, honeymooners are subject to all the same hassles travelers around the globe experience--missed connections, lost luggage, forgotten items, botched reservations, theft, illness, bad weather, etc. The best way to cope with these common travel problems is to anticipate them in advance. Schedule your connecting flights at least 90 minutes apart (better to spend an extra 30 minutes at the airport than agonize for hours when your initial flight is delayed). Also, leave extra time to get to your destination when traveling by car. You never know when a traffic jam or construction delay will occur.

To keep from leaving anything important at home (like your tickets, passport, etc.), always use a travel checklist before departing. Christina and I have used such a list for the past ten years. We've reprinted a copy which we encourage you to use in Appendix IV (the blank spaces are there for you to add additional items).

ALONE TIME

Don't assume you have to spend all your time together while on your honeymoon (or any other vacation, for that matter). Allow each other some time alone as well. Use this time to pursue your own interests, read, watch television, or just lie on the beach without having to answer to anyone.

SUN EXPOSURE

If you do honeymoon in a warm weather climate, watch out for sun exposure. Not only can too much sun increase your chances of skin cancer, but a rip-roaring sunburn can put a damper on your sex life as well.

SEX

Speaking of sex, don't put too much emphasis on how good, bad, or frequent it is. Honeymoons have a way of putting tremendous (often unrealistic) sexual pressure on newlyweds. Many couples feel compelled to live up to some romanticized, idealized picture of sexual prowess and super endurance. If this works for both of you, that's fine. But please don't force yourself to be in the mood when you're not (once again, open honest communication with your partner is the key to preventing problems).

NEGATIVE THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

As we mentioned in the previous chapter, don't be surprised if a few negative thoughts and feelings pop up during your honeymoon. Remember, it's only a few short days (or hours) since you made a major life transition. You've also just gone through several months of intense physical and emotional pressure.

When you finally relax and let down your guard, fears, doubts, and other negative feelings can emerge unexpectedly.

The secret to dealing with these negative thoughts and feelings is two-fold: 1) understand from the outset that they are very common; and 2) don't make a big deal about them if they occur.

The same is true for physical symptoms of stress in your body, such as headaches, diarrhea, nausea, palpitations, etc. These too can result from fear, anxiety, or even too much excitement! (Not to mention, too much sun, wine, champagne, food, etc.)

COPE WITH PROBLEMS CREATIVELY

Many other problems occur for couples on their honeymoon. This is not abnormal. You can reduce much of the "stress" that results from these problems by dealing with them creatively. Make up your minds to have a good time no matter what happens, good or bad. If you don't have unrealistic expectations, this should be easy to do.

CHAPTER 10 - HOW TO SAVE YOUR MARRIAGE (22 SURE-FIRE TIPS)

There's tons of advice around on how to improve, enhance, strengthen, or otherwise save your marriage. Some of this advice is good, but most is pretty bad.

While we can't cover everything you'll need to know in just a few pages, here are some sound ideas Christina and I (and thousands of other couples) have found helpful.

NOTE: For additional tips, see Chapter 10 (Stress In Relationships) of *The 14 Day Stress Cure*.

PURPOSE

Actively create a purpose for your relationship that can empower both you and your partner throughout a lifetime. This purpose must be bigger than just having your relationship succeed. It must also be bigger than having fun, having a good time, having a family, or reaching any other well-defined goal.

Examples of purposes that can last a lifetime (and keep your relationship fresh and exciting) are: contributing to the health and well-being of everyone around you; contributing to other people's financial success; contributing to ending hunger on the planet; contributing to ending stress in people's lives; solving the problems of crime, abuse, or poverty in the world, etc.

For example, Oprah Winfrey, the successful T.V. talk show host, recently took on a new, empowering purpose for her life. She committed herself and (her considerable resources) to ending the problem of child abuse in the world. Since then, her T.V. show has become even better! In addition, her primary relationship with the man in her life now has a focus much bigger than just the two of them.

Any purpose that turns you on and energizes you will work. Just make sure both you and your partner are excited about it and that you plan to dedicate your relationship to it. (This won't make all those little hassles, disappointments, and petty disagreements of married life disappear. What it will do, however, is make them inconsequential.)

NOTE: Each of you can have a different purpose or life direction. Then, the purpose of your relationship can become mutually supporting each other to become successful.

