

# LEMONADE AND LENSES

*april | twenty fifteen*





PROFESSIONAL  
PHOTOGRAPHY PROPS  
*by darling baby shop*



*darling baby shop*  
www.DARLINGBABYSHOP.com

ALL IMAGES ©KERI MEYERS PHOTOGRAPHY  
WWW.KERIMEYERSPHOTOGRAPHY.COM

Lemonade and Lenses Issue 40  
April Twenty Fifteen

Back Image Photographer  
Emily Cunningham

Cover Photographer  
Kathleen Stivers  
Kathleen-Amelia.com  
@KathleenAmelia

Kathleen Amelia is a portrait and wedding photographer located in beautiful Humboldt County, California. She fell in love with photography after her father had given her the first camera she would ever own as a young adolescent. She is married to her loving husband of nine years, and they have two beautiful daughters together. Kathleen Amelia enjoys traveling, coffee, art, exploring new spaces, and spending time with her family. She is grateful to be given the opportunity to give the gift of photography to others.

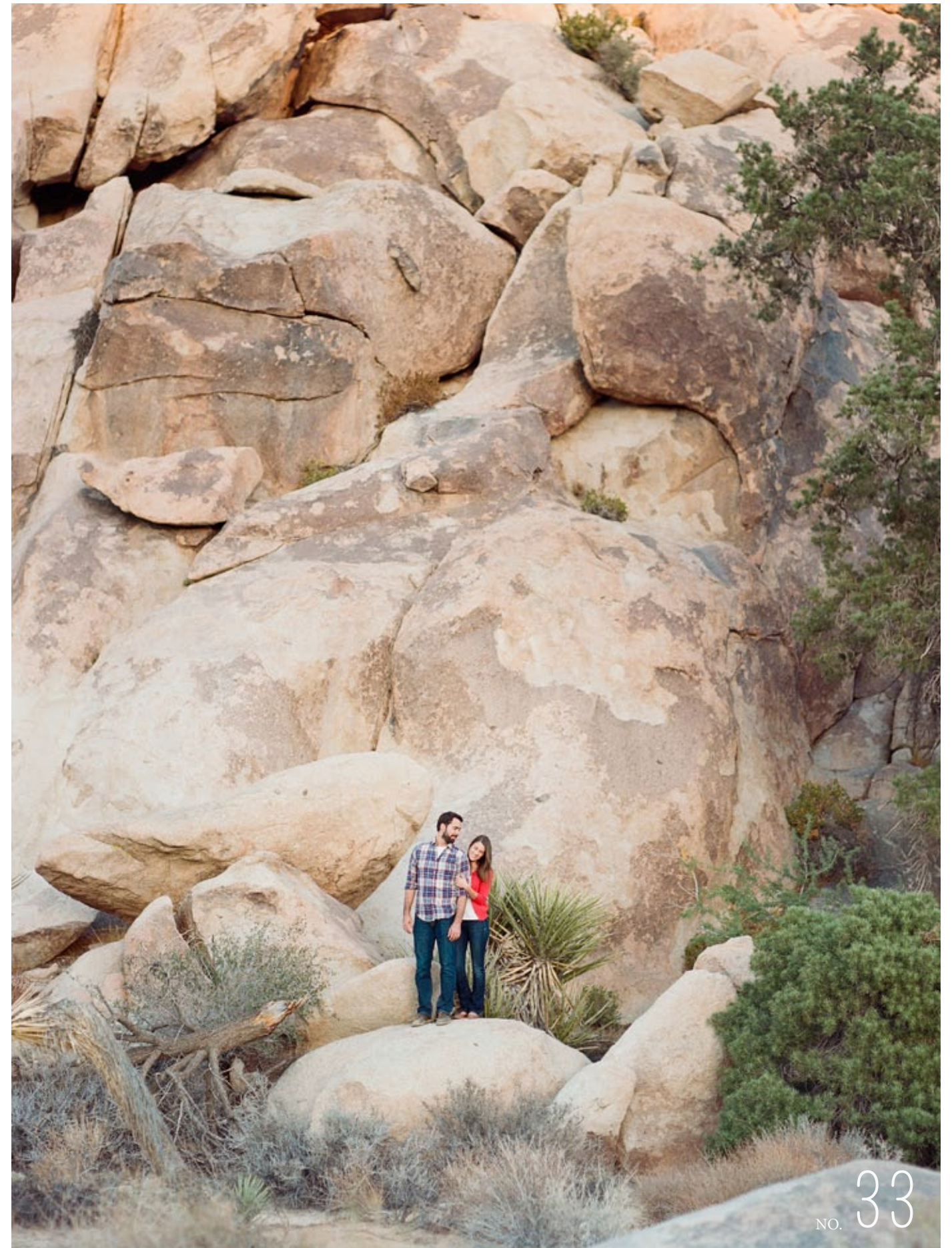
Connect  
LemonadeAndLenses.com | Hello@LemonadeAndLenses.com | @LemonadeAndLenses | #LemonadeAndLenses

© 2012 - 2015 Lemonade and Lenses, LLC

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the editor, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

Photos, text, trademarks, business names, product names, logos, and companies in this magazine are the property of the their respected owners. You may not modify, publish, transmit, display, participate in the transfer of sale, create derivative works, or in any way exploit the content of this Lemonade and Lenses Magazine Issue or any portion of it without prior written approval.

For permission requests write to the editor, addressed "Attention Lemonade and Lenses Permissions" at Hello@LemonadeAndLenses.com





07 THE ENGAGEMENT SESSION  
EXPERIENCE  
*Michelle Leach*

19 HOW TO GET NATURAL EMOTIONS  
FROM YOUR CLIENTS  
*Erin and Peter Krol*

33 EVERY COUPLE IS UNIQUE  
*Shane Hopkins*

45 MAKING ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS  
UNIQUE  
*Megan Cooper*

59 BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND  
GAINING TRUST  
*Ali Lauren Thompson*

71 WHAT TO WEAR  
*Emily Cunningham*

83 EVERYDAY MAGIC  
*Celeste Noche*



THE ENGAGEMENT SESSION EXPERIENCE

Michelle Leach



**W**hen I started my business two years ago, I struggled to find my niche. I fumbled my way through posing individuals like seniors and laughed as I rolled around on the ground trying to capture kiddos. I pride myself in being a wedding AND portrait photographer, but it wasn't until I started booking engagements and eventually weddings that I realized I'd come home.

Making my clients feel comfortable during our time together is of utmost importance to me. If my clients can laugh and have fun with me as well as love their images, then I feel like I am accomplishing my goal. Nine times out of 10, when I book an engagement session I'm booking their wedding too. So this is an opportunity to show your couple what you're made of as well as start the relationship off on the right foot.

Aside from having fun, I also value peace. When I'm shooting a wedding, I want photography to be one of the most peaceful experiences of their day. People will be pulling them in every direction, so if I can create a peaceful and private moment between the bride and groom, I do. If that is my end goal, I want to make sure in an engagement session that I am doing the same. Keep in mind, aside from an initial meeting (I usually conduct mine over coffee at a local shop) this is the first time this couple will be working with you. It's important to start off on a strong note and help build trust.

So, how do I get a couple to trust me? How do I get them to relax and have fun; to capture those natural connections they make with each other? Getting your picture taken can be daunting. My husband and I invest in our portraits every year, and the planning and preparation as well as stress that is involved is important for me to go through so I can experience what my couples go through. For all the reasons why posing loving couples is easy, it can be just as difficult dealing with two personalities.

I can control a lot of things about the session: the outfit options, lighting, location. One of the things I can't control is if the couple has an argument beforehand. This may sound like a silly step but I've captured more than one couple who has had a fight

before their session and it simply doesn't yield emotional, connected photos. So take it from me, in my last email contact before the engagement session I will usually send a little line like, "Try to remember this is going to be really fun. No need to stress or argue beforehand." I think that helps the couple keep in mind to be aware when stress is high, an argument can occur, and no one wants that.

I should also mention here that knowing your couples' boundaries is a must. There is nothing that will make a couple MORE uncomfortable than if you unknowingly cross a boundary. It's rare that I encounter a couple who has yet to kiss until their wedding day, but it has happened. Knowing something like that will affect my posing strategies, so I want to make sure I honor that.





