

LAUGHTER AT THE ALTAR

A guide to creating
meaningful moments
and magic at the
wedding altar.



LaToya Papillion-Herr

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For my family and communities.

Every ceremony I perform brings me back to the infinite love and support I receive from my wife, Naomi Herr.

It is important to me, that I pour into the world – exactly what I want my family to inherit; joy, support, love, and an unwavering reminder that they are deserving of grand celebrations!

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Preface

When I decided to begin performing wedding ceremonies, in 2015, I had never been to a wedding besides my own. I had, of course, seen many weddings on TV, plenty of videos shared online, and even heard first-hand experiences about weddings. When it came to wedding ceremonies, I really didn't know exactly how magical they could be.

My own wedding, in 2013, was a sweet elopement ceremony in the mountains. Together with about 15 of our close friends, and their plus one, we celebrated all weekend. Since I had never been to a wedding, nor considered what mine would look like, I trusted the input of my friends and family.

Other than my dress (which was custom-designed for me), they pretty much decided the full ceremony experience. As we prepared, different people kept adding in different parts and we went with it. My mother decided that I needed a wedding party, my father decided that I had to be walked down the aisle, a friend decided that we had to light a candle, and the officiant decided exactly what would be said (with no input from us). As well-meaning as each gesture may have been, it wasn't a vision drawn for me nor a reflection of me and my wife's relationship. Our ceremony was a culmination of well-intended, but disconnected, ideas from people that love us.

At the time, I had never really imagined my wedding day and it didn't feel like there was anything I could have added to the overall experience. But, as I stood at the altar with my wife and watched our officiant flip through page after page of a ceremony I had no connection with - I knew I should have had more direct input.

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During our ceremony, we had a friend read a poem that was special to us. Then after the ceremony, I performed a lip-sync routine and danced with my wife down the aisle. Celebrating our union with people that genuinely love us was an experience I could never replace.

Even with all of the love surrounding us, I spent my wedding ceremony waiting for it to be over; so that I could finally celebrate with my new wife. We are grateful that everyone present made us feel supported, loved, and completely encouraged. For many LGBTQ+ couples, that is not always the case. We were blessed and extremely fortunate.

When the Supreme Court declared LGBTQ+ marriages legal, in 2015, for all states - I knew that I'd join the wedding industry. With the memories of my own wedding day, I was dedicated to creating a deeply meaningful and spiritual experience at the altar for others.

When I decided to become an Ordained Minister, I was an entrepreneur running a metaphysical shop and serving clients as a full-time spiritual advisor and diviner. My

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spiritual practice had grown over the years and standing with couples at the wedding altar felt like a natural progression.

My spiritual practice had given me grace and experience that allowed me to meet my couples where they were; regardless of their religious beliefs, gender identity, nationality, family makeup, etc. Truly honoring their manifestation of love was important to me. What I had learned over the years is that no matter what life experience the ritual was honoring - it needed to be intentional, unique, human-centered, and authentic. Rituals are powerful and should be honored as such.

Since my first wedding on November 13, 2015, I have navigated many learning curves. Serving hundreds of couples has come with lessons on public speaking, connecting with people at the moment, navigating the particulars of a wedding, the relationship at the altar, and so much more. Yes, I am serving couples as a wedding professional but I am also serving them spiritually, whether there is prayer or not.

Every couple that I have worked with has been different, as every human comes with varied experiences. But through it all, I meet my couples where they are and provide the experience they most desire. This book is full of writing samples for couples that want to have a genuinely magical and connected ceremony. But this book is also a reminder to honor the beauty in your wedding ritual.

It is my hope that each section of this book is not just informative, but engaging, inspirational, and insightful. Writing these ceremonies is rooted in a balance between my spiritual work and my experience with my couples. While you read, take the time to envision how you want your ceremony to feel.

Each section will guide you through the various aspects of a wedding ceremony. This outline is not set in stone and you are encouraged to explore what parts truly connect with you. Use it as a tool to write a ceremony that you and your partner will always cherish. You deserve a grand celebration, full of intentional moments.

About the Author



LaToya is a Professional Wedding Officiant, Pre-Marital Coach, Spiritual Advisor, and entrepreneur. She works with people that want to share their authentic stories and have them told with reverence and genuine excitement. Whether she is serving at the wedding altar, in the spiritual wellness community, or by working with other event professionals, she believes that our stories hold the key to our excellence and our ability to create magic in each moment.

Her deep love for connecting at the heart - serves as a powerful foundation for how she shows up at the wedding altar and in business. *Laughter at the Altar* is her debut as an author and a resource for all couples.



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