



KEEP CALM AND MARRY ON

**HOW DO YOU PLAN A WEDDING WHEN YOU DON'T
EVEN KNOW WHERE TO START?**

CHECK OUT THESE LESSONS FROM A NOT-
EVEN-CLOSE-TO-GETTING-MARRIED SINGLE
ALBUQUERQUE GUY.

By ADAM R. BACA

Photos by LIZ LOPEZ



I'm not getting married anytime soon, so "wedding planning" is basically a whole other language to me. My first reaction is to run to the nearest local bookstore and buy a copy of *Wedding Planning For Dummies* (which actually exists!). But my inexperience also makes me the perfect person to explore what it means to plan a wedding in Albuquerque from the ground up. Let's just call this **WEDDING PLANNING 101.**

KEEP CALM. and Hire a Planner?

Camilla Dominguez



I MEET CAMILLA DOMINGUEZ, the owner of Corazón Events, in her office, where she spends plenty of time planning weddings all around the

city. I tell her of my complete wedding planning ignorance and ask how necessary it is to hire someone to plan for me.

"In your case, you can't afford not to have a wedding planner," Dominguez says. "Good wedding planners can actually save you money." Why? Because planners have experience; they've planned hundreds of weddings, so they're constantly talking to vendors and very aware as to who can provide what—and at what cost. A planner will know where to find the flowers, cake, and venue you want, all within your pricepoint.



Then she explains some of the differences between good planners and those that are not-so-good. "The number-one thing to be cautious of: if they don't get back to you in a timely fashion," Dominguez says. She also says to make sure they're good listeners. "She needs to carry out whatever the bride's and groom's vision of 'perfect' is," she says.

Of course, not everyone needs a planner. Just ask Erin Sparkman, who married her husband, Adam, on October 20, 2012. She planned her own wedding with the help of her family.

"We were just like, oh, we can do it ourselves," Sparkman says. "There are all kinds of wedding sources you can go to—blogs, websites, magazines." Even sites such as Pinterest have become places for millions of brides to find all kinds of wedding inspiration. If you have the time, the support, the imagination, and the inclination, planning your own wedding isn't at all out of reach.

But wedding planners are also available for those who decide to self-plan—they can break down every aspect of your wedding, setting out an outline that you can follow.



Sweet Williams Photography

KEEP CALM...

and Set The Date

“When?” is one of the first things people will ask you after you announce that you’ve gotten engaged (this is what nearly everyone who’s been there and done that tells me). And setting a date isn’t a bad thing—it gives you a good goal. But how far ahead do you need to set the date, and why should you pick one day over another?


The experts I quizzed say that there’s a lot that goes into it. When you close your eyes and picture walking down the aisle, do you see snowflakes floating gently from the sky? If so, July’s out. Or maybe you’re hoping for having your first dance on an outdoor patio while your guests sip margaritas under the stars—in which case, you’re in a spring or summer state of mind.

But there are still other things to think about.

“We’re still kind of unsure of the date,” says Joannie Suina, who will marry Lionel Romero by this coming September—though she doesn’t have an exact date. “But we definitely know it’s going to be in the summer,” she says, citing the fact that lots of people generally take some time off during the hotter months, so more of her guests will be able to attend.

For other people, it’s the specific date that makes a difference. Laci-Mari Schneider tied the knot with Collin Schneider on December 1, 2012—12/1/12. “I thought how the numbers played out was really cool,” Schneider says.

From the First Dance...



...and a lifetime of Romance

First Dance • Father/Daughter Dance • Bridal Party

The World Leader in Teaching Ballroom Dance Since 1912!

2801 Eubank Blvd. NE, Ste. K
Albuquerque, NM 87112
505-296-6112

3301 Southern Blvd. SE, Ste. 605
Rio Rancho, NM 87124
505-892-4100

arthurmurray-newmexico.com



THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO ALUMNI MEMORIAL CHAPEL

A PLACE TO CELEBRATE

ARE YOU A LOBO?

MAKE YOUR WEDDING HISTORIC

BEAUTIFUL NEW MEXICO LANDMARK
NON-DENOMINATIONAL
LOCATED ON MAIN CAMPUS

505.277.5808 | unmalumni.com/chapel



And sometimes shooting for a certain date could save you money. Prices may differ depending on the date you decide to be married on. "A lot of places will give discounts if you get married on a Friday or Sunday, and not a Saturday," Schneider says. It's good to ask all these questions when looking for the perfect wedding day.