CLARIFY AGREEMENTS, EXPECTATIONS, VALUES, ROLES, ETC.

Once again, we are compelled to emphasize how important it is for you and your partner to clarify (that means communicate with each other openly and honestly) important agreements, expectations, values, roles, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, passions, etc. Failing to do this is a major cause of "stress."

Don't assume that you know your partner's thoughts, feelings, or desires. Don't assume he or she understands yours either. Always spell things out so there are no misunderstandings.

YOUR PARTNER ISN'T RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR HAPPINESS

Never expect your partner to bring you happiness. He or she will have enough trouble managing their own life. They won't be able to take responsibility for yours as well.

Besides, the truth about human beings is that we all have the power to make ourselves happy any time we want. We don't need other people to provide this for us. It's actually much easier and more dependable to learn how to create happiness on your own. Then, whatever happiness your partner does contribute to your life, you'll accept it as a bonus. (And if they don't contribute much, you won't feel cheated.)

NOTE: In our wedding vows, which Christina and I wrote together, we both included the phrase, "And I will not hold you responsible for my own happiness and contentment."

TRUST

Trust is an important part of all human relationships. It's especially important in a marriage. Since the promises you make to each other are the foundation of your union, you must each trust the other to faithfully follow through.

While trust is necessary for the success of your relationship, don't be naive or stupid about granting it. Make sure your partner is worthy of your trust, and call them to task for any major or minor violations. Organize your own life and behavior so as to deserve your partner's faith and trust as well. You must establish and protect mutual trust in your relationship. Without this key ingredient, your relationship will likely fail.

NOTE: Before I board any airplane, I always check to make sure it has wings! If the wings were ever missing, I wouldn't get on the plane. Trust is the "wings" of your relationship. Without it, your relationship won't "fly." Thus, insist that mutual trust be present in your relationship, and if it should ever be damaged or missing in any way, consider its reinstatement an absolute necessity.

SUPPORT

Make your marriage about supporting and nurturing your partner. This often becomes contagious. But even if there is little reciprocation, you can still derive pleasure from serving another person (provided you do so of your own free will).

GIVING IN

Christina and I once attended a wedding where the minister opened the ceremony by relating the following story. He talked about a couple who were both in their 90's and who had been happily married for more than 70 years. When he interviewed them to find out the secret to their success, the wife replied "I truly believe we made it this far because I gave in 95% of the time." When the husband was asked, he replied, "I too gave in 95% of the time."

There's real truth in this story. Don't be eager to have your own way if you want to have a long and happy marriage. Make it your goal to give in more than 50% of the time, and take pleasure in letting your partner have his or her way as often as you can.

AGREE WITH YOUR PARTNER'S CRITICISMS AND COMPLAINTS

Too many people get defensive when criticized, especially when complaints are delivered by a loved one. Don't underestimate the value of these opportunities.

While you might think you are innocent, your partner wouldn't be criticizing you unless you have done something (either real or imagined) to deserve it. Whatever the case, don't dismiss your partner's feelings. Find some way to agree with their point of view, for much of the time they will have a legitimate beef.

VALUE EACH OTHER

Perhaps the best advice we can give you about saving your marriage is to always value yourself and your partner. Never focus on the negatives about each other. Always emphasize the positives and force yourself to reflect upon them frequently. (The negatives tend to stand out all by themselves!)

In addition to valuing your own worth and the worth of your partner, learn to value the differences between you. Each of you probably has differing needs (for intimacy, for example). You also probably have different desires, strengths, communication styles, beliefs, preferences, past histories, and patterns of dealing with both success and adversity.

Learn to value these differences rather than criticize each other for having them. Don't assume that your way of doing things, your point of view, or your past experiences are any more "right" or "valid" than your partner's. Each of you is a separate, distinct, and different human being. And each of you has a right to be who you are (and be loved and accepted just that way).

Another part of valuing each other is refusing to blame or criticize each other when things don't go a you wish. All people make mistakes, including your partner. Again, focus on what's "good" and "right" about your partner, rather than anything you might view as "bad" or "wrong."

Also, resist saying anything negative or critical about your partner in public (even to your best friends). You might be strongly tempted to do this, but it only devalues your relationship.

Christina and I always speak highly about each other to our family, friends, and other acquaintances. Even if we're upset or down on each other at the moment, we don't reinforce our negative feelings by communicating them to others.