Assuming your couple arrives happy and ready for their photos, their outfits look great, the lighting is perfect, and the location screams LOVE, you are ready to begin. I don't know how other photographers go about creating a comfortable environment, but if it's one thing I've learned, vulnerability breeds vulnerability.

I don't mind being vulnerable and having a laugh at my own expense. I've stored up several comical anecdotes over the years, all that have to do with my personal blunders or experiences. It really is that simple. You just need a few good stories that get people laughing and there's nothing funnier than a photographer who's had her fair share of embarrassing moments.

Once they're laughing and having fun, it really is all coasting from there. Keeping in mind that you're building a relationship with them, I also take this opportunity to ask key questions. I try to keep my posing simplistic and I let them do the work. I may ask them to face inwards and wrap each other up and have them whisper their favorite thing about their partner. Or I may stand them facing me, simply holding hands and sharing about the moment when they KNEW they'd be spending the rest of their lives together. The emotion you can capture simply by listening to them and waiting for that sweet smile towards each other at the end of a story is epic.

I think the engagement season can be full of to-do's and check-mark boxes for wedding planning, it's important that they get to take a deep breath and remember why they're doing this.





Sometimes a wedding can be about who's invited, the flavor of cake you're serving, or how beautiful your venue is but I want to remind them a wedding is first and foremost about their love for each other. I like for them to reflect and remember who they are as a couple and to feel comfortable being themselves.

I want my couples to walk away feeling like they had an experience with me. A fun, peaceful experience. I think it's important for every photographer to decide what his or her values are and act strategically in helping their clients experience those values. I believe when a photographer is confident in the goals and values they want to accomplish, you can work smarter and create a beautiful environment for your clients, as well as create images that you're proud of.

A successful engagement session also sets you up to capture their love on the wedding day, so I would encourage you not to think too lightly about photographing them in this season. Be strategic, have your values in place, get ready to laugh and learn who this couple is. Everyone has a story.





Michelle began Magnolia Adam's Photography back in the spring of 2013, naming her business after her two babies. Michelle married the man of her dreams on the 4th of July so they could celebrate with fireworks every year. She would say the best part about her job is the people she meets and getting to make them laugh. She loves to tell stories and capture those moments that will be talked about forever. Magnolia Adam's Photography values giving clients an experience versus just providing a service and focuses a lot of time getting to know brides and who they are.

[MagnoliaAdamsWeddings.com](http://MagnoliaAdamsWeddings.com)

[Facebook.com/MagnoliaAdamsPhotography](https://www.facebook.com/MagnoliaAdamsPhotography)

[@MagnoliaAdams](https://www.instagram.com/MagnoliaAdams)



# HOW TO GET NATURAL EMOTIONS FROM YOUR CLIENTS

Erin and Peter Krol



**W**e've all been there: our ideal couple, amazing location, perfect weather - and then we get there and our clients freeze up and get nervous, and it's like photographing a brick wall. We've heard a number of fellow photographers blame the clients or say that they were just having an 'off' day, but let's be honest, a big part of the problem with not getting natural emotion from your clients is usually us as the photographer and it can usually be prevented! These are just a few of the things that we have done that have really worked for us over the last few years and we hope some of them may help you, too!

## EVERYTHING BEGINS BEFORE YOU EVEN TOUCH YOUR CAMERA

One of the best ways to get natural emotions from your clients is to interact with them during the session, and you can't do that very well if you don't know them. It's always easier to chat with someone or joke around with them if you know their personality and their sense of humor, so make sure you begin getting to know them through emails or phone calls or coffee dates early on! I can tell you from experience - during our first year of business I made the mistake of not getting to know someone well enough prior to the session and I said something during a session that I thought was hilarious and they definitely didn't think it was funny. Talk about awkward! Make sure you know your clients!



## PREPARE YOUR CLIENTS FOR THEIR SESSION

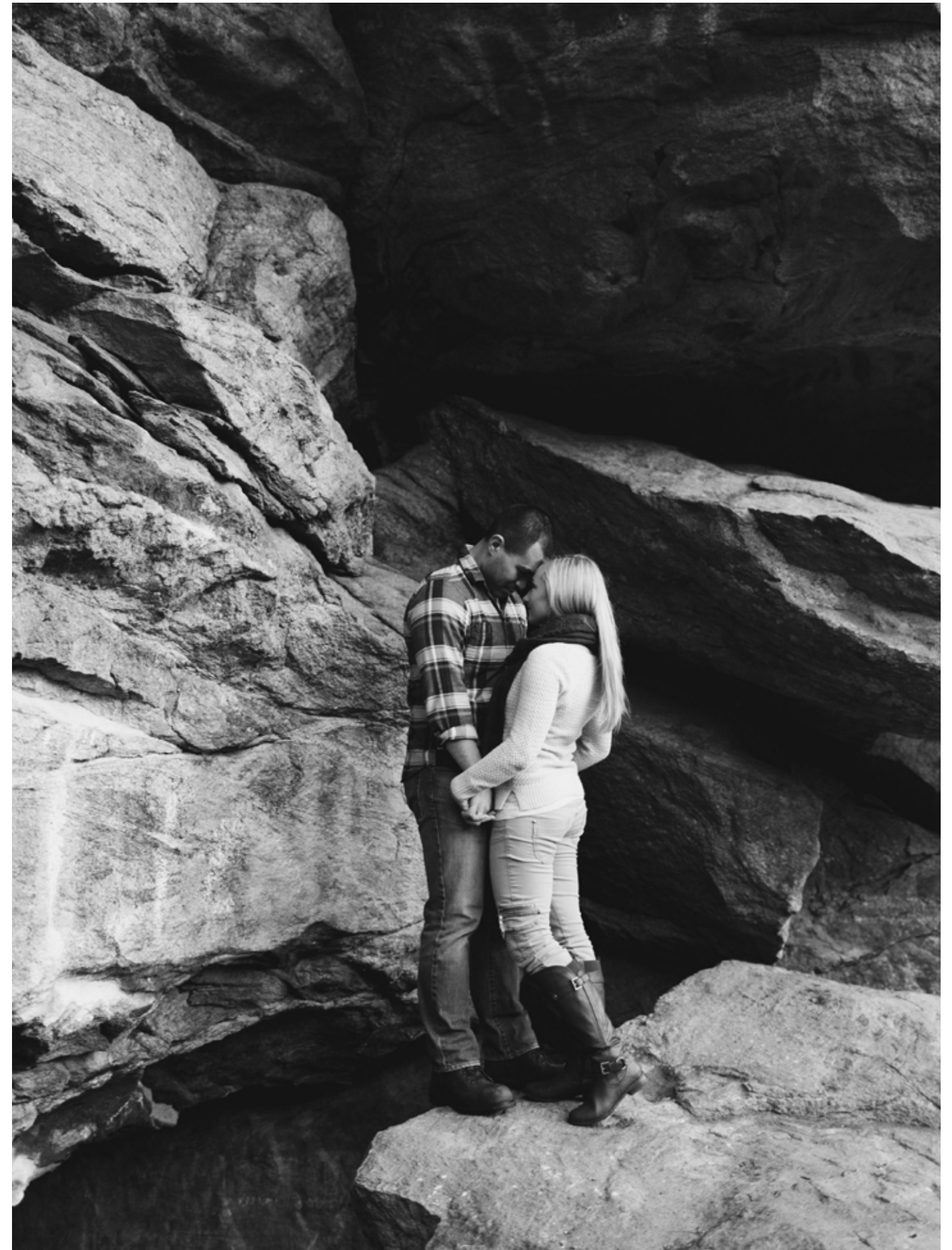
This isn't necessarily something you would think of when you think of 'Getting Natural Emotion,' but trust us, it's important! The more prepared your clients are, the more comfortable they will be at their session, and the more comfortable they are at their session, the more natural they will look and feel. You may think that you're being repetitive or telling them something that isn't necessary, but they probably want to know whatever it is. Confirm the location again, help them with wardrobe, tell them that they will feel awkward, but that everyone does; just reassure them everything will be great!

## WARM YOUR CLIENTS UP

Every time we begin an engagement session we start with a few actions and movements that we know we might not use when we're culling the session, but will get the clients comfortable and moving. Whether that's just walking toward us and away from us while holding hands, or slow dancing and laughing with each other, giving them an action to focus on will get them used to being in front of the camera and ready for the rest of the session. Another bonus to this is that chances are they will feel ridiculous, which will make them laugh, and who doesn't want laughter during an engagement session?!