According to Dominguez, 12 months is a solid time frame to plan a wedding, but you can certainly pull it off in less—it took Schneider and Sparkman six months to plan theirs, and others have taken less time. But, just like it wasn't a good idea to pull an all-nighter to get your twelfth-grade research paper done, it's not a good idea to wait until the last minute to plan a wedding.

"I would have given myself more time," says Denise Parra-Arnold, who was married to Brian Arnold October 6, 2012 at the Hotel Albuquerque. She was engaged at the end of December 2011. "It took me almost exactly nine months."

But be careful not to give yourself too much time. Parra-Arnold says you may end up taking too long to decide, and start worrying too much about really small details, only creating more stress on yourself.



Denise Parra-Arnold & Brian Arnold

"I would have given myself more time," says Denise Parra-Arnold, who was married to Brian Arnold October 6, 2012 at the Hotel Albuquerque. She was engaged at the end of December 2011. "It took me almost exactly nine months."

KEEP CALM...

and Look at Your Budget

Everyone says the financial aspect is a big one—and I can see why. Some weddings cost as much as luxury yachts! And just take a look at some of the questions you have to answer: How much money are you going to spend on your wedding? How much money can you spend? Who's paying? What are the best ways to save money?

"I didn't even know where or how to start a budget," Parra-Arnold says.

Dominguez says there's one huge key to keeping the cash down: guests. "The more guests you have, the more money you spend," Dominguez says. "The number-one way to save money is to invite fewer guests. The fewer the guests, the less food you have to pay for—and you could probably even go with a smaller venue."

And get rid of the things you don't care about. Ask yourself, "What are the things you absolutely have to have?" Dominguez says. If you don't absolutely need something, cross it off your list, and save. For example, Schneider sliced out save-the-date cards, which kept her bank account a bit plumper.

"It was very hard, because I'm not a budgeter and my husband is," Schneider says, who ended up determining a ballpark figure and going from there. "We didn't want to get in debt."

KEEP CALM... and Choose a Dress

OK, I may not know much about weddings ... but I do know about how important it is to find a dress. For brides, finding the perfect dress is such a big deal, it might as well be capitalized: The Dress.

"You want to be special!" Sparkman says. For that same reason, Parra-Arnold actually traveled to Denver and San Deigo to hunt down the right gown. "I like so many different styles. I bought every single bridal dress magazine on the shelves," she says. She says she drained every possible resource: blogs, websites. Whenever she heard a gown designer's name, she immediately looked it up on the Internet. Two months later, she found the one she wanted at Brides by Demetrios in Albuquerque.



KEEP CALM...

and Find the Perfect Venue

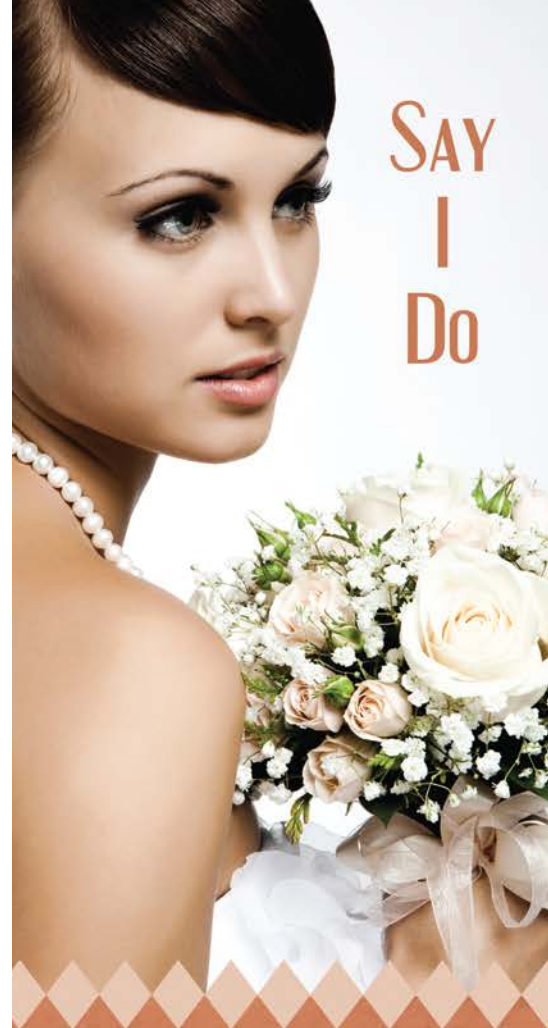


It turns out that not everyone wants to hop in the car, hit I-40, and get married by Elvis in Las Vegas. The people I talked to want to have the perfect venue: the groom's childhood home, Sandia Peak, a hot air balloon, a casino, a Catholic church. Whatever it may be, it's probably best to put this task at the top of your list.

