

# Bride Again®

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## The Power Of Rituals

Typically, weddings are steeped in symbol and tradition. Everything — from the matching bridesmaids' dresses to the giving and receiving of rings — has a specific meaning so familiar that it needs little explanation.

When brides marry for a second or third time, however, they begin to look at these traditions in a new light. When Jerri Ledford of Tennessee got remarried eight years ago, she and her husband chose a simple ceremony with the justice of the peace rather than redoing the "big bash" wedding and reception. "It wasn't the event that mattered as much as the fact that we loved each other, and we knew that our souls matched," says Ledford.

Many couples, like the Ledfords, are foregoing "old-fashioned" weddings that may seem outdated or inappropriate for older or previously married couples. Others, though, are creating their own traditions. Through the power of ritual, they're not only enhancing their wedding day but bonding as a family and bringing more meaning to their everyday lives. "The more you incorporate ritual into your life, the more every moment will become sacred and

special," says Barbara Bizou, author of *The Joy of Ritual* and *The Joy of Family Ritual*.

### What is a Ritual?

"A ritual is a small, symbolic act that represents a larger act," says Bizou. Contrary to popular belief, rituals don't have to be huge productions. In fact, Bizou says, quoting Thomas Moore, "A ritual is anything that speaks to the soul." Something as mundane as your daily cup of coffee can

become a ritual if you make your intention clear and focus on relaxing or preparing for your day. "Intention is the number one thing in ritual," she says.

Rituals work because they are a way of "training" your brain. When you take part in a ritual — however small — your brain cannot tell the difference between the ritual and the actual event. It's similar to how an athlete visualizes a successful race or game, and his or her brain experiences both the visualization and the "real" thing identically. "If you do a ritual to release any ill effects or negative elements from an old relationship, your psyche

reads it as being over; it's complete. You have room for something new," says Bizou.

### Clearing Out the Past

Because of their flexibility, rituals can add extra layers of meaning to just about any situation or life experience. Especially appropriate for women and men remarrying, though, are their abilities to clear the past to make way for a new relationship and to help them commit to the new family they're forming.

In most cultures around the world, a part of the marriage preparation is purification. "The bride and groom go through anything from a few hours to weeks of purifying before the actual ceremony," Bizou says. The intent is "to really acknowledge your past relationships and to do a ritual where you're releasing them." Bizou, an interfaith minister, includes a ritual in the actual wedding ceremony to clear the past, but it can just as easily be performed prior to the wedding day, at the wedding shower, or even in solitude.

Just as you might make space in your closet for you new husband to place his clothes, you need to clear out your heart, mind and emotions. "You spend some time honoring your past relationships, looking at the lessons learned, and deciding