

Relationships and the Seven-Year Itch by Amy Soriano
Humanities Agora 2019 Popular Article: Second Place

Although I was not the typical 20-year old “bride” who thought it was time to get hitched, I thought I was entering into a lifelong romantic journey with the love of my life. I thought I knew all about a long term relationship, after all I had found my knight in shining armor who had vowed to be mine forever. Ha! Was I wrong!

Now that I am slightly older –okay, quite a bit older—I learned the hard way. And boy, did I learn. I had thought I was totally absorbed in my lover and one day along came this wild, bearded fellow who swept me away. Now, you may be wondering, were these two different people? No, he was just one person, but he had changed, or so I thought he did. I later came to realize that I was not seeing him for who he truly was. I was blinded by my idea of how he should be, and this idea of how love was supposed to be played out like in the movies where the boy and girl meet each other by happenstance, they fall in love, get married, have children and everything is just wonderful. Wrong! What the movies fail to tell you is about the often ugly side of relationships, the fighting, arguing, stress and the things that cause disagreements. They also forget to mention that there is a point in a relationship where people are so involved in their routines that they forget the other person has wants and needs. They fail to tell you how to communicate when you reach those points of not being head over heels in love with your partner.

Seven-year itch?

Is it just an itch? Or is it a metaphor to describe the feelings that you get when the “seven-year itch” comes about? I’ll try to explain what it is and how it can be recognized and

dealt with accordingly. The seven-year itch is a point in any relationship when two people have fallen into, or out of, a routine with each other, and the relationship lacks excitement. The relationship may not have that lovely, romantic, butterflies-in-the-stomach type feel anymore, and that's fine. The itch causes you to feel like you are missing something in your life, and you try to find ways to either permanently stop the itch, or relieve it temporarily.

Sometimes people get so caught up in the routine of their everyday lives, their own feelings, wants and needs that they tend to forget about their partner's needs. When people forget certain things about their partner, it may seem like the other person is slipping away, or turning into someone they may not recognize anymore, which means they may see a side of them they may not have noticed prior to this lull in the relationship.

Once a relationship has reached this point it is usually a time of contention. There is a lot of arguing, fighting, and a defensive hostile posturing. Don't worry, this can be worked through, for the most part. As long as both parties are willing to put their differences aside and talk about their problems the couple can start to repair their relationship. Even after 11 years with my partner, there came a time when I took offense to everything he said to me. He would tell me that he thought my decision about going out somewhere was a bad idea, and he would leave it at that. Now, to be clear, I'm a grown woman and can come and go as I please, but this certain place I wanted to go was known to have a bad reputation in a pretty rowdy part of town, and it was almost dark, so his simple remark was "I don't want you going there, it's not a good idea." Well, my younger self would have complained that he was trying to control me, and did not want me to do things that made me happy. Little did I know then that he was, in his own unique way, looking out for my safety. My rebellious independence-loving self wanted to snap, yell and curse

at him for not letting me do what I wanted. Looking back, I realize that was a very childish thought and that is not how an adult should behave.

There isn't a guideline or rule book on how to be an adult, but I'm pretty sure not acting like a child is an implied suggestion when you are trying to make a relationship work.

Can you survive it?

The answer is yes, you can survive it! A lot of people have. I have survived it. The key is mainly recognizing the lack of communication in the relationship, and *both partners* making an effort to reconnect with each other and open up that line of communication.

My partner and I had our seven-year itch early in our relationship. Having worked through it we understood that we had to be completely open and honest with each other if we wanted to make our relationship work, regardless if what we said hurt the other person or not. The second we felt that we had to hide our feelings from each other, then we were not being honest, and if we couldn't be honest then we couldn't effectively work through our problems together.

Since then we say things that upset each other sometimes when we're being open and honest, but we don't get offended by it either, because what we are hearing is how the other person is feeling. We take what we hear, process it, talk about it and eventually we're both happy with the results, but most importantly without compromising who we are as individuals. We still have times when we don't talk as much, or communicate the way we would like to, but he's usually busy working, I have school during the week and I take care of our children too. We both have pretty busy lives, but we still make an effort to make time for each other. One night a week we have a date night so we can have our time together. We hangout, talk, and catch up. There are

times when something comes up and we don't get that time with each other, which is fine, we have to move past it and just look forward to the next time we get our date night.