Venue topped Schneider's list. Her ceremony was held at Christ Lutheran Church, and the reception was at the Marriot Uptown. The venue depends a lot on how many guests you will have at the wedding and how many you can afford.

"We chose El Zócalo in Bernalillo (for our venue)," Suina says, because it could accommodate both an outdoor ceremony and an indoor reception. "We wanted somewhere that was more Southwest vintage, but in our price range. Once we saw it, we kind of knew it was the right place," Suina says. El Zócalo also offered a wedding package: up to 200 guests, along with tables, chairs, audio set up, security, a bridal suite, restrooms, and a kitchen for the food vendor.

SAY I Do



Indian Pueblo Cultural Center

- One-of-a-kind surroundings in the heart of Albuquerque
- 200 Guests Inside
450 Guests Outside
- On Site Catering
- Unique Menu Selections
- Lodging Options
Now Available

We invite you to see our beautiful facility
Call our event planners
for a tour

505-843-7270

2401 12th St NW

IndianPueblo.com/eventplanning 



THE DOS AND DON'TS

of Choosing a Wedding Gown

WHAT ALBUQUERQUE EXPERTS SUGGEST YOU KEEP IN MIND WHEN LOOKING FOR YOUR DREAM DRESS.

Say "I Do" to:

Asking lots of questions. The boutique staff deals in gowns all day, every day—they can explain fabrication and fit. But also ask yourself some questions: does the gown you like work with the activities of the day? Can you dance in it? Sit in it? Does it make you feel beautiful?

Trying on as many dresses as you need to. Five? Ten? Fifty? There's no magic number for how many gowns it

takes before you find the perfect one. With every one that you try, you learn something new about what you want your final choice to have—or not have.

Bringing your camera to take some photos—mirrors tell just part of the story, and it's nice to have pics to check out later, anyway. Some boutiques don't allow photography, so call ahead to ask if you can take a few snaps to help in your decision-making.

Say "I Don't" to:

Picking a dress just because it's trendy. Think classic, think timeless, and think how not-cringeworthy your wedding photos will look in 20 years.

Bringing an audience to your fittings. You don't need every single one of your bridesmaids, female cousins, neighbors, and grandmother's bingo partners with you to give their opinions—unless you want them there.

Worrying about the sizes of the gowns you're trying on. Bridal gown samples generally run three sizes larger than street clothes, so concentrate on how it looks, not what the label reads.



Courtyard by Marriott
Albuquerque Journal Center
5151 Journal Center Boulevard
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87109
T 505.823.1919 F 505.828.1009

- 2400 sq ft Kokopelli Ballroom, up to 150 guests
- Full Catering services available on site
- Full Bar services available on site
- Professional Wedding Planner on site

KEEP CALM...



The florist, the caterer, the photographer, the musicians ... these are the people with whom you're going to be spending some quality time. So it's important to choose the right ones.

Dominguez says it's good to start deciding on vendors six to nine months out from the wedding. When it comes to your photographer, "It's your wedding day. You can't ever get these pictures taken again," Dominguez says. Sure, your cousin just bought a new camera. He loves his new hobby of taking



pictures of every other thing he sees outside. Let's hire him, your mom might say.

"Bad idea," Dominguez says. For something as important as your wedding, you want to call in a pro.

Parra-Arnold spoke with three different photographers before she decided on the one for her. "You need somebody that you'll have good communication with," she says. "Take a look at previous books and albums of weddings they shot" to make sure their style matches yours. She recommends making a list of the pictures you want and share your ideas with the photographer beforehand. Do you want a picture of the bride and groom cutting the cake? Walking down the aisle? Let them know what you need—and what you'll be comfortable with.

For Parra-Arnold, everything seemed to really fall in place when it came to the vendors. It all started with the bakery. "I knew the bakery I wanted," she says. "That was already decided." From that point it was like a wedding vendor connect-the-dots. "He immediately knew of the florist that I would click with. And she sent me to the photographer."

