



Article:
What Is Going On With
My Bride?

When it comes to transitions, there is usually one partner who experiences the change more directly and struggles more deeply with the emotional components. In my experience, this person is usually the one who is more in touch with the cyclical nature of life, and around a wedding, this person is usually the woman. While there are plenty of men who feel the death and rebirth nature of this transition, as well as couples who seem to carry the burden equally, it is much more common in our culture that the woman is going through an emotional earthquake while the poor groom is looking on thinking, "What is going on with my bride?" If this is your situation, read on. The more you both understand what your partner is feeling, the more you can move gracefully through this transition and experience the wedding and first year of marriage with the joy that you both deserve.

Couples often become polarized around a wedding simply because they don't understand the emotional undercurrents that play such a significant role during this time. You may be thrilled to be getting married and feeling bolstered and proud about the experience, but when you check in with your fiancé, you see that she's depressed, crying, and irritable. Unless you understand that she's in the midst of a dying process, where she's letting go of her identity as a single woman and confronting her fears about this unknown commitment of marriage, it's highly likely that you will take her moods personally. This doesn't serve either of you. It makes your fiancé feel badly and it exacerbates her already-present guilt that she should be joyous and

excited about her wedding. But if you keep in mind these wise words of Robert Johnson, author of *She*, you may be able to hold a more compassionate space which will allow your bride to move through the difficult emotions more easily:

*When a man sees an anguished look on his partner's face, this is the time to be gentle and cautious; it may be that she is just waking up to the fact that she is dying a little as a maiden.**

Now, this may be easier said than done. When you see your bride's anguish, this can tap into one of your more primal fears: disappointing her. Here you are, on the way to one of the most cherished events of your lives, and she seems absolutely miserable. Without a broader context of what's going on with her it would be very difficult not to take her moods personally. But if there is one line you absorb from this article, it's this: **Your partner's pain and fear is not a personal rejection of you!** As I tell my bride clients, she would be feeling these feelings no matter who or when or how she gets married. They are simply part of this, and all, transitions. She cannot let go of the old life and identity and step into the new phase without feeling sad and scared. If you crowd her with a constant barrage of questions during your engagement like, "Do you still love me? Do you still want to marry me?", or after the wedding with, "Do you regret marrying me?", I guarantee she will feel overwhelmed and recoil, which will only

widen the chasm between the two of you and slow down her transition process. [see Interview: Michael]

What to Do

One of the truths we know about men is that it's very difficult for them to see what they deem as a problem without wanting to fix it. Without going into our genetic coding and social conditioning, suffice it to say that this desire runs deep and it's difficult to break. But I urge you to hold back when you see that your bride is in pain or fear and do two simple things: First, remind yourself that she's not rejecting you, then remind her that it's okay that she's feeling this way and that you understand that she's going through the normal emotions of a transition. You can gently encourage her to read some of the articles in the eCourse, but ultimately your job is to remind yourself that she loves you, that her difficult feelings are because of this transition and not because she doesn't want to marry you, and that, with the right information and support, she will come out of it and experience the joy and excitement that you're feeling. Your partner will appreciate your understanding and compassion more than you realize. And practicing the skill of allowing your partner to just *be* without jumping in to offer solutions and fix will serve you very well for the rest of your marriage.

** Feel free to replace the word maiden with single person. Johnson uses the word in the archetypal sense, but many people have a problem with the word as it may connote more of a fairy-tale girl than the flesh-and-blood woman you are marrying.*