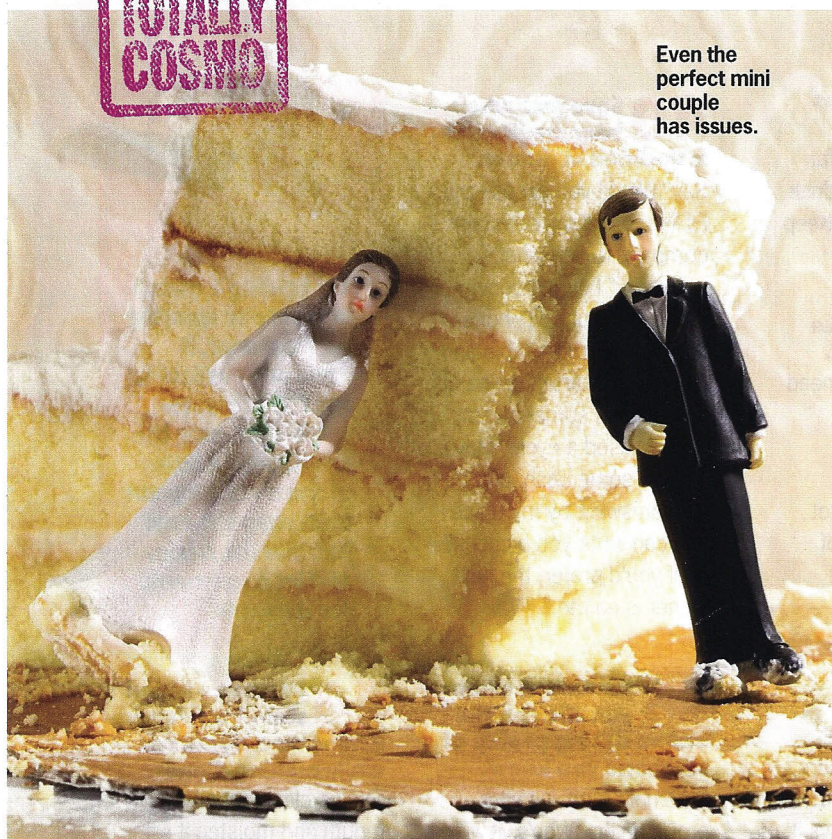


TOTALLY  
COSMO

Even the  
perfect mini  
couple  
has issues.



## Confessions of a Wedding Planner

**Samantha Goldberg has orchestrated the nuptials of hundreds of couples. And because she works intimately with soon-to-be-hitched duos, she knows what makes and breaks lasting love. Listen in as she spills the five signs that a marriage will crash and burn.**

AS TOLD TO  
BETHANY HEITMAN

■ I plan 50 to 80 weddings per year. And let me tell you, I've dealt with all types of brides—from those who were more obsessed with me than with their fiancé because they had seen me on the Style Network's *Whose Wedding Is It Anyway?* to women who called the whole thing off with just a week to go.

Crazy brides aside, planning such a big day means I get to witness behaviors that a couple doesn't always reveal to others. And over the years, I've deduced that certain actions—as trivial as they may seem—are predictors of whether a couple will live happily ever after or bite the dust. These red flags that pop up during the planning process tell me a couple doesn't have a shot in hell at making it.

### **The Bride Refuses to Let the Groom Choose the Cake**

It's true: Brides are almost always more interested in the minutiae of wedding planning than grooms are. But when I encounter a woman

who refuses to relinquish any control to her fiancé, it doesn't bode well. I can think of a few instances in which the woman ruled the event with an iron fist and the couple ended up in divorce court a few years later. Basically, they weren't able to make decisions together.

On the flip side, it's a positive sign when a bride takes the time to understand which part of the wedding is most important to her groom and then gives him full say in that area. A couple I worked with years ago—who happen to still be very happily married—serves as an example. He couldn't have cared less about the flowers, color palette, and hors d'oeuvres, but he was completely obsessed with the cake. When it came time for the tasting, the bride said, "Let's get whatever you want." Whether it's the cake, the photographer, the open bar, whatever, a bride who lets her almost-hubby have some say proves she's empathetic, and a guy who wants his taste to count shows he's not aloof—both necessary traits for the relationship to pan out.