Can it recur?

The seven-year itch can happen more than once in a relationship. It will be hard the first time, but if you survive it maybe the second time won't happen, or it won't be so bad. Just recognize the signs and make the effort to fix the problems, or if the problems are too great know that it is okay to end the relationship. If you survive it and you end up settling back into a routine just know it is okay too, but try to be aware and include your partner in things that you want to do. Make time for each other. If you have conflicting schedules then you have to make time to communicate with each other so you can sit down and talk and keep your connection strong. You don't have to be with each other all the time *that* can also put a damper on the relationship.

Find your balance. Find out what your partner wants from you and what you want from your partner. Talk about your expectations for each other, but don't give up who you are as a person. Don't lose yourself trying to make someone else happy. Be happy, love yourself, and the rest will fall in line.

Should You Buy the Nintendo Switch? By Nathaniel Evans

Popular Article: Honorable Mention



I have been playing Nintendo consoles since I was 6 years old. I first played games offered by Nintendo Game Boy Advance and, as the years went by, I moved on to the Nintendo Ds then the Nintendo Wii. I own every single console ever made by Nintendo, except the Nintendo Wii-U because it would have been redundant. Having been a huge Nintendo fan my entire life and based on my experience with the consoles, I can attest that the Nintendo Switch is well worth the money and just may be the best console that they have ever produced. If you have not bought a Nintendo Switch yet, allow me to share with you why I did.

The Nintendo Switch is not any run of the mill console. Yes, it outputs video of your games to a television just like any other console, but it has one added benefit, portability. Haven't you ever wanted to just take your PS4 or Xbox One anywhere at any time, but cannot because it must be tethered to a television at all times? Well, the Switch has you backed up since the Switch not only outputs to a television screen, but it is also a tablet that allows you to play video games anywhere and at any time on the built in screen.

Ever notice how creative Nintendo's hardware is compared to the competition? They were one of the first to have an analog stick fully integrated into a console in the 90s on the Nintendo 64, they were the first to fully integrate motion control gaming into a console with the Wii, and in the recent past, they were the first to make a console that is fully portable and still have it pack a graphics punch. All of these firsts make the Nintendo brand stand out and pop beside the others because they can be wacky and zany at times. Without that creative workspace Nintendo has cultivated, the brand would not be worth the price. The newest console from the gaming icon, the Nintendo Switch, is well worth the money and then some.

As of January 2019, in just under two years, the Nintendo Switch has sold 32.27 million units worldwide. Why does that number matter to you? It matters because it speaks of the quality of the product and how well loved it is. The Nintendo Switch has had some of the most creative games this generation of gaming has seen and I do not think that they are going to be slowing down any time soon! The Nintendo Switch is Nintendo's tour de force.

Nintendo has always had amazing games that can be played exclusively on their consoles. Nintendo has taken all of their intellectual properties from over the years and packed this hybrid console to the brim with these games. Mario has seen a revival in the gaming market with the release of Super Mario Odyssey that takes the franchise back to the Super Mario 64 days and hones in on what makes a Mario game good, the fun factor. Zelda has also been completely changed for the Nintendo Switch with the new release entitled The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild. This title took the series out of its stale routine and helped it to flourish again with an open world concept and a brand new weapon system that makes the game feel like an entirely new beast! The final, really big exclusive game that millions were excited about in the Switch

was the release of Pokémon Let's Go Pikachu and Let's Go Eevee. These games took the series in a new direction and introduced new and young fans to the amazing world of Pokémon.

Now to the slight downsides of the Nintendo Switch. The PS4 and Xbox One are more powerful in the graphics department, but like I said earlier they are always tied to a television. The Switch's portability is a gimmick for sure, just like the Wii was with its motion controls. Instead of sitting on the couch all day playing your sports games or shooting games, you can now take the Nintendo Switch on long trips, and even go off into the wilderness with your handy portable console to keep you entertained, if that is what you fancy! The portability makes the console versatile, which is unrivaled by its competitors. Obviously that portability hinders performance compared to the other modern consoles. It can only output 1080p on the television and the resolution in tablet mode can fluctuate but the lack of power in the Switch is not a major hindrance. I mean, who wouldn't want to take their games anywhere at any time?

