

Robyn Ashley Weddings

NYC WEDDING OFFICIANT

THE OFFICIANT'S CUT

The Unity Candle Ceremony.

The full ritual to read at the altar: the words for each flame, the supply list, the delivery cues, the blended-family version, and the graceful save for when the wick refuses to catch.

AS SEEN IN

Tamron Hall · Brides · The Knot

FROM ROBYN'S DESK

The ritual the whole *room leans toward.*

A groom on a Brooklyn rooftop once nearly set his bride's veil alight when the wind caught the flame. I reached over and moved the veil like it was part of the plan. The photographer got the save, and the couple still has no idea how close it was.

That day gave me the rule I hand every couple now. The unity candle is lovely indoors and a gamble outside, and a few small choices decide which version you get.

So this is the unity candle ceremony the way I run it, with the supply list on the same page as the words. The lines are set in large type, so whoever is reading can do it at arm's length. In the margins are the cues I have learned over 300+ ceremonies.

Read it once out loud in your own voice. Cut anything that does not sound like you. The ritual is yours.

Robyn

ROBYN ASHLEY WEDDINGS · BROOKLYN · NYC



What you'll *actually need.*

One center pillar, three inches wide or more. Width keeps it stable and visible from the back of the room. White or ivory is the traditional choice, and a personalized pillar with your names and date doubles as a keepsake.

Two tapers and three sturdy holders. Standard ten to twelve inch tapers, two taper holders, and one heavy holder for the pillar. A wobbly pillar holder will haunt you, so weight it.

A long lighter with a backup, on a level table. Keep a spare lighter in reach, because they fail at the worst moment. Set everything on a waist-high table that does not rock.

ROBYN'S NOTE

The center pillar is the one thing guests actually see, so spend there. A heavy, wide pillar in a weighted holder reads as steady and intentional from *every seat in the room.*

Light the tapers *first.*

DO NOT SKIP THIS

A cold wick in a cool room can take several tries, and watching a couple fumble with a lighter mid-ceremony kills the moment you built. Pre-lit tapers leave only the graceful part on camera.

Light both tapers before the ceremony begins and stand them in their holders, ready to lift. The only on-camera action then is two flames meeting at the center.

Test the long lighter the morning of, and keep the backup within reach of whoever is reading. If you are anywhere near open air, plan the windproof version now, because a breeze is the open flame's one real weakness.

ROBYN'S NOTE

Do a dry run at the rehearsal with the real tapers and the real holders. I have never regretted the practice light. I have regretted trusting a fresh wick to catch on the first try at the altar.

Where the *candle goes.*

Where it goes. The candle lighting lives right after the ring exchange, before the pronouncement, where the room has already gone quiet and the arc is climbing. It runs about three to five minutes with the explanation.

Who delivers it. The officiant reads the words while the two of you light. The couple should be looking at the flame and at each other, not narrating their own ritual.

— *[Officiant, step to the side of the table so guests can see both tapers meet the pillar. Speak to the room, not down at the page.]*

ROBYN'S NOTE

The lighting is the visible moment guests came for. Give them a clean sightline to the center pillar, then get out of the frame. The couple and the single flame are the picture.

Two *separate* lights.

— *[Officiant, address the guests. The couple steps to the table, tapers already lit and standing in their holders.]*

At this time, **[PARTNER 1]** and **[PARTNER 2]** will light their unity candle.

The two outer flames represent your lives up to this moment. Your separate histories, your families, everything that shaped each of you into the person standing here.

— *[Slow down here. Let the two flames be seen on their own for a beat before anyone reaches for them.]*

One *shared flame.*

— *[Couple, lift your tapers together and bring both flames to the center pillar at the same time.]*

As you light this center candle together, you do not put out your own flames. You bring your light to a shared space.

Let this single flame be your life together. Brighter and warmer because you share it.

— *[Hold the pose a moment for the photographer, then return the tapers to their holders.]*

ROBYN'S NOTE

Bring both tapers in at once, not one after the other. Two flames meeting as one is the whole image, and it reads from the back row. One at a time looks like a chore.

Better *together.*

The two of you began today as separate lights, and you will leave as one.

May this flame remind you that in marriage you are better together.

Warmer, steadier, and brighter for having joined what each of you carried in.

— *[Let the single flame stand on its own for a beat before you move the ceremony on. The quiet is part of it.]*

ROBYN'S NOTE

This last line is the one the room remembers, so read it plainly and let the flame carry it. The image of two lights becoming one does the work without any push from you.

The blended *family version*.

If you are joining a family. Add a taper for each child. The parents light their tapers, hand them to the children, and everyone brings their flame to the center pillar at the same time, lighting it together as a new family.

If you are outdoors. Wind is the candle's one weakness, so seal the pillar inside a deep hurricane vase or lantern. Even a slight breeze blows out a taper before it reaches the wick.

If you want no open flame at all. Keep the structure and swap the symbol. A unity sand pour or two waters blended into one vessel carries the same read, two becoming one, and never quits in the wind.

ROBYN'S NOTE

For the family version, hand a child the line as well as the taper. A nine-year-old saying "this is our flame now" with their parents will undo the whole room in the best way.

If it goes *sideways*.

If the wick will not catch. Do not stand there relighting for an awkward minute. Smile and say, "Your love is clearly stronger than this flame." Touch the wicks to the pillar, hold the pose, and set the tapers down. Nobody past the front row can see the flame anyway.

If a breeze blows a taper out. Say, "The wind wants in on this too," relight from the partner's flame if it survived, and keep moving. A warm line covers a slow recovery every time.

If the lighter dies. Reach for the backup without a word and carry on. The room reads a short pause as care, never as a stumble.

ROBYN'S NOTE

The save is in the grace, not the fire. A first-timer freezes when the flame quits. A pro has a warm line ready, says it, and lets the ceremony carry on as if nothing happened.

Three things *before you light for real.*

This is one ritual, marked the way I would mark my own. Treat it as a working draft and it starts sounding like you.

i

Buy a wide pillar and weight every holder.

A pillar three inches or wider, two tapers, and three sturdy holders. Test that the pillar holder cannot rock before you trust it on a ceremony table.

ii

Decide indoors or sealed, and pre-light the tapers.

If you are anywhere near open air, put the pillar inside a deep hurricane vase, or pick the sand swap. Light both tapers and test the lighter the morning of.

iii

Read it aloud once, and fill every bracket a week out.

Whoever is reading runs it start to finish in their own voice. Fill each [BRACKET] in advance, print a clean copy on cardstock, and keep one warm save line in your back pocket.

"We were writing the ceremony ourselves and kept getting stuck on where the candle lighting fit with everything else. The kit had the whole arc already. We dropped our words in and it sounded like us."

DANA & MARCUS · MARRIED IN THE HUDSON VALLEY, 2025

IF THIS RITUAL IS DOING ITS JOB

The whole ceremony, *not just one flame.*

The candle lighting is one ritual. A ceremony is the architecture around it: the processional, the welcome, the vows, the unity moment, the pronouncement, all timed so the lighting falls at the right beat instead of feeling bolted on. The Couple's Ceremony Kit is the full word-for-word framework I use, with scripts for the candle and every other unity ritual, written so you can drop your own words in.

\$79

Open the Couple's Ceremony Kit →

ONE-TIME PAYMENT · LIFETIME ACCESS · 48-HOUR MONEY-BACK

Where this *came from*.

PULLED FROM

The candle lightings I have run at NYC and Hudson Valley weddings, with the prep notes I now give every couple up front. The structure is field-tested over *more than 300 ceremonies*.

WHAT IS IN THE KIT

The full word-for-word ceremony framework, with scripts for the unity candle and every other unity ritual, written so you can drop your own words in. All of it in *the Couple's Ceremony Kit*.

USE THIS FREELY

Print it, mark it up, hand a copy to whoever is reading at the altar, run it at the rehearsal.

IF YOU DO ONE

Email me. I read every one.
hello@robynashleyweddings.com.

Marked from a working ritual, with the prep notes and cues I use at the front of the aisle.

*About this
ritual, and
where it has
been lit.*