## BE EXCITED!

If you come to a session tired or nervous, your clients will be able to tell, we promise. If you come to the session happy and excited, your clients will become happy and excited no matter how nervous they are! Keep the mood light and fun! Your mood and your attitude will directly affect your session, so stay





positive and express how excited you are to work with them! Talk about how awesome the weather is, talk about how amazing they look, make them happy to be there with you! Along these same lines - RELAX! When you relax, you will put your clients at ease.

#### DIRECT, DON'T POSE

The purpose of an engagement session (aside from save the dates or a new profile picture) is to have fun and get pictures that show your clients' love! As photographers of couples in love, we like to capture moments that look like they were going to happen, whether we were there to capture them or not. We have found that when we give clients a pose to do - stand here, put your hands there, look that way, smile - they become tense



and nervous. They focus so much on what they're 'supposed' to do that they forget about why they're with us in the first place! When we give them directions - get cozy, talk to each other, cuddle - they are free to be themselves and have fun. A lot of times we will tell them where to sit or stand or which direction to walk so they have a place to start, but then we will just give them little directions like 'get close' or 'snuggle' so that they can interpret it whatever way they want and make it personal to them as a couple. From there, we will just say 'turn your face towards us a little more' or 'hold each other a little tighter!' Directing them gives them much more freedom than posing does. One thing to keep in mind is to make sure that if you're not giving them a pose to do that you give them plenty of direction, otherwise it's pretty much a guarantee that they will be lost and confused and lose confidence. If we see any shyness or uncertainty creeping into the session, we will decide what we want to happen next and act it out ourselves. This is easy for us because we're married and it may seem like it wouldn't make that much of an impact on anyone, but the thing that relaxes our couples is that Peter acts out the part of the girl and pretends I'm the guy and he looks hilarious doing it! He will also over dramatize it a little bit so that they laugh, and then I will tell them that they can't possibly look as ridiculous as he does which always gives them a little boost of confidence. If you don't work with your spouse or someone else and you're not sure you can act out a pose on your own, you can also act it out on your clients. If you're a guy it's always funny to cozy up to your male client and if you're a girl, grab on to that lady! Its super awkward and totally unexpected but they'll be laughing about it for the next little while so you'll be able to get plenty of natural emotions. This leads us to our next one.

## DON'T BE AFRAID TO MAKE A FOOL OF YOURSELF

Be goofy! Be silly! We make fools of ourselves all the time because that's who we are. We make it pretty clear from our social media and blog that we are lighthearted and fun people, so our clients know what they're getting into from the start. We're constantly laughing with each other and with our clients at meetings, so they know that at their session, that's how it's going to be, too. Don't take yourself too seriously, because your clients will feel like it's all business and they won't be comfortable enough with you to open up.

## PRAISE YOUR CLIENTS

This is something that even we forget to do sometimes. If they're doing something you like, tell them! If they're doing



something you don't think is that great, say something like 'that looks awesome, but can you just move over this way a little?' Telling them exactly what they're doing that you like or what you need from them will give them confidence, which brings out their personalities more. Once they're feeling confident they will be having fun and giving you plenty of smiles and laughs!

## BE CONVERSATIONAL

One of the best things about engagement sessions is that you have time. Time to talk, time to laugh, time to relax. It's not a wedding day, where there are crazy planners wondering where the bride and the photographer went, and guests wanting to take the couples attention away. Spend the session chatting with your couple! Ask them about wedding plans, honeymoon plans,





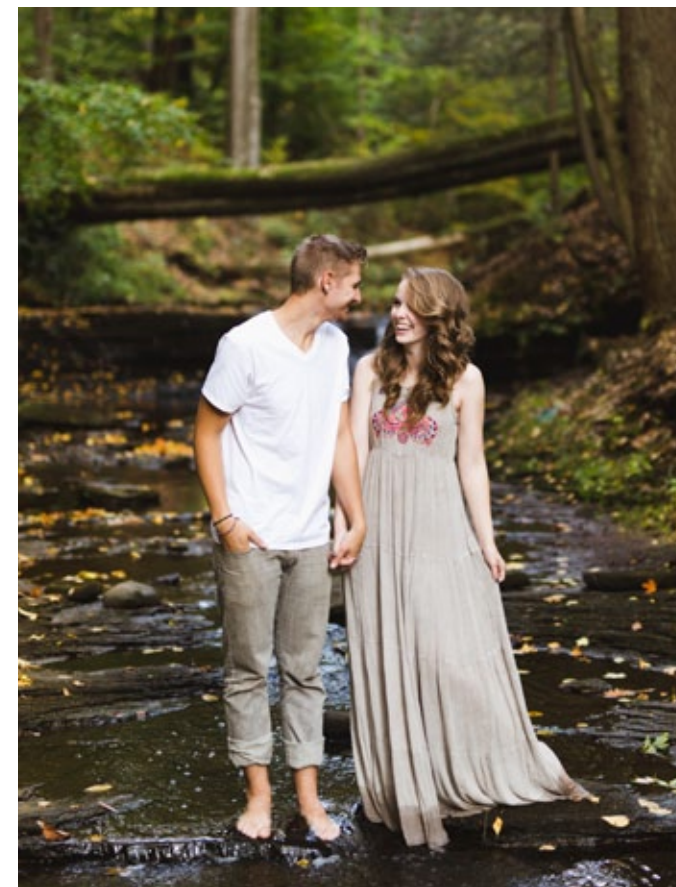
hopes and fears for the wedding. If you're giving them something else to think about, they will be able to relax their bodies and not be stiff and uncomfortable. You can also ask them non-wedding related questions! How they met, the most embarrassing thing that happened while they were dating, etc. Chances are at least one of their stories will be funny and they'll be laughing and looking at each other, knowing some inside jokes that they're not sharing.

Another thing that we'd like to point out is that when we say natural, authentic emotion, we don't only mean laughing and smiling, even though that's what the bulk of our article is about. It can also mean a quiet moment between the two of them. One way we do this without having it look fake or cheesy is to give them something to do (stand here with your arms

around each other and foreheads together) and then have them quietly talk to each other. A lot of times they will naturally close their eyes because of the intimacy of having their heads so close together or they will kiss without us telling them to. This always produces the best smiles too, we don't know why!

If all else fails and we just can't get our clients to laugh (which is rare), we will tell the guy to wrap his arms around his lady and whisper something dirty in her ear (always gets a good laugh), or we will tell them to give us their biggest, most fake laugh which is always completely ridiculous, but is immediately followed by a real, genuine laugh because they know how crazy it was.

We also tell them awful photography jokes: "What did Cinderella say after having her picture taken?;" "Someday my prints will come."



If you have a story that relates to being photographed, be sure to tell them! I once had a fairly famous photographer tell me that I looked like I was going to pass out when she was photographing me. Not exactly flattering, but it made both Peter and myself crack up and we relaxed so much more after that.

We know that not everyone has the same approach to photography as we do, but now that we've given you some of our methods for authentic emotions, try them out! See what works and what doesn't, and remember that not every client responds to the same things. Above all, remember that you're doing what you love and giving your couples something that they will always have to remember this time in their lives. How amazing is that?!





Daphne and Dean (a.k.a. Erin and Peter) are a newly married couple based in Connecticut who love photographing love stories! They met and fell in love over photography and decided to start a business together shortly thereafter, which turned out to be the best decision of their lives. Their business is built on being more than just a vendor on a wedding day. They strive to build relationships and make the entire process fun and simple. When they're not photographing super cute couples they love geocaching, mountain biking, playing board games, and snuggling their orange, exotic, short hair kitten. Follow along with their adventures on Facebook or Instagram!

[DaphneAndDean.com](http://DaphneAndDean.com)

[Facebook.com/DaphneAndDean](https://www.facebook.com/DaphneAndDean)

[@DaphneAndDeanPhoto](https://www.instagram.com/DaphneAndDeanPhoto)



love your lab!



Your clients deserve the best. Let us provide you with the tools, products and support that you deserve!

