

the parent trap

Divorced parents can create a wedding celebration hurdle, having strategies up your sleeve could save the day.

In the perfect world, parents who have split badly would kiss and make up for their son or daughter's wedding day. But parents are only human, when hurt runs deep and emotions are raw, a temporary truce may not be possible. Managing the situation may require empathy, tact and knowing when to walk away from the situation.

ISSUE: ONE PARENT REFUSES TO GO TO THE WEDDING IF THE OTHER IS ATTENDING

Try speaking to them separately, if that works, get them together for a chat. Let them know how much it means to you and your fiancé to have them there. Listen to their requests on seating or location in the room so they are made welcome and comfortable. If the mediation isn't working, let one of them back out of the day. It may be a blessing in disguise. Leave the invitation open as late as possible, the closer the event, the more rational the decision may become, seating arrangements can be altered in an instant.

ISSUE: ONE PARENT IS TAKING A NEW PARTNER, SO THE OTHER REFUSES TO GO.

This is the most common heart-breaking scenario. Base the decision on your friendship with the new partner and the strength of their relationship with your parent. If they're married or have been together for years, the new partner must be invited. However, if the relationship is relatively new and you haven't had much to do with the newcomer, don't feel obliged to invite them, especially if it's going to cause heartache.

ISSUE: THEY REFUSE TO SIT WITH EACH OTHER OR ANYWHERE NEAR EACH OTHER

Let them sit where they like. It's much better to have them there and sitting far apart than not there at all.

Don't make a big deal of it. At the ceremony, your mother could sit in the front row, your father in the second row, but not directly behind. Alternatively, they could both be seated in the front row with their new partners, but with other family members between them. At the reception, seat them on different tables with people they like and know.

ISSUE: PAYING FOR THE WEDDING

This can be touchy. There have been cases where both parents want to help pay for the wedding, but are arguing over who is paying for what because they don't want to pay for things that will be enjoyed by their ex and ex's family. Diffuse this problem by suggesting the divorced parents pay for personal things like flowers, dress, transport, hair and make-up. The newlyweds can pay for expenses that cover the items enjoyed by everyone at the wedding, like the venue, caterer, drinks.

Another way of handling this is to pay for the wedding yourself, and parents could contribute a cash gift.

ISSUE: YOU ARE CLOSER TO YOUR STEP-PARENT THAN YOUR OWN PARENT

If your step-parent helped raise you, they should be given a prominent but neutral role, like helping to plan and organise. If it suits the relationships, the father and step-father could walk the bride down the aisle together. If you can only choose one man to walk you down the aisle, choose the one you feel closest to.

ETIQUETTE

ISSUE: THE RECEIVING LINE FOR DIVORCED PARENTS

ETIQUETTE STATES THAT THE MOST TRADITIONAL AND FORMAL RECEIVING LINE IS:

mother of the bride
 mother of the groom
 bride
 groom
 maid of honour
 bridesmaids

In this case, the groom will be the only male in the line.

IF HOWEVER, YOU'D LIKE TO INCLUDE BOTH OF YOUR PARENTS, AND THEY ARE DIVORCED, THE ORDER WILL BE AS FOLLOWS:

mother of the bride
 father of the groom
 bride
 groom
 mother of the groom
 father of the bride

IF THE BRIDE IS CLOSE TO HER STEP-PARENTS AND WOULD LIKE THEM TO BE INCLUDED, THE ORDER WILL BE:

mother of the bride
 step-father of the bride
 mother of the groom
 father of the groom
 bride
 groom
 father of the bride
 step-mother of the bride

IF THE GROOM IS CLOSE TO HIS STEP-PARENTS AND WOULD LIKE THEM TO BE INCLUDED, THE ORDER WILL BE:

mother of the bride
 father of the bride
 mother of the groom
 step-father of the groom
 bride
 groom
 father of the groom
 step-mother of the groom

If the divorced parents don't get along at all, seat all parents and partners and only announce the bridal party.

ISSUE: THE BRIDE'S FIRST DANCE IF THERE'S A STEP-FATHER

Avoid announcing the father and daughter dance. Make sure you have a twirl around the floor with both fathers at least once during the reception.