

For the Parents Of Bride and Groom- Celebration or Anxiety

While the focus of wedding preparations rightly belongs on the bride and groom, often their parents find it a particularly difficult time of conflicting emotions. First, there are the obvious feelings; pressures of organizing the details of the wedding and reception; the pain of separation in seeing a son or daughter off on their own; and the worry and hope concerning the new couple's future. But the more potent emotions lurk just below the surface, and these tend to put unusual stresses on the parents of the newlyweds.

A trend has developed recently of couples married between 20 and 35 years booking themselves on to Marriage Encounter weekends following the wedding of their son or daughter. These couples frequently discover and come to grips with the effects the wedding has had on their own relationship with each other. In watching the new bride and groom, memories are stirred of how the parents were as newlyweds; the awkwardness with each other, the passion, the fumbling their way through those early decisions, the struggle to accommodate each other, and the joy and hope that love will conquer all. Yet so often those memories are bittersweet or even sobering as they reflect on how their own marriage has evolved over the years. How they believed that their own honeymoon would never end, yet somehow it did. How their hopes and dreams for an ever vibrant love seemed



to fade into complacency as they accommodated one another. How they discovered "he's not the husband I thought he would be, or I'm not the perfect partner I'd hoped to be," and maybe marriage isn't all it's cracked up to be. Such reflections usually occur in the middle of the night, triggered by unlikely circumstances: an argument, hearing what used to be their favorite song on the radio. And yet the real values have held; for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, etc.

Some parents start to discover how much the focus of their lives had been their children and not each other - and this new awareness is especially painful after the kids are off on their own. And the children's weddings somehow seem to highlight the effects of the separate paths the parents have taken in their married lives.

What is most tragic of all are the parents who realize there is little left between them and end up getting divorced shortly after the children marry. The post-wedding blues can often be a

time of near trauma even for the best of marriages.

Here are some suggestions for parents of about-to-be-married children to help them anticipate this phenomenon and prepare for it:

- Make the time to talk about your feelings honestly. Schedule time with each other to do this if necessary. So many parents go through the preparations for their children's wedding talking only about the details and arrangements, but not about what's going on inside them.

- Make a serious effort to listen sympathetically and encourage your partner to talk about it. Be attuned to the non-verbal signs of anxieties even your spouse may not realize are there. Try to avoid talking him or her out of feeling like that. Careful listening can be a magic ingredient that creates intimacy, especially in difficult time.

- Sign up to attend a Marriage Encounter weekend. This experience can be one of the most enriching of your married lives together. Many couples report re-experiencing the same fresh and alive kind of love they had when they first started out together. This weekend experience is designed for couples of any age to affirm what is good in their relationship, to enhance trust and intimacy, and to look forward to the future with joy and confidence. If you have questions about the Marriage Encounter Weekend, or want to make a reservation, call 872-3180.

'New Horizon' For Couples Entering Second Marriages

Are you planning to marry for the second time? Or are you engaged to someone who has been married before? If so, you are among a growing number of people who would benefit from the diocesan New Horizons program. More than 1,000 couples so far have taken advantage of this special opportunity.

Now in its fifth year, New Horizons is conducted by one of two teams of four married couples (all in second marriages themselves), with a priest or religious on each team. Persons who are in the process of or who have been granted a Church annulment, and those who are entering a second marriage after the death of a spouse, are encouraged to participate.

Since second marriages certainly present special issues and circumstances which differ from those of first marriages, it has been proven very beneficial for both spouses-to-be to attend, even if one of them has not been previously married. Attitudes, experiences and longstanding habits can be shared with each other in the open, honest forum provided by the New Horizons program, assisting the couple to create a favorable climate for marriage.

Self-awareness, communication, sexuality, attitudes, present and future children, former spouses, past and present in-laws, all are areas treated in the sessions, as well as the importance of the sacrament of

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marriage in the Church and in society today.

Couples who have experienced the program have found it most helpful:

"We thought we communicated well, but found it was only on a superficial basis. This program helped us to look more deeply at our relationship, to think and talk on a deeper level."

"It made us consider things that normally would not have been dealt with, such as how we view our spiritual life and how our background affects our attitudes toward child-rearing."

Facing a blended family and other complex situations experienced in a second marriage requires additional adjustments not found in a first marriage. The New Horizons program looks realistically at these issues and encourages a practical approach from the beginning which can result in rich and rewarding relationships.

If you are a New Horizons candidate, you can obtain a registration card from your parish; send it in to the

Family Life Office. The next session is scheduled for April 2, 4 and 6.

For further information, call Jim and Donna Fitch, Marriage Preparation Coordinators, (716) 436-5450.

...THE TOAST...

Usually it is the best man who offers the toast to the wedding couple. However, others like a favorite uncle or long time friend may also be asked to toast the happy couple. The occasion can be a nervous one especially for the person who is not used to the limelight, and of course the person giving the toast wants what he says to be just right for the occasion. Throughout this bridal section there will be hints as to how to accomplish this, along with quotes and ideas to help the toast-giver.

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