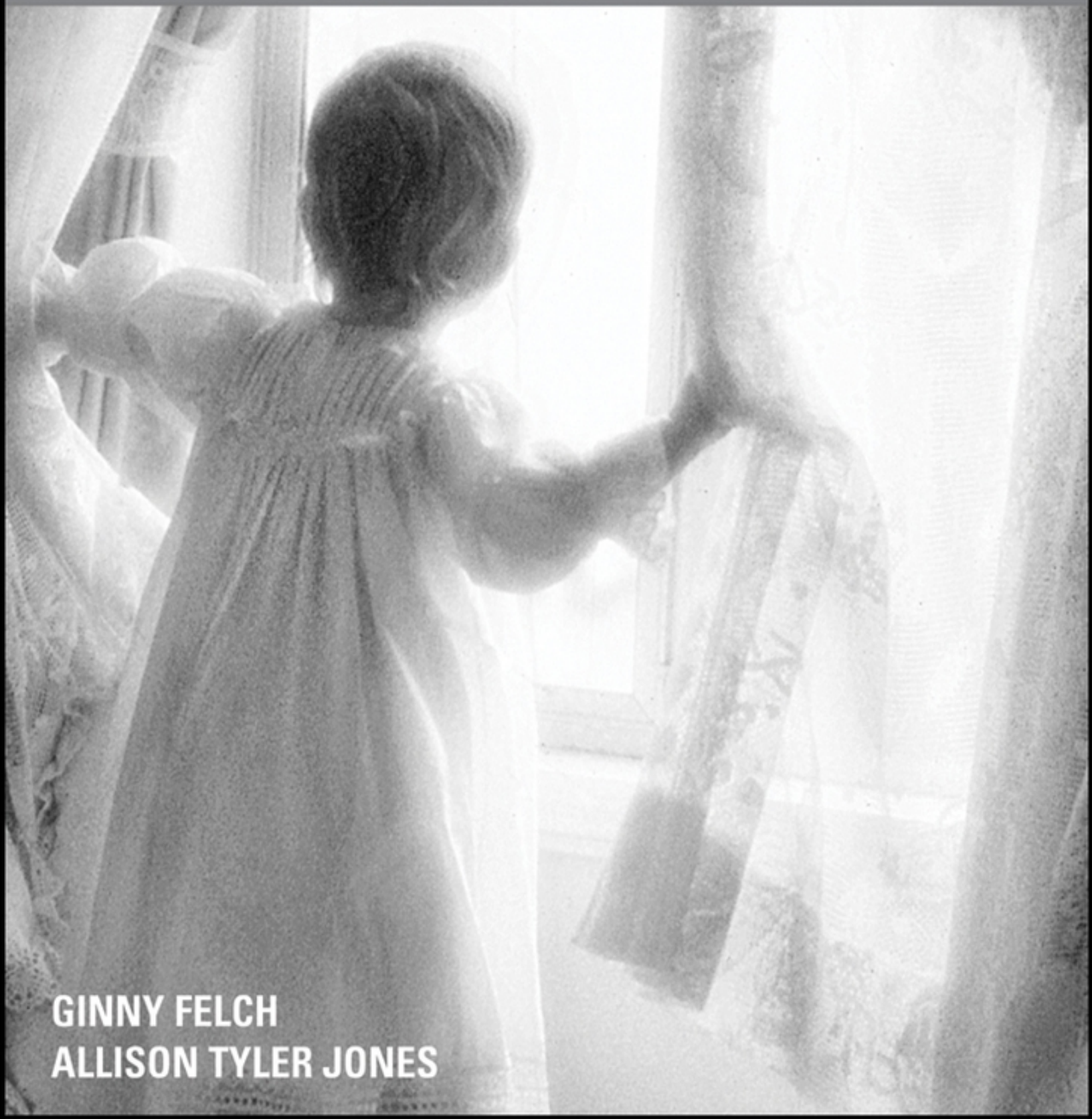




# PHOTOGRAPHING CHILDREN

**PHOTO WORKSHOP**

Develop your digital photography talent



**GINNY FELCH  
ALLISON TYLER JONES**

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# PHOTOGRAPHING CHILDREN PHOTO WORKSHOP

Ginny Felch with Allison Tyler Jones



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## About the Authors



**Ginny Felch**, as a child of the '50s, was given a Brownie camera by her father. She was encouraged by his kind compliments about her sensitivity and composition. The beauty and nostalgia of New England as well as Ginny's mother's eclectic eye for beauty and her appreciation of art and design were gifts that contributed to her developing eye. Ginny was trained as a wedding photographer after years of studying black-and-white photography. Later, her love for children, spurred by devotion to her son, Zachary, led to an inspired career creating children's portraits.