Food is a biggie—consider what your favorite Albuquerque dishes are, and what your wedding is going to be like. Is it a formal sit-down? Do you want yummy finger foods that people can eat while mingling? Depending on your venue, your catering may already be taken care of. "A lot of places won't let you bring outside catering in if they do catering on-site," Schneider says.

KEEP CALM...

and Work On Invitations and the Guest List

→ The guest list—that part seems a little daunting to me. I mean, how do you decide who to invite? Or—even more daunting—how do you decide who not to invite?

"I didn't invite children to the wedding," Schneider

says. "That was extremely hard for me." But it helped cut time and save the budget. While it may be tempting to invite every friend and acquaintance, it's not always necessary.

"I think sometimes people get carried away in inviting people out of respect," Schneider says.

It can be tempting, but do you really need to invite your fourth cousin that you haven't seen in 15 years?

"I think that's the hardest part of

getting married—the emotional stress, not wanting to leave anyone out," Schneider says. It might be difficult, but remember: it's ultimately your party.

Getting the word out means sending save the date cards (if you choose) and traditional invitations with RSVP cards (and corresponding postage), which ought to be ordered about three months before the event. But you can also go the online route.

"We created a wedding website for free at MyWedding.com," Sparkman says. Wedding guests were able to go to her website and RSVP to the wedding. This was helpful since most of her guests were out of town. It helped save time and money on postage costs.

"I think that's the hardest part of getting married—the emotional stress, not wanting to leave anyone out," Schneider says. It might be difficult, but remember: it's ultimately your party.

LARRY'S HAT SHOP

Located in the Heart of Nob Hill



(505) 266-2095

Nob Hill
3102 Central Avenue SE



KEEP CALM...

and Get Premarital Counseling

Rebecca and Michael Holland

Courtesy Photo



“Couples that do as little as eight hours of premarital counseling reduce their risk of divorce by 50 percent,” says Rebecca Holland, the program director for The Family Lifeline, Inc. in Rio Rancho. “With the divorce rate hovering around 54 percent right now, it’s like offering marriage insurance to couples.”

This is why she highly recommends the counseling to all engaged couples. Rebecca and her husband Michael have been married for 31 years, and their counseling covers five critical areas with couples: healthy communication, conflict resolution, financial management, sexual relationship, and healing relationship hurts.

Rebecca says the biggest reason couples come in is because of poor or lack of communication. She says that, often, people are thinking about what they are going to say next, so they miss what their partner is saying right now. “We either brush things under the rug or end up arguing around and around it,” she says. The counseling teaches couples how to have a win-win argument.

When it comes to the financial

aspect of marriage, “You usually have a saver marrying a spender,” Rebecca says.

Premarital counselor Diana Denson says, “You need not become one bank account.”

“Seventy percent of marriages end after extramarital affairs,” Rebecca says, adding that 41 percent of marriages are impacted by an affair by one or both partners. Couples must learn to talk to each other about what they want and need.

“Marriage is like anything else in life. It changes as we change, and if you’re not working on it on a regular basis it’s not going to last,” she says. Couples should make sure they are in love.

It’s very important not to wait too long to get married. “The longer they wait, the less they are committed to each other,” Rebecca says. “Commitment is the critical piece to every marriage.”

Oh, one more thing: don’t let Facebook ruin your marriage! Denson says with the current technology and social networking boom, it’s easy to get caught up in a digital world and lose track with reality. “People are so neglectful with face-to-face contact,” she says. “Make sure you remember you have

Peddlin' Parties USA
PARTIES USA
WHERE *Fancy* BEGINS...

505.856.7687
peddlinparties@gmail.com

Specializing in Events, Catering, Desserts & Gifts



KEEP CALM... *and Walk Down the Aisle*



Then comes the big day. There can be so many steps leading up to your wedding, but the actual wedding day should be as stress-free as possible. After all, you already did all the work.

Plan everything out and give yourself some time to relax before your marriage day. "I didn't want to think about anything or rush for anything for the last two weeks," Parra says. "I didn't want to be a drama queen about anything."



a living, breathing human being in your life. People barely even look up from the computer or the smartphone to say hello."



LORENGO'S

1100 SAN MATEO BLVD. NE ALBUQ. NM 87110
(505) 255-8693

Where style is created...

<i>Eyelash Extensions</i>	<i>Hair Styling</i>
<i>Large Wedding Parties</i>	<i>Permanent Make-Up</i>
<i>Bridal Make-Up</i>	<i>Facials & Waxing</i>
<i>Onsite Weddings</i>	<i>Manicures & Pedicures</i>