Often, what happens when you violate this rule is that other people agree with your negative assessments and add more of their own. They encourage you to think even more negatively about your partner, which is the opposite of what you truly need to do.

NOTE: You might think that by "getting things off your chest" by talking with friends you will feel much better. In the short run, this may be true. But in the long run, it will probably hurt your relationship.

SEEK TO PLEASE AND PLEASURE EACH OTHER

Consider your marriage license a license to please and pleasure your partner. After all, you are in the best position to know what they like (and provide it for them). You also have exclusive access to their inner thoughts, desires, and secret fantasies. So take full advantage of this special position you occupy. Take pride in pleasing your partner and adding pleasure to his or her life. Whether or not they reciprocate in kind (this will be hard for them to resist), your life will be richer.

OTHER TIPS FOR MARITAL SUCCESS

- Be honest with your partner at all times.
- Communicate whenever something is bothering you.
- Keep communicating until the problem is successfully resolved.
(Do not give up!)
- Deal with problems when they first begin to emerge.
(Don't ignore them or wait to see if they get worse.)
- Always insist on win-win solutions.
- Forgive each other (after the fact) for any wrongdoings.
- Forgive each other (in advance) for any future wrongdoings.
- Fight for the best in each other (even if your partner resists you).
- Encourage healthy growth and change.
- Keep your promises to each other (no matter what).

- Renegotiate any promises that were foolishly made or too ambitious.
- Admit your weaknesses and lack of skill in specific areas.
- Never assume your marriage is secure (it isn't!).

For more information about how to save your marriage, see the next two chapters.

CHAPTER 11 - HOW TO DESTROY YOUR MARRIAGE (10 "PROVEN" METHODS)

If, instead of nurturing your relationship, you want to destroy it, all you have to do is follow these ten rules: (Note: these rules have all been tested! They've "worked" for thousands of unhappy or recently divorced couples.)

1. BE ABUSIVE

Assume that a marriage license gives you the right to physically, emotionally, or verbally abuse your partner. Men seem to do this much more than women. But women can certainly be abusive as well.

2. BE DEFENSIVE

Research has shown that people who react defensively when challenged or criticized by their partner have high divorce rates. Defensive behavior also includes totally ignoring your partner's criticisms and complaints.

3. BE CRITICAL

Another fine way to destroy your relationship is to constantly point out flaws in your partner's behavior, ideas, or personality. Of course you can always claim that you were just trying to help (out of love for your partner), but who wants to live with someone who constantly views them as being "wrong."

NOTE: A common variation on this theme is to not voice negative opinions when they occur, but to store them up in your memory instead. Then, when you get really angry, you can let them all out at once!

4. TRY TO BE RIGHT MOST OF THE TIME

Make sure you always assert your point of view and totally invalidate your partner's feelings or perspective. After all, being right is what's most important in a relationship. Isn't it? Anyway, if your partner can't face up to "the truth" (as you see it) it's their problem. Right?

5. BE SELFISH

In addition to being right, always try to be selfish and get your own way. Look at things from your own perspective and regularly ignore the wants, needs, and concerns of your partner.

6. BE DISHONEST

Tell little white lies from time to time. Pretend everything is fine when you're really upset or angry. And never communicate to your partner when you think something is wrong.

7. BE UNFAITHFUL

Develop amnesia about the vows and promises you made to your partner. Make a few half-hearted efforts to work things out--then quit on your partner. Justify having an affair (e.g. "everybody's doing it") or get your friends to egg you on. Oh, and don't forget to tell yourself "it won't do our relationship any harm" or "nobody will find out" or "it will end up being a good thing for our relationship in the long run." (See #6 above.)

8. BE SUPERIOR

Make sure to always put other people down (including your partner) so you can feel extra good about yourself. Consider certain types of people less valuable or worthwhile than you, and always consider your personal standards and opinions more right than others'.

9. BE CONTROLLING

Keep close tabs on your partner and prevent them from growing and changing at all costs. Try to get your partner to think, feel, and behave exactly as you do. Try to dominate and control them and make them fearful of offending you.

(NOTE: this is an excellent way to end up living alone.)

