



in your shoes

Advice from “The Nics”

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You're engaged! And you start thinking about your wedding. Everything's going great, but then, there's a little snag. Then, another small problem, then soon, an even larger problem occurs.

Problems will arise, but don't worry, you're not alone. *Your Wedding Day* has help for you from someone who's recently been there, “In Your Shoes.”

Nicolie (Nicky) and Nicola (Nick), who prefer being known only by the name their friends adoringly call them, “The Nics,” have agreed to talk with you about some common wedding planning problems, and how to solve them.

Your Wedding Day: Let's begin with some advice to *Your Wedding Day* couples about timing. You started planning over a year before your wedding, should all couples begin that soon?

Nicky & Nick (“The Nics”): Looking back at our almost year-and-a-half engagement, we realize that made it easier to get everything done by having more time to plan. It also allowed time for growth as a couple.

We advise taking the time to enjoy each other and to talk. If you're already committed to the relationship, allowing six more months, or longer, can be positive and alleviate some wedding planning stress.

YWD: Many couples have problems starting the wedding planning. What's your advice?

Nicky: Find a wedding planner that understands you and your visions. Our planner, Debra, owner of Tres Fabu Event Planning and Design, got to know “US” and put her whole heart into making our day special.

YWD: Another frequent problem is that couples usually work, making wedding planning intense. Working, or owning businesses, as you both do, how do you find wedding planning time?

Nicky: Nick and I have jobs we are good at, but it is not wedding planning. So, we let Debra do what she knows best.

Nick: But, we advise busy couples to share this experience. It should not be just one person's vision or responsibility. Again, the long engagement made it easier to do everything while we still worked.

YWD: Before even getting started, you resolved a common situation, having two faiths, in your case, Catholic and Methodist. How can couples do this?

Nicky: Nick and I discussed our faiths and their roles in our lives before even becoming engaged. Marriage in a Catholic church meant a lot to Nick's family, but although the ceremony was mainly Catholic, there was no full mass.

The Nics: Discuss the importance of faith in each other's lives. Embrace differences. Cross those bridges now; things only get more complicated as you go along.

YWD: You had different cultural upbringings too. Please discuss working with families that follow their culture closely.

The Nics: You have to make both your identities one. Honor both cultures and incorporate both into your wedding and into your life.

Nicky: The most important thing that worked for Nick and I was that we started asking the hard questions early. We talked about likes and dislikes, what we want for our family, children, and the role of culture in our lives. We learned the importance of compromise, and that understanding and respect is key.

The Nics: Honor family cultures at your wedding but remember, there are two people and two families blending. Most importantly, know you can't make EVERYONE happy; making each other happy is most important.

YWD: After these important early discussions, how can a couple start developing a theme both bride and groom will love?

The Nics: Stop and think what makes you as a couple tick. Do you have favorite hobbies together, a favorite saying, a favorite place? Look inside you as a couple, you'll find many themes.

Nicky: Nick and I communicate how we feel, so it seemed reasonable to use words as a theme to convey our love. We chose three words, Love, Honesty, and Respect, and had them projected with light in English and Italian on the pillars.

YWD: Your New Year's Eve wedding was a dual celebration. Please advise our YWD couples on celebrating two occasions.

The Nics: Make sure to get that point across early and to have all vendors on board. Decide how you want to celebrate. It was important to us to have two distinct celebrations. When the wedding and reception were over, we shifted to the New Year's Eve celebration. We had the big countdown with streamers, and imitation snow to begin the party.

YWD: To accomplish this, you had over 20 meetings with your many vendors. Does so much vendor-contact help the planning?

The Nics: It helped tremendously because we wanted to be involved, and it helped vendors get to know us and understand what we were truly looking for.

YWD: Along with two celebrations, you had two very different venues. Please discuss bringing out a venue's best qualities.

The Nics: Find the beauty in what exists and allow it to shine. Don't think just because it is a wedding you need flowers and tulle. Find the beauty within the venue, and just play it up.

Nicky: For instance, St. Mary's is an older church with marble floors, wood pews, and stain glass windows. We did not want to take away from its beauty, so we decided against flowers and just dimmed the lights and had over 600 candles.

YWD: And your reception venue was just the opposite.

The Nics: Our reception location was a large open area five stories tall. We were worried about it feeling cold, so we made it a warm and inviting place, especially through lighting, projecting our theme words on the pillars in English and Italian. This created a warm atmosphere, transforming the room into an enchanted winter wonderland.

YWD: Another challenge was your uneven guest list. What problems could that present?

