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10 things never to say to repeat brides

Learn second wedding etiquette so you don't inadvertently offend remarrying friends

By Charlotte Latvala



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You just got the news: Your friend is tying the knot for the second—or even third—time. And while it's a joyful occasion, it's not free of complications, says relationship expert **April Masini**. So some of your comments can hit a sore spot, even when that's not your intention. "If your pal has found Mr. Right, there's no reason to make her feel bad by quoting gloomy second marriage statistics to her, for instance," says Masini. "She's probably nervous as it is, even if she doesn't show it." That's why she needs you to be supportive—and stay away from the following remarks:

1. "Wow, so soon?"

Even if the ink is barely dry on your pal's divorce papers, questioning her timing is a major no-no. "It makes it sound like you think your friend is getting married without thinking it through or taking the time to analyze the relationship carefully," says Terri Orbuch, PhD, author

of ***Finding Love Again: 6 Simple Steps to a New and Happy Relationship***. Better to stick with a neutral, open-ended comment, such as, "Congratulations! If you ever want to talk about anything, just let me know," suggests Dr. Orbuch.

2. "You're not having a big wedding/wearing white, are you?"

Janie*, who runs a small business in Pittsburgh, PA, was taken aback when a friend questioned her decision to have a full-blown, catered wedding reception for her marriage to second husband John*. "She implied that, as a repeat bride, I didn't deserve hors d'oeuvres and a big cake," she says. "It felt judgmental and petty." Once upon a time, second weddings *were* low-key affairs and only virgins wore white—but social mores have (thankfully) relaxed since then. A better approach: "I can't wait to hear all the details about the wedding and what your dress looks like!" suggests Dr. Orbuch.

3. "How is your ex with all this?"

"It made me squirm every time someone brought up my ex or my former in-laws," says recent bride Tanya* of Cincinnati, OH. "I wanted to say, 'Hey, I'm the one getting married here!'" Whether they're on good terms or not, talking about your friend's ex is definitely off limits. "There's no way to ask about him and not come across as a gossip," says etiquette expert **Melissa Leonard**. The exception: If your pal initiates a conversation about her friendly relationship with the former hubby, it's OK to say something like: "I'm sure Seth is happy for you both," and leave it at that, says Leonard.

4. "You're getting a pre-nup, right?"

Unless you double as your friend's financial advisor or attorney, legal advice will likely be met with a cold shoulder—for good reason. "A comment about a pre-nup implies the marriage won't last," says Masini. "Weddings are about good will and happiness, so this isn't the time to express any sort of doubt." A smarter choice of words: "I'm wishing you all the best in health, happiness and success."

5. "Oh, I remember the flowers/music/food at your first wedding. So lovely!"

At lunch one day, Janie's longtime pal surprised her by going on and on about Janie's first wedding. "This woman raved about the flowers, the cake, the music," she says. "It never occurred to her that I didn't want to relive my first wedding when I was planning my second." Even if you're merely complimenting her, it's not a good idea to dredge up the past—especially when you have no idea what's painful and what's not, says Leonard. A safer and still-flattering remark, she says: "You have such great taste. I'm sure your wedding will be beautiful!"

6. "Can you re-use your old wedding ring?"

That piece of jewelry is often the most personal, meaningful token from a marriage, and bringing up the whereabouts of the old one is thoughtless. "You have no idea whether she returned it to her ex or sold it to help pay bills," says Leonard. "She may not want anyone to know, and there's no polite way to ask." Instead, admire her beautiful new ring once it's on her finger—without making any comparisons.

7. "Are you pregnant?"

This is the mother of all inappropriate comments to a second-time bride-to-be. "This assumes that the only reason your friend would get married is because she feels obligated to," says Dr. Orbuch. Even if you're absolutely sure she's expecting, steer clear with a vague, positive comment like, "Congrats on getting married. I'm excited to hear about everything!" which leaves her free to tell you as much—or as little—as she'd like.

8. "Who's paying this time?"

Unless your friend is asking you to foot the bill, money matters aren't up for discussion. "My old college roommate actually said, 'I suppose you're having a smaller wedding since you're paying for it yourself this time,'" says Tanya. "I was speechless!" Money is always a sensitive issue, Dr. Orbuch notes: "Asking who's paying points out—in a negative way—that she spent a lot of money before, and the marriage didn't work out." Focus on the event itself, not the price tag: "I'm looking forward to hearing all about the reception!"

9. "Didn't you say you'd never get married again?"

In a late-night gab fest a few years ago, your friend swore she was so over marriage—so over men, in fact—that she'd never, ever walk down the aisle again. But guess what: She met someone who changed her mind. Why throw her words back at her? "You may think you're being the voice of reason, but keep in mind that it's her life to live," says Masini. Keep your recollections to yourself (chances are, she remembers saying those words, too!) and substitute something like: "I knew you'd find the right guy someday!"

10. "Are you allowed to get married in a church?"

Many denominations frown on second marriages, but chances are a devout friend already knows that. "Reminding the bride that her church may not give their blessing can be like rubbing salt in an open wound," says Leonard. Instead of insensitive probing, stick to innocuous questions like, "What venues are you looking at?" or "Where do you plan on holding the ceremony?" After her response, stick to the positives.

**Names have been changed*

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