



Sampler

These excerpts from the book are yours to enjoy,
and feel free to pass along to family, friends and colleagues.
who are planning a wedding or know someone who is.

For couples and families: amazon.com/dp/BOBM99FV2R

For Parishes and Dioceses: DioceseofTrenton.org/ecw

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From “A Note from Peg Hensler”

You may or may not know this, but the Catholic Church plays a major role in working with newly engaged couples so they will have the best marriage possible. If you want a Catholic wedding, now is the time to take advantage of one of the cornerstones of your local parish, one that provides you with a wealth of information and the opportunity to be welcomed by a caring and nurturing local community.

In countless conversations with deacons, priests, and lay people who work with couples, one “almost always true” sentiment emerges: couples that take the time and make the effort to embrace the Catholic approach to marriage are way better off than those who don’t.

“12 Words, 4 Phrases to Live By”

Remember and embrace these four phrases so that you will all get along famously:

Ask, don’t tell.
Suggest, don’t demand.
Help, don’t control.
Accept, don’t resist.

They’re easy to remember but harder to implement. But adhering to these 12 words is exactly what families need to do. The more you live by these words, the better the relationships will be.

“What’s Really At Stake”

Besides the money and stress, what’s really at stake, quite simply, is the future of the family. When wedding planning issues aren’t resolved, when mistakes are not forgiven and when decisions lead to resentment, future issues become harder and harder to deal with.

Take the common problem of divorced parent(s) of the couple who are not talking to each other and may refuse to be in each other’s presence. Because they are so entrenched in an adversarial situation, it puts the bride and groom in a virtually impossible situation, having to choose between the two parents and potentially stepparents.

But that’s just the beginning. The same choice facing the now-married couple will happen over and over if and when they start a family. Whom to choose to invite to birthday celebrations, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Baptisms, Communions, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, the list goes on.

Now you can see why this is such an important issue and needs to be resolved sooner than later.

Stress Reducer #2: “The Obsession With Perfection”

“Perfect is a fantasy” is a line from the popular series *Jane the Virgin*.

And sometimes a TV sitcom (*Last Man Standing*) teaches a great lesson, and in this case, it addresses one that plagues so many brides and grooms: **perfection**. They drive themselves (and others around them) crazy with the desire that everything be perfect.

In this episode, the bride became a “bridezilla” wanting every single detail, no matter how small, to be perfect. The groom went along because he wanted her to be happy.

His only request was that he wanted to wear white high-top sneakers to the wedding. Well of course this caused a major blow up until he told his bride-to-be *why* he wanted to wear white high-top sneakers.

When he had gone for an interview for his current job, he borrowed a suit but forgot to borrow shoes. His only shoes were white high-top sneakers - he went to his interview in a suit and sneakers. At the interview, the owner of the establishment looked at his shoes and said, “kid, you’re one of a kind, I want you on my team.” And through that job hiring he met his bride.

For him, the sneakers were the reason he found happiness with the woman of his dreams. Once the bride heard that story, she cried and realized that there is no such thing as a perfect wedding and what really matters is the two people getting married surrounded by family and friends that love them. Of course, he wore the white high-top sneakers and it was a “perfect” ceremony.

So, like the bride in the story, if you try too hard to reach perfection, you very well might miss those special “moments.” The lesson here is to enjoy every minute of your wedding: talk to those who love you. Kick off your shoes and dance up a storm like no one’s watching. Savor the food. Drink the drinks. Go off your pre-wedding diet. Hug everyone. Spend a little quality time with people who have come a long way.

Above all, let love rule the day and don’t fret over any problems. Now that’s the real definition of perfection.

To paraphrase a famous saying, “planning a wedding is a journey, so enjoy the ride.”

Reflections of couples: In order not to be consumed by all the details, some couples took “time outs” where they didn’t talk about all the stresses and issues, so they could clear their minds and stop the constant pursuit of perfection. They also expressed a desire to learn a more non-confrontational way to respond to their family and friends when they gave suggestions or made demands.

