

## Notes from Jeff Smith's Child Photography Talk Photography Forum 9/20/11

Photographing Children means building a good relationship with the child- It's got to be real

It's about Peek-a-boo I see you and trust.

Kids are ephemeral. Here today and gone tomorrow. Almost always on the move and constantly changing. They are not little adults; they are little people. Which means somebody has to be the adult in the situation and that should be you – meaning set limits, respect them, be strong loving and fair. Easy to be with. Never lecture. Explain what the rules are and enforce them calmly, consistently and flexibly. Good teachers: fair but tough like children and don't play favorites.

Babies: about mom and baby, holding environment – peek aboo

They need to know that you think they are as wonderful as they think they are.

**Mom** is a lioness: make peace with her however you can; inclusion is better than trying to go around her- she often sees them as a projection of herself worth – often easier on boys than girls. Get her permission.

Kids view:

They live in a world of giants who should care for them but often scare them.

They are constantly interrupted, talked over and ignored by adults.

They are strongly motivated by attention

Think of the weird kid you knew who was always interrupting and interfering with your games.

Kids see photographers as someone who undergoes a personality transplant when a camera is in their hand, as Giant weird Harold who blinds them with the focus light and camera mounted direct flash.

What to do. Smile when you see them. Don't refer to them as the kids, but by name - Sue, Johnny etc.

Tell them you like to take pics and ask permission. Give them prints next time. Get them involved.

Don't ask if you are not willing to accept no for an answer. Don't ask when you are really telling. Listen to what