

(re)married, with children

Arrange a destination wedding event that has your kids saying, “We do!”

At Jarre and Dave Weinstein’s recent destination wedding in Key West, the best man had to stand on a chair to deliver his toast—a list of “Keys to a Happy Marriage,” which he recited perfectly. “There was never any doubt that Matt would be my best man,” Dave says of his nine-year-old stepson. “Matt has been a ring bearer many times, but it was important for me to explain to him how this wedding would be different—that walking down the aisle was his final approval of us becoming a family.”

For couples tying the knot for the second (or third, or fourth) time, a ceremony often represents something different than it may have the first time around. Many opt out of the white dress and tuxedo, the dozens of attendants and the 200-plus guest list. Perhaps most importantly, children from previous marriages typically play key roles in the planning process and celebration. In fact, 65 percent of all remarriages involve children from prior relationships, reports research from the National Stepfamily Resource Center.

According to Sasha Souza, a California-based wedding coordinator and event planner, including your children in the celebration not only reduces the risk of them feeling alienated, it acknowledges that your remarriage has a significant effect on their lives. “It’s the perfect way to make it known, not only to them but to everybody, that you consider yourself and them part of a much larger family unit.” Plus, if both



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partners have children, planning a wedding together can be an excellent way for stepsiblings to start feeling like a single family. Read on for tips on how to ensure an unforgettable wedding and honeymoon for the whole gang.



MAKE IT A GROUP EFFORT

Asking your children to help with the planning and execution of your special occasion demonstrates your ongoing commitment to them—that they will be as important to you as they were before your marriage—and your respect for their ideas and opinions. You also give them the opportunity to showcase their talents and interests. Your artistic son may design the invitation, or your musical daughter may sing a recessional song. Some teens escort their mother or father down the aisle. And, of course, kids often assume the traditional roles of ring bearer, flower girl or attendants. Souza suggest that parents ensure their children are excited about their role in the wedding. “Don’t force your children to participate if they’re uncomfortable.”

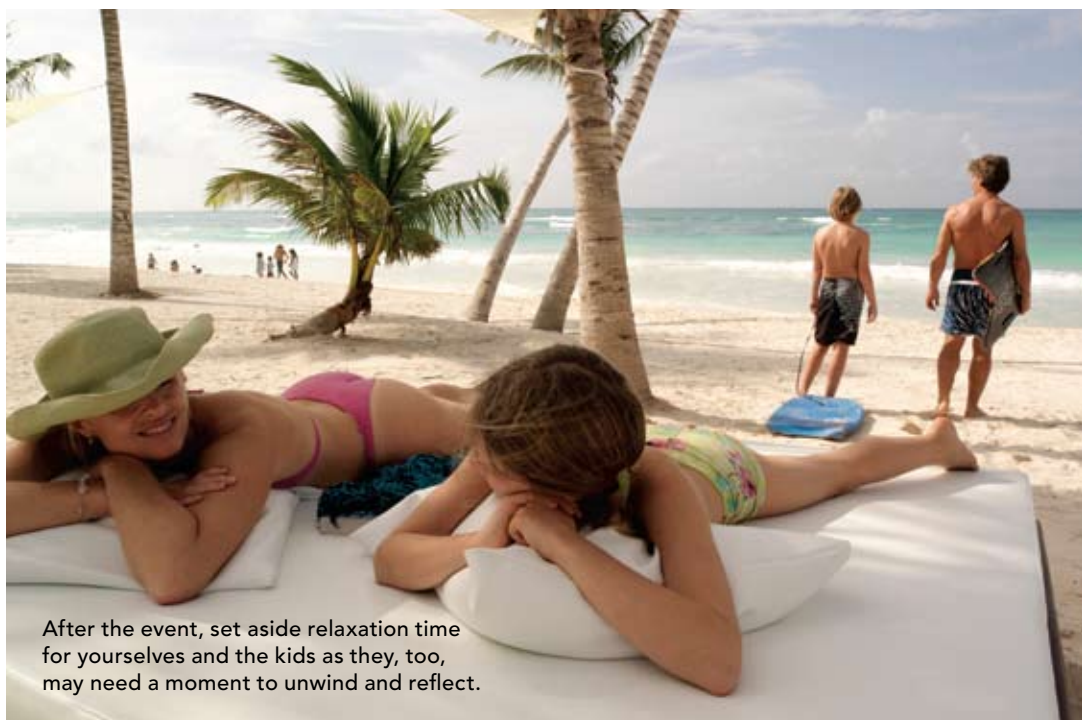
LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Whether you’re researching wedding destinations online or consulting a travel agent, keep your kids in mind when choosing the location—you don’t want them to feel uncomfortable or bored in an adult-centric setting. Ask them for suggestions; perhaps arrange a powwow where everyone in the family can have their say.

Carol Peterson, owner of TravelBride honeymoon registration and travel services, recommends Hawaii for family getaways. “The islands are beautiful and very romantic for adults,” she notes, “yet children of all ages love to play on the beach, swim and build sand castles.” Caribbean all-inclusives are also great for families who treasure sun, sand, surf and kids clubs. In Mexico, Cancún and the surrounding Riviera Maya offer great beaches and a mix of cultural activities, while U.S. destinations like Orlando and San Diego promise theme parks along with fun in the sun. Wherever you decide to go, be sure to compare pricing for family vs. wedding and honeymoon packages, as these tend to differ a lot.

FUN FOR EVERYONE

These days, resorts worldwide provide a range of programs



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geared toward children and teens, so your kids will be entertained, and you’ll have time to take care of last-minute bridal details (and steal romantic moments alone with your sweetie). Most properties house kid camps and some even staff a “kids’ concierge” to organize activities for your youngsters, from beach parties and scavenger hunts to outdoor movie nights and teen spa packages. Many destinations also offer babysitting services during evening outings or day trips away from tots who need more hands-on care. After the big day, pencil in some relaxation time for yourselves and the kids, as they, too, may need a moment to unwind after the past months of planning.

PRIVACY, PLEASE

A “familymoon” is not the same as a romantic trip for two, but it can be just as exciting. To ensure everyone enjoys some privacy, splurge on a larger suite or separate rooms, or find a resort with a multi-bedroom villa or bungalow with private pool and garden. Send the kids off to kids’ camp so you and your spouse can share a sunset dinner, couples massage or day trip to an exotic locale. As Peterson assures, with some collaboration and advance planning, “your getaway can be romantic, memorable and lots of fun for everyone.” KIM CARMEL