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Mini-Monies Are A COVID-19 Trend We Actually Love

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For a while there, it seemed like we were heading back to normal...or a new version of normal. As vaccines became more readily available and warm weather swept in, COVID numbers began to decrease. Mask mandates disappeared along with government-imposed limits on the number of people allowed to congregate indoors.

For many folks that meant—wedding season was back. Those big indoor weddings that had been postponed at the start of 2020 could return in all their glory. Bring on the dance floors and drunken speeches.

Courtesy of Cactus Collective Weddings

Or...not. With hospitals filling up again thanks to Delta, mask mandates returning at the CDC's urging, and possible reports of COVID transmission among vaccinated wedding guests, many are once again looking at their wedding and wondering—now what?

Cue the mini-mony.

Scary Mommy spoke with McKenzi Taylor, owner of Cactus Collective Weddings, which plans fairytale weddings in spectacular remote natural settings, about the latest trend in wedding planning.

Mini-Monies Are Trending

Courtesy of Cactus Collective Weddings

The first thing to know is that mini-monies, also known as micro-weddings and elopements, are not new. Taylor's company has been offering scenic micro-weddings and elopements (as in weddings with less than twenty guests that are planned within six months) since before the pandemic. Even before the pandemic, Taylor noticed a trend where people were moving away from large events meant to please family and parents and shifting toward unique small group experiences. COVID has accelerated that trend and brought it more mainstream.

"Between COVID's effect on the economy to the waxing and waning of this pandemic and its consequences, so many couples are opting for simplicity, miniceremonies, and beautiful outdoor locations to say 'I Do'," Taylor says.

Courtesy of Cactus Collective Weddings

According to Taylor, a mini-mony is anything under fifty people, but it doesn't skimp on the luxury details that matter to the couple. It's really about what you want with a smaller guest list. "You can still wear the beautiful white dress, if that's what you want, have a photographer for a full day, still have luxury details, a bridal party, if you want, video —it's really just less people."

Courtesy of Cactus Collective Weddings

Planning A Wedding When Planning Is Impossible

COVID is evolving, as is how we need to respond to it. We don't know what variants will emerge that will throw us back into chaos or what treatments will come down the pipeline that might make all of this feel like a distant nightmare. The only thing we know for sure is that we need to be prepared for anything—eighteen months of pandemic living has taught us that.

When the pandemic first forced couples to postpone their weddings, people were "disgruntled, frustrated, and pissed off about changes in their plans," Taylor notes. Now, she's noticed more resilience in her clients. Wedding-planning couples are more ready to adapt, to accept that they may need to rework their plans.

Courtesy of Cactus Collective Weddings

But that doesn't mean couples who dreamed of a big wedding need to alter their plans permanently. Taylor's advice to those couples is to "consider what you really, truly in your heart want to do. If it means a lot to have 200 people at the ceremony, then don't feel pressure to just get married now."

For couples who want to get married and start their life as a married couple sooner rather than later, she urges them to consider getting married in a small setting, with a small guest count sooner, and then plan the big party later. "You can do both," she says, "it doesn't have to be one or the other."

In fact, Taylor says many of her clients are already married—they're just having their party.

Courtesy of Cactus Collective Weddings

Tips For The Ideal Outdoor Wedding

If you do choose an outdoor wedding, Taylor offered the following advice:

> Choose moderate weather—early autumn or spring are good choices.
>
> Consider the outdoor location of your dreams, whether that's ocean, farm, mountains, canyon, lake and go for it. Her company has a special focus on acquiring permits to allow couples to marry in picturesque locations, like Red Rock Canyon. The tradeoff for those locations is guest count. Usually the permit allows up to fifteen people.
>
> You can keep tradition, if you want. Couples can still take the reveal photographs, still participate in the something old-new-borrowed-blue, tradition, walk down the aisle, splurge on dresses, enjoy the champagne toasts and music
>
> Be proud of the fact that your wedding is eco-friendly.
>
> Take as many pictures and videos as you want.
>
> Enjoy the peace of knowing you are doing all you can to keep yourself, your guests, and your community safe. With a small, outdoor wedding, chances are, your wedding will not end up a "superspreader" event that dominates the news cycle.

Courtesy of Cactus Collective Weddings

Infectious disease specialist Kristin Englund, MD also offered advice on how to celebrate safely:

- Utilize electronic communications. This way if there's a change in mask mandates or other policies, you have an easy way to communicate with your guests.
- Be upfront about your expectations—Make sure your guests know what you expect ahead of time in terms of masking, vaccination, or testing.
- Consider space—Even outdoors, give guests the space to social distance and not feel cramped.

COVID certainly pushed mini-monies and micro-weddings into the mainstream, but it's important to remember that mini-monies are not a consolation prize. Many of Taylor's pandemic clients did come to her because their initial plans for a big indoor wedding were canceled. Ultimately, she recounts that they were thrilled and found the experience to be better than they envisioned—not only stress-free, but beautiful.

She says, "Sometimes people think [it] will be lackluster event, but by and large people have been super happy about that decision."