Under the name of Virginia Clayton, she exhibited and lectured her way to becoming a Master of Photography through Professional Photographers of America and has been coached by some great photographers, including Marie Cosindas, Morley Baer, Ruth Bernhard, Robert Farber, Sara Moon, and Josef Karsh. Ginny has had speaking engagements across the country and in Europe. In 1990, she visited the Soviet Union while documenting the Heart to Heart Children's Medical Alliance as part of a group of volunteer doctors and nurses from Oakland Children's Hospital.



Shortly after returning home from working with parents facing the possibility of losing their children, Ginny endured the tragedy of losing her own 15-year-old son in an automobile accident. Soon thereafter, her home and all belongings were destroyed in the Oakland Firestorm of 1991. This was the beginning of a challenging and courageous journey of healing and discovery. Her survival and reclaimed zest for life were due in no small part to her relationship with her husband, Will, and his family.

When Ginny finally did return to her life as a children's photographer, she found it all the more poignant and meaningful to be a part of the joy and appreciation of children and life. Ginny is motivated deeply by the moody and sculptural effect of natural light on a myriad of subjects, creating a sense of place and feeling of timelessness. Her children's portraits are known for those qualities as well as her warmth and ability to connect with and relate to children.

Her philosophy about photography is that the equipment and technology take a back seat to vision, creativity, and passion. Above all, Ginny seeks beauty. Here is one of her favorite quotations:

*"Beauty has a dignity and poise that takes us beyond our smallness and negativity; beauty brings us in to remembrance. Beauty is the bridge between the real and the ideal. Not everything is beautiful; yet when we develop a graceful and gracious eye, we can find beauty in the most unexpected places." —John O'Donohue*



**Allison Tyler Jones** is a professional photographer located in Mesa, Arizona. Allison photographed her high school yearbook and has held photography as a passion for most of her life. Married, with 2 children and 5 step-children (yep, that's 7!), she is the former co-owner of the beloved *Memory Lane Photo and Paper Arts* store in Arizona and co-author of the photography books *Designing with Photos* and *Expressions: Taking Extraordinary Photos for Your Scrapbook* and *Memory Art*. Allison has also compiled a bestselling book of quotes titled *Quote, Unquote Vol. 1*. After retiring from her retail store in 2005, Allison launched her photography studio, *Allison Tyler Jones Photography, Inc.*, where she specializes in children and family relationship portraiture.

Allison lectures nationally and internationally on photography. Her inspiration is the personalities of her subjects and their relationships with one another.

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*For Will: You have taught me most of what I know about the strength and fragility of the human spirit. I am deeply grateful for your love, appreciation, and undying support in our life journey.*

*For Zach: My son and angel guide, my soul inspiration. Without you, my little zachabuddha, there would be no book.*

*~ Ginny Felch*

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First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to Robert Farber for inviting me to write an inspirational book on photographing children. All along the way, he has encouraged me to stick with my intention to place more emphasis on the creative than the technical. I wholeheartedly believe that he shares my passion for photography and understands the emphasis on creativity.

Judith Farber, my friend and neighbor, has been a soul-mate throughout the process of putting this book together. I have called her during times when I wasn't sure I could pull it off, and she commiserated so beautifully that I found myself getting right back to the drawing board.

I am certain that this book would not have come about without the support and friendship of my editor, Kim Spilker. As acquisitions editor, she went way beyond her job description, I'm sure, to hold my hand, encourage me, and help me all along the way.

Soon after I started working on the book, I realized that I didn't actually have a lot of the photographs from before 1991, when my house burned down. Because of that and the fact that I wanted to show different styles and points of view besides my own, I invited other photographers, known and unknown to me, to submit photographs. I was thrilled at the responses and have been very inspired by the images. My eyes have been opened once again! Thank you, Deidre Lingenfelter, Linda Murray Lapp, Joyce Wilson, Lizbeth Guerrina, Marybeth McCormack, Amy Melious, Pat Stroud, Gail Nogle, Marianne Drenthe, Matt Reoch, Patrisha McLean, Melanie Sikma, Scarlett, Rick Chapman, Wendi Hiller, Tina Wilson, Sherman Hines, Theresa Smerud, Karma Wilson, Heather Jacks, and Amanda Keys. You all went beyond the

imaginable to get files to me in short order. I have met some wonderful new friends and peers along the way.