Stress Reducer #44: Guests Can Be Stressed Too

You think you’re the only ones who can be stressed out on the Big Day? Think twice. The bad news is that guests get stressed over a variety of issues. The good news is, almost all of their stresses can be easily prevented. Here are a few:

- **Shuttle delays.** This happens quite often, where shuttles between hotels and venues are delayed, sometimes resulting in guests missing the ceremony. We cover this in Stress Reducer #34. Make sure not to leave this totally up to the entity that arranges for the shuttle – you need to get involved as with any other service.
- **Older guests seated too close to the band/DJ speakers.** Not only does this cause difficulty for people hearing each other talk, loud volumes can be damaging to older ears. In addition to taking this into account when creating the seating chart, ask the band/DJ to keep the volume reasonable instead of ear-popping.
- **Sitting with other unfamiliar guests.** While there will be some cases where this is unavoidable, familiarity with others makes for a more enjoyable time and reduces stress.
- **Rambling speeches and toasts.** One of our brides/grooms made it very clear to keep toasts under five minutes and requested that all speakers practice their talks. This

goes a long way from turning boring and unrehearsed toasts into fast-moving and enjoyable ones.

- **Lack of communications.** Guests can get upset when they have not been made aware of:
 - Dress code for the event.
 - Preferred hotels with transportation to the venue.
 - Cash bar vs. open bar.
 - Starting times for both the ceremony and reception.
 - Shuttle times to and from the venue, and where to meet the shuttle.
 - Dates, times and locations of any special events, like a next day breakfast.
 - Directions to all locations.
- **Inconvenient date(s).** Did you accidentally choose Super Bowl Sunday or a major religious holiday for the wedding? That will most definitely cause stress for some guests.
- **Time between the ceremony and the reception.** A midmorning ceremony or Mass followed by an evening reception leaves guests with many hours to fill. The bride and groom should plan pre-reception events, provide suggestions for activities, or take suggestions or offers from friends or family. They can post these suggestions and events on their wedding site so guests can plan appropriately

The easiest potential stresses to alleviate are these because they are easy to fix.

Reflections of couples: We heard from several couples that guests staying at hotels were stressed out over shuttle arrival and departure times. That was the last thing couples wanted to hear on their wedding day. In retrospect, they realized that they could have coordinated with the hotel staff, making it easy for them to inform guests of shuttle times and locations.

Stress Reducer #19: Embrace Prayer to Reduce Stress

This stress reducer may seem a little different to you than all the rest. We're not offering suggestions on how someone else can help you in the wedding planning process. We're not offering advice on how to select a venue or florist.

What we are suggesting and asking is that you turn your worries, concerns and joys over to God by embracing prayer during this time. Why? Prayer gives hope, the ultimate stress reducer. We know that more than half of Americans pray each day as do 20% of people not even affiliated with a particular religion. Many doctors actually admit that it's the best thing you can do for your mind and body.

Prayer is simply a conversation with God when we ask for His guidance, tell Him our problems and listen to what He is telling us. You don't have to go to church to pray. Pray at home, while driving, even while waiting in line at the supermarket. That's what's so great; God is always there to listen to us.

You don't have to recite a specific prayer – you can put your thoughts into your own words; as simple as, “Jesus give me the strength today to handle whatever comes” or “Lord, guide me in my decisions today.” And pray as often as you want – there are no limits. You can even create a prayer to get you through the wedding planning process.

Prayer can offer praise and worship to God, thanksgiving for our many blessings (especially for each other and our families) or a request that we be the best person we can be. And most of all prayer should be thanks; for the many gifts and guidance God is sending to us.

Prayer can also be more formal. There are many prayers that can be found on the internet – consider this one:

I pray that the peace of Christ rules in my family's hearts (Colossians 3:15). Show us how to be united and to live in harmony with one another and be thankful for one another. In Jesus' name, Amen.

You can also talk to a priest, minister, pastor, pre-marital counselor or any other clergy about praying to reduce stress and the issues you are facing. Doing so may be a great way to resolve specific situations.

Reflections by Peg: Since 2004, I have worked with hundreds of Catholic couples and many interfaith couples while they were planning their weddings, and I can tell you without a doubt that those who prayed regularly dealt with stress and conflict during wedding planning very effectively.

