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Gordon-Lennox's "Crafting meaningful wedding rituals: A practical guide" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Gordon-Lennox, J. (2019). *Crafting meaningful wedding rituals: A practical guide*. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. 192 pp. \$20.95. ISBN 9781785923906

Author Jeltje Gordon-Lennox is a psychotherapist and celebrant trainer who holds a Master of Divinity from McCormick Theological Seminary. Writing in both French and English, she has authored a number of books focusing on ritual creation and practices in the secular world including, *Crafting Secular Ritual: A Practical Guide* along with *Emerging Ritual in Secular Societies: A Transdisciplinary Conversation*.

Crafting Meaningful Wedding Rituals is divided into three parts. Part one deals with the preliminaries such as the proposal, the couple's reason for marrying, along with the power found in the creation and completion of the ritual. Part two provides extensive information on how to craft the ceremony by focusing on the planning, shaping and realization of the ceremony itself. Part three, the epilogue, focuses on what happens after the ceremony and how to utilize symbolic rituals to renew, dissolve or refresh a marriage for longevity. The author also includes some resources for further reading.

With more couples turning away from traditional wedding ceremonies, and many more who wish to simply cohabitate, *Crafting Meaningful Wedding Rituals* is a timely book to guide couples who wish to have a more secular based ceremony to celebrate their coupledness. Specifically designed for amateur ritual-makers, this book provides highly detailed and definitive instructions on how to create the perfect wedding ceremony, and tailor it to meet any couple's needs. The value of ritual is the nucleus of this book, along with the importance of true human connection. Couples are challenged to question how they wish to declare their commitment for each other, and what essential elements they need to make their celebration a true reflection of their unique love. Plenty of real-life experiences are provided throughout, and these narratives detail challenges faced by couples of all genders and diversities, describing how they worked through their problem to reach a final solution.

One of the best parts of this guide is part two, *Crafting the Ceremony*, it is here that the author has provided an invaluable and highly exhaustive resource. Every aspect of organization for the big day is covered, with the author providing notes on ritual design along with a sample order of ceremony. There are checklists and toolboxes for planning, creating and realizing the ceremony, questionnaires and inventories on

ritual profiles along with plenty of tasks and discussion points for couples. Couples are taught how to assess their individual needs for the day, how to compose vows to include core values, and how to individualize and personalize their entire ceremony and celebration. At times the amount of information can be overwhelming and with a large focus placed on constantly assessing one's feelings, there is the possibility that any couple could end up overthinking their entire wedding process. However, this book is ideally suited to those who have different cultural or religious/spiritual backgrounds, and who wish to design a unique ceremony that stands apart from a traditional wedding celebration.

Reviewer

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