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GOING SOLO?

HOW TO ATTEND A WEDDING SOLO—AND SURVIVE

It's not easy being single when it seems like everyone else around you is tying the knot, but you've got to admit it stings just a little when you can't even check off the +1 box on all those invitations. Though it might seem like weddings are number one on the list of terrible things you must suffer through as a single, they can actually be fun and good for you! Here's why you should hit all the nuptial festivities you can.

1. Remember, it's not about you, Single Sarah.

Weddings are about the vows of undying love and devotion of the important people in your life, so instead of showing up with a poor-me attitude, why not focus on the joy of the occasion? There's nothing wrong with simply sitting back and admiring the leap of faith two people are taking in making a public gesture of their commitment to each other. Even if you're feeling resentful about a recent breakup or a string of bad dating luck, don't take the opportunity to engage in that particularly caustic brand of cynicism that only a woman scorned can spew. Refrain from bad-mouthing the whole concept of weddings as overrated displays of egotism or from spouting statistics about divorce and extra-marital affairs. No matter how you're feeling on the inside, it's time to put on your best smiley face for the outside world.

2. Don't project.

Every woman has felt the single wedding jitters. The symptoms start with feelings of self-pity and loneliness, and reach a fevered peak the day of the wedding when you begin imagining that you're wearing a giant "sad single" sign on your forehead. But before you start introducing yourself as the forever spinster or telling the other couples at your table that you're considering the nunnery or sperm bank as your future options, it's time to stop your whining and ditch the paranoia. If you're worried about other guests gawking at your conspicuous singledom, fear not. It might be hard to believe at a couple-centric event, but just because it seems like everyone else there is spoken for, it doesn't necessarily mean they're any happier than you. The couple seated next to you might just have had an argument about washing the dishes while the woman across from you might suspect her husband of having an affair. Don't project your feelings on others, and remember that you might not be the only one not head over heels in love. So, buck up and remind yourself that your stag attendance is not making the twitter update of the day.

3. Invest in a killer dress.

So what if you don't have a significant other on hand to smother you with compliments? Get your hair blown out, strap on those heels, and wear that dress into the reception like you own it. Rather than let it wear on your self-esteem, taking control of your single status will boost your confidence and get you noticed. I'm not talking about getting all gussied up in

the hopes that you'll meet the future Mr. over the salad bar. But, what your mother told you is true—no one will love you until you love yourself, honey. So, shoulders back and no slouching! Self-respect attracts others, and though you may not find a ton of single eligibles at the reception, you might meet someone who can introduce you to some after the fact.

4. Focus on the perks.

Attending a wedding on your own does have its advantages. You can wear what you like, leave when you like, and even splurge on a new pair of stilettos that perfectly match your favourite party dress. You don't have to worry about finding a date or having your mom offer to call up your cousin as a last-ditch resort. The best part is that you don't have to spend the evening feeling like you're babysitting your date. There's no worrying that he's not having fun or that you have to keep him from yawning all night. And there's no awkward dance-floor moments if the date turns out to be a total dud.

5. Don't fall prey to the spell of happily ever after.

Rather than body-check all the other single women to get to the bouquet, it's important to disengage from the significance marriage holds for many single people. If you're seated at the singles table, you might think you've lucked out and hit the man jackpot. The good news is you won't feel as isolated and alone. The bad news is, you might start envisioning one of the fellows through wedding rose-coloured glasses. It's not unheard of for a lonely single woman to end up spending the night with someone she met at a wedding, but take care not to do something you'll end up regretting the next morning. If you're already vulnerable, a hangover and an awkward morning-after with a one night stand will not leave you feeling empowered nor will it portend your own future marital bliss.

6. It's a wedding, not a funeral.

Congrats for conquering your own cold single feet and getting yourself to the wedding. It's time to enjoy the party with a little eat, drink, and make merry! Smile, mingle, and celebrate the ceremony. One caveat: don't go overboard at the open bar—there's nothing sadder than a lone, drunk gal on the loose during a reception. You don't want to end up bawling in front of a bunch of strangers about how it'll never happen for you.

With these tips in mind, enjoy the wedding and help a new couple start their marriage off right with support and joy!