If you have always loved Mario, Zelda, and Pokémon and are lucky to have \$300 to spend on a brand new console, then the Nintendo Switch is for you. If you don't have \$300, but you are an avid gamer, be sure to save up and you will not regret it!

Is Bethesda Game Studios Game Making Faltering? By Michael Lane

Popular Article: Honorable Mention



Source: <https://www.gamerant.com> (Pete Hines talking to fans at E3 2015)

Bethesda Game Studios. When you hear this name, some people will more than likely remember of one of the following games: The Elder Scrolls Morrowind (TES III); The Elder Scrolls Oblivion (TES IV); Skyrim (TES V), Fallout 3; Fallout: New Vegas; and, Fallout 4. These games are universally praised for their rich story-driven worlds, letting gamers play hundreds of hours of tactical action, dive into intriguing plots, submerge themselves in ambience that is superb, and explore environments that are spectacular.

I first played TES V: Skyrim. My mother bought it for my father for Christmas in 2011, and being curious, I asked my dad if I could play the game, and after he said yes, I popped the disc into my Xbox 360. I was blown away by the content. I was amazed by how big the map was and

where and what I could do. Since then I have been a huge fan of BGS video games. I have played Fallout 1, Fallout 3, and Fallout: New Vegas, Fallout 4, and TES IV: Oblivion, and TES V: Skyrim.

Bethesda Game Studios (BGS) first franchise, The Elder Scrolls, allows you to explore the vast continent of Tamriel, where you can adventure into the wilderness and become whoever you want in this fantasy world. With five games in the series (Arena, Daggerfall, Morrowind, Oblivion, and Skyrim) and TES: Online allows you the player to explore a fantasy world rich with lore and meet very interesting characters along the way, such as Paarthunax or M'aiq the Liar. You can also become anything you want, from a stealthy assassin to a mage who has incredible magical skills.

In 2004, BGS acquired the rights to Fallout from its original developers, Interplay Entertainment. Fallout takes place in an alternate universe where technology did not evolve past the 1950's, and in 2077, a nuclear war breaks out between Communist China and the United States of America, enveloping the whole world in another Great War. Fallout 1, Fallout 2, Fallout 3, Fallout: New Vegas, Fallout 4, and Fallout 76 are set in various wastelands, from the west coast of California to Washington D.C. Again, the option to be who you want to be is yours. You can be a good person and help people survive in the wasteland, or you could be a complete psychopath and kill every single person in these wastelands.

In 2008, BGS released Fallout 3 to the public, receiving multiple awards and fantastic critical reception for its world, which took place in the Capital Wasteland of Washington D.C. Taking place in the year 2277, 36 years after the events of Fallout 2, you play as The Lone Wanderer as you explore the ruins of D.C. to search for your father, who mysteriously left your vault. The atmosphere of Fallout 3 was this lonely world where the soundtrack made you feel alone in this

never-ending wasteland. The character-leveling system is very unique, as it allows you to improve your skills by leveling-up and choosing new perks every time you level up. It is my favorite video game ever made, and I have played it five times. That should tell you how much flexibility or game mechanics is present. Today, the game is considered a classic.

In 2011, BGS released *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*. This is considered by many fans and critics to be the best Elder Scrolls in the franchise. The game was a massive success commercially for BGS, selling over 30 million copies by 2016 and making over \$1 billion dollars. Taking place in the province of Skyrim in the continent of Tamriel, the events in *Skyrim* take place 200 years after the events of the fourth game in the series, *Oblivion*. The player takes control of the Dragonborn, who has the ability to kill dragons and take the dragons' power from them by absorbing their souls. The player can then use these powers to unlock Shouts, which are powerful shouts that the player can use in combat.

In 2015, BGS released *Fallout 4*. Set in 2287, 10 years after the events of *Fallout 3*, you take control of the Sole Survivor, the only survivor of Vault 111, whose cryogenics failed and killed all of the vault residents, except for you the player. The Sole Survivor was alive before the Great War and entered the vault the day the bombs dropped. The game takes place in The Commonwealth, which is post-apocalyptic Boston.



