

FIVE SIMPLE STEPS

TO MAKE YOUR VOWS
THE HIGHLIGHT OF
YOUR CEREMONY!



REV. MANDI NEISER

"Being deeply loved by someone
gives you strength,
while loving someone deeply
gives you courage."

—Lao Tzu

Introduction....

I am thrilled that you are interested in learning how to write your own vows for your special day. It is my promise to you, that after reading through this simple 'how to' guide, *and doing your homework*, you will create the most wonderful vows to say to your partner on your wedding day!

Since 2003, I have enjoyed my calling as a non-denominational minister. Through these years, I have had the honour and the privilege of officiating 1,200 wedding ceremonies for many wonderful couples and their families.

One of my favourite aspects of a wedding ceremony, next to the bride or the groom watching their partner take that most anticipated walk down the aisle, is listening to them exchange vows they have taken the time to think about, compose and put pen to paper to write. And I mean write, not copy them from Pinterest, Google, or any other online shortcut you can find with the press of a button or an inquiry from Siri!

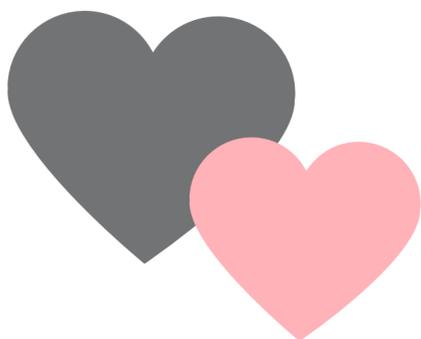
In my opinion, writing your own vows just shows that professing your love to your partner in front of family & friends is of the utmost importance, and although you may feel nervous and scared about taking on this mission, you know in your heart, what you want to express is far more important than feeling scared!

Over the years, I've heard some of the most beautiful and heartfelt words from both partners; sometimes to the point where I am in tears just listening! I don't hide the fact that I too can get emotional from time to time. It usually adds to the intimacy of the moment to know that I can be just as vulnerable as everyone else. (I think the day I stop being affected by the beauty and intimacy of heartfelt moments created at the altar, is the day I need to find a different vocation!)

Well, enough about me and my emotions, let's get down to work so we can bring those genuine and sincere words out of your head and put them to paper. OK, I know that's a little old school, however I'm 56 years young and I'm used to writing things out on a thing called paper!

*"Once in awhile,
right in the middle of an ordinary life,
love gives us a fairy tale."*

—Unknown



Let's Get Started!

To start things off, let me first share with you the reasons why several couples choose **not** to write their own vows. Maybe you can imagine yourself in one of these scenarios as well?

- Couples think they need to memorize their vows (are you kidding me? Not a chance!)
- Couples think their vows won't be 'good enough' or
- Couples are most afraid of 'falling apart' in front of their guests.

In any case, I do my best to convince each couple that in spite of their reasons or justifications for sticking with the 'repeat after me' version of wedding vows, writing their own will most definitely be the highlight of the ceremony!

First things first....

Before I reveal my own personal guide to writing fabulous vows, I just wanted to put things into perspective. Your vows are a mini-ceremony within a wedding ceremony. I believe that what separates a good ceremony from a great one, is creating an experience your guests will be raving about for weeks and months after the wedding is over.

When you think of it as being an experience, think back to the last time you saw a great movie. Disney movies are so successful because they have created a formula that keeps families coming back year after year to see the latest and greatest production!

A good movie has a beginning and an end. It is laced with laughter, joy, a dash of magic and a sprinkle of sadness and tears. All in all, it is wrapped up in a pretty bow which holds within it the energy of a good ole love story! Now have I got your attention? Ok... let's get down to business!



*"It's not about the day being perfect.
It's about being present in each moment
as the day unfolds in its perfection."*

~Rev. Mandi Neiser

Step One: Connect With Your Heart

Whether your style is to mimic the Zen-like gestures of a Monk meditating in the solitude of a temple, or you thrive on the chatter and bustle of as many people around you as possible while sipping on a latté, the first step to writing amazing vows is to get to a place where you think best and you won't be constantly interrupted. You know what this means don't you?

Even though I am a 'mom', I don't want to sound like your mom when I ask you to put your phone on silent, tuck it in your purse or pocket, and do what you can not to pick it up for the next 30 - 60 minutes (I guarantee you won't chew your fingers off!).

This may sound a little 'woo-woo', however I promise, if you just trust me and try this, you'll be surprised at what your heart wants your mind to know!

Are you ready?

