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Awkward! What to Do When a Couple In Your Wedding Party Breaks Up

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Photo: Getty Images

Whether they fell head-over-heels long before you announced your engagement or hooked up at your engagement party, coupling up in a wedding party is common. Unfortunately, so is calling it quits in the 12 or more months it takes to plan a wedding.

"When a bridesmaid or groomsman or a parent of the bride or groom breaks up with their significant other before the wedding but during the festivities, there's going to be a pall over the event," warns April Masini, relationship expert and advice columnist. A "bridal party member going through a break up may not show up for you — literally," she says, while "you may hold back your own feelings of joy because you're focused on the feelings of your heartbroken wedding party member."

But before you break down over their break up, realize "things happen," Masini says simply. "And sometimes, it's better to be flexible than rigid about what you want." Don't be quick to rush to any decisions. Instead, "broach it with your bridal party members, and reconvene a week or two later with a decision."

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You have a lot of options. For example, "if it's a big wedding with a big wedding party, consider diminishing their roles in the bridal party and assigning the toast to your father, not the best man going through a break up," Masini suggests. "Or ask your aunt to take over the bridal shower duties so your bridesmaid who's breaking up isn't under the pressure of hosting. And if it's a very small wedding, consider restructuring the wedding party altogether. You don't need bridesmaids and groomsmen if you have kids or pets who want to walk down the aisle with your parents. Be creative, and think outside the box to find solutions that put the least stress on all of you."

It's also smart to "try to keep the two people apart by strategizing your events in ways that they meet minimally," says Masini. Think: "The co-ed bridal shower may be better as a traditional all-female shower with a guy's night out as well. Or, dilute their interactions by inviting more people to your wedding-related events. If there's less chance of the broken-up couple being seated together or having to talk to each other because there are so many people at an event, you'll have a more peaceful time of it."

If the exes can't keep it PG in your wedding party, "consider talking to them separately and explaining that it's really important to you to have a certain tone at your wedding, and then ask if there is anything you can do to help them be OK with that peaceful tone," Masini says. "Knowing your feelings, and knowing you want to help, may be all they need to put their company manners on."