# EVERY COUPLE IS UNIQUE

Shane Hopkins





I would assume that most photographers prepare for a shoot in a similar way: charging batteries, formatting cards, packing up all their gear, and thinking about the location where they are shooting. But one thing that is often overlooked is thinking about the couple you will be working with. The couple is the most important part of the equation, so why don't we spend more time thinking about them beforehand?

I believe the reason is that most of us get too comfortable in our ways. We have our “go to” poses that work most of the time and maybe even our “go to” one-liners that get the couple to laugh, but what if we approached the shoot differently? What if we really took time to understand the couple? Not just the basics, like how they met, what their interests are, or what they do for a living. What if instead we focused on the real relational and interpersonal hints we can pick up on that give us insight into them as individuals and, more importantly, them as a couple? If we really understand their personalities, how they interact with each other, whether they are shy or outgoing, then we will be able to connect with them on a different level and get them to interact in a true and natural way.

So, how do we do this? I believe the answer is through observation. One thing that makes a truly great photographer is their ability to observe their subjects and know what to do with the information they gather. Whether it is scoping out an awesome location or watching and anticipating the little moments that happen on a wedding day, we are observing what is in front of us all the time. So how do we use this skill to connect with a couple during a shoot? If you take the first 10-15 minutes of a shoot to really focus and observe, you will gain a huge amount of insight about them as individuals and as a couple.

My wife and I usually show up to an engagement shoot about 10-15 minutes early, park, unpack our gear, and walk over to the meeting spot. A few minutes later the couple arrives, parks, and walks towards us. This might sound standard and not meaningful, but those first few minutes when the couple walks towards us, I can learn a lot about them before the first “hello.” Did they get out and immediately embrace (this one is my

favorite, you know its going to be a good shoot!)? Did they hold hands? Did they touch at all? Are they talking and laughing? You get the point. There is so much to be learned about a couple from simply watching them walk towards you.

The first 5-10 minutes of an engagement shoot are typically a little awkward. The couple is nervous and doesn't know what to expect, unless you get lucky and have a couple that models on the weekends (sarcastic of course, this never happens!). Even though there may not be a ton of keepers in those first few minutes of shooting, this time is so important. For us, we are taking this time to really observe them (and talk to them) to see what their personalities are like and how they are interacting with each other. We are looking for things like: are they smiling and laughing a lot; if one of them is more shy than the other; are they a “touchy feely” kind of couple or more reserved?





All of these little tidbits that we pick up on help guide us through the rest of the shoot. This information may help us determine what poses will make sense for them and what we may have them do during the shoot. For example, if they seem adventurous, we'll probably take them to off the beaten path, maybe climb some rocks, or have them trek through tall grass for an awesome shot. If they don't seem as adventurous then we will keep the session more low key and more within their comfort zone. By tailoring the session to each couple's personalities it helps foster the most natural images.

Another observation we might make in the first few minutes of a shoot is that one of them is a little shy. Being shy can come in a couple forms: camera shy, affection shy, or just an all around shy person. Let's say the girl is camera shy and specifically tells

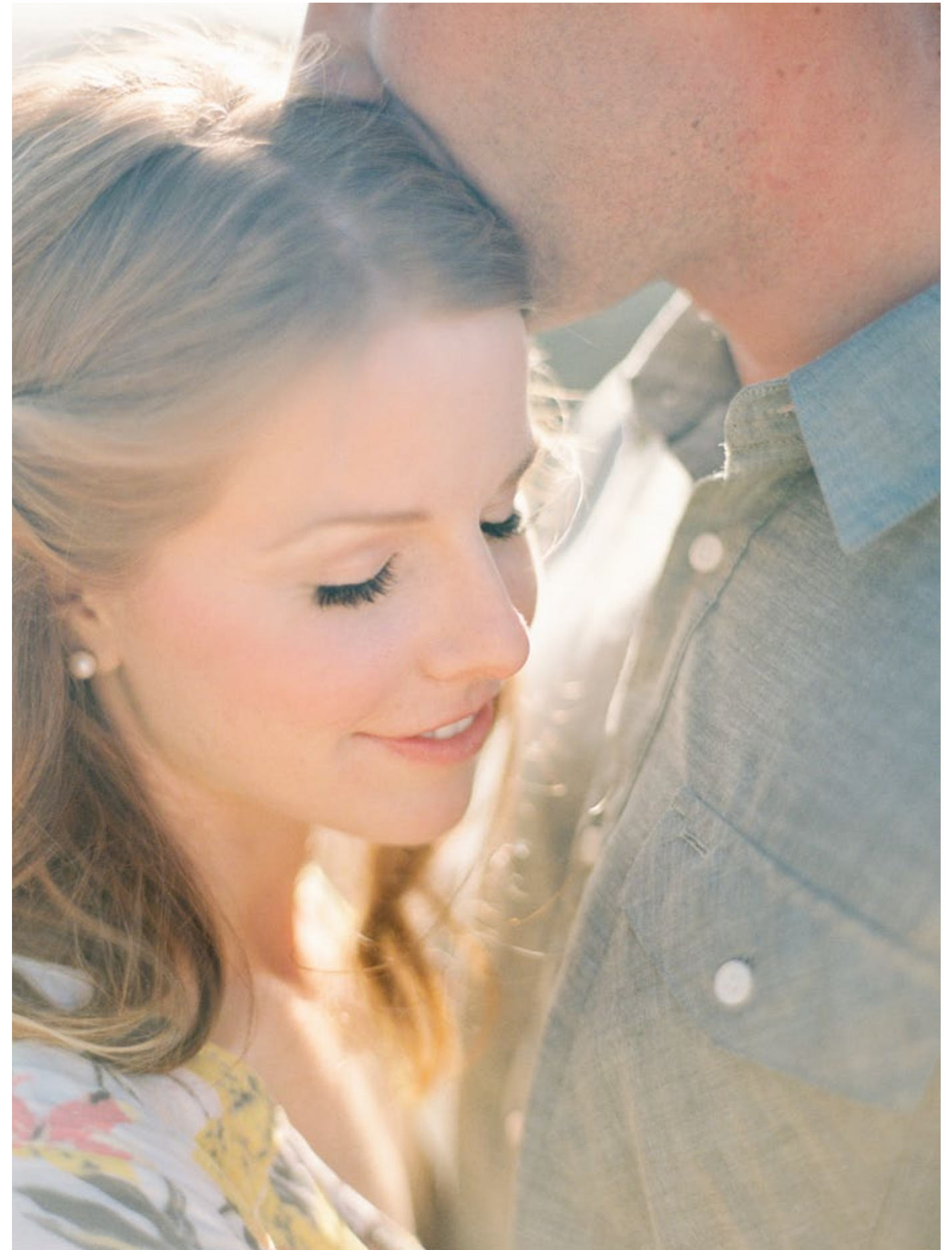
you she dodges The camera at all costs! This can be a little bit of a challenge when you are trying to take photos, right? However, that's her personality and it should be reflected in the photographs in an artful way, because it's who she is. If you don't take the time to observe her and think about who she is then you might just put them in your favorite pose and hope it works (we are definitely guilty of this). However, there are so many things you can do to make her feel comfortable. You can shoot long focal lengths; try putting on your 135mm lens and standing back, to help her feel as if you're not there. If you do want to get a closer, more intimate shot, have her in a pose where she is behind the guy a little bit. She might see this as a shield or buffer to the camera and will hopefully be a little more comfortable. These are just a few examples of how you can make her feel at ease, express who she is, and still get awesome images.



I think these skills of observing and understanding people are so important to your job as a photographer. They are way more valuable than anything you can learn about f-stops and shutter speeds. These skills might not come naturally, but I doubt when you first picked up a camera you were making mind-blowing images. So, much like we had to practice using our camera to get more familiar with how they function, we should practice these skills of understanding people. It is so easy to practice. Just go somewhere, anywhere and watch people (try not to make it weird though!). The next time you're at the grocery store watch a couple that is shopping together. Are they holding hands and kissing on each other or do they have a list and are all business with no time for affection? If you're grabbing a cup of coffee, look around and see if you spot any couples. How are they sitting with each other? Are they close or

on opposite sides of the table? These little things can help you learn so much about people and how they interact, which will help you strengthen this skill as a photographer.

