

INTIMATE FAMILY PHOTOS

Quick Guide
Written by Karthika Gupta




We've all heard the dreaded words, "Okay everyone, look at the camera and on the count of three say, Cheese!" I know I have been guilty of using this technique, too, in my early days as a family portrait photographer. I remember coming home from client photo shoots and kicking myself for not being original, botching up my client's experience, and getting really mediocre images that lacked any emotion or connection.

Over time, my style of photography evolved and I started investing more time and effort into making my clients feel comfortable before, during, and after their photoshoot. The results were images that were fun, fresh, and full of emotions – exactly the kind of images that I want in my portfolio. My clients love the experience, and I often hear them say, "Oh, that was so much fun!" or "Thank you for making it so

easy," and "I loved how you made us feel at ease." I realized that if, as a photographer, I was having a good time interacting with and photographing my clients, then they were having a great time too.

At the end of the day, my job as a photographer is not only to take great, meaningful, and beautiful pictures for my clients, but also to make sure they have a great time and it is a pleasant experience. To that end, there are some things to keep in mind to capture connections among your clients and create intimate family photos that are original and evoke emotion.

 **Recommended Reading:** If you'd like to learn how to create amazing portraits, grab a copy of Photzy's premium guide: [The Art of Portrait Photography](#).



Photograph by Karthika Gupta

Focus on the in-between moments because those tend to be more real and authentic.



Photograph by Karthika Gupta

Family dynamics are very important, and as a photographer we have to pick up the sometimes subtle as well as the obvious cues.

FAMILY DYNAMICS

It is very important to understand family dynamics prior to the photoshoot. This goes beyond the typical questions about the names and ages of the kids. Try and understand the likes and dislikes of the people involved. If there are young children involved, take the time to understand the personalities of the kids as individuals and with their siblings. Is the family casual and easygoing, or do they like formal, traditional posed pictures? Just because they like a particular style of imagery does not mean you have to stick to that. But certainly incorporate what they want first, and then feel free to experiment.



Photograph by Karthika Gupta

I try to think of photos that parents will love as well as those that the kids will have fun with and ones that grandparents will frame and put up on their walls.

STRUCTURE THE SHOOT


Trust me, structuring is key and will ensure you maintain your sanity during the photoshoot. Have a plan of action. I make it a point to spend the first five minutes of every session educating my clients on what they can expect. The first few minutes is warmup time: testing the light, figuring out the right lens, etc. I let my clients know exactly what's happening, and many times I get a lot of beautiful images during this time. Clients are much more relaxed if they think these first few minutes don't really count.

Then we incorporate an activity like walking along a path, climbing a tree, or playing in the park, and I photograph around that activity. This is where you can get some really intimate and fun images. Finally, we just sit down to enjoy each other's company. This not only lets the clients know exactly how we are going to



Photograph by Karthika Gupta

spend our time, but it also helps keep me in check. Because let's face it, for most of us, once we start clicking that shutter, it is so easy to lose track of time!

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Include all family members and make sure you capture all their personalities. Sometimes you need to get down at their level to make it meaningful and intimate.

MAKE IT FUN

This is a critical part of capturing connections among family members during the photoshoot. For family portraits with little kids, try techniques like tickle-fest, blowing bubbles, rocking out those dance moves, and other such methods to get the kids in the spirit of having fun. If kids are a little older, try cracking jokes. Bring some basic props if required and let the kids play. Photograph around the activity and capture candid moments of family interactions. If all else fails, it is okay to set up the shot and work the family into the pose. Make sure to keep clicking so that you can get some candid photos throughout the whole process.

Remember that families that play together, stay together. Your job as a photographer is to capture these family dynamics in a fun and pleasing way. If your clients have a great time during the shoot, it is more than likely that they will love your images because they will remember the experience in a positive light.




Photograph by Karthika Gupta

I like to think of relationships that need to be treasured rather than poses that need to be duplicated. Even if I would have tried, I would have not gotten this sweet moment via instructions. Instead I said something like, 'Mom, love on your baby like you don't want to let him go', and this was one of my client's favorite images.

EMBRACE THE CHAOS

This one is a little hard to digest because, as photographers, we tend to be perfectionists. The lighting has to be right, the styling has to be perfect, and the angle and composition has to be one of the allowed rules – you know, all those things that we learn in Photography 101, Photography 201, and perhaps even Photography 301!

But sometimes it is okay to break the rules and just go with the flow. Yes, every frame here will not be PERFECT, and more than likely it will break all the rules of the photography, but that's okay. It may be more important to capture that fleeting moment than to be technically correct. And more often than not, clients do love images that show them as a real family and not just a perfect version of themselves!

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DIRECT LESS AND OBSERVE MORE

The most important thing to remember with intimate family portraits is that you want to create memories that will withstand the test of time. Don't focus on outfits, locations, and props as much as on emotions, connections, and relationships. Let go of perfection as in the perfectly posed photo. Instead, educate your clients to see themselves as a family unit that plays together, gets crazy together, and also loves together. When you direct with the intention of capturing those intimate moments, emotions, and feelings, clients tend to relax more and you create magical memories.

At the end of the day, creating intimate family portraits is more about connections and interactions rather than poses. When you take photos with the intention of documenting the personality of a family, the session starts to become fun. I always think of how I would want another photographer to document my own family and go from there.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Karthika Gupta is a wedding, lifestyle, portrait, and editorial photographer based in Chicago. Her style of photography is fun, fresh, and organic. She strives to capture authentic emotions and interactions among her clients and emotive imagery in her commercial work.

She loves connecting with other creatives and photographers and is always ready for an engaging conversation about photography and the art of storytelling.

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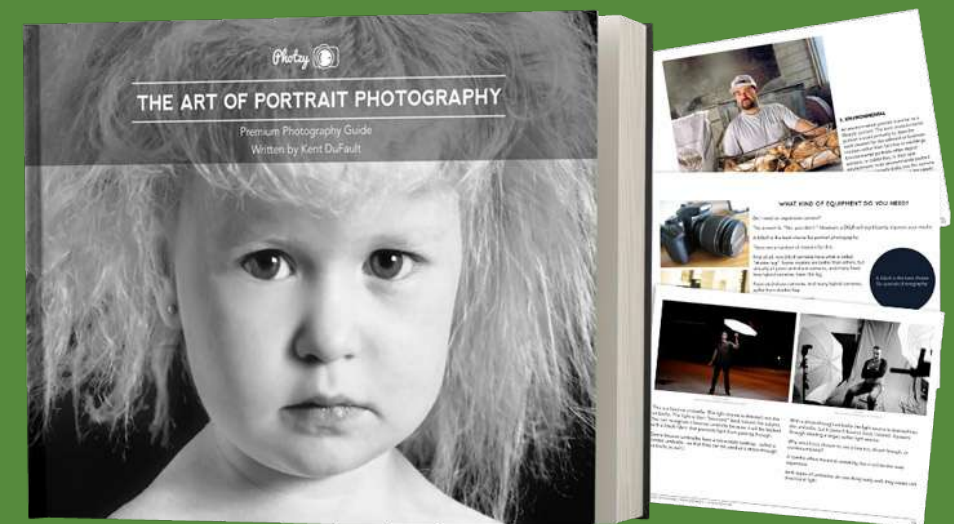
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