First focus on your breathing!

Just notice your breath as it goes in and out. It's nothing complicated and you don't even have to shut your eyes (especially if you are in the coffee shop and you don't want to weird anyone out!). As you begin to get in touch with your beating heart, allow yourself to sense the emotions of what it feels like to be in love.

Now, think about your partner as you focus on the love & adoration you hold within your soul for this beautiful person. As you do this, begin to formulate words in your mind that help to articulate what the love in your heart translates into words. Once you do, write them down.

Now that you have centered yourself and created a connection with your Heart you are in the right space to answer each of the following questions which make up the recipe for personal, memorable and meaningful vows.

I encourage you to answer each question in as much detail as you can. Once finished you will be combining your answers from each of the four parts; one sentence after another, to create the perfect words that express your love to the person who's hand you will be holding for the rest of your life.

*"Holding hands is a promise to one another that,
for just a moment, the two of you don't have to
face the world alone."*

~Unknown



Step Two: List all the ways your Partner Shows up for You

So who is this person you're about to profess your love to?

How do you think of them when you think about all the years (or months) you've been together in this amazing relationship ride you've been on?

Think about how you felt when you realized you were in love with them, and then what emotions went through your mind when you knew they were 'the one'!

Is he or she your partner, your friend, lover, team mate, partner-in-crime, confidante, companion, teacher, lover, dance partner, your 'Boo', your Teddy bear or your sweet cheeks?

Sometimes just starting off with complimenting them will get your creative juices flowing and the words dancing across the paper (there's that paper again...wink, wink!)

Example: Let me start off by saying that you are the most thoughtful person I have ever met! The love you have for me, your family and your circle of friends just astounds me...

You'll want to refer to them in your vows the way you would have a conversation with them by being as natural as possible with language that feels comfortable.

If his or her legal name is used during the ceremony, however you never refer to them in this way, then don't use their legal name in your vows! You want this to feel as normal & comfortable as possible.



*"Love doesn't make the world go round.
Love is what makes the ride worthwhile."*

— Franklin P. Jones

Step Three: What do you want to Promise your Partner?

Obviously your partner means the world to you. You want to convey this to them from that vulnerable part of your heart. So what it is you want them to know you are willing to do for them as you begin this adventure as partners for life?

Way's to start each sentence might be:

I promise to...

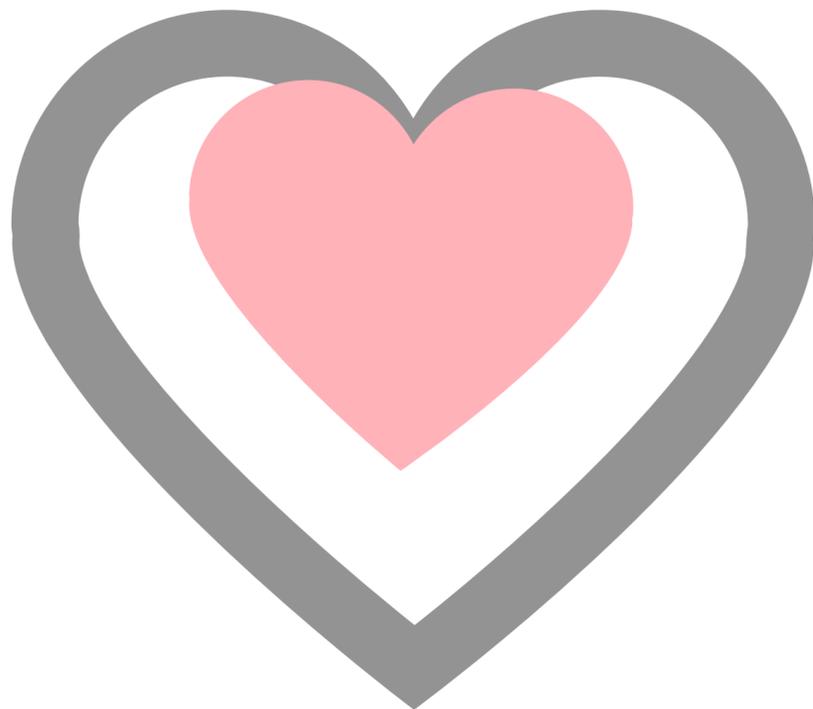
I vow to...

I will always....

...believe in you, respect you, cherish you, stand by your side, honour you, listen to you, nurture you, support you, trust you, root for your (name sports team or something else), share in your..., make you laugh, clear the snow off your car on a snowy morning, wipe the tears from your eyes, scratch your back, always put my socks away, put the cap on the toothpaste, be faithful for the rest of my life, accept you as you are, compromise with you, agree to disagree, be your biggest fan.

