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Brides and grooms, your emotions are likely all over the place right now. COVID-19 has disrupted one of the most important celebrations in life and frustration, sadness, anger, and uncertainty are valid feelings. Don't feel guilty about that. It stinks. It's been an evolving situation, and hard to know what to do first. Living in limbo is hard! Hitting pause is the first step. Even J-Lo and A-Rod have had to postpone! Creativity and an open mind are helpful in rebooting your wedding plans.

Depending on your wedding date, you may have had no choice but to postpone. There are so many concerns to work through in deciding whether to postpone, elope, hold out hope the original date will work. Where does one start? Travel restrictions, friends and family in high risk groups, venues with very few available dates, rescheduling charges from wedding pros, new contracts, new health and safety protocols are just a few considerations in the process.

If you have a planner, you have a guide and some help negotiating. Planners craft rain/wind plans, illness plans, but not usually pandemic plans! But, we are creative, have relationships and use an array of tools to help you get from this to “I do!” chaos. Many of us have been educating ourselves during Shelter-in-Place in a variety of areas from staying in touch with other wedding pros for their availability so that we can help with rescheduling at a moments notice to learning the health and safety protocols we will all need to keep the celebration joyful AND safe. We know it will take a lot more effort on everyone's part to make the day happen.

First, talk with your partner. REALLY talk. Which is more important? To be legally wed soon or to have the grand celebration with ALL of your important family and friends? The day is the beginning of a lifelong marriage. If you choose getting married now, consider a micro, or intimate, wedding, keeping in mind your County requirements about size, distancing, etc. If you go this route, you may consider having the big affair in a year and celebrate your first anniversary at the same time.

Venues are already experiencing full calendars for 2021. Some were nearly full already and with so many 2020 couples moving into next year, you may need to consider altering your Plan A. If your date is taken at the venue you just have to have doesn’t have any Saturdays left, would a Sunday work? What about a month before or after the traditional wedding season? There are also many locations that do not promote themselves as wedding venues that planners can share with you. Consider a friend or family’s property. Those locations will have additional items to consider, but if you really want a particular date, this might work. Establishing the new date and venue are top of the list.

How will you get your A team on your new date? The stars may align or they may not. Consider which elements were most important to you. If it was the food, then talking to the caterer about availability as you are looking at alternative dates is crucial. If it was the photographer, start there. If you have hit your budget max, another consideration is which pros can accommodate the new date without a postponement fee. Some of those fees are small and some are not. It’s worth a conversation. Most of us in the wedding industry absolutely love this work and we will bend over backwards to help you have the day of your dreams. Some are making exceptions to their nonrefundable deposits so just ask. Read your contracts first.

Change-the-date communications with everyone early is vital, especially if you will have a small ceremony and reception now. For those who will not be invited, if you can bear, reach out personally with a phone call. They will be more understanding than you might think. When emailing, use a BCC. Mailing cards, wording on your website and social media can help efficiently notify guests who need to travel.

There are other things to consider so talk with your planner. Keep communicating with your partner, family, wedding pros, and your wedding party. Find joy in being with your life partner. Create a signature wedding cocktail or create a Pandemic Pasta Sauce recipe. Be kind. Live in love. You WILL be married.
During the planning phase of your wedding, you’re going to get to know your vendors very well. They will come to understand the most intricate plans of your special day and will be committed to making them all happen for you.

When it comes to communicating with them, your main goal should be staying on the same page all the way up to your wedding day. The last thing you want to happen is a mix-up about how many people your caterer will be serving or how many chairs you need for the ceremony.

Communication is key when it comes to wedding vendor management. Ask your vendors what their preferred method of communication is to minimize delays on important decisions and details. Make yourself available as much as possible in case a time-sensitive question comes up during the planning phase.

**ORGANIZATION IS CRITICAL**

You will accrue multiple documents and emails from your vendors throughout the planning process. If you are sent digital files, be sure to print them out and keep all important documentation, including contracts, inside a labeled binder, drawer or box.

You’ll probably need to refer back to these documents as you continue through the planning process, so it’s imperative you have quick, easy access to them. When it comes to email, make sure you’re checking your inbox and even your spam folder frequently to make sure you’re not missing important messages. Create a wedding folder for an easy, convenient way to keep your emails organized.

**SHORT ON TIME? ASSIGN A POINT OF CONTACT**

Dealing with multiple people can confuse the process in a hurry. If you’re not the one who will be managing interactions with your vendors, make sure to appoint someone as that key point of contact.

If you decide to hire a wedding planner, this is their role. If you are going with a smaller, more intimate wedding ceremony that doesn’t require a planner, ask someone on your bridal party or in your family if they can take on the task of helping bridge the gap between you and your vendors.

A single point of contact will help streamline the process and keep everyone on the same page.
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