

Wedding Wars - Navigating Premarital Disagreements

by Leah Travis, Associate Marriage & Family Therapist

Girls who dream about getting married usually think of exciting moments filled with joy and anticipation. However, the actual process of planning is quite often stressful, and wrought with tension. Sometimes the first and most serious arguments between the brides and their future husbands stem from disagreements about the wedding.

So, are frequent or intense arguments an indication that your marriage is doomed from the start? Probably not.



Many couples are more emotionally invested in the decisions that they make surrounding their marriage than any they have yet made together. So, it makes sense that you will each work harder for your own selection than, for example, when choosing where to go on Saturday night.

Premarital disagreements are common, and a great opportunity to learn how to negotiate with each other. This skill will come in handy as you begin your married life, making decisions about where to live, children, and other life transitions.

Navigating decisions with your beloved may be challenging, but working through negotiations with your parents or future in-laws is often even more complex, especially if they are helping to finance the wedding. Some parents may consider this an opportunity to plan their *own* wedding again, to impress their friends, or

they may have strong ideas about what a wedding “should” be. Having opinionated parents does not mean that you must bend to their every whim, but be careful not to burn the bridges you’re still building.

Here are some points to keep in mind: *It helps to be on the same page with your fiancé before you approach a disagreeing parent.* Once you two have agreed, support each other. Also, you need to explain it to your parents, he explains it to his. *Prioritize.* If you sense opposition on a detail you don’t consider vital, it may be worth it to let it slide. Giving in here or there could grant you goodwill in future disagreements, and may leave you with some unexpected fond memories.

Parents who are funding the wedding have the right to refuse to pay for things. Their decision to help is a *gift*. Talk to them about what is important to you, and why, but if the primary financier of the wedding is not willing to pay for something, be prepared to find another way to pay for it. Most parents want to provide everything you dream up, but may have trouble admitting they don’t have the resources. Realize that this transition may feel like a loss for parents, and they are probably still learning to think of you as an adult. Find ways to remind them that while your relationship is changing, it isn’t ending.

Here are some more tips on navigating the “battle zone:”

- Don’t assume. If your future spouse disagrees with you, he or she is probably not *trying* to make you angry. First listen and then ask questions.
- Do clarify your requests.
- Learn how to share your wishes *without* attacking your partner. Saying; “I’ve always dreamed of _____.” It’s really important to me.” is a lot more effective than; “Your idea is stupid.”
- Work out a system for managing “gridlock.”
- If you have trouble finding a compromise, keep talking. Remember that your wedding is symbolic of your union, and should reflect the two of you together, not one or the other alone. If you are willing to give in on one thing, perhaps your fiancé will defer to your preference somewhere else.



For more information, call
708-895-7310 or
219-226-1810

