

# The Perfect Photo Shoot

## Personal, Authentic, Inspirational, Respectful, Joyful

- Understand the purpose of the photos.  
If possible, know how and where your photos will be used, who the audience is, the accompanying text, the essence of the intended message, the delivery media, etc.
- Have a definite theme.  
Props, location, grouping, casting, clothing and lighting support this idea. Sending mixed cues through uninformed choices of these components dilutes the power of your photo's message.
- Get to know everyone  
Do a "meet and greet" with your group of models if they don't know each other. 20 minutes of exchanges like favorite movie, food, hobby, music, video game, TV show, vacation, dream job, sport, and anything else the group wants. Photographer and stylist should participate as well.
- Main model  
Decide who will be the "hero" figure in the shot, the person who is most energetic, the one who best characterizes the theme of the shot. This is usually done through composition, lighting and clothing.
- Find the energetic person  
Try to get someone to be the spark plug to your activity, someone who can lead the discussion, figuratively "keeping air in the balloon". They will be able to pull some of the more passive group members along.
- Protect your models' energy  
If possible, use stand-ins for getting your lighting and positioning set. If you use your actual models for this, you will use up their energy and good will before you ever start making real images. If you must use your main models from the beginning of the shoot, talk to them only about general positioning, clothing issues, lighting etc. Wait until you are really ready to shoot before you ask them enact the scenario you want to photograph. The first few runs are the freshest, so avoid using up their energy with too many retakes of the same scene.
- "Make it real"  
Create a real scenario your models can understand and relate to. If you ask them to fake it, it will look and feel fake. Convince them to "be in the moment" of the scenario you have given them. If they are supposed to be listening to one of the group playing the guitar, one of the group had better be a skillful guitar player. Help them to forget you are there with a camera and get them to relate to each other. If they are sitting there anticipating every pop of the flash, it won't look real.
- Try for natural lighting  
The preferred light for a shoot is natural light with diffusers and reflectors. This helps your models to be "in the moment" without the distraction of the flash hitting blinding them every few seconds.
- Backgrounds  
Pay attention to backgrounds! The background is every bit as important as the main subject in establishing credibility of your photo.
- Prop placement  
Be subtle. As much as possible, be realistic in placing props. Forcing a "fake" or unrealistic placement of props will many times look fake in your photos.
- Shoot to a laptop computer  
Shoot to a laptop using dependable software that will show intended crop and typical processing presets. *Lightroom* and *CaptureOne* work well. You need to know exactly what is working and what needs adjustment. Show your models a few of the best frames. This kind of encouragement is great for non-models.