

# TAKING PORTRAITS THEY'LL LOVE

What's the most important aspect of any portrait? The eyes! And if you want those eyes to look spectacular, you need to know how to get natural smiles and honest expressions out of your subjects. This can be a struggle for many photographers. So here's a list of ideas to help you during your sessions.



- Smile a whole lot! Hopefully it'll help them relax and smile too.
- Act like you're having fun, even if you're feeling a bit stressed. If they think they're fun to take pictures of, it's a great ego boost that's bound to get positive results.
- Be aware of their moods (and mood changes). If you are sensitive to their moods you can work with them. If you are unaware then you'll probably only make things worse.
- Find a topic of conversation that interests them. Conversation will loosen up most subjects.
- Tell jokes. Making the subject laugh is a great way to capture honest expressions!
- Don't spend the entire session behind the camera. This makes the subjects feel detached from you. If possible, set your camera up on a tripod and use a shutter release cable. This will enable you to maintain constant interaction with them.
- Encourage your subjects to be themselves. If they feel free to be themselves, they'll be more comfortable and their expressions will be more honest.
- Just in case this doesn't go without saying, DON'T tell your subjects to smile. Forced smiles never look natural, and often look painful.
- Self-deprecating humor goes a long way. Don't be afraid to poke fun of yourself in an effort to help your subject relax. Catch them off-guard and snap away.
- Have the subject stick out their tongue at you, or make some other silly face. Wait for the smiles and laughs that will come afterwards. (This works great with children *and* adults!)
- Take pictures when they don't think you're ready. Whether you're in the middle of telling a joke, or they're telling you about they're mother, or they're just staring off into space, sometimes the unexpected shots turn into the best portraits. (Using a shutter release cable allows you to do this without them realizing it.)
- Remember that not everyone likes to smile. Find an expression that they're comfortable with and go with it. It will be a better portrait for them than a cheesy (and unnatural) smile.
- If you feel like it will help the subject feel at ease, turn on some music. You could even take that one step further, and encourage them to bring a CD of their favorite music with them.
- Let the subject move around. This will create more natural portraits and the subject will look more comfortable. (This is especially valuable with kids.)



Hopefully these ideas will help you get started. Gradually, you'll come up with more of your own ideas to add to the list. Just remember – an honest portrait will always be better than a forced one! Portraits that capture real expressions will keep the customers coming back over and over again.