Vendor Stress Reducer #5: Accommodations & Transportation

Where out-of-town guests stay and how they get from the hotel to the venue and back is often a source of unexpected and annoying stress. Generally, booking a block of rooms for your guests is straight-forward but shuttle/limo service between the hotel and venue requires some thought. Paying attention to this detail early on during the process can prevent stress. See Stress Reducers 30, 31, 32, 33 and 34. Questions to ask the hotel and transportation provider:

Hotel

- Do you have rooms available on the date(s) we want?
- What is your group rate when blocking rooms?
- Do you have a contract?
- Do you require a deposit?
- What method of payment do you accept?
- What is the last date we can cancel for a full refund?
- Do you have other blocks scheduled on our date(s)?
- Is there a minimum or maximum number of rooms we must book for the group rate?
- Can you block rooms for our guests that are near one another?
- Will you accept reservations after the deadline date as long as there is availability?
- Do you offer courtesy rooms depending on the number of guests in our party?
- Do you offer the bride and groom a complimentary bridal suite?
- Is it possible to include additional rooms if the agreed upon block of rooms is not enough?
- When will the block of rooms be available to our guests?
- Can guests extend their stay at the discounted rate to make it a long weekend?
- Will we have a point person who will coordinate the details with us?
- How will you let us know who has reserved a room?
- Will there be an online code or link to use to get the group rate?
- Is parking included in the room rate? If not, what is the charge? Is it negotiable?
- Does the hotel have a restaurant?

- Does the hotel have a bar? If so, what time does it close?
- Do you offer “after party” packages?
- What amenities are included? Breakfast, Lunch, etc. If not, can we purchase a breakfast package?
- If your hotel does not offer food options, can we bring in food and drinks the next morning for our guests?
- Do you have a separate room for a breakfast buffet?
- Is Wi-Fi included in the rate?
- Will there be a sign in the lobby welcoming guests for our wedding?
- Will someone at the front desk be able to direct our guests to the shuttle/limo location and time of pick up?
- Are the rooms handicapped accessible and if so, how many rooms are?
- What are the check-in and check-out times?
- Do you offer transportation to and from the venue and local airport?
- Will the front desk staff hand out our gift bags to the guests upon arrival?

Limousine/Shuttle Provider

- Are you available on our date?
- Do you have any other bookings on that day?
- What is your standard rate?
- Do you have a contract?
- Do you require a deposit?
- What method of payment do you accept?
- How long do I have to cancel for a full refund?
- Do you require full/partial payment prior to the day of the wedding?
- How long have you been in business?
- Can you provide references?
- Are your chauffeurs/drivers/vehicles insured? What is covered?
- Do you do background checks on your chauffeurs and drivers and are they professionally trained?
- What is the average employment duration of your drivers?
- What style vehicles do you have? Are they equipped with GPS?
- Can your vehicle(s) accommodate our size wedding party?
- What amenities do your vehicles have? Food? Beverage?
- How do you determine price? Time or distance? # of vehicles?
- Is cost of gas included in your price? Tolls?
- Do you offer any package deals?
- Do you have a backup plan in case a vehicle breaks down the day of the event?
- How many guest shuttles do you recommend for each hotel?
- Do you coordinate with the hotels to inform guests of time schedule?
- What is the proposed shuttle schedule for pick up and drop off to and from venue?
- Who do we contact in case we need to speak with someone the day of the event? What number should we use?
- Is a gratuity included in the price?

“I Wish We Had Thought of That”

After the reception is over, what happens to all the leftover food, centerpieces, gifts and anything else that doesn't belong to the venue?

The answer is: it's your responsibility. You need to assemble team of people (with cars with plenty of room) to help carry out everything you want to take.

Of course, talk to the venue about them packing up food for you and your “clean-up” team to take. You certainly don't want precious memories tossed if you don't take them.

From “55 Questions: Planning Your Catholic Wedding”

Choosing Scripture Readings

- What are our options for the readings?
- Who should we think about to read the passages?
- What is God saying to you in the readings?
- What is the text of the readings that is suggested by the *Order of Celebrating Matrimony*

Choosing Wedding Music

- Who do we work with at the Parish for our music?
- What are the criteria for choosing Catholic wedding music?
- How do we find good musicians?
- What are the appropriate times for music in the wedding liturgy?
- What's the best way to choose songs, hymns and other music?

From “10 Topics Your Pastor May Raise or You Should Discuss If He Doesn't”

- **Rice or Birdseed:** Ask the Pastor if he permits the use of rice or birdseed outside church after the ceremony. Bubbles are another option.
- **Emotional Support Animals (ESAs).** Churches have no prohibition against ESA certified support animals. Ask if non-ESA animals are fine at the ceremony.