10. BE CERTAIN

Above all else, make sure to believe that you fully understand life, marriage, and human beings. Be so certain that you never have to let others guide you. After all, if you don't know something, you must be "stupid." And if you ask for help, well you must be a "weakling." So always pretend you know what to do, even when the truth is you don't have a clue!

Christina and I want you to appreciate these relationship-destroying patterns because we all fall prey to them from time to time. Even when you and your partner fully understand them, they will still tend to occur as "knee-jerk" reflexes.

The trick is to spot these common patterns early on, so you can choose not to continue them. You can even team up with your partner to keep these patterns from ruining your love and respect for each other.

NOTE: For tips on several other common relationship-destroying patterns, see Chapter 10 (Stress In Relationships) in *The 14 Day Stress Cure*.

CHAPTER 12 -- LIVING HAPPILY EVER AFTER (THE REAL TRUTH ABOUT WHAT IT TAKES)

THE "BAD NEWS" ABOUT HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

The bad news about marriage and other long-term relationships is that they frequently fail. This is because human relationships are difficult to maintain. The forces that bring people together and create hope, excitement, and positive expectations are rarely sufficient to insure long-term success.

In addition, there's an awful lot of bad advice, mistaken ideas, and other false theories about how to keep relationships alive and happy.

THE "GOOD NEWS" ABOUT HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

The good news about marriage and other human relationships is that, despite the above, you can learn to live happily ever after. Your marriage can stand the test of time and provide both you and your partner with a lifetime of happiness, satisfaction, and mutual support.

Living happily ever after, however, requires lots of work and dedication. Even more important, it requires knowledge and know-how that most people lack. Contrary to fairy tale images, living happily ever after doesn't just happen to people! You can't simply ride off into the sunset with your betrothed and hope things will somehow work out.

You and your partner will have to create a happy life together. You'll have to experiment over and over again to discover what does and doesn't work.

Above all else, you'll both need to become life-long students of human nature and human relationships. But be selective in who and what you believe. Most authors and other experts will lead you astray. Find the few who can actually produce good results for you, and then read everything they've written on those and other subjects. Find out where they are giving public lectures and be sure to attend. Find out if they offer regularly scheduled seminars and workshops. Listen to any tapes they've produced. Inquire if they've written any reports or special articles. Immerse yourselves

in their thoughts and guiding principles. If you do this consistently, your lives will change for the better.

Christina and I have found the following books on relationships highly rewarding:

- *Love Is Never Enough*--Aaron Beck, M.D., Harper & Row, New York, 1988

Explains how misconceptions, misunderstandings, and faulty communication patterns lead to marital disharmony and stress. Based on the clinical work of one of the leading psychotherapists and marriage counsellors.

- *Marital Myths*--Arnold A. Lazarus, Ph.D., Impact Publishers, San Luis Obispo, CA, 1985

Written by another distinguished therapist and marriage counsellor, this book discusses 24 marital myths, including "husbands and wives should be best friends," "don't have sex when you're angry," and "marriage should be a 50-50 partnership."

- *The Road Less Traveled*--M Scott Peck, M.D., Touchstone Books (Simon & Schuster), New York, 1978

One of the most popular self-help books ever written (on the New York Times best-seller list for more than 400 weeks!). Contains an excellent review of common myths about love and romance that cause people to suffer and fail in their interpersonal relationships.

- *False Love*--Stan Katz & Aimee Lieu, Ticknor & Fields, New York, 1988

Another superb book on relationships. Explains what true love really is, how to distinguish it from false love, and how to create it with your partner.

- *You Just Don't Understand: Women And Men In Conversation*--Deborah Tannen, Ph.D., William Morrow & Co., New York, 1990

An important book that shows how women and men fail to appreciate

each other's communication styles and needs. Shows how the childhood conditioning of boys and girls leads each to live in different "realities" about life, love, communication, intimacy, etc.

● *The One Hour Orgasm*--Bob Schwartz, Ph.D., Breakthru Publishing, Houston, TX, 1989

A practical guide to increasing your own and your partner's sexual enjoyment. Based on the work of Dr. W. Victor Baranco, Ph.D. of More University, this book is not just about sex! It's about how to enhance the overall quality of your relationship as well.

NOTE: There are many other books we've found helpful on subjects other than marital success (kids, money, worry, self-esteem, etc.) For a list of these excellent references, see the Suggestions For Further Reading Section in *The 14 Day Stress Cure*.