Do you get the picture?

You can use as many sentence starters as you want, or group them altogether.



*"When you realize you want to spend the
rest of your life with somebody,
you want the rest of your life to begin as soon as possible."
—When Harry Met Sally*

Step Four: When Will I Promise you These Things?

To you my love (or insert any word you may call him/her here),
I make these promises (from above in Step 3):

- As we grow and change,
- when it's easy and when it's hard,
- when I love you and when I don't like you so much,
- when we are afraid and when we are sailing through life,
- when we are partners and parents
- when we are friends and when we are allies
- when we are together and when we are apart
- when we are exhausted and can't take life one more moment, and when our cup is overflowing and we are filled with life's goodness.
- even when you are away on business
- when we are at home and when we travel the world
- when I am upset with you and when I love you
- as we grow old & grey and a little wrinkly,
- forever and ever,
- 'til death do us part.

*I vow to help you love life,
to always hold you with tenderness and
to have the patience that love demands,
to speak when words are needed
and to share the silence when they are not,
to agree to disagree on red velvet cake,
and to live within the warmth of your heart and always call it home.”
— The Vow*



Step Five: Add a Personal Touch!

In this section, use your imagination to really 'wow' your fiancé(e)!

Say something that doesn't really fit in the outline above.

What does your partner do that's funny?

What do you do that your partner thinks is hilarious?

What little quirks do they have?

What little quirks to you have that they either think is cute or completely drives them nuts?

What have you learned from them?

What have they learned from you?

What do they do that makes you crazy?

What do they do that has you loving them even more?

Do you get the picture?

Does it seem less daunting now that you have a formula and some ideas to create some stellar vows? If you are still sitting on the fence for fear of not saying the right words, or you're just looking for an excuse not to, I have included real examples of vows that were created for couples I've personally married over the past few years.

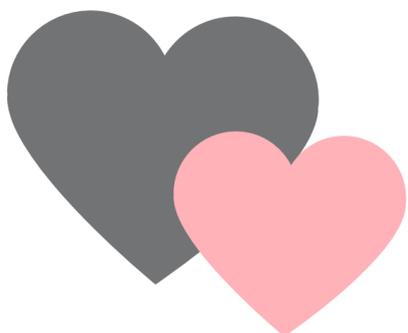
One final piece of advice: Practice saying your vows! Don't just put them on a piece of paper once you've written them and then pull it out for the first time in front of your partner and all your guests. As the minister officiating a wedding ceremony, I read over what I'm going to say a few times so I know where I need to emphasize certain things, and when I need to pause, etc. This will make you sound like a pro!

Enjoy reading them!

And, if you feel after all this that you still don't have any imagination, feel free to tweak them in any way you would like to make them personal to you!

*"I love that you are my person, and I am yours;
That whatever door we come to, we will open it together"*

A. R. Asher



Examples of Vows

Example Number One:

"My love...

We have a connection that is rare and unique. We often know what the other is thinking and feeling without ever speaking a word. We've shared tears of joy and tears of sorrow together and through it all, I trust you with my heart.

You know when I need comforting or time alone, and you know when I need you to kick me in the butt because I'm acting like an ass. You have taught me to trust and have faith in the moment. I am grateful for all the experiences that have brought us to today...right here and right now. And with trust, I embrace all that is yet to unfold.

My wish for you is that this ring be a symbol of how much I respect you, admire you and trust you as we continue to fulfill our soul contract with each other. I continue to love you today and promise to love you forever with all of my heart."

"You are the poem I never knew how to write, and this life is the story I've always wanted to tell."

~Thyler Knott Gregson

Example Number Two...

"I stand before you today the happiest man in the world. I honestly can't believe that I get to spend the rest of my life with you! You're the love of my life and you make me happier than I could have ever imagined.

Today, I vow to never take for granted how privileged I am to have you as my wife. I promise to be faithful and supportive and to always make our family's love and happiness my top priority. I will listen to you with compassion and understanding, and speak to you with encouragement and love.

I will dream with you, celebrate with you and walk hand-in-hand with you through whatever challenges our lives may bring. I vow to do everything I can, so that when we're both wrinkled and shriveled old fools holding hands on some park bench, we will both have loved the lives we shared together.

You are my person, my one and only, and I will love and respect you always."



