

# FREESTYLE GUIDE

TO LOOKING NATURAL IN PHOTOS

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Photo + Video



A romantic couple is shown in a close embrace, kissing. The man is on the left, and the woman is on the right. They are both wearing patterned ponchos. The background is a soft-focus forest with sunlight filtering through the trees. The overall mood is warm and intimate.

# LOVING the way you feel IN PHOTOS

Welcome to Kara Cavalca Photo + Video's Freestyle Guide to looking natural in photos! I've gathered these insider tricks from years of working with people just like you! Many clients worry about looking awkward in their photos, and these steps in addition to my process will make sure that won't happen. Photoshoots can seem stressful because the attention is all on you; my hope with this guide is to help you relax and see that photoshoots don't have to be scary! I am here for you every step of the way.

I created this guide to help you get the most natural images that don't look OR feel awkward. I want to make sure that you look and feel your absolute best in your photos. I am here for YOU, my main goal is to give you a great experience in addition to amazing images. My promise to you is that you'll love the journey just as much as the end result!



## SETTING THE MOOD

Half the battle for feeling natural in your photos takes place before the session even starts. For example, if you plan your outfit at the last minute, rush out the door, or get stuck in traffic, chances are you're going to be stressed and frazzled when you arrive at your session (which if that does happen, it is OKAY we can take some time to breathe and relax at the beginning to shake off those frazzly feels). But there is a lot more you can do to help you relax besides just allowing extra time and planning outfits in advance.

Everything from what you wear to what you say to your partner, family or friends in the days before your session, to how you mentally prepare yourself before the session will affect the tone of the photos. Preparing for photos can seem stressful at first, so it's important to follow a few rules to help loosen up.

You'll see it is much easier than you think!



## PLAN AHEAD

I know how frustrating it can be to get yourself photo-ready, especially if you have a family or partner that needs to be photo ready as well. This can be particularly frustrating if your partner or your kids are being grumpy or uncooperative.

So let's take care of all those little details ahead of time. Lay out exactly what everyone will be wearing from top to bottom, even little accessories, as far as week before your session. Have a test run, try everything on to make sure it fits, is clean, and wrinkle-free.

Then when the day comes for your photo session everything will be ready and you can feel confident that it looks good. This will take all that stress out of the mix, and you can focus on the exciting day ahead.



# BE COMFORTABLE

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# and feel good

A great photo is not about the clothes. They are important but they are secondary to how *you* feel. Clothes are the decoration, but you are the main event. A great photo is about you, your personality, and the relationships in the photo. You don't need the fanciest, most fashionable on-trend outfits to look good, this is about style not fashion. More importantly, it is about YOUR style.

You should wear something simple that flatters your shape, allows you to move around comfortably and feel like yourself. Stick with a style that is YOU. Now is not the time to explore a totally new vibe. Chances are, you will just look back on your photos and think, that's so not me.

I want you to look back on your photos and focus on the joy, the relationships, and the magic there. I don't want you to look at your images and be distracted by your clothes. The clothes are meant to flow with you, add to your personality and image, not distract from it.

Wear something that makes you feel confident and attractive because that is what these photos should be about, capturing your unique beauty, personality and style.



## timeless

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You'll want to highlight your best features. Clothing that fits will define your waist and highlight your shape. Baggy clothes can give the illusion that you're bigger than you are. Add layers, like a slim jacket or open sweater to break up big blocks of color and create more vertical lines. This works for men and women. When you wear clothes that both flatter your shape and make you feel AMAZING, it is so much easier to relax and be natural in front of the camera.

When in doubt, keep it simple. Solid colors, simple patterns, and classic shapes are always going to look great. Avoid logos, mixing wild prints, or graphics, we want to keep these images as timeless as possible. Fabrics with a little texture are great for adding visual interest without distracting from what's really important - YOU!

To get into more detail about what to wear check out my [What to Wear style guide](#) too



## HAVE A DRINK

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Yes, I'm serious! A little alcohol goes a long way. I'm not saying you should get drunk, or even tipsy. But just one glass of wine, or a beer or cocktail before your session will help loosen you up, get you smiling more naturally, reduce those inhibitions and give you a moment to relax.