Source: <https://www.windowcentral.com> (Image from Fallout 76 reveal at E3 2018)

BGS is considered by many to be one of the best developers and publishers of video games in the business. So how in the world did BGS manage to make the blunder that is Fallout 76? On May 10th, 2018, Fallout 76 was shown to the world. This was BGS's first attempt at the always online, open-world, massive-multiplayer market. Fallout 76 was released November 14th, 2018. Flash forward to January 2019. The game is not liked by a majority of the fan base, and critical reception is mixed. The game is constantly in a buggy state and has many glitches. Every time the game is updated, it is plagued with more bugs.

Fallout 76, which is a completely different genre, was acclaimed by BGS as being the same as previous Fallout games, with the ability to play solo and still provide much enjoyment. This is somewhat true. If I had anything positive to say about Fallout 76, it would be the soundtrack, which I believe captures the spirit of West Virginia perfectly. Another thing would be the variety

of enemies in the game, and its map, which is very large, being four times bigger than Fallout 4's map, so it allows for hours of exploration. Other than those amazing features, the game is bland.

So how can BGS fix the train wreck that was Fallout 76? Let's just hope that the company has enough skill points in their Repair Skill or the Jury Rigging Perk. If the studio wants to rebuild fans' trust, they should create a new game engine, then shut down the servers for Fallout 76, and assess the current situation. While there are fans who love to play the game, BGS should announce that they plan to completely revamp and reimagine Fallout 76 to be rid of many issues and problems.

BGS should then focus on completely overhauling the game, going from a Massive-Multiplayer Online experience to a single-player experience. You are more than likely saying to yourself "Wouldn't that take time and resources to develop?" and you would be correct. However, if there is a studio that can do it, I am confident Bethesda Game Studios can get the job done. What they could do is allow Bethesda Game Studios Austin in Texas, the studio responsible for the product, to remake the game with supervision from series veterans.

By reimagining the game into a single-player experience, with a good story and interesting side-characters and companions, I am confident BGS can fulfill the promises they originally made. Fallout has been a single-player only game for decades now, and I believe the old adage "If it isn't broke don't fix it" applies here. However, what about Bethesda's other franchises? Last year at E3 2018 (Electronic Entertainment Expo), BGS announced that they were in the process of developing two new games, Starfield and The Elder Scrolls VI.

While another Elder Scrolls game was obvious, Starfield is the unknown. Bethesda has not released a new IP in over 20 years, so fans are ready. Before the release of Fallout 76, fans were

excited for these two new games. After the release of Fallout 76, fans are now cautious, especially with the announcement that, after Fallout 76 was released, Bethesda will continue to use the same engine for both products.

BGS has used the Creation Engine since 2011, and by 2019, it is already outdated. If I could give Bethesda advice on how to avoid another Fallout 76 fiasco, I would suggest repeatedly to make a new engine, not redesign their current one. Bethesda has made a lot of money in the last decade from their multiple games. This has amounted to over \$1 billion dollars. That is surely more than enough money to make multiple games and a completely new engine.



Source: <https://wikipedia.com> (Logo for BGS Creation Engine)

For Bethesda to regain the trust in their fans, it will take a lot of work and sacrifice to develop a new game engine, and re-develop Fallout 76. However, I am confident that Bethesda Game

Studios, a studio who has put so much passion into their past games, can learn from their mistakes and make a new, better experience for all players.

Avoiding the Modern Wedding Drain by Kilie Mullins

Popular Article: First Place

Weddings – They are supposed to be fun events, right?



Weddings celebrate a couple's commitment to each other, in the presence of mostly treasured friends and family members. Perhaps wedding days are the start to a lifetime of happiness. What most couples often forget is the cost of planning and throwing a wedding celebration. The costs of weddings nowadays can often run into the thousands, if not tens of thousands of dollars. From venue costs to catering fees, from flowers to attire for the bridal party, wedding costs can quickly deplete the couple's bank account. No wonder they are winded after the party is over. All of the price tags can scare a couple away from wanting to celebrate their union, let alone appease older family members who always want the large, traditional weddings. So, the question we're must ask is this: What are the ways a modern couple can use to avoid a high cost wedding, but still have that traditional wedding experience?



First, it's important to understand those aspects of a wedding that can quickly get costly. A quick look at a popular wedding help website, WeddingWire, indicates that couples spent an average of \$16,000 on their wedding and served around 110 guests in 2007. Today's average is \$28,000 for 124 guests. Which means that most couples spent even more than that outrageous amount. According to WeddingWire's survey and others, the ten factors that sent the price of weddings through the roof are reception and ceremony venues, the engagement ring, catering, attire, music, photography and videography, flowers, invites, a planner, and the honeymoon. Let's take a look at each of these categories and some methods of getting around the madness of modern wedding planning.