OTHER TIPS FOR LIVING HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Here are our final thoughts for helping you live happily ever after:

1. Instead of spending your life hoping and wishing for what you don't have, learn to value and enjoy whatever you do have at any point in time;
2. Instead of wanting other people to be different or to act the way you'd like, value and enjoy them just the way they are (and just the way they are not);
3. Instead of wanting life to go a certain way or expecting life to go as you planned, have whatever way life goes be terrific!

None of these suggestions are meant to endorse a defeatist, passive attitude. Instead, they are ways to keep you from struggling "against the grain" of life and to help you relate to life more actively and creatively, so you'll end up with more of what you truly want. If life happens to go the way you want, great! But if it doesn't, you can still be happy, provided you apply yourself creatively.

THANK YOU

In closing, both Christina and I want to personally thank you for letting us share this information with you.

Thanks also for having the courage to embark upon two of life's most rewarding challenges--planning an enjoyable, stress-free wedding and creating a happy, satisfying, long-lasting marriage.

We wish you lots of happiness and success.

APPENDIX I

PRE-MARITAL VALUES, GOALS, & EXPECTATIONS QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed to elicit hidden assumptions and expectations that should be acknowledged and discussed by any two people contemplating marriage. By answering these questions now, and sharing your answers with your partner, you can prevent many problems and conflicts from developing in the future.

The best way to use this questionnaire is to write down your answers to each of the 25 questions on paper. Select a quiet place and **do this alone** (very important). Have your partner do the same. (You may want to take several days to think about and write down your answers.) Then sit down together and share/discuss your responses. Allow at least two hours for discussion. If needed, schedule a second or third session to complete.

Even if you think you know how your partner will answer each question, complete the sharing/discussion process for each and every one. You'll be amazed at how often you'll learn something new!

1. What are your personal reasons for getting married? Why not just live together?
2. What is the purpose for your relationship?
3. What could your partner do (specifically) that would make you ask for a divorce?
4. What is your purpose in life?
5. What are your goals: a) short term? b) long term?
6. How do you expect your partner to support you in pursuing your purpose and goals?
7. Is your partner committed to supporting you in the ways you expect? How do you know for sure?
8. What is your partner's purpose in life?

9. What are his/her short term and long term goals?
10. How does your partner expect you to support him/her in pursuing his/her purpose and goals?
11. Are you committed to supporting your partner in the way he/she expects? Are you really committed to this? How do you know for sure?

12. Career/Work Issues:

How will each of you relate/respond to the activities and demands involved in each other's career?

What, specifically, do you expect of your partner with respect to your work/career?

13. Home/Family Life Issues:

What are the major jobs/roles/tasks you see for each other in terms of your married life together (e.g. mothering, fathering, house keeping, home maintenance and repairs, car maintenance and repairs, etc.)?

Make a list of all the "jobs" you see for yourself.

Make another list of all the jobs you see for your partner.

Then compare lists.

14. Money Issues:

Who is primarily responsible for money?

Spending? Saving? Investing? Budgeting?

Paying bills?

Checking accounts--joint? separate? both?

Borrowing decisions?

Credit cards?

Long term financial planning?

15. Sex Issues:

Who is primarily responsible for initiating?
Who is responsible for birth control?
How are requests/desires/preferences to be communicated?
Frequency?
Likes?
Dislikes?
Fidelity? Extramarital relationships?
What do you consider important/essential in a long term sexual relationship?

16. Children:

Have?
How many?
Raising and schooling?
Discipline?
Religion?
How will you deal with an unplanned/unwanted pregnancy?
Who will be mainly responsible for the childcare/caretaking activities? (Only one, not both!)
What do you expect your partner to do specifically to contribute to the child rearing process?

17. Religion:

Clarify and resolve any unaddressed issues regarding religion, including how you will deal with family members views about religion and how you will celebrate religious holidays.

18. Time Together/Time Apart: What are your expectations about:

Spending time together?
Spending time apart?
Spending time with children?
Spending time with parents/in-laws/other family members?
Spending time together on trips and vacations?
Type of social life you would like to have as a couple?
How much time your partner spends with you when he/she is at home (not working)?

Is it O.K. for your partner to socialize without you? How often?
With whom?
What joint social activities do you especially like? Dislike?