I am so grateful to all of my clients, past and present, who have generously allowed me to work with their children. I have been so enriched by many of the friendships that developed henceforth. Rediscovering old clients from my past life has made this quest a full circle experience and has been a very important part of my healing. Revisiting photographs from 30 years ago has been like rediscovering lost treasures.

My patient husband, Will, has exhibited an inordinate amount of patience and tolerance through the past six months. I promise on this public page that I won't ever whine quite as loudly as I have in the past when he works too hard. Thanks to my family and to my treasured friends for your support and affirmation that "You can do it!" You left me alone when I needed space and encouraged me all along the way, which I needed more than you know. Your feedback to my chapters has helped me immeasurably.

Jake Elwell, of Harold Ober Associates, my nephew and very close friend, I thank you for giving me the confidence to look at a book contract and not wither away. Your experience in the publishing business and your understanding of my nature helped me to trust your advice implicitly.

Have I mentioned my dog, Gracie? How patient she has been as she plumped up because of missing beach walks and ball fetching. When I thought I would explode with angst, just holding her tightly brought my blood pressure down measurably!

Deidre Lingenfelter, you have encouraged me to write a book ever since I can remember. Your love and support have carried me a long, long way. My friend Linda Lapp Murray was my first mentor, and we have remained dear friends and partners in creative crime.

Marty London's wise words of wisdom are always in the back of my mind as I face life's joy and challenges. Gail Graham's enthusiastic feedback and encouragement to exercise along the way was an everyday incentive (and I will start exercising tomorrow!). Ginny Otis and my sister, Barbara Steele, gave me helpful hints and feedback.

It truly did take a village for this book to happen, and I thank you all from the depths of my heart.

~ Ginny Felch

# Introduction

In 1987, Josef Karsh wrote the following to me:

*"I have just returned to find your enchanting portfolio. I find the collection sensitive and exquisitely executed. You have also managed to capture the tentative quality of adolescence, an especially difficult thing to do. It was interesting for me to read how you psychologically prepare parents and children for their session with you. I would most certainly encourage you to do a book on children's photography."*

The sheer miracle of childhood is something few can deny. The intrinsic innocence, honesty, spontaneity, and whimsy of children have been the subject of prose, poetry, and paintings throughout the history of man. Since the introduction of the art and craft of photography, the depiction of children has been a popular and passionate quest.

What a thrill it is to have such a long and fun-filled career as a photographer of children. It has always been my desire to share the passion and the craft with those who feel the same stirrings of attraction to this field. I know that many are put off or discouraged by the threat of the supposed technical challenge of photography and equipment.

It truly makes me sad to think of the unexpressed vision of those who hold back due to that fear or intimidation. I believe this threat or challenge is manufactured; the flames of fear continue to be fanned by some manufacturers of camera equipment, authors of books, and teachers of photography.

Don't get me wrong; there is a place for understanding how to better execute fine photographs, but your vision, passion, and personal tastes have a deeply profound effect

on what you produce. It excites me to think that I can be any part of encouraging you to follow your bliss, your heart, and your passion for photographing children. That has always been my point of view whether teaching, mentoring, or producing children's photographs.

Even when I worked in the darkroom, I was interested in keeping the process more of a mystery and a magical experience. To see an image rise up out of the paper submerged in water is still a miracle to me! I continue to feel that magic when I peer through a lens and even when I work on an image in Photoshop. I want to know less about why things happen and more about making my images sing.

Those who are looking for scientific definitions and formulae for sharp and perfect images might look elsewhere. Books abound with such information. I hope that in this book you find inspiration and encouragement to follow any urges you have had to make photographs that capture the spirit of a child.

## **WHO SHOULD PHOTOGRAPH CHILDREN**

Everyone who enjoys and appreciates children and who wants to learn to capture their energies should photograph children. I would guess that a large majority of cameras are purchased when parents see their firstborn child.

With the advances of digital technology, anyone can take an acceptable image of a child — in that the exposure is good. That is almost guaranteed. The issue here is how to take an exceptional photograph of a child, one that holds your attention for years.