Some of this may seem so simple and maybe even obvious, but sometimes I will look at a gorgeous image, where the lighting is perfect and the couple looks amazing, but it is missing something for me. That "something" is almost always emotion or connection, which is the reason I believe learning to understand people is so important to photographing couples. It's a work in progress and something we are constantly trying to improve on, but learning this skill has truly helped us connect with our couples and gets them to interact in a real and authentic way.





Shane & Lauren Photography are a husband and wife wedding and portrait photography team based out of southern California. They are hybrid photographers, shooting with both film and digital mediums. Their roots and teachings in film photography have given them a love and passion for images that are clean and true to their natural colors. They are inspired by nature and try to spend as much time outdoors as possible. In the off season you'll likely find them up in the mountains enjoying family time with their two young daughters.

[ShaneAndLauren.com](http://ShaneAndLauren.com)

[Facebook.com/ShaneAndLauren](https://www.facebook.com/ShaneAndLauren)

[@ShaneAndLaurenPhoto](https://www.instagram.com/ShaneAndLaurenPhoto)



MAKING ENGAGEMENT  
SESSIONS UNIQUE

Megan Cooper



Unlike wedding photographs, which celebrate the beautiful events of the day, engagement pictures can tell a couple's story in a more creative, relaxed way. They bring to life a couple's love journey and highlight the relationship's personality. Is it playful, spiritual, or thoughtful? What is the quiet love language that is spoken through gentle glances, small touches, and secret smiles? The photographs illuminate the answers.





Before the couple's story can be told, another relationship must be developed between me, as their the photographer, and the couple. During our first meeting, it's important that I share with the clients my philosophy and style as they relate to photography. It's then time for the dialogue to turn to the couple. How did they meet? What are their shared interests? What is the engagement story? How do they describe their relationship?

#### CHOOSING A LOCATION

Gone are the days when engagement sessions were held in front of heavy studio drapery with the couple teetering on uncomfortable stools. Choosing the right location, be it indoors

or out, is an essential element in revealing another layer of the couple's relationship and personality.

The Twin Cities area provides many scenic urban and pastoral venues for an engagement session. In Minneapolis and St. Paul I frequently utilize historical architecture, museum spaces, lake vistas, and green space juxtaposed with urban textures. A short drive outside of the cities provides rural elements and natural settings, creating a rustic and natural tenor.

Couples often offer perfect location choices to serve as backdrops to their photo story. Selections signify memorable events or are reflective of the relationship - from the coffee



shop where they got engaged to a small airport to represent a destination wedding and love of travel to an ice cream parlor, which was the scene of the first date. Each engagement session is an enjoyable time for me, as I see the couple's personalities and relationship emerge through their choice of location.

When scheduling the shoot, timing really is everything. I consider the site's natural light conditions. For example, in urban shoots, taller buildings and structures can block the sun, prematurely contributing to darker light. In the summer, the "golden hour" is from 7-9 p.m., so seasonal changes come into play, too.

#### WHAT TO WEAR

Once the engagement session location is established, I

encourage couples to carefully consider the attire for the shoot. To inspire the couple's choices, I create a story board which visually conveys how I envision the session's set up and format. I recommend at least two types of outfits, reflecting a casual and formal tenure, which are colorful and feature different textures. Couples should avoid bold patterns and on-trend clothing can date the photograph. I recommend choosing the styles around a color scheme, while cautioning "Coordinate, don't match outfits." Engaged adults shouldn't look like young siblings posing for an annual holiday card.

Beyond outfits, some couples bring accessories - hats, heirloom jewelry, ties, and shoes, for example. Setting the stage for an engagement session requires layering. The couple and setting are the primary layers, while accessories that are reflective





of the couple's personalities, style, or love journey add the finishing touch.

#### USE OF PROPS

The next step centers on making the session comfortable, fun, and memorable for the clients. It's important to make the couple feel like they are a part of the entire process. To that end, I encourage clients to bring items to the session that have special meaning for them. Bringing their own props facilitates making the session a personal experience, allowing them to be creative and their personalities to emerge.

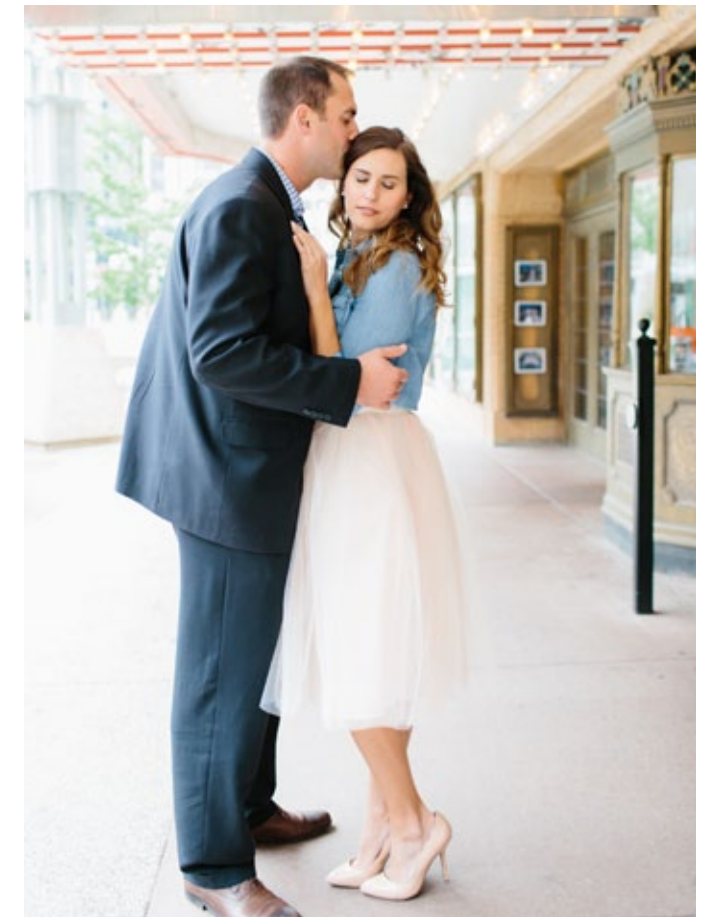
A couple who became engaged across the finish line of their first marathon brought running shoes and marathon medals. One couple selected a guitar, which the groom-to-be plays for

his fiancée, and many clients bring picnic set up, including favorite culinary elements. Pets, specifically dogs, are often included as props. They bring a natural element of spontaneity to the session, resulting in some of the most candid photos.

While props can add to a session, they can also take away from the significance of the engagement photo. I caution clients against using too many props or utilizing elements that "take over" the scene. Props should highlight, not be the spotlight.

#### MAKING CONNECTIONS

To create a relaxed atmosphere, I engage the couple in small talk to set them at ease while I am setting up or shooting. As the couple relaxes and focuses less on their nervousness, I am able to catch more of the essence of their relationship. As I give



suggestions on where to place an arm or where to look, it often gets the couple to focus on each other and that is when I can get the most genuine, candid pictures.

There's a balance in the way I interact with the couples and that is often driven by the clients. In some cases, more verbal interaction is necessary to guide the couple through the session. Other times, I find that a quiet presence works well when I notice the couple is "in a moment" or seem to have a natural ease in front of the camera.

Making a solid first connection can go a long way in fostering a lasting relationship, business- or friendship-wise. Many clients have subsequently hired me to document their lives through maternity, newborn, and family photos. Because clients put

their trust in me to capture those irreplaceable moments in family life, I value our relationship and feel honored to count many of them as friends.