19. Growth And Change:

Is it O.K. for your partner to change, grow, and develop new interests?
What types of changes would not be O.K. with you?

20. How will you deal with problems/crises/conflicts when they arise during your marriage?

Talk together?
Talk with friends?
Talk with counsellor?
Other means?

21. How will you work to prevent problems/conflicts in your marriage or address them when warning signs first occur?

22. How will you signal each other that you are feeling:

Angry?
Hurt/Disappointed?
Unhappy?
Horny?
Sexually Unfulfilled?

23. Are you committed to creating your own joy and happiness which can be contributed to your relationship, or do you expect to get these from your relationship?

24. What would you do if your partner suddenly changed his/her mind and decided not to get married?

25. Review all old/prior relationships. What was it within you that caused them to fail?

NOTE: Don't hold back! Be honest, truthful, and thorough. Dig deep. Write down everything you think, feel, and believe. Even the embarrassing stuff! Better to get things out in the open now, than to pay the price of not doing so later.

APPENDIX II

BRIDE AND GROOM WEDDING QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What kind of wedding do you personally want?
2. Who would you invite?
3. Who would you exclude?
4. Do you want a traditional wedding or one with a special theme?
5. What type of ceremony do you want?
6. Who would you like to have marry you?
7. Who is going to pay for the wedding? Do you know how much they are willing to spend?
8. Who will do most of the work of planning and making arrangements for your wedding?
9. What functions/tasks will you personally be responsible for?
10. What functions/tasks do you expect your partner to be personally responsible for?
11. Who will assist you in planning and making arrangements?

12. What is your plan for freeing yourself and your partner from having to attend to last minute details on the day of your wedding, including your reception?

13. What type of honeymoon do you want? How long? How expensive? Where?

14. What do you expect from each other during your honeymoon?

15. Who will be responsible for planning/making arrangements for your honeymoon?

APPENDIX III

WEDDING DAY CHECK LIST

(Divide these assignments between bride, groom, and key family members; one person – preferably not the bride or groom – should coordinate to make sure all items have been done.)

ON ARISING

- check time (your clocks may not be accurate)
- check weather forecast
- call attendants (list phone numbers, locations, and pre-notify that someone will be calling)
- take a relaxing bath or shower
- eat a normal breakfast

MID-MORNING TO MID-DAY (Depending on the time of your ceremony)

- call minister
- call organist, musician
- confirm other key people
- confirm transportation arrangements
- assign all last minute jobs, tasks, details to others (preferably in advance)
- prepare an "emergency kit" to take with you (can be prepared several days in advance)
 - include: comb, lipstick, hair spray, pantyhose, rollers, makeup, tampon, safety pins, needle & thread, emergency cash, checkbook, medications, etc.
- make a detailed list of all items to be transported with you
 - include changes of clothing, emergency replacement outfits, honeymoon supplies, etc.
- assemble all items to be transported in one convenient place
- load all items to be transported into car at least 1 hour prior to leaving
 - if not feasible, place all items together near door for loading when transport vehicle arrives (don't forget "emergency kit")
- eat a light lunch
- have at least one hour quiet-time for yourself (to do whatever you like)

LEAVE FOR CEREMONY

- leave much earlier than you think necessary (allow for traffic jams, unexpected delays)
- check car before departing
 - gas, tires, spare, jack, cell phone
- have back-up plan in case car breaks down (pre-arrange on a standby basis)
- on arrival, have someone check to see what needs to be done and report to you
 - don't handle anything yourself!

RECEPTION

- have others assigned to worry about last-minute details
- assign one person to coordinate and report to you
 - don't try to coordinate things yourself
- have fun and mingle with your guests
- be prepared to personally acknowledge gifts received in advance
- remember to acknowledge key people who helped and supported you
 - family, friends, suppliers, reception staff, etc.
 - make a list so you won't forget anyone

EXIT

- have someone in charge of clean-up, discharging guests, and transporting gifts
- have them report to you that night or next morning
 - (this relieves worry, uncertainty about what happened after you left)

If you follow these simple steps, much of your wedding day stress will be reduced!

