

Focusing on son's happiness instead of marital minutia

By Sherri Gardner Howell

When you have children, there are times when you nurture, times when you lead, times when you compel and times when you just hang on for the ride.

My younger son, Brett, is engaged to his best friend, Olivia, and they are planning their wedding.

Guess which time it is in my life?

In every way, this is a dream-come-true for my husband and me, as well as for the happy couple. We have known Olivia since she was 12 years old, when she and Brett first met and began to develop a true soul-to-soul friendship. I never doubted that Olivia would always be part of our lives. To now have her as a daughter is simply the best.

In addition, we have known and loved her son, Cohen, since we first held him as a one-month-old baby. If I could have molded my first grandchild out of clay, I couldn't have done any better than Cohen.

So this is a happy, happy time in our lives. Now all that has to happen is a wedding... a Brett and Olivia wedding.

There was much laughter in heaven last weekend as the newly-engaged couple came to town for their engagement party and for our first official look at the wedding plans. Why? Because my mother had to be falling-off-her-cloud laughing as her former "hippie" daughter – now turned traditionalist – heard her free-spirit son and his bride-to-be outline the plans for their perfect wedding. She had to be remembering our own pre-wedding conversations and the differences in what the two of us saw as the perfect day.

My mother and I compromised a lot in planning mine and Neville's wedding – mainly because I was 23, she was paying for it, and I was not unaware of the difference in getting married in my small, close-knit hometown and getting married in a larger city. I wanted my wedding to be remarkable for the right reasons, not because the bridesmaids wore tie-dye.

In the end, it was a dream day for her, as well as for my new husband and me. I think her only disappointment was not seeing her daughter in a Cinderella-style wedding dress. I was totally in love with a fabric called qiana – think 1970s faux-silk disco shirts – and wanted a simple qiana gown with minimum lace. She won on the veil, and I have always been glad I didn't go with the ring of daisies in my hair – and with the tie-dyed bridesmaid dresses!

In addition to enjoying what she would surely call “payback,” my mom would also be getting a kick out of my efforts to just shut-up. While I can be rational, collected and sometimes even patient in my response to things that happen in my professional and social life, I always fight a quick-trigger response when it comes to my sons. Anything that affects them causes an immediate rise in anxiety and worry. Before I know it, I've blown up over something that would have blown over or looked different in the morning.

So I am following the parenting page that says to hang-on and enjoy the ride. Truthfully, when I actually stop looking at the minutia and focus on the reason for all the planning, all I feel is joyful happiness. My baby boy is marrying his best friend – the girl not only of his dreams, but of ours, too.