In 2010 Megan launched Meg Cooper Photography, leaving her corporate graphic design career to pursue her passion - using her love of photography to capture the most important moments in the lives of couples and families. Educated as a graphic artist and armed with an innate creative perspective, Megan delved into learning everything she could about photography, including equipment and photographic styles. Harnessing her talent and passion for art allowed Megan to develop her own style, leading to her work being featured in several regional wedding magazines and wedding blog sites. She specializes in natural light engagement, wedding, and lifestyle photography. Megan lives in the Twin Cities area with her husband, John, their children, Madison and Wesley, and the family's rescue dog, Duncan

[MegCooperPhotography.com](http://MegCooperPhotography.com)

[Facebook.com/MegCooperPhotography](https://www.facebook.com/MegCooperPhotography)

[@MegCooperPhotography](https://www.instagram.com/MegCooperPhotography)



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND  
GAINING TRUST

Ali Lauren Thompson



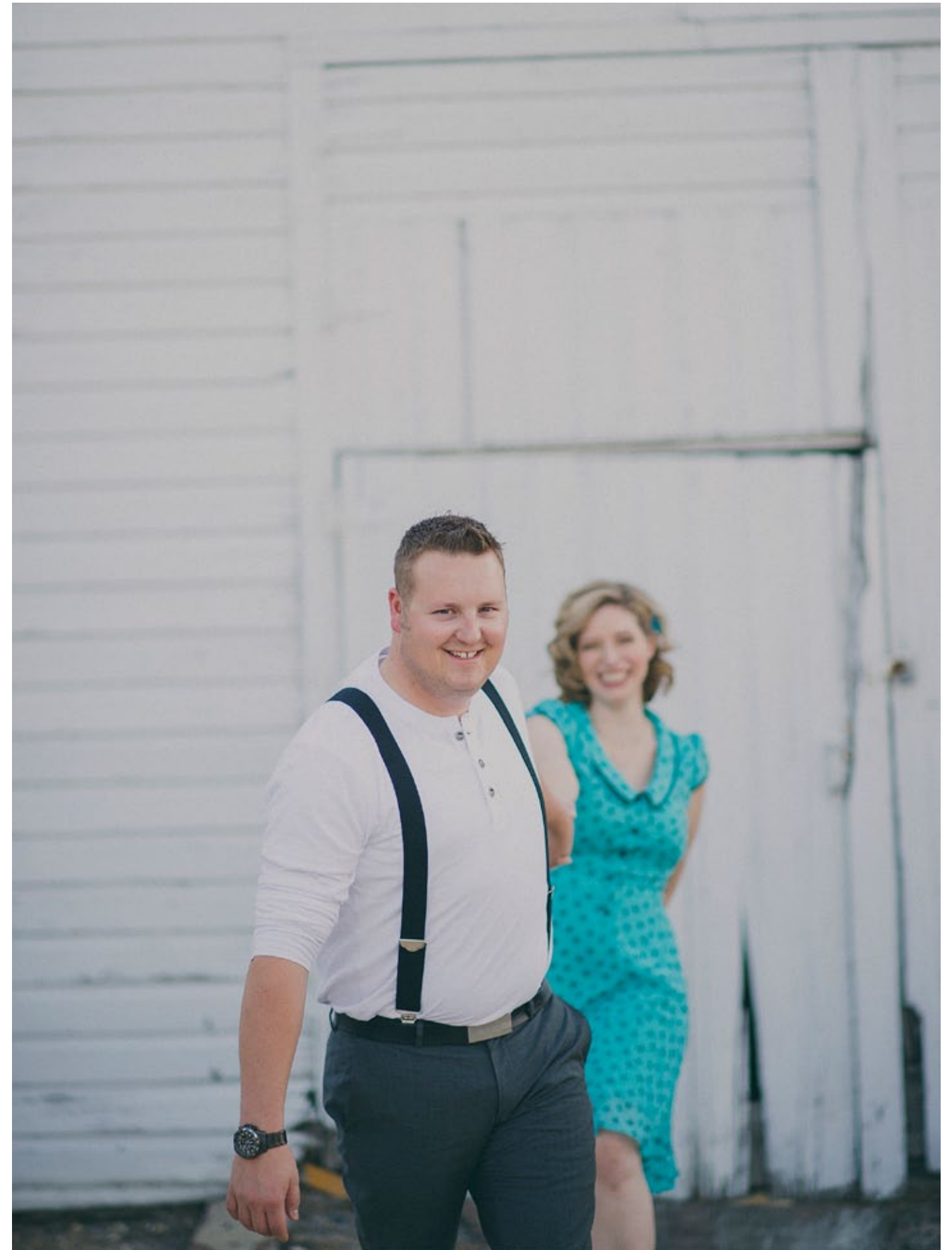
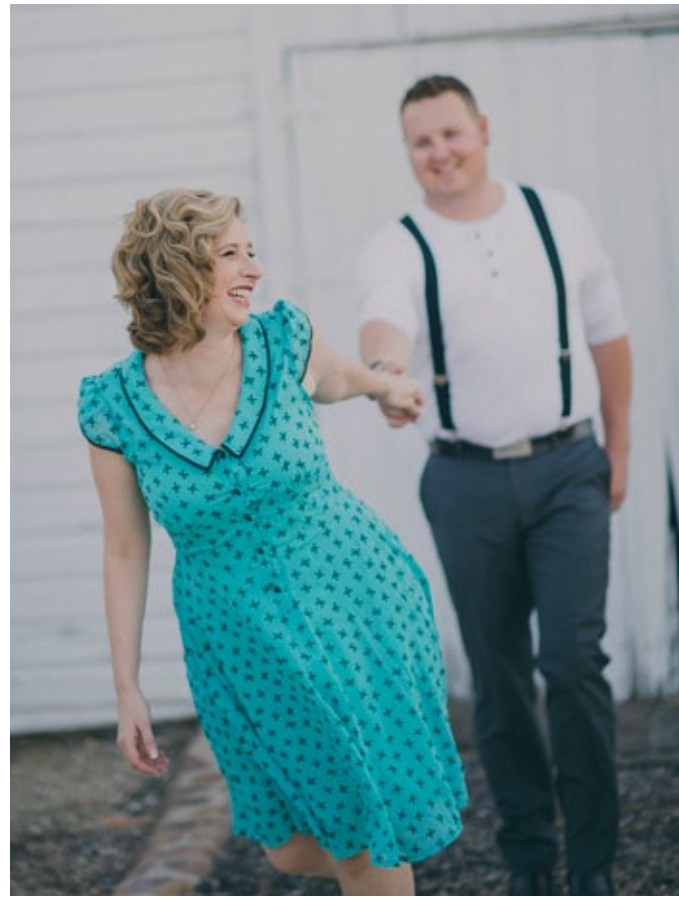
**F**lowers are ordered, vows are written, decor is placed with love and care, the perfect dress is found and purchased, and you, their photographer, are asked to document every special moment as each couple's wedding day unfolds. And, while capturing the details is inevitable, it's the love they are vowing to each other that every wedding photographer strives to document. It's the smile that steals his face at the first glimpse of his soon-to-be-wife and the way her thumbs gently caress his hand while they stand at the alter and pledge their forevers. Those moments, those looks, they are the details we need to record to tell the story that our couples will share with their loved ones for years to come.



A seasoned photographer will confidently say they are able to capture those stolen glances and true smiles without photographing their couples prior to the wedding day, but there are steps we can take beforehand to ensure this happens with ease.

I have changed my packages and pricing numerous times over the years. I have altered what they will include and how everything will play out, but the one thing I've done my best to be consistent with is to always encourage an engagement session with my wedding clients prior to their wedding day. I have had many clients inquire about my reasoning and I have a well-prepared speech as to why I feel an engagement session is one of the most important pieces to achieving beautiful images on their wedding day.

I have found that the time I spend with my clients during their engagement session allows for growth in our relationship, which inevitably makes the wedding day feel more like you're working with friends rather than strangers. It grants me permission to watch for and learn the difference between their nervous smiles and their happy smiles. It presents me with the opportunity to learn if he's a "blinker" and catch that cute look she gives him after they kiss. It allows me to, hopefully, convince the clients who "hate having their photo taken" that it isn't as bad as pulling teeth and that it can actually be a lot of fun if they trust the process. It has taken me many years of trial and error and I'm still learning every day, but I've come up with some things that will help both us as photographers and your clients through the entire process.