APPENDIX IV

TRAVEL CHECK LIST

PRE-TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS:

- Stop paper
- Stop mail
- Arrange pet care
- Notify neighbors
- Notify parents/relatives
- Arrange house sitter/house care

PRE-DEPARTURE HOUSE CHECK:

- Check windows, doors
- Hide computers
- Hide video camera
- Hide other valuables
- Set timers
- Garbage
- Check refrigerator
- Check hot tub
- Set thermostat
- Set answering machine

PACKING ITEMS:

- Tickets
- Passports
- Vaccination certif.
- Wallet
- First aid supplies
- Camera
- Clock
- Clothesline & clips

___Travelers checks

___Comb

___Itinerary

___Deoderant

___Reservations

___Needles & thread

___Phone numbers

___Plastic bags

___Index cards

___Prescriptions (duplicates)

___Safety pins

___Soap, laundry & bath

___Spot remover

___Tooth brush

___Suntan lotion

___Tooth paste

___Umbrella

___Pen & paper

___Glasses

___Medicines

___Sun glasses

___Aspirin/Tylenol

HIS CHECK LIST:

HER CHECK LIST:

___Bathing trunks

___Belts

___Beach jackets

___Blouses

___Cuff links, tie clasp

___Coat

___Gloves

___Cosmetic supplies

___Handkerchiefs, scarves

___Dresses

___Hat

___Gloves

___Pajamas	___Handbag, dress & travel
___Raincoat or topcoat	___Hats
___Robe	___Hose
___Scarf	___Jewelry
___Shaving supplies	___Lingere
___Shirts	___Raincoat & boots
___Shoes, socks	___Robe or beach coat
___Slacks	___Scarf, handkerchiefs
___Slippers or thongs	___Shoes, dress & walking
___Suits (one dark for evening)	___Shower cap
___Ties	___Slippers, scuffs, or beach thongs
___Underwear	___Swim suit
___Shampoo	___Sweaters
___Running gear	___
___Tennis shoes	___

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following is our list of recommended books for additional advice and support. These are select books Christina and I have both personally read. Each is worth many times the price.

PLANNING A WEDDING WITH DIVORCED PARENTS

by CINDY MOORE AND TRICIA WINDOM

Publisher: Crown Publishers

ISBN 0-517-58451-4 Softback - 198 pages \$10.00

Planning a wedding is complicated enough, but when divorced parents are involved, a whole new set of rules is needed. Cindy Moore and Tricia Windom offer excellent advice on this subject, which can't be found anywhere else. Their book also includes helpful checklists, expense charts, sample invitations, and other great tips such as:

- How to word announcements and invitations
- Who pays for what expenses
- Seating arrangements for the ceremony and reception
- Who gets included in family photographs
- How to deal with uncooperative step-parents
- Who gives the bride away
- How to avoid awkward, hurtful encounters

A dynamite book that every bride and groom with divorced parents should read!

HOW TO HAVE A FABULOUS, ROMANTIC HONEYMOON ON A BUDGET

by DIANE WARNER

Publisher: Better Way Books

ISBN 1-55870-317-9 Softback - 192 pages \$12.95

No matter what your destination--from California to Canada, Maine to Mexico, Hawaii to the Caribbean--this book can help you plan a fabulous, inexpensive honeymoon. Diane Warner is a nationally recognized expert on saving money with wedding and honeymoon arrangements. In this up-to-date reference, she shows you how to gather information on travel and lodging bargains that most travel agents won't offer you. She also includes hundreds of creative honeymoon ideas that can save you precious time and money.

Here are just some of the topics Diane covers in this exceptionally well-written and organized book:

- Great honeymoon, travel, and transportation bargains
- How to dine at romantic restaurants on a limited budget
- Free honeymoon entertainment
- Packing, safety, and other travel tips
- State-by-state listings of fantastic honeymoon vacations
- Affordable Hawaiian, Canadian, Mexican, Alaskan, and Caribbean honeymoons
- Honeymoons for outdoor sports nuts
- Couples-only honeymoon resorts
- Honeymoons in exciting cities (New York, Chicago, New Orleans, Los Angeles, etc.)

In addition, there's an excellent resource section, listing phone numbers (mostly 800's) and addresses for airlines, bureaus of tourism in the U.S. and abroad, car rental agencies, cruise-only travel agencies, dude ranch associations, hotel and motel discount companies, and U.S national parks.

Wish this book had been around when we were planning our honeymoon! (NOTE: You can also use it for years to come for planning inexpensive family vacations.)