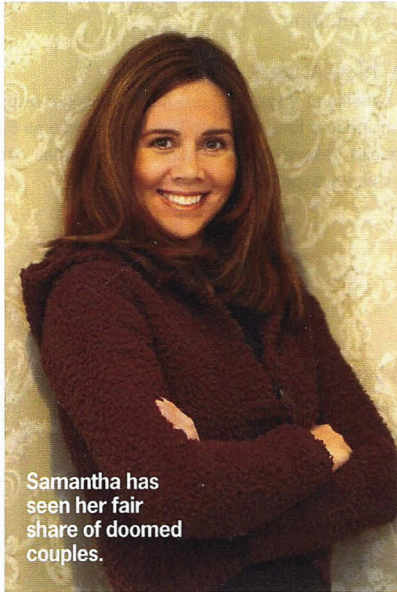
### **The Groom Lets His Mom Call the Shots**

Most of my brides involve their moms in the planning process, and why wouldn't they? It's like having a second planner for free. But sometimes, grooms' mothers try to muscle in too, which is something I'll never understand. Not only is it inappropriate, but it's up to her son to tell her that.

Unfortunately, I've seen quite a few grooms chicken out. In one case, a domineering mom wanted nothing to do with her future daughter-in-law's Indian heritage and argued that it shouldn't be part of the wedding. Thinking it would only make things worse, her son didn't put up a fight on his bride's behalf. Watching him let his mother walk all over the woman he supposedly loved was heartbreaking. If the groom had put his foot down in the first place, there's a chance his mom would have gotten the message. Because he didn't, she is still trying to rule their life and putting stress on them that could lead them to break up.

**Guys Gone Wild**  
Just a few years ago, men wanted nothing to do with wedding planning, but now I see a ton of groomzillas.  
SOURCE: SAMANTHA GOLDBERG

RubberBall/Getty Images



Samantha has seen her fair share of doomed couples.

### The Bride Blows Half the Budget on Her Dress

I will never forget the look of fury and horror on one client's face when his future wife revealed she'd spent most of their wedding savings on a designer gown. Weddings are pricier than ever, and money-related issues can cause a lot of undue tension. So when a bride goes behind her groom's back and splurges on a big-name dress or expensive flower arrangements, I start to get nervous. It's a huge sign that she doesn't respect him and refuses to compromise...and trust me, those tendencies don't disappear after she walks down the aisle. I have worked with tons of couples who fought viciously over the wedding budget and learned later that many of them continued to argue and eventually split.

Recently, I signed on with a bride and groom who really impressed me. Throughout the process, if the bride wanted to spend extra on something, she would call her future husband, and they would discuss if it was worth it. She wasn't giving him full veto power, mind you, but she was showing regard for their union. I'm guessing they have real staying power.

### The Bride Freaks Over the Groom's Bachelor Party

I've seen some women wig out about the possibility of her guy having a boys' night at a strip club. One client of mine



even threatened to leave her fiancé if he had a bachelor party. But my motto is: If you can't trust him, why the hell are you walking down the aisle?!

The women who tell their man to have fun and don't grill him for details seem secure and confident in their relationship...and from what I've seen, that trust makes for a lasting marriage. On the other hand, the brides I work with who give their man the third degree either are really insecure or know their guy can't be faithful. One woman got so crazy over the thought of her fiancé going to a strip club that she threw a big fit and he canceled his plans. She'd made a big deal because she was afraid he would stray. Well, she ended up being right—I heard they separated a few years later because he wasn't faithful.

### The Bride and Groom Fight in Front of Me

No matter how in love two people may be, planning a ceremony and reception is overwhelming and will no doubt cause a few tiffs. But warning bells immediately start ringing for me if the couple gets really heated with each other in my presence. Arguments are private, and dragging me into them shows that there is a lack of respect for each other and for their bond.

Once I was meeting a couple for the first time for a consultation—something I like to do before taking on new clients. I would ask the bride what kinds of things she wanted to include in the wedding. Anytime she said something, the groom would say, "That's stupid. We aren't doing that." Right then and there, I knew I couldn't take them on as a couple. I was unable to plan an event for people I knew wouldn't last. Sure enough, I heard later that they had divorced soon after getting married. ■

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