Can't or don't drink? No problem. You can have a glass of lemonade, or tea or whatever gives you that moment of calm. There are lots of other ways to loosen up and release nervous energy as well. Try some yoga, go for a walk, or clean the house. Anything that relaxes you and releases tension can have the same effect.





A man in a white shirt and dark bow tie sits on a stone wall, smiling at a woman in a red dress who is also smiling back. They are outdoors with tall grass and trees in the background.

# COMPLIMENT EACH OTHER

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The secret to getting natural-looking photos is to focus on interaction. You want to interact and focus on your partner or family members as much as possible during the session, and that starts before you even get there.

To give your connection an extra boost, treat your partner or family members like you are the luckiest person in the world to get to spend time with them. Compliment their outfit and how great it makes them look. Adore their hairstyle or that sparkle in their eyes. Give them an extra big squeeze to show them how much you love them and how happy you are to have them there with you. They will feel so loved and admired, their confidence will soar, and it will definitely show in your photos.

You want to treat the day as if you're on a date. Leave some time before your session to spend time together; go for a short walk or cuddle up on a bench and talk. Pamper each other, be sweet, and be kind. Let the little things go. It's a day to connect and to love and be loved. I know that sounds cheesy but it's so true.

Also make sure both you and your partner read through this guide so you start off on the same page. It's a two-way street and you both want to feel your absolute best. Let them help you get there!

## QUICK TIP

Do you have trouble showing or expressing your feelings? That's okay! It could be great for each of you to write a note to one another. In this note I want you to let your partner know how much you appreciate them and how happy you are to be with them.

Share these notes together before the shoot, and bring them with you!





# CHOOSE A LOCATION THAT FITS YOUR STYLE

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The location you choose for your photos plays a big role in setting the mood for your session. If you love the outdoors, hiking, and being on the water, then it would be a shame to have your photos done in a more urban environment. Likewise, if you love a more modern, industrial, in-town feel, then you'd be wasting an opportunity to embrace that if you had your photos taken in a local park.

Speak up about what you love and what you and your partner like to do. I've done photoshoots in valleys, mountains, back alleys, downtown, forests, beaches, fields, parks, train yards, lakes and more. Think about your happy place and see if you can embrace that in your photos.

When you're in your happy place, you'll feel more relaxed, but also more excited about how the photos will turn out. It makes the session much more fun, and when you're having fun you look much more natural in photos! Fun is key!

If you don't have a specific location in mind, let me know the vibe you are going for! I know a lot of wonderful locations!





## LOOKING NATURAL on camera

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So, you now know how to set the mood before you even arrive at your session. You're prepared, relaxed, and connected. You've chosen a location that speaks to you and makes you happy and comfortable. Now it's time to learn how you can look and feel natural in front of the camera.

Once you're in the right mindset, looking natural in front of the camera is as simple as following a few easy rules. Anyone can do it!



## GET THAT NATURAL SMILE

Most people smile differently when looking at a camera than they do when they're smiling naturally, some more than others. (If you are a fan of the show FRIENDS, you can see a perfect example of this in Chandler when he tries to take engagement photos.) Sometimes when you are just posed looking at the camera, the cues that normally tell your face muscles to form a smile just aren't there. You tense up, you're suddenly very aware of your facial expression, you're not sure what to do with your hands and suddenly that's all you can think about. These conditions are just not great for getting a natural smile!

I have questions, games and cues to help bring out your natural, genuine smile. I want to connect with you on the shoot, I want you to connect with your partner or family on the shoot. I will ask you questions and have you ask each other questions to evoke feeling and emotion that will pour through into the images. Some of my favorite moments are when I capture you interacting fully with each other, in your own moment. When you look at each other, your expression will immediately soften, become more natural, and it will get you in a rhythm of smiling naturally. When I tell you to look at me you will already be primed to smile naturally because you've been laughing and smiling and have a great time already.

When you are focused on each other, it shows off the best and most authentic version of you. These are the photos that will make you remember how you felt at this time in your lives.