HOW TO HAVE A BIG WEDDING ON A SMALL BUDGET

by DIANE WARNER

Publisher: Writer's Digest Books

ISBN 0-89879-521-4 Softback - 128 pages \$12.95

Diane Warner does it again in this excellent book loaded with money-saving tricks and organizational tips. You'll find dozens of creative ideas that will not only save you money, but will make planning your wedding a whole lot more fun.

In this completely revised and updated edition, Diane explains:

- Creative, cost-cutting ideas contributed by recent brides
- How to be your own wedding consultant (if you can't hire one)
- How to design and use a wedding planning calendar
- How to outfit your bridal party without breaking the bank
- How to get beautiful flower arrangements on a budget
- How to serve fabulous food for pennies a person
- How to create wonderful ambiance on a shoe string
- How to keep costs down on all those other "little" extras

A short, easy-to-read book that will give you hundreds of creative, low-cost ideas. At the minimum, we're sure you'll save at least several hundred times what it costs!

THE 14 DAY STRESS CURE

by MORT ORMAN, M.D.

Publisher: Breakthru Publishing

ISBN 0-942540-06-9 Softback - 323 pages \$24.95

Available at <http://14daystresscure.com>

We've saved our best recommendation for last. If you really want to give yourself a great wedding present--one that will pay big dividends for the rest of your life--buy at least one copy of my award-winning book *The 14 Day Stress Cure*. If you like what we've written about wedding stress in this guide, think how much more you could learn about other types of stress as well.

Reading this book will change the way you think about stress forever. It will show you how to quickly eliminate emotional problems, deal with stress at work, reduce the fear of public speaking, reduce most physical symptoms of stress in your body, and much, much more.

Here's what a few notable health professionals have said about this book:

"Years of clinical wisdom have melded to produce an entirely new synthesis about stress and health. Dr. Orman has written a book that is both marvelously human and easy to read. The physician, healer, and teacher is immediately apparent."

James P. Lynch, Ph.D., Author of The Broken Heart and The Language Of The Heart

"The most helpful guide to easing the problems of everyday life I have ever read. Dr. Orman's reliable and easy-to-master method can improve anyone's ability to deal with stress more effectively."

Robert Shaw, M.D., Psychiatrist, Director, The Family Therapy Institute Of Berkeley

-"Dr. Orman's book is a wise and compassionate analysis of the major problems which cause stress in people's lives. He clearly shows how each of us can take charge of ourselves and find relief from our emotional burdens."

Nina Tassi, Ph.D., Author of Urgency Addiction

-"Dr. Orman's new book may change the way health professionals and other people are educated about stress. I highly recommend it to any medical student, nursing student, psychologist, or other health care professional."

John-Henry Pfifferling, Ph.D., Director, The Society For Professional Well-Being

-"I love singing the praises of this book to my patients. It goes way beyond the usual 'how-to' advice about stress. Congratulations, you've produced an important new milestone for promoting health and well-being."

Richard Feinbloom, M.D., Author of Medical Choices, Medical Chances

To order this book, go to: <http://14daystresscure.com>

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Morton C. Orman, M.D., is a board-certified internist who has been helping people win against stress for more than three decades. He is a graduate of Duke University (B.A., 1969) and the University of Maryland Medical School (1973). He is Founder and Director of The Health Resource Network, a non-profit, health education organization, and he is a co-founder of the Society For Professional Well-Being, a national association for the prevention of stress in physicians and other health care professionals.

Dr. Orman has lectured widely to both professionals and the public. He has conducted seminars and workshops about stress for thousands of individuals. His book, *THE 14 DAY STRESS CURE*, received an outstanding book-of-the-year award in 1992 from the National Association of Independent Publishers.

Christina B. Chambreau, D.V.M. practices holistic veterinary medicine, specializing in homeopathy and homeopathic education. She graduated from the University of Georgia College Of Veterinary Medicine (1980) and she is currently a teacher and lecturer for the National Center For Homeopathy and the Academy of Veterinary Homeopathy.

Dr. Chambreau began using holistic and nutritional therapies in her practice in 1983. She opened her own homeopathic consulting practice in 1988, and her client base extends from Maine to California. She has contributed to numerous magazine articles about holistic health for pets. She has also lectured to thousands of school children about how they can participate in ending World Hunger.

Dr. Orman and Dr. Chambreau live near Baltimore, Maryland.