From Wedding Planning Lessons Learned: A Blueprint for Successful Marriages

COVID was a reminder that LIFE HAPPENS! In planning our daughter's wedding, we had to be more flexible, more inventive and more determined to find the fun. Those 3 life lessons have often “popped up” in our own 45-year marriage. Trust us, they work.

From “Nipping Resentment in the Bud During Wedding Planning”

With all the decisions you will make planning your wedding, and all the people that they will affect, resentment over those decisions can occur during wedding planning, at the wedding and long afterwards. Learning how to prevent these resentments is an extremely important skill to develop.

How you compromise and resolve differences in wedding planning can be a steppingstone for how you will resolve future conflicts in the marriage. These lessons need to be learned implementing effective communications skills and issues of the heart explored.

From “Patience Is Required for a Happy Wedding Planning Experience”

Possibly much more important than working out our differences is what we learn about ourselves through the process. We often discover something we never realized about ourselves or our spouses as we go through the nitty-gritty details of life where we truly are working out our salvation. We can decide to work on cultivating a particular virtue once we open our hearts to God’s amazing grace.

Any happily married couple in a long-lasting marriage would tell you that their marriages had not been total bliss. They had endured many ups and downs, at times feeling like it was useless to go on. What did they do? They hung in there. They discovered ways in which to work together in harmony. They sacrificed for the other, putting the other first. They practiced the virtues — even heroic ones! They communicated with one another. They worked it out with God’s help.

From “What’s Important to Parents When Planning Weddings with Our Adult Children”

- We listened to our children and their fiancées as to what they wanted.
- We only gave our opinion if it could make the day better or they didn't realize something that we knew from our own experience.
- One of the most important things is that nobody should feel left out of the planning.
- The most important thing to remember is that you are adding to your family and they will be part of your children’s life and yours for years to come. Start off with love and respect for everyone.

From “I Wish We Had It To Do Over”

Marriage Boot Camp

Looking back on the planning process, several couples called it, tongue-in-cheek a “de facto marriage boot camp” or something similar. They wished they had approached it differently by planning more instead of letting things just happen.

Unresolved Problems Never End

“Had we set boundaries with specific limits with my mother-in-law, perhaps her behavior would have changed. But we didn’t and it didn’t. Despite what we say, she brings excessive gifts for her grandson seven years later. It’s not a happy situation. Hope it changes.”

From “20 Easy Ways to Save Money”

- A buffet vs. sit-down dinner can save money, and besides, most people love the cocktail hour and are stuffed by the time dinner is served.
- Check out how much will be saved by having an off-season wedding, sometime in the November to March timeframe. Savings just by making this one change could easily pay for a honeymoon or add big bucks to a down payment for a house.
- Talk to several photographers and check out the quality of “junior” or associate photographers that might come with a lower price tag.

From “Ideas to Spiritually Enhance Your Catholic Wedding”

- Pray with your wedding party during prep time and your spouse before the ceremony.
- Have a collection for a favorite charity.
- Collect prayer intentions from guests.

From “The Big Day Stress Reducers”

Assign one or more people to be “go to” people that will be happy to handle anything that comes up. They can be guests and/or people that work for the venue, or both. Let the manager(s) at the venue know who your personal “go to” people are so they can talk to them instead of you. Here’s what the “go to” people could handle:

- Guests unhappy with the food or drink.
- Children making noise and misbehaving.
- Bringing boxed gifts out to a car for safekeeping.
- Ushering people to their seats.
- Asking people not to talk during the ceremony or speeches.
- Alerting staff when chafing dishes are running low.
- Working with staff if a table is short a place setting or a seat change is needed.

From “An Exceptional Wedding Planning Experience”

The groundwork for their special experience started about a year before the engagement as the couple got to know the families that they were marrying into. By the time wedding planning rolled around, JP recalled “there was already a solid foundation on which to build.”

**Now that you've read parts of
The Wedding Survival Guide for Catholics,
here's what's in the entire 192-page book:**

44 Stress Reducers
8 Vendor Stress Reducers
The Beauty of a True Catholic Wedding
55 Questions: Prep for Your Catholic Wedding
10 Topics Your Pastor May Raise
Words of Wisdom from Clergy, Experts and Families
Stress Reducing Mindsets for the Couple and Parents
If We Had It To Do Over
Wedding Day Emergency Kit
The Big Day Stress Reducers
An Exceptional Wedding Planning Experience

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