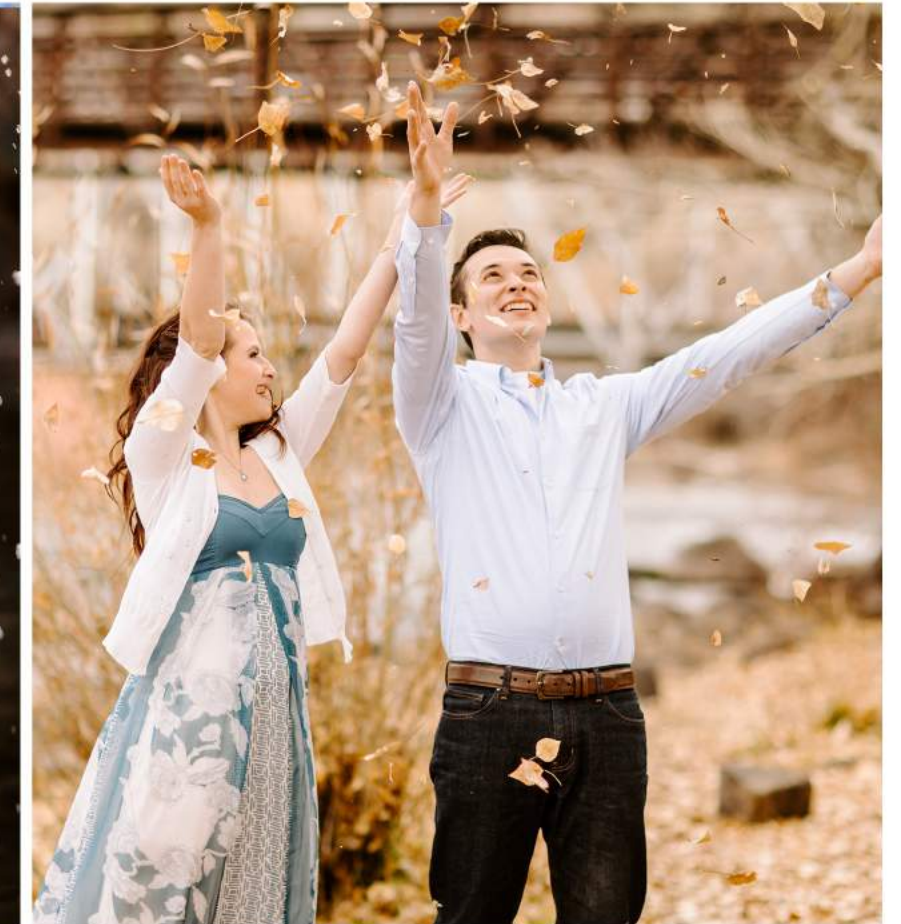
