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Richmond Times-Dispatch (VA)

Time to Organize

Lindsey Romain | CTW Features
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The big day may be over, but there's still all that stuff! Programs, favors, gifts, cards, the dress - while your wedding day was wonderful, you don't want to relive it via all the extra items in your home. In lieu of getting buried in leftover wedding stuff, learn to cut ties with frivolous items from the onset.

"The key is to only keep things that will be important and memorable after the wedding," said Amy Trager, a certified professional organizer based in Chicago. "If someone gave a card at the wedding or reception that only had a signature on it, there's really nothing terribly special about it."

Here are some of Trager's tips for keeping on top of post-wedding organization:

Question Yourself

Trager suggested asking yourself a few important questions before starting the organization process: Is this something I will use again? Is this something that I love? Is this something that enhances my life or makes me happy?

"Remember that you can donate items to those less fortunate," she said. For unwanted clothing items and accessories, like dresses or purses, she suggested sites like Donate My Dress or NewlyMaid, which lets you donate a used bridesmaid dress to obtain special pricing on a new "little black dress."

Store Properly

If the dress stays in the picture, be sure it's stored in acid free paper before going into a box. "Most reputable dry cleaners that offer bridal gown services will place the dress in this already," said Trager. She also said to make sure the dress is cased in plastic or a garbage bag.

Be Careful with Paper

The temptation to keep extra decorations might be present, but Trager suggested only keeping the things that will be used for sure and that are meaningful something to the couple. These items can go into a memory bin or be preserved in a photo album or scrapbook. The only papers from wedding preparation that should be kept are ones that will be referenced later, like a guest list, which can serve as a checklist for thank-you letters.

Use Your Gifts ... Now!

Wedding gifts don't have to pile on even more stress if they're dealt with right away. For excess items that need to be returned, Trager suggested getting it all done at once.

"Depending on your schedule, it might be easier to tackle one store a day, or get it all done in one longer day," she said. "Better to get unwanted items out of the house as soon as you're able."

If the gifts can't be returned, Trager said to donate them or pass them along to a friend or family member as a gift.

Keep Good Company

"I would suggest the bride recruit some help in these tasks - especially the groom," said Trager, who also suggests asking the wedding party and family members to help with collecting memories, returning new items and purging old ones. "Sometimes company makes the whole process a lot more enjoyable!"

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