More Examples of Vows

Example Number Three:

"When we met, the furthest thing from my mind was falling in love! Before I knew it you were all I could think about. I love your heart and your mind. You are handsome and charming, every girl's dream. I never knew I could love someone as intensely as I love you. You are part of my every breath. I feel you in every heartbeat. I love you in so many ways.

You are truly my everything: my best friend, my lover, my inspiration, my contentment, my family. You are the person I laugh and cry with and absolutely the person I want to spend the rest of my life with. I am so grateful to be here making an eternal vow to you today.

You are my dream, you are my wish, you are my fantasy. I promise to love you truly. To be loyal and faithful. to encourage and respect you in everything you do. I promise to love you madly and never lose sight of how passionately we care for each other even in challenges and heartache.

I promise to love you deeply in a way I know will grow to become even stronger throughout the rest of our lives. One lifetime with you will never be enough."

"In dreams and in love there are no impossibilities."

— Janos Arnay



Example Number Four:

You are my co-pilot and navigator on every trip and you are the one I can't wait to pack my suitcase with. You are my every reason for getting up each day, and I am your only reason for having to raise your voice when I forget to put my dirty clothes in the hamper.

You have single-handedly restored my faith in the human race because of the way you live and breathe and sprinkle your pixie dust magic on everyone you meet and everything you touch.

From this moment on I promise to tell you when I am upset with you, I promise not to get defensive when you tell me you are upset with me. I promise to start the car for you on mornings when the temperature dips below freezing. I promise to keep a stash of your favourite chocolate bar so when you have a little craving after dinner you will never be disappointed! And lastly I promise to always love you and care for you in the best way I know how.

Mary...you are the love of my life and I feel so grateful to be able to call you my wife. I'm not perfect...you're not perfect...but we're perfect for each other!"

Some Final Thoughts....

1. Your vows are going to be the most important part of your ceremony, so really take the time to sink into your soul and make them the best they can be! I can't imagine anything more thrilling on your wedding day than hearing your partner profess their love to you in the form of vows they have taken great care in composing!

Discuss before you begin how long your vows are going to be. When it comes to composing your vows, there is no 'right' length. What I would suggest however is that you and your partner discuss how long each of your vows are going to be so that one of you doesn't feel bad if your masterpiece is more like a finger painting compared to theirs!

Personally, I think that anywhere from five to twenty sentences would suffice depending on what it is you want to say and what you decide is the perfect amount for both of you. There's no right or wrong, it's just what works for you!



2. Consider putting your vows on something beautiful. Often times there is a theme for the wedding ceremony and reception. If there isn't a theme specifically, there are often times a colour theme. If your invitations or programs or other fine details throughout the ceremony site are in a lovely lace pink and grey, then consider putting your vows on a piece of card stock that matches.

I think it's so tacky to see a bride or a groom pull out a piece of three-ringed lined paper that has been folded several times. Or worse yet, they pull their phone from their pocket and begin scrolling through to say their vows. Not only is this tacky, but if your ceremony is in the sunlight, there's not a hope you're going to see your phone from the glare.

*"I saw that you were perfect and so I loved you.
Then I saw that you were not perfect and
I loved you even more."
—Angelita Lim*

A Little Bit About Mandi...

“At the age of thirty-five, after a series of synchronistic events, Mandi answered the call from within her heart to attend a non-denominational church one beautiful Sunday morning. That day changed the course of her life forever when the minister told her there was a light inside her that needed to shine.

Twenty years later and over thirteen hundred ceremonies performed, Rev. Mandi has been part of the tapestry that has woven together so many lives in the form of weddings, baby blessings, celebrations of life and vow renewals! Although her life is far from perfect, through her spiritual strength and faith in God, she navigates through each day with intuition as her guide and courage as her compass.”



Let's Connect!

Let's continue this journey together by staying in touch!

If this modest little guide helped you to create your wedding vows that 'wowed' your fiance and your guests, I would love to hear about it!

I invite you to visit my website www.MarriedByMandi.ca for some resources to help you along the way to planning your wedding ceremony. There you will find checklists for interviewing potential officiants & photographers and venues.

Feel free to send me an email at mandi@marriedbymandi.ca if you have any questions, comments or suggestions.

You can also visit my Fan Page: <https://www.facebook.com/MarriedByMandi> for lots of fun photos, quotes, wedding and marriage wisdom and reviews of my work.

Click here to connect to:
www.MarriedByMandi.ca



Click here to connect to:
[Facebook.com/
MarriedByMandi](https://www.facebook.com/MarriedByMandi)