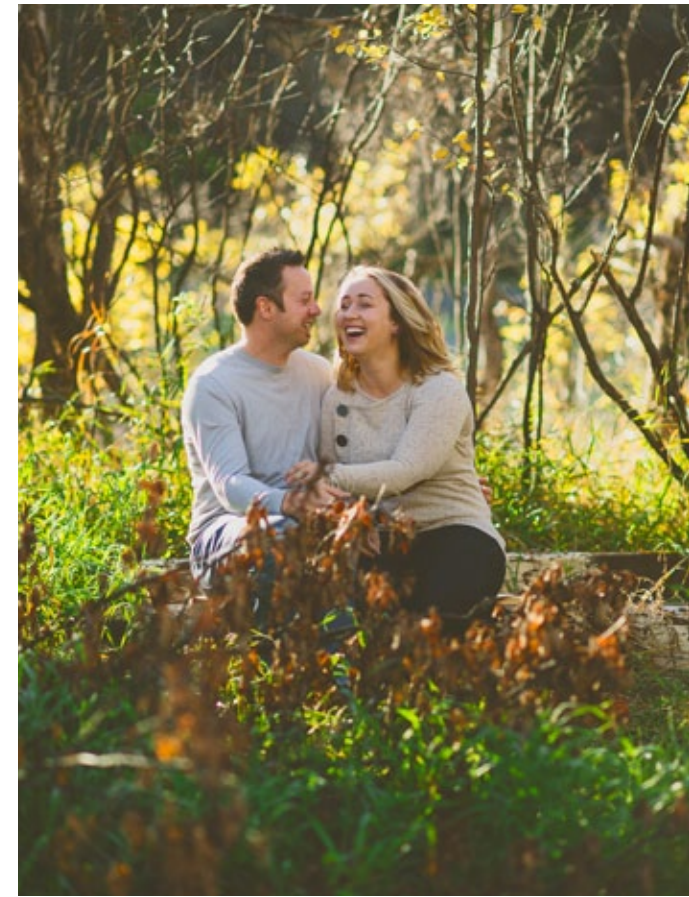
Before you even start to exercise your trigger finger, fill your clients in on what they can expect. While this undoubtedly isn't your first rodeo, it likely is theirs. Informing your clients about everything will take place and what they can expect will answer any questions they may be too embarrassed to ask and help them feel like you're all in this together. I've created a page right on my website with general information about my engagement sessions and what clients can expect, but this can be done through a phone conversation or mailed correspondence. The information I've prepared for my wedding clients includes everything from how long the session will take to reminders that their hands and that gorgeous engagement ring will be photographed to a Pinterest board with outfit inspiration if they feel they need it. I direct my clients to this page before their engagement session and always encourage them to ask me any questions they might have.

This next point will be an example of "I should follow my own advice," but something I've contemplated for quite some time and know others have found success in is a questionnaire. I feel that the more simple you make this, the better, but it has the potential to give you some great material to work with throughout your engagement session and beyond. An example of some questions you could ask your clients would be: You're being spontaneous and planning a date on the fly, what do you two do? Where is your dream vacation and why? What is your favourite memory together as a couple? What makes you smile? A few simple questions like this will give insight into who they are as a couple and why they fell in love with one another.

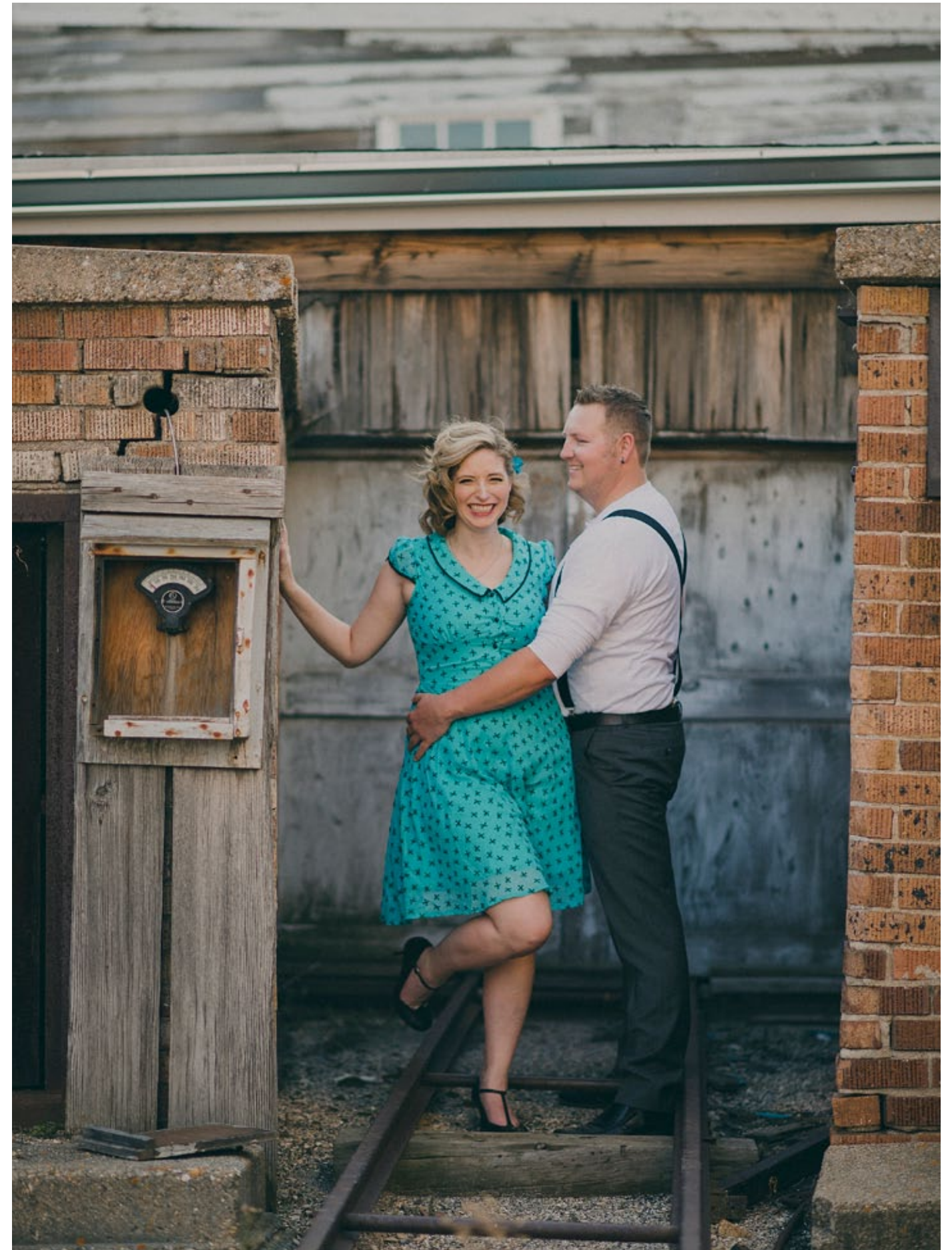
When the time comes for me to meet up with my clients for their engagement session, I always do my best to explain what we'll be doing, where we'll be shooting, and what they



can expect as we go through the shoot. I always ask my clients to do their best to trust the process and try to have fun with it. Give your couples permission to love each other, hug, kiss, giggle; some will open up immediately, simply because they've been given permission to. While you're shooting, guide your clients through posing and body placement as organically as possible and always let them know they are free to rearrange themselves if they're uncomfortable. If they cuddle into each other or say something to make their partner laugh, be sure to let them know they are doing a wonderful job. If they've pulled each other into a great pose tell them how beautiful it looks. I've found encouragement and reassurance eases many out of their shells and toward the end of the session, they've become natural models, their confidence is elevated, and you have some beautiful portraits to share with them.



As wedding photographers we often spend more time with our couples on their big day than anyone else will. Our couples pledge themselves to one another and we are entrusted with documenting those intimate moments. I feel it's the time we spend with our wedding couples at their engagement session where our relationship and that trust truly begins to form its roots. And, as with all things organic, that relationship will require warmth, commitment, and nurturing to blossom into something beautiful.





Ali Lauren is an animal-loving, tea-drinking, novel-reading nerd. She is wife to one of the most amazing men you will ever meet and proud mother to four beautiful (but often smelly) fur babies. Her savings are spent on world travel, vintage books, over-priced Starbucks drinks, and the best dark chocolate she can get her hands on. She loves Edgar Allan Poe and Angela Lansbury a bit more than one should probably admit to and often turns to their work for comfort and inspiration.

[AliLauren.com](http://AliLauren.com)

[Facebook.com/AliLauren](https://www.facebook.com/AliLauren)

[@AliLauren](https://www.instagram.com/AliLauren)

# WHAT TO WEAR

Emily Cunningham



**T**his article is written for use by the couple when talking about engagement shoots. Photographers can use the same ideals when talking with their couples before an engagement shoot, so take what advice is given and put it to use in your business!





