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He Asked You to Sign a Pre-Nup ... Now What?

ETIQUETTE, PLANNING TIPS

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Photo: Getty Images

Prenuptial agreement: The words can strike fear, hurt and anger in the strongest and smartest of women. And yet, "you're getting married, and that's the most acceptable and responsible reason to ask for a pre-nup," says relationship expert April Masini. "Having a mutual prenuptial agreement is smart and responsible."

So if your significant other takes you by surprise and asks for one, take a deep breath and follow these steps:

1. Take the time to find out where in the process your fiancé is currently.

"If you're not sure, ask," Masini says. "Where in the process are you?" is a perfect opening line. Has he seen a lawyer? Had one drawn up?" Make sure you have these answers before you move on.

2. Next, do not sign anything on the spot.

"If he's gone to the trouble of having a legal document drafted, you should be as respectful to the process as he was, and take time to consider what he's proposed in the document," says Masini. "A draft of a prenuptial agreement is a starting point, not a finishing point."

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3. Bring the document to your own attorney for review, and to suggest changes.

"While it's cheaper to use the same attorney he did, it's also a conflict of interest," Masini explains. "This is a document that if enforced, will find the two of you on opposite sides of a division of property, and for that reason, it's wise and fair to use two different attorneys. If he balks at that, consider what's really going on."

While Masini feels most, if not all couples, benefit from having a pre-nup, she does believe there are unacceptable ways to ask for one. "Bringing it up at the last minute is disrespectful and even sneaky," she says. But couples can find themselves in that situation because they fear the other won't sign the agreement. "Address the issue long before the wedding invitations are printed. If a prenuptial agreement is a deal breaker, learn that early. Not later."

KEYWORDS:

Married Life

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