Nicky: We had 300 guests, 70 mine, 230 Nick's. It did not result in too many problems because at the church we did not have bride and groom sides.

The Nics: We advise any of you with a similar situation to be fair to both sides. The key is to make both sides feel important and special.

YWD: Nick, many of your relatives came from Italy. What tips do you have for incorporating culture into the wedding day?

Nick: Bring your cultures in where you can and know you did your best. We had small touches, like a CD that gave people Italian lessons and Italian music.

Nicky: And a four-course Italian meal. In Nick's family food is really important, so the menu was important to us.

YWD: *So food is a good way to incorporate culture?*

Nicky: We wanted to give everyone a nice meal that they could really enjoy. Il Fornaio was the caterer, and we met on several occasions with Gretchen, Il Fornaio's event coordinator, to pick our food and iron out details.

The meal started with Antipasti: Crostini assortiti, prociutto con grissini, mini quiche and melanzane al formaggio. The four dinner courses were: Trio di Primi, Insalata del Fornaio, Sgroppino al limone, and Filetto al balsamico e petto di pollo alla ducale.

After dinner we also had a savory table that had bread, cheeses, lentils and sausage (which is an Italian good luck tradition on New Years) and nuts supplied from Il Fornaio.

Even the 20 people that came from Italy were impressed with the Italian food. That is a high complement.

YWD: *A large guest list can cause problems. What were your concerns?*

The Nics: "We were worried we would not be communicating to everyone how much they mean to us. So we wrote personal messages to every person. For months we wrote at least ten a night until we had 300.

Find a way to make each of your guests feel important. Little touches are important.

YWD: *One situation couples face, is reception guests wanting to sit near them. What can they do, especially with a large guest list?*

Nicky: "We had two floors to work with, a downstairs, and an overlooking balcony. We divided the tables, so half downstairs were for my guests and half for Nick's, and the remaining guests were seated upstairs.

The Nics: Our head table was centered with guests all around. Having guests upstairs made us nervous because we did not want anyone to feel excluded.

However, the people upstairs said they had the best seats in the house. This proved to us that as bride and groom, you put more stress on seating than the guests do. We suggest focusing more energy on who you put at each table and making the table fun so people are not paying as much attention to their proximity to you.

Nick: The seating chart is the hardest part in wedding planning, I believe. To all the brides and grooms out there, start early. Realize there is no way you can please everyone.

YWD: *Nicky, you had nine bridesmaids. What is something special to do for attendants?*

Nicky: Let go of the idea of having all your girls wear the same thing. You love your friends and family for what they bring to your life with their own style and personality, don't take that away from them.

I believe that you look more beautiful when you are comfortable with what you are wearing, so I picked the fabric



and I went with each girl to the designer to have the dress individually created for fit and style.

YWD: *Nick, what about groomsmen, what's something special grooms can do?*

Nick: Grooms can do the same thing. Find something unique for each groomsman. Start looking early and as soon as you find something that reflects them, get it.

YWD: *There is always a budget with a wedding. What's your advice for sticking to it?*

The Nics: Figure out what is most important. Sometimes simple is beautiful, but you don't need to do things that are ordinary. We used twigs and branches for center pieces rather than flowers.

YWD: *You've mentioned the stress that invariably occurs with wedding planning. How can our brides and grooms overcome that?*

Nicky: Weddings are stressful any way you cut it. I wish I could say you can eliminate it but you can't. The best advice I have is to talk to each other and respect each other.

Nick: Don't forget your relationship. You don't want to wake up the day after your wedding and not remember what you loved about each other. A wedding is just a day, but a marriage is a lifetime, so remember the day is for both of you, not ANYONE else.

YWD: *What is your final advice for Your Wedding Day couples?*

The Nics: Create your own dreams and visions. Make it your own. So find what that is, and find someone to execute it, and your day will be MAGICAL!

Remember why you are getting married. The wedding is not about the celebration, it is about the union. It is so easy to get caught up in all the planning, but take time for each other and enjoy your engagement. Spoil each other with notes, date nights, conversations, walks, and stolen kisses. These are the important things. Remember the beginning, the first time you said "I love you," and remember *that* when you get overwhelmed with the wedding planning.

YWD: *And here's a final piece of advice from Nick!*

Nick: Guys, don't be afraid to get involved, have an opinion, have some vision. This is just as much a part of your day as it is your bride's.

Your reward is when you get to look upon those beautiful eyes of your new bride and see the smile on her face. It's worth it! •