Ceremony and Reception Venues



Not many people want to get married in a shack, or in the preacher's living room--although my mother did this and swears it is the easiest and least expensive way to get married. Thanks to the proliferation of views share via social media, couples today are pressured more than ever to find the most picturesque, outrageous, hip, effortlessly cool venue to host this huge party. Problem arise, though, when they find out these venues rent for around a minimum average of \$15,000. Let's talk about the scenery – old churches, vineyards, gardens, historic estates, and designated wedding sites carry a hefty price tag mainly because they're so beautiful to look at. Couples are paying for that view. Additionally, many wedding venues attach hidden costs to their packages.

They allow couples to bring their own booze? \$15 corking fee per bottle. There are small children in the party? \$100 insurance premium. The view looks great and they have the couple's date free? Get ready to shell out for all the decorations, seating, and tables, because they won't provide any of it for free! Don't despair at these claims; you don't have to pull a Bruno Mars and find a little chapel. There are tons of affordable and free venues if couples look harder.

First, find a place that lets you do the ceremony and reception at the same place. Look for public parks with rentable shelters; local churches that are newer, yet still pleasing to look at; or family members' backyards, if they are disciplined landscapers. All of these options can keep the costs down, and make your wedding affordable.



Rings:



Diamond encrusted engagement rings and solid gold wedding bands aren't affordable options for most couples. The average price of \$5,764 for an engagement ring equals six months of rent for

most people. Add in the high cost of solid gold bands and you're looking at a lot of dough spent on a bit of metal and some shiny rocks. Instead of going the typical retail route, look for online, handmade jewelry. Sites like Etsy and Amazon provide high quality, often handmade items at a fraction of the cost. Ask your partner their preferred style. Go for the non-traditional colored gemstones, silver plating, or carved designs to add low-cost flare to your choices. Bonus: no one has to die in a diamond mine for your jewelry.



Go for a simpler design to save money, like these rings from online store Etsy.

Catering



Both the rehearsal dinner and traditional reception dinner are expected aspects of a wedding celebration. Families, friends, and your social media sites are looking for rich, luxurious meals for both events – but no one has money for that! At an average \$1,285 for the rehearsal dinner and \$70 per guest for the reception, you're looking at the possibility of eating well for one day and nearly starving the next few months. If you have a particular restaurant that you love – yes, we're talking Bojangle's, Little Caesar's, or the Lord's choice – Chick-fil-A – order from them!

The food is delicious and typically reasonably priced for large groups. Serve a variety of hors d'oeuvres! If you've got grannies used to cooking for large families, have a potluck!



Attire



You want to look good for your wedding day – that's a given. No one wants to look like the swamp monster, especially if you're documenting the day with photos. That doesn't mean you need a designer gown or an expensive tux. Look for local bridal salons, or even on Amazon, for beautiful, cheap gowns in thousands of styles. If you're skeptical about online shopping for something so personal, read the reviews! Lots of online retailers for bridal gowns will offer custom measurements, try-on fittings, and rush orders for custom jobs.



Grooms can find affordable options at large chain retailers like Kohl's, Wal-Mart, or even Target. Be open to the idea of mismatched party attire. Stay in the same color family, and let your bridesmaids and groomsmen go wild with the styles. They'll often find clothes that fit their budget, but still work with your ideas.

Music



If someone hasn't said it before now, I will: You don't need a DJ or a band! Find a friend with knowledge of streaming services, a speaker, and run with it. Private bands and DJs can cost upwards of \$6,000, and all they do is often perform the same tasks you can accomplish from your phone or laptop. Music streaming services, such as Pandora or Google Music, will allow you to tune into channels that cater to your musical tastes. Another option is Spotify, a streaming service that allows you to create playlists with thousands of choices to cater to your taste.



Photography



Professional photographers are costly; see if a family member has a high-end camera of their own.

If \$2,700 sounds like a ridiculous amount to pay for a photographer, then be on the lookout for affordable alternatives in the area. Throughout the year, photographers will offer sales, promotions, or giveaways for their services and packages. Keeping an eye on these deals will allow you to get quality services for a fraction of the price.



