

easy ways to enjoy your engagement

Many brides-to-be get so anxious about creating a perfect wedding that they forget to enjoy their engagement. These simple ideas will help you stay in control of the preparations and set stronger foundations for your marriage

WORDS BY EVE MENEZES CUNNINGHAM



Communicate

If you try to do everything yourself, you'll be causing unnecessary stress and may also unconsciously push your partner away. There are all sorts of clichés about men not being interested in weddings but if he weren't interested in the marriage, he wouldn't have proposed (or accepted your proposal). Talk about what marriage means to you both. What's really important to you? What do you want from

**“NO COUPLE WILL EVER
BE COMPLETELY IN
UNISON ON ALL ISSUES.
AS LONG AS YOU
CAN BE OPEN WITH
EACH OTHER AND
DISCUSS THINGS, IT
WILL WORK OUT”**

your relationship? Share your plans and strengthen your bond.

Andrea and Matthew recently celebrated their first anniversary. Andrea says, “There are so many things that couples do not discuss, such as what you like and don't like about each other; housework; whether you both want children; what would happen if you did have children (e.g. issues to do with work; problems that could arise); surnames and many other things. No couple will ever be completely in unison on all issues but as long as you can be

What's most important to you?

Copy the list of words below so you and your partner both have a list. Rank each word in order of importance to you and then, using a different coloured pen, guess their order of importance to your partner. Are there qualities not listed which you would add?

Adventure, charity, children, creativity, equality, family, friendship, fun, freedom, growth, honesty, honour, independence, individuality, intimacy, kindness, love, partnership, peace, security, social justice, spirituality, tradition, truth.

Spend some time laughing about how right or wrong you were about each other's values and discuss any surprises before they become problems.

open with each other and discuss things, it will be successful."

Set boundaries

While most of your friends and family will be thrilled for you, some can let their excitement run away with them and try to take over the preparations. Anticipating this will leave you better prepared to deal with them nicely and assertively.

Matthew says, "Andrea and I planned the wedding together and chose what we wanted and didn't let anyone push us in another direction. That's not to say we didn't involve our parents. We did - it was a priority for us. But we knew what we wanted, discussed it with them and were open to suggestions."

Don't be tempted to go along with what other people want at the expense of what you and your partner want. The last thing you want is to bottle up resentment only to explode inappropriately and really hurt someone's feelings.

Make time to unwind

Building pampering time into your schedule will benefit you and everyone around you.

Choose from a wide range of treatments which will boost your sense of wellbeing and

peace. If you've been running around on loads of errands, a reflexology treatment will help ease your tired feet while balancing the rest of your body.

Massage is a blissful way to release any tension (especially around your neck and shoulders) and will improve your posture. This will leave you feeling and looking more confident, happy and even slimmer. Crystal therapy and Reiki work on the energetic rather than physical levels but will also leave you feeling calmer, more peaceful and connected with your ever-resourceful centre.

You might also benefit from regular facials and if your hairdresser doesn't automatically provide a relaxing head massage while shampooing, consider finding one who does or book a separate Indian Head Massage. Meditative exercises like yoga, Tai Chi and Qi Gong will

"THE WEDDING IS ONE DAY AND MARRIAGE IS FOR LIFE. FOCUS THE MAJORITY OF YOUR ENERGIES ON THE RIGHT ONE"

strengthen your body, improve your flexibility and stamina, helping you to relax.

Make sure that you choose something you'll love. Otherwise it will become just another chore on your list. As well as immediate mood-boosting power, pampering will help you look more glowing than ever by the big day.

Hen nights and stag dos

Choose a friend or sibling who you trust to



organise this night. Make it clear to them that while you're happy to be surprised there are limits. And if you don't like surprises, say so! This is your night and it's just as important to have boundaries with your friends as with your relatives.

Honeymoon

Some brides are happy to let the groom take over organising the honeymoon completely while others are more hands on. Again, negotiation is key. Your honeymoon is something you'll both want to look forward to and treasure the memory of forever.

Andrea says, "We discussed it briefly and decided where we wanted to go but Matthew booked it. He wanted to surprise me but worried I wouldn't like his choice so just asked me openly and then did all the research."

Go on dates

Arrange regular dates with your partner and avoid (this will be challenging but worth it) all wedding-related talk. Give yourselves a chance to enjoy each other's company, have fun and get to know each other ever better.

Ask for advice

Talk to married people whose relationships you admire and ask them how they do it. This is a great way to let family members (who may have wanted to become more involved in your preparations) know how much you value their input. What advice do they wish they'd been given when they were engaged? How did they overcome their biggest obstacles?

Be organised but remember why you're doing this

At times, it may feel as if planning your wedding is an enormous task using diplomatic and organisational skills you didn't know you possessed. Think of it as a chance to flex your negotiation skills. The better you and your partner become at discussing things before they become an issue, the more you'll enjoy the day and the happier and stronger your marriage will be.

Other resources:

For information about local practitioners, see www.holisto.com and www.findareflexologist.com