Booking the perfect engagement photographer is the first step to gorgeous photos. A million thoughts start running through your head. What should I wear? How should I wear it? While it can be a nerve-racking task for some, there are key things to consider while choosing the perfect look.

#### OUTFIT

You want your environment to speak for itself. In order to do that, it is best to bring several outfits for your engagement session. You want to appear as though you fit into your surroundings. You don't want to look out of place. Also, it is important that you dress for the appropriate season. Bring multiple options and pieces that you can layer or mix and match. It is also a good idea to bring both a casual and a dressy option. It will be nice for you to have pictures of both, seeing as

though you wear both casual and dressy styles in your everyday life. If you only want to wear one outfit, then having layers is key! That way you can easily take off a sweater or jacket to change your look just a bit.

#### COMFORT

Throughout your session, comfort and confidence is key. As they say, feel comfortable in your own skin. Try to relax and enjoy this moment. You do not want to be tugging and pulling at your shirt or your pants during the shoot. Doing so takes time and focus away from your session. You want to be able to focus on taking direction from your photographer and spending time with your fiancé. Doing an engagement session is a great way to make you feel comfortable and confident prior to taking photos on your wedding day! They are a blast and you want to enjoy it, so you want to feel and look your best.



#### STYLE

Show your personal style in your pictures! If you love to wear elaborate necklaces or fun bracelets, wear them! Dress as you usually would. Styles that you love but have never worn may not come together the way you hoped. Not every style works for every person. If you wear a style for the first time in your pictures, it may show. If you see a new style that you like, play around with it before your engagement shoot. Wear it, ask for opinions, and feel it out. If it works, it works. If it doesn't, change it up!

## COORDINATION

While you want to coordinate with your fiancé, you don't want to wear matching outfits. Wearing the same color can cause the two of you to blend together in your pictures. Conflicting patterns can also be make the photos too busy. So make sure you try the outfits together. Each of you can find different aspects of your outfits that compliment each other. This mixture of personal styles will create the perfect combination.

## DRESS FOR YOUR BODY TYPE

This is something that takes time for some to learn. You can easily flatter your body type if you find the right pieces. Different necklines and fits can change the entire look of your body. They can minimize or maximize certain features. Different jeans, dresses, or skirts can also dramatically change

the look of your waist or your legs. The same applies with tops, as different lengths can help give you a more appealing look. Work with what you have! By taking the time to both research and try on different types of clothing, you will surely find the perfect outfits for your body.

## MAKEUP

The best piece of advice I can give you is not to overdo it. Lots of brides-to-be want to have a more dramatic look in pictures, so they use products and colors that they have never used before. As mentioned in the style section, doing something for the first time is never a good idea. You want to look like yourself in the pictures and you want to make sure that you aren't giving off the wrong vibe. Accentuate features such as your eyes and cheekbones, so they stand out in pictures. Make







them pop! Bold eyes and eyelashes are always a fun and easy way to really play up your look. If you have your makeup done professionally, don't be alarmed when your stylist has finished your makeup, as you may feel that it is too much. Having a little more makeup on is okay, it will all balance out in the photos. If you are not a makeup person, don't worry. Something as simple as a soft lip color will give you a new look.

#### HAIR

Although some of you may not want to spend the money, getting your hair done is something that I would suggest. It ensures that you will love the way it looks and I guarantee that your stylist will make sure that it stays the way you want it. Let your hair stylist work their magic on your hair. You can always think about it as a trial-run for your wedding day. You

may not want the same hairstyle, but getting your hair done by the same person should put you at ease.

Above all, spending a small amount of time planning out your outfits with your fiancé will work in your favor. Ask your friends and family what they feel you look best in and what they feel compliments your own unique style. After making a decision on your own, shoot your photographer a text or an email asking their opinion. Your photographer wants you to feel your best and look your best on the day of your shoot. They will be more than happy to give you their opinion. Once you have the location and your outfits planned out, you are well on your way to fabulous engagement photos. Always remember that you can't go wrong when you go with your own personal style. Be beautiful. Be you. Have fun and happy outfit planning!



Emily Millay is an Ohio based wedding photographer. With a background in fine art, she applies her knowledge and talent to create beautiful compositions through her work. Every couple has a love story and her goal is to show you that through her lens. Emily loves the color yellow, open fields, and the last 15 minutes of sunlight.

[EmilyMillayPhotography.com](http://EmilyMillayPhotography.com)

[Facebook.com/EmilyMillayPhotography](https://www.facebook.com/EmilyMillayPhotography)

[@EmilyMillayPhotography](https://www.instagram.com/EmilyMillayPhotography)



EVERYDAY MAGIC

Celeste Noche





In a world filled with unique and intriguing ideas for photo sessions, it's not difficult to get caught up in themes and props when it comes to an engagement session. Let me start by saying that many of these ideas are exciting and inspiring, and I appreciate the color they bring to the world. But I'd also like to put in a good word for the idea of no theme at all; for a celebration of two people who were lucky enough to find each other; for simplicity.

In my experience, engagement photos that shine in their simplicity have one thing in common: intention. As counterintuitive as it may sound, when couples are intentional about each detail, the superfluous falls away and the remains are simple, yet essential to their story.

So how do you plan for simple? The best part about simple is that it doesn't take a lot of thought. Instead of focusing on props and details, you can think about what's important to your story and how can you dedicate this time to honoring that.

Let's begin with location. One of the best ways to feel comfortable in front of the camera is to be in a setting you're already familiar with. This is different for everyone, but can also be surprisingly the same. Maybe you have a morning ritual of walking to your favorite coffee spot. Perhaps a favorite

hike. Maybe you two go to the same noodle house every week and know the owners by name. Although they may not seem picturesque at first, the comfort and meaning behind these places will help paint a picture that's true to your story. The familiarity and small pleasures that bring you back to those places will draw out the natural beauty of your everyday life.

An even more honest and vulnerable setting to consider is your home. Your home has an intimacy and meaning that is truly unique to you. As a photographer, couples in their homes are among my favorite to photograph, because it gives us an opportunity to savor and save this moment in time. Your everyday at home can often be overlooked and forgotten. It is the place you leave each day to be somewhere else. But it's also the place you're most familiar, where you retreat for refuge, and that can grow with you the longer you stay.





A year, ten years, fifty years from now, your home will most likely be different. By then, you may have moved away or settled into a new pace of life. But your home in this moment? It's seen you at your best and your worst. Just like your partner. How wonderful to celebrate this exact moment and the place you're in during the time you've found your person.

A less conventional way to approach engagement photos is to ask your photographer to hang out with you for a morning or afternoon. You can plan the day as you normally would, the only difference being that your photographer is tagging along. He or she will be able to capture the way you walk together or the way you touch one another without thinking about it. There will be no need for posing because there's so much warmth and realness in the ways you're together each day. Not only will these photos be a testament to what your lives look like now,



they'll offer an artful perspective of your everyday. Your photos then become momentos of your real life, rather than keepsakes of something decorated or staged.

I would be remiss not to mention how imperative it is to have a photographer a) who you feel comfortable with and b) whose work resonates with you. It will be difficult to capture simple magic of the everyday if you and your partner are unable to relax and feel comfortable around them like a friend. In addition, it would be beneficial to find someone who specializes in a photojournalistic style and is more "behind the scenes." In a similar vein, if you're able to find a photographer whose work you admire, the qualities you appreciate in their work will take a new form in your own story.

Above everything, the art of simple engagement photography really only comes down to two things: you and your beloved. It can be easy to forget this amidst the allure of props and themes. When you strip those away, the simplicity left is beautiful and meaningful in a new way. Remember why you're taking the photos in the first place. Your whole life has led up to this moment; to finding your better half and celebrating the new life you'll begin together. Celebrate that and your engagement photos will tell their best story yet: yours.



Celeste Noche is a Bay Area native whose life dream is to travel the world and share her stories through photographs. Based in Portland, Oregon and San Francisco, California, she enjoys photographing everything from food and travel to people and weddings, with real moments being the common thread throughout. She began her blog, Wanderlogue, five years ago and still dedicates the space to sharing her adventures.

[CelesteNoche.com](http://CelesteNoche.com)

[Facebook.com/CelesteNochePhotography](https://www.facebook.com/CelesteNochePhotography)

[@ExtraCelestial](https://www.instagram.com/ExtraCelestial)