If all else fails, modern smartphones have stunning cameras built into their hardware.

Do you have a family member with a passion for photography? Do you know someone with a new iPhone or Android? Ask them if they'd be willing to take some photos for you. If you live in a town that houses a college or university offering visual arts degrees, ask if there are any student photographers that can work for class credit. If neither of these options work for you, then be watching for sales or promotions from local photographers.

Flowers and decorations



Try making the decorations yourself, like these rustic DIY examples.

When it comes to decorations, Dollar Tree is your friend! Dollar Trees, and other similar dollar stores, provide DIY decoration supplies you can use as centerpieces, aisle runners, bouquets.

Take an artsy friend along for ideas! Make sure to create a list of all the decorations you want for the ceremony and reception, then take that list with you to make sure you stay on track.

Professional florists and decorators will add on extra taxes just for their services, time and supplies. Get around these costs by making most of the decorations ahead of time, using materials from dollar stores or wholesale suppliers.



Lavish affairs as in this photo are often too pricey for a modern budget.

Invites



If you want to go the traditional route and send out paper invites, there are affordable ways to do so. Online sites like Basic Invite or Vistaprint offer cheap invites with quality designs that you can order from their website. If you want an even less expensive, try Greetings Island online, a site that provides free greeting cards for all occasions, including weddings. Customize their free template online, download the PDF, and then take the file to your local UPS or equivalent print shop. Get all the invites you need printed on sturdy cardstock for less than \$10. Add in bulk envelopes from Wal-Mart and the cost of stamps to get a total cost of around \$30 for all of your

invites. That amount is a far cry from the average \$408 couples spent on invites alone, excluding the price of other stationary.



Wedding planner



The average couple spent \$2,000 on a wedding planner to help them structure out their wedding timeline. I don't think you need me to tell you that this is a superfluous cost that many couples can't afford. An affordable alternative can be found in any of the thousands of planning templates available online for free. These lists are comprehensive and include every possible option for you to customize and reference throughout the course of your wedding planning. If you're more comfortable with digital interfaces, there are apps available for download on both iOS and Android powered cell phones. WeddingWire and The Knot both supply apps that make it easy to create a guest list, to personalize a website, organize vendor conversations, and keep track of a comprehensive checklist of everything you need to get done.



Online templates like this one are plentiful. Just do a quick Google search for wedding planning timelines.

Honeymoon funds



After the wedding is over and you're wallet is recovering from all the hits it's just taken in the past few months, another expense that comes right behind is the honeymoon. Many couples choose to take a honeymoon trip, often for a few days, and to some exotic location popular with Instagram models and social media influencers. Couples spend mass amounts of money on their wedding – so they shouldn't have to shell out large amounts for the honeymoon! The honeymoon trip is supposed to be a private period for the new couple that allows them time together to enjoy their status as the newly minted Mr. and Mrs. Travel costs, hotel accommodations, food and activities can run the price up for the entire honeymoon. The most

important thing to remember is that your honeymoon doesn't have to be influencer approved.

You can take a trip that is special to you and your spouse. Find a town you've never visited that may not be a tourist town, but has activities and restaurants that you want to experience. Take small day trips if you can't afford hotel stays. Take the time to research the total costs of the trip and allow for adequate saving beforehand.



This is Richmond, Virginia, a beautiful city on the water with nightlife, museums, and parks to explore – all without breaking the budget!

Tips to remember

- Give yourself lots of time to plan everything out. If you're taking on the expenses and the planning yourself, don't mess up from the start by not giving yourself enough time to properly plan.
- Stick to a preplanned budget. It can be easy to get sidetracked, especially if there isn't any accountability outside of your own conscience. Make a budget and stay with it. Allow for a few changes, but don't let yourself get swept in by the flash sales or colorful envelope liners. After all, they won't matter in the end.
- Have fun! This is the most important point to remember. It is your wedding day, no matter how you celebrate it, and you should have a good time. Don't let everyone else's ideas of how the day should go cloud your choices when it comes to choosing things you love. You want

McDonald's? Have McDonald's! You want to rent a bounce house? Budget for it and bounce away! Whatever you do, don't let the day run away from you without stopping to cherish some small portion of the experience you are having together.