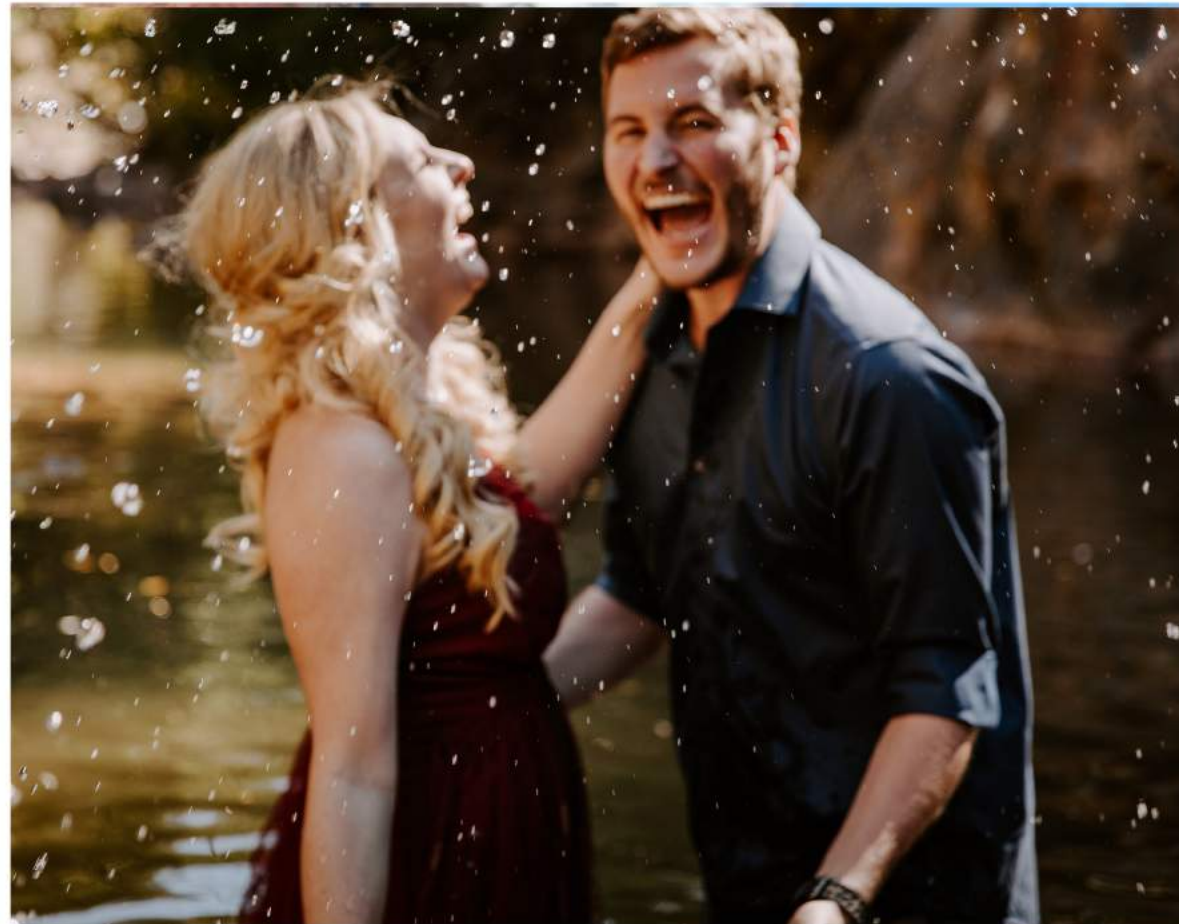
# MOVE YOUR BODY