I believe that parents have the potential to be excellent photographers of their children. The motivation is great, in

creating a history of the life of a child, as well as to surround yourself with images that bring you back to that day. The opportunity is there, as parents usually spend an inordinate amount of time watching, playing with, and tending to their children in all manner of activities. Most importantly, parents have the heart connection built right in! That is the key that opens the door to the potential for creating beautiful images of children.

Certainly, other people cherish children and love to observe and photograph them. The ingredients needed are passion and an interest in learning to see! Right there, you have most of what you need, even with a simple point-and-shoot camera.

Wonderful photographs of children have so many uses these days. You can create brilliant scrapbooks, slideshows, and even customized books. Wouldn't you just love to improve your photography by leaps and bounds just by learning to see and understanding a few photography basics? I think your time has come!

## **WHAT I'VE LEARNED FROM COACHING PHOTOGRAPHY**

Most people contact me for two reasons. Either they have been photographing children for years and want to learn to go beyond their existing work, or they are just starting out and have been put off or intimidated by the technical elements of the camera and computer. The second group is my favorite.

Dispelling fear is a beautiful thing. When you are fearful, your mind tends to shut down, and things make less sense. You get discouraged, and you give up. Fear is the enemy of creativity, and creativity is what you need to nurture the most if you want to improve your photographs. On the other

hand, entering into the zone of creativity can allay bigger fears and can open you up to new experiences and joys.

*Heritage Illustrated Dictionary's* definition of creativity, "to cause to exist, bring into being, originate," makes me think of giving birth. No baby is alike (identical twins, the exception), and each one is uniquely created from two unlike parents. A new being comes forth, with new possibilities, much like the creation of an idea, or an image.

Shouldn't that give us all hope? The potential for new ideas is within ourselves, and we are all potential creators or artists. You can look outside of yourself for inspiration, but your point of view, your sense of timing, and your personal interpretations are all the resources you need to spring forth with more extraordinary imagery.

## WHAT IS AHEAD

I really hope that this process of learning about improving your photographs of children will be fun, inspiring, and relaxing and that you will learn to trust yourself above all. Not just trust yourself, but *value* and *honor* your true nature and your unique vision. You have something unique to contribute to the volumes of photographs that have been created over the years. I really believe that.

Through exercises about seeing and appreciating light and composition, you will expose yourself to a beauty you might never have appreciated. Learning to see the light has enhanced my life immeasurably, let alone my photographs of children. What used to be mundane, ordinary moments will be brightened by a more acute observation of your surroundings. A simple walk on the beach, in the park, and down the street will become a more enchanting engagement with life. That is what I truly hope for you.

Choosing children as your subjects can bring you so much insight into your own life. Children really are our teachers. They have all the wisdom that we come into the world with, and we can learn a great deal from them. They are honest, spontaneous, and often carefree little beings, to say nothing of their graceful gestures and penchant for playfulness.

In your interaction with children, in your deep observation of them in order to create lasting images, and in your exploration of their nature, you will be entertained and inspired. Hopefully that inspiration will come through in your photographs.

You are embarking upon, or continuing on, a very fruitful and rewarding path. Let's celebrate and begin!

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# CHAPTER 1

## THE ART OF PHOTOGRAPHING CHILDREN

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## [Advice for the Aspiring Professional](#)

### [Be Inspired](#)

### [Resources for Inspiration](#)

### [The Importance of Play](#)

Photographing children is not for the faint of heart. Just ask any child photographer and you will hear enough stories about fussy newborns and stubborn toddlers that it might make you think twice about this genre of photography. Certainly, a bowl of fruit is much more cooperative than an 18-month-old. You can take your subject, set up the light just right, and spend all afternoon working the angles for the perfect shot of fruit. Not so with children.

Subject to every whim of the children they photograph, the children's photographer must be part Pied Piper, part parent, part psychologist, and, oh yes, part photographer. Making images of children can tax you in every possible way. Chasing them is a physical workout, while trying to coax a 2-year-old (or a 14-year-old, for that matter) to see things your way takes every psychological skill in your arsenal. Add to all this the technical challenges of learning photography in general and *your* camera in particular, and you might feel like giving up before you even start.

While photographing children may not be the easiest hobby or way to make a living, it might turn out to be one of the most rewarding adventures you ever pursue. Children simply are the most fascinating subjects. For example, young children haven't learned to be guarded and self-conscious; every thought and mood is right on their faces, which makes for images with great expression. Sometimes, you lift your camera at just the right moment, the planets align, and you get a shot of something so amazing that all the rest of it falls away and you realize that you are in love with photographing children.

