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## Make a stress-free wedding happen!

For many brides, the quest to plan the perfect day can quickly turn into a nightmare trip down the aisle. Here are a few tips to keep your wedding day bliss from turning into the honeymoon blues.

- *Marriage Planning 101*: Once the ring goes on, the race to plan the perfect wedding begins, giving couples little time to think about the marriage itself or how their wedding spending decisions could affect their future. But smart couples are now setting aside time to address pre-wedding issues such as what they will do when it comes to financial planning, spending money, raising children and family politics.

- *Managing wedding expectations*: For many brides, planning the perfect wedding is a major life event decades in the making. With this in mind, it's easy to see how wedding expectations can get out of hand in a hurry. With wedding euphoria taking over, busy brides and grooms can quickly lose sight of spending, causing the perfect wedding to turn into fights over money. By managing expectations of what a "dream" wedding should be, it is still possible to have a lovely and elegant wedding without breaking the bank.

- *Bridezilla-free zone*: The term "Bridezilla" has been used to describe a difficult, unpleasant, perfectionist bride whose obsession with planning the perfect

wedding day leaves frustrated family, friends, bridal vendors and even her groom distraught in her wake. Horror stories of fist fights, hair pulling, kicking and screaming from out of control brides-to-be have put wedding planners, vendors and bridesmaids on the offensive. Some wedding vendors now go as far as to include language in their contracts reserving the right to cancel if the bride's behavior is determined to be "out of control or abusive." So, whether you hit the gym or hit the spa, have a plan in place to handle wedding-related stress and keep Bridezilla at bay.

- *Just say "no"*: Brides place such demands on their bridesmaids these days that it is not uncommon for them to decline, even when it's one of their best friends. Not only is the financial responsibility of being a bridesmaid staggering, but the time commitment demanded by some brides is also daunting. The massive to-do lists handed out by brides, coupled with the obligatory appearances for shopping, parties and showers, can leave bridesmaids feeling underappreciated, overworked and broke after the wedding is over.

Brides should be upfront about both time and financial expectations with their friends when asking them to join their wedding party and understand if the answer is no.

— NewsUSA



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## New teen program promotes building healthy relationships as foundation for a happy marriage

By SUZANNE KURTZ  
JTA news service

Carl Levy remembers the day he met Randy, his wife of 39 years. It was Oct. 15, 1965 and they were teenagers attending a United Synagogue Youth convention in New Jersey.

"I remember sitting at the table for dinner. Randy was a little late that night," Levy says, adding that "I remember her sitting down at the table. I remember being interested."

Says his wife: "I remember what I wore."

Five years later they married, and Levy says with a chuckle, "It's all because of USY."

The Levys and 50 other couples shared their romantic journey on a recent video for USY titled *Summer Lovin'*. The couples had one thing in common: Each relationship blossomed due to some involvement with the Conservative youth

movement.

As the video concludes, a smiling newlywed and expectant father advises, "So look to your left, look to your right; that might be your future wife or husband."

While the Jewish community places an emphasis on the importance of Jews meeting and marrying other Jews, it rarely looks at the nature of these relationships, says Deborah Rosenbloom, director of programs at Jewish Women International.

"We talk about the end goal of marrying a Jew, but we don't talk about what [makes] a good relationship," Rosenbloom says.

Recognizing the need to have this discussion, JWI teamed with USY nearly two years ago to develop a comprehensive guide to help educate Jewish teenagers on the importance of developing healthy relationships.

The result of the collaboration is a nearly 200-page source book titled *Love Your Neighbor, Love Yourself*, which debuted with the *Summer Lovin'* video before 1,000 teens in December at USY's four-day annual convention in Chicago.

"This was my fourth [USY] convention," says Josh Block, 17, of Massachusetts. "And I was the most impressed with the topics in this book."

Divided into four major sections in 13 chapters, the book addresses some weighty issues affecting healthy relationships, and provides useful tactics for relationship decision making. Problems such as abuse and aggression in relationships are discussed at length, and modern dilemmas of self-image, sexuality and the power of language also are explored.

Woven throughout the book are quotations, parables and insights from contemporary Jewish writings such as Rabbi Elliot Dorff's "This Is My Beloved, This Is My Friend: A Rabbinic Letter on Intimate Relations," and ancient sources like the Talmud and Torah with real-time scenarios, pop-culture references and thought-provoking exercises.

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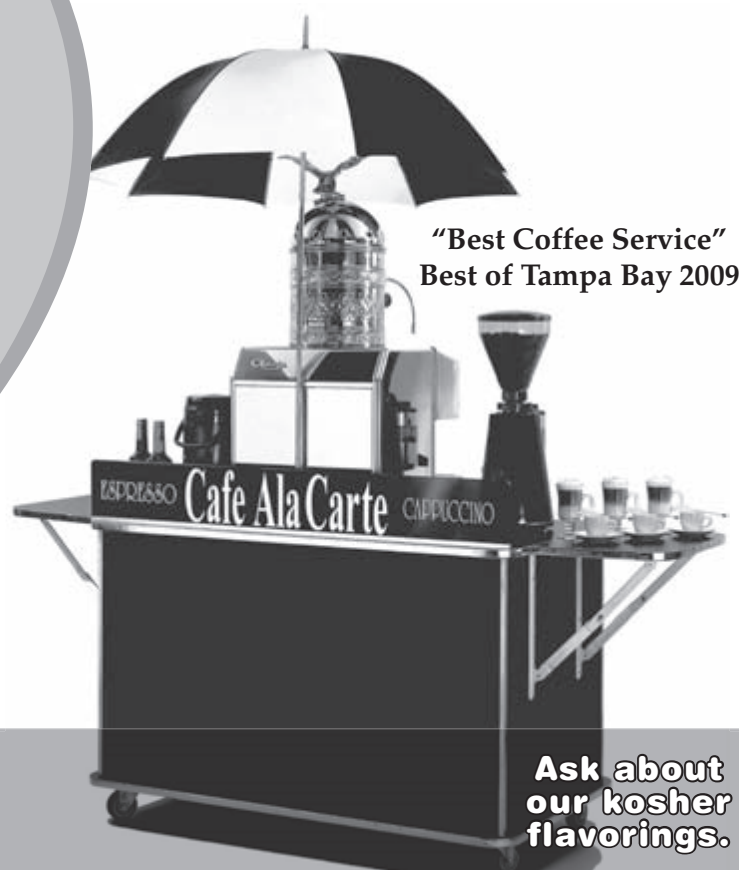
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