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PHOTOGRAPHY

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BIRTH – PHOTOGRAPHY – FAQ

Q. Should I talk to my chosen birth location about photography?

A. YES! It is your responsibility to discuss your desire for photography with your birthing team. Some professionals/locations do not allow photography. Others restrict it to certain times or procedures. Nearly all have a policy for how many “helpers” you can have in the room – and that includes the photographer. This number bottoms out if you are in an operating room. So please be aware that with things changing quickly in a medical situation, our best laid plans may fail. Rest assured that even if I am not in the room with you for the birth; I will be there before, after, and even capturing the reactions of your family as we wait for news. The story won't stop.

Q. Will you use flash?

A. That is another discussion you should have with your birth team. Sometimes it's prohibited and we want to be respectful of those guidelines. I do prefer to use flash when I can, however. I will use an off-camera setup in the corner of the room. It will be fitted with a diffuser and triggered remotely from my camera. The images I take will be very intentional (not just firing off thousands) and most people don't notice the soft pop of light. But you can choose to discontinue use of the flash if it bothers you in any way. Please be vocal and I will react. It's a hard time to be annoyed!

Q. Why are so many photos in black and white?

A. Most places where births occur have very difficult lighting situations. Because of this, we see grain, motion blur, and color issues. The two best ways to combat that are to use flash and process the photos as black and white images. Most people find grain more acceptable in BW because it feels more classic and editorial. BW also helps clarify images by allowing a major bump in contrast without distorting colors. Lastly, it deletes any hint of multiple light sources creating color casts on the face or the dreaded zombie skin people get under fluorescent lighting.

In addition to the logistical reasons, black and white photos are aesthetically pleasing. The absence of color makes distractions in the background fade away. (Think ugly hospital equipment.) It goes a long way in hiding the blood and blueness of newborns that makes people cringe. It ensures that the focus of the picture is the person, expression, or event taking

place and not the distractions. For complicated reasons, BW also makes it way easier to create the illusion of brightness in pictures that were dimly lit. But above all, BW feels powerful and photojournalistic.

Q. Speaking of photojournalistic, what's your style?

A. Birth photography is in no way posed or planned. It's a raw, intense, photojournalistic type of photography. It's all about working with what is available. Pretty much the exact opposite of most photography. You can't move the subject, communicate with them, or even really affect the lighting. I love the challenge of it and the uninhibited humanity of what comes from that situation. Because we have to roll with the punches, it's all about embracing "ugly light", black and white edits, and uncomfortable angles.

Q. What if I go into labor in the middle of the night?

A. I will be there! You will be in frequent contact with me leading up to your birth to know how you are progressing. You should call when you are in the early stages of labor (even if it turns out to be false labor). You should contact me when you are headed in. At that point, I will make all preparations to be out the door. It can take up to two hours for me to get my ducks in a row with childcare and transit time so you must be communicative with me early and frequently. I don't want to miss this any more than you! The goal is to be at your birthing location when you are in active labor (7cm).

Q. What if you don't make it in time?

A. That is a very real possibility. Babies are unpredictable. With my first child I had my first through third set of contractions nearly on top of each other in the shower. When I got to the hospital I was ready to push. He was born right around 2 hours from the first contraction! And 5 weeks early! Despite all that I did have warning. I was leaking fluid the night before and had an inkling something was up. But that's why you should be in constant contact with me. I want to be at the ready and will do everything in my power to be there for you. So if you call and a half hour later it's just gas...we'll have a good laugh. If that kiddo comes flying out without warning, my contact allows me to give you a Fresh 48 and Posed Newborn session in its place or a refund.

Q. I'm modest. Can you, as Rachel on Friends said, *stay near my head!*?!

A. Absolutely. We will go over the level of modesty you want to maintain during certain aspects of the birth process and nursing. You may even choose to have me out of the room during the actual birth. Your comfort is the most important thing and I will honor that.

Q. What if I change my mind about something during the birth?

A. Be vocal with me. If you decided you're uncomfortable with something, the flash is driving you nuts, or you want to stop altogether – TELL ME. I will NOT hold a grudge. Birth is a very trying endeavor that makes us emotional and difficult to read. Our threshold for frustration is destroyed. I am there to document and enhance your experience. So let me know in no uncertain terms how to do that for you!

Q. How long will you be there?

A. I will try to arrive during active labor and stay the course until your child is born. After the birth, I will take photos of measurements, footprints, etc. if I have access. Then I will do some photos of your first moments as a family. These usually include candid images, details of the baby, and possible more events (like family coming to visit or the first bath). I try to stay about 2 hours after the birth but I don't want to leave until I feel the story is told.