



TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PHOTO SHOOT

by Cheri Wenger

1. Discuss your goals & expectations with your photographer.

Successful photo shoots start with setting clear goals as well as taking time to share your ideas beforehand. This helps the photographer to brainstorm ideas, gather necessary props and/or make their own comments & suggestions. This is also the time to discuss potential locations, wardrobe and props.

2. Make it Personal.

Lifestyle portraiture works best when the model(s) are doing things or are surrounded by things they love & enjoy. So if you have favorite articles of clothing, jewelry or a personal possession that means a lot to you, bring it to the shoot. Whether it is a goofy hat, a treasured heirloom from your grandmother, a favorite snuggly or a piece of sports gear, it will help to capture the essence of you in photos. If you play a musical instrument or sports, you may want to bring something related to that with you.

3. Show up prepared — rely on a checklist.

Nothing can spoil a shoot more than running late or forgetting something important. You will leave the shoot feeling disappointed & having regrets. So make a checklist of things you intend to bring, and set a goal to arrive early so if there are some last minute things to discuss or set up, it will ensure starting on time. Since you won't be rushing, both you and your photographer will be more relaxed and less stressed...resulting in a better photo session.

4. Discuss weather, lighting & the possibilities of rescheduling.

Natural lit portraits require planning to achieve the right lighting and scenery. Photographers can do their best to work around non-ideal lighting conditions, unexpected interruptions such as other people at the same location, and even make the best of the weather; however, there may be some circumstances that simply won't work for the time or day of your shoot. Discuss in advance plans for reshooting and possibly pencil in a back up date especially if you need the images within a certain time frame.

5. Create the look you want to capture in your photos.

Consider your goals. Do you want these photos to express the real you, the fairytale you or somewhere in between? If a glamorous photo is what you are after, you need to dress the part. If you would like the photos to be representative of your everyday family life, then everyone dressing alike may not be the best wardrobe choice. These are things to discuss with your photographer so that they can make suggestions as to the style and colors you should consider wearing, as well as what not to wear. In general, busy stripes and plaids or very bold, patterned prints can be distracting, and should be avoided. For beach shots, combinations of white or black with khaki or denim are often recommended. My personal belief is that you can use a variety of pastel colors, too, with white, denim or khaki to avoid everyone looking too "matchy". For example, mom in a white shirt, dad and the boys in baby blue and the girls in pastel dress with each of those colors in the pattern or print. If you want to wear a bright or bold patterned dress, then the background should be rather neutral. If you are planning on a themed or fairytale shoot, discuss what costumes, etc. to bring so that both of you can be prepared to capture this style of photography. Keep in mind whether you want people to notice you or your clothing in the portrait. The key is that the style of clothing should be representative of you.

Always experiment with your hair and make up beforehand, and not the day of your shoot. Avoid getting your hair cut just days before the shoot. Give yourself time to learn to work with the new cut unless your goal is to portray yourself in a different light or create a whole new image. Stay clear of heavy, glossy or metallic make-up when taking natural lit, outdoor portraits. Those work best for studio lit photos and will not result in beautiful, natural-looking portraits. Remember, the photographer can work their magic, but you need to show up looking the part. Avoid dark or distracting nail polish and accessories that steal the camera's attention from you.

6. What to bring the day of the shoot.

Plan for the unexpected. Bring along your makeup case, mirror, comb or brush, hairspray, extra clips, accessories, any articles or clothing you want to change into, a change of jewelry or other style accents to change things up. To achieve different looks in your session, you need to think about how you can modify your hairstyle or look and plan accordingly. If it is a hot day, you may want to bring something to drink (smiling a lot can make you thirsty). Moms, bring toys & books for the kids to keep busy and don't forget the diapers, snacks and bottles. If you are planning to include the family pet, or have young children bring along a friend to watch them while you do other shots. Aside from the other suggestions mentioned above, bring whatever makes you most comfortable.

"Capturing images; creating memories"