Parent or professional, being successful at children's portraiture requires you to get seriously in touch with your inner child, and to reach deep and find out what really inspires you both visually and emotionally. This chapter explores what you should know when beginning the journey into photographing children and offers a starting point for inspiration.

## **ADVICE FOR THE ASPIRING PROFESSIONAL**

Judging by the popularity of digital cameras these days, it's apparent that photography has become an international pastime, if not a downright obsession. Prices and availability have made cameras more affordable than ever, and technology continues to enable point-and-shoot technology that results in amazingly good exposures. Even the camera in your phone can turn out a decent image. What is it, then, that pushes one over the edge to want to become a professional photographer, to make images that are better than the rest, good enough to be called, dare we say it...art? Has being a photographer been a lifetime dream? Or have the improving photographs of your own children caused friends and neighbors to ask if you'll photograph their kids? Do you have a true love for and patience with children? Are you willing to put up with a shy child who doesn't want to leave their mother's side as in [1-1](#) or do you have the patience to wait for a newborn to fall asleep in her father's arms?

### **Figure 1-1**

ABOUT THIS PHOTO *Children can be among the most challenging and rewarding of photographic subjects. 1/250 second, f/3.5 at ISO 100. ©Allison Tyler Jones / [www.atjphoto.com](http://www.atjphoto.com)*



### *Note*

Perhaps you only have a point-and-shoot camera — this is fine; this is enough. Don't be intimidated by all of the latest advances and technology. The advent of digital photography will allow you to be more successful, more quickly than ever before. You will know when you need to advance, but to start all you need is a camera and a kid.

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Before you dive head-first into the *business* of photography, think about what draws you in and what your aspirations are as a photographer. Taking time to evaluate your goals and motivations will inform every decision,

whether it's the type of equipment you need or the kind of business you want to have.

Ask yourself questions such as

- Are you happy simply recording your immediate and extended family history and your friends' lives?
- Do you love to find the beauty and complexity in things around you?
- Who are you and where are you now as a photographer?
- Do you have enough technical skill to feel confident charging for your services or do you have a passion to photograph children but it's still more of a hobby at this point?

If you are considering photographing children as your career and don't feel a draw or some sense of enchantment toward little ones, you would be much better off finding another subject or specialty.



### *Quote*

*"A photographer's work is given shape and style by his personal vision. It is not simply technique, but the way he looks at life and the world around him." ~Pete Turner, More Joy of Photography by Eastman*

---

## A NOTE TO PARENTS

A large percentage of photographers who decide to photograph children, either as a hobby or a vocation, do so when they become parents. Suddenly nothing is more profound than nurturing and observing your perfect and beautiful creation. Watching his or her every move and expression, the softness of the cheeks, and the miraculous achievements made each day is awe-inspiring. Using the downtime with a baby or young child and taking advantage of the miraculous moments helps you begin to really see this child. Morning light through the window, sleepy eyes, and grateful smiles suddenly become your favorite subject. Maybe you are a new parent now reading this book for ideas on ways to better capture your own child. Relax and enjoy the pleasure of making simple and spontaneous images of your child.

Who has a better potential to photograph your child than you? If you've ever taken your child to a mass-merchant photo studio to have his or her picture taken you know that those photographers aren't exactly tuned in to the individual child. As a parent, you have the inside track on your child's expressions, moods, and quirks. You have access to your child 24 hours a day allowing you to document the full range of activities, interests, and expressions.

But don't forget, your child also has the inside track on *you*. Somehow, kids just know how to push their parents' buttons, and a friendly photo shoot can go from, "Come on over here sweetie and let's take your picture" to "Stop touching your brother! Do you want a timeout?" Before you know it, you're ready to send them all to their rooms all because you wanted a nice photo for you to remember how much you love your kids.

And so, a caution to all parents out there. Remember why you're taking these photos in the first place. Be patient with those little ones (even when they aren't so little anymore). When you're first learning about photography you can be so worried about "getting the shot" that you forget to be in the moment with your child. Maybe you could photograph the neighbor's kids and she could photograph yours one time. You know you'll be nicer to her kids than you are to your own.

## BE INSPIRED

Whether photographing children for fun or profit, paying attention to your creative journey, past and present, helps you develop your own individual style or signature. That