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One of the biggest things you can do to look more natural in photos is to MOVE!

During your session, we will build movement into the poses so they feel, well, less posed! Walking, hugging, snuggling, playing with your hair, swaying and many more things all breathe life into a photo. Doing this will keep your bodies from looking stiff and awkward, and you from feeling like it! It also makes the whole session more fun, and keeps you laughing and smiling naturally.

Just remember, the last thing you want to do is just freeze and stare at the camera!





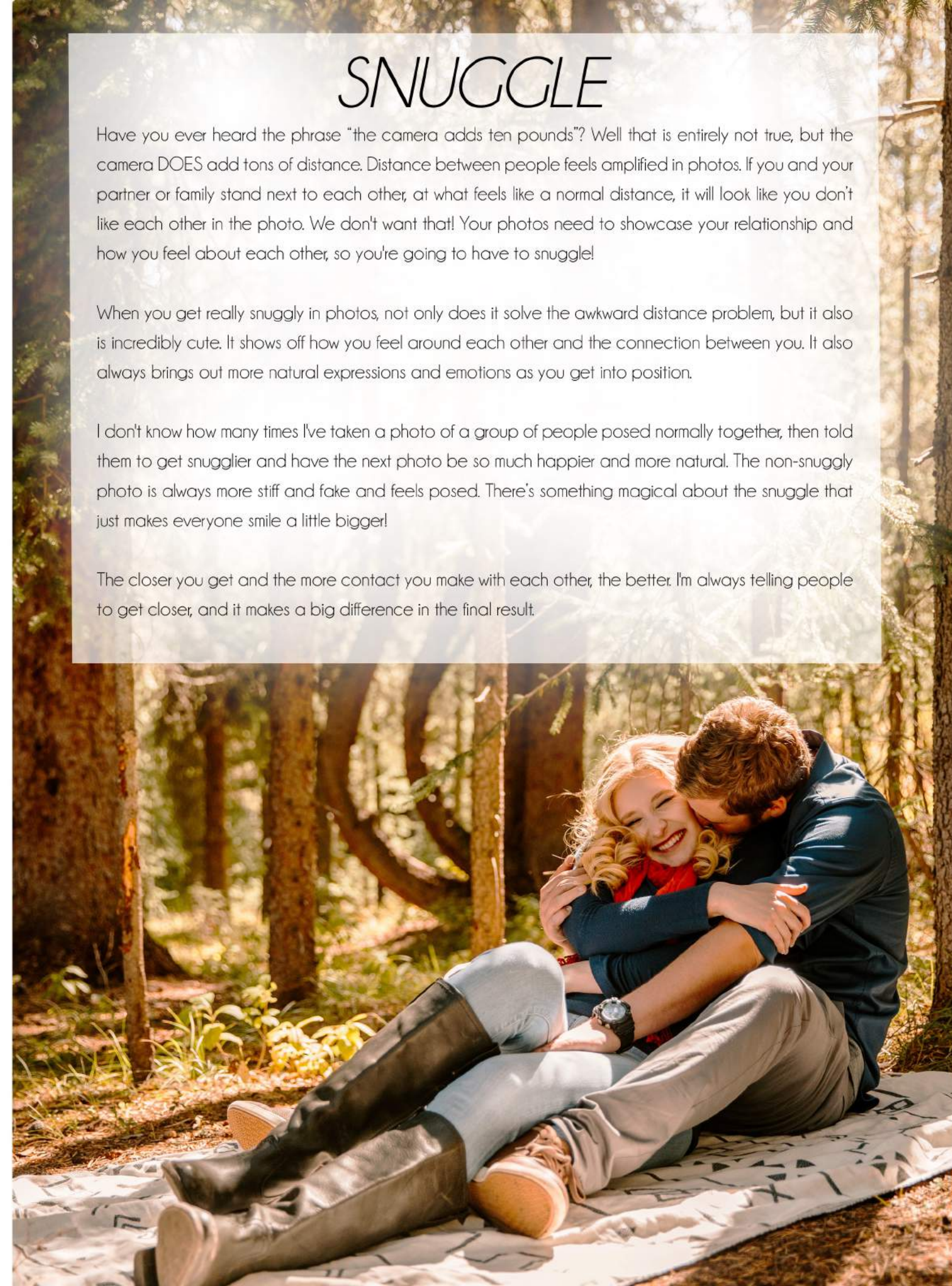
# SNUGGLE

Have you ever heard the phrase "the camera adds ten pounds"? Well that is entirely not true, but the camera DOES add tons of distance. Distance between people feels amplified in photos. If you and your partner or family stand next to each other, at what feels like a normal distance, it will look like you don't like each other in the photo. We don't want that! Your photos need to showcase your relationship and how you feel about each other, so you're going to have to snuggle!

When you get really snuggly in photos, not only does it solve the awkward distance problem, but it also is incredibly cute. It shows off how you feel around each other and the connection between you. It also always brings out more natural expressions and emotions as you get into position.

I don't know how many times I've taken a photo of a group of people posed normally together, then told them to get snugglier and have the next photo be so much happier and more natural. The non-snuggly photo is always more stiff and fake and feels posed. There's something magical about the snuggle that just makes everyone smile a little bigger!

The closer you get and the more contact you make with each other, the better. I'm always telling people to get closer, and it makes a big difference in the final result.





# BRING YOUR ANIMALS

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Your pets bring out the very best in you. They help you feel at ease, make you smile, and know just what to do to make you laugh. So bring them with!

The photos my clients get with their pets are often their favorites! Your animals are such a huge part of your life, why wouldn't you include them in the photo fun? We can start or end at your house to get images with them, or bring a friend or family member along to the shoot who can watch them once their moment in the spotlight is over.





## *CLEAR THE DAY*

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To get a variety of fantastic creative images, you have to spend a little time on them. It can take time going from one location to the next, or setting up the scene to get the best image. With the freedom of time we can set up more complex images and be a little more detail oriented with your photos. You will feel much more relaxed and be able to enjoy your session stress-free if you don't have to worry about the next thing you need to do that day.

If you can clear the day, it also clears your head and gives you the space to focus entirely on your partner and your relationship, and the images will reflect that.

The more you put into the shoot the more you will get out of it.

Plus, you can go on a date afterwards!!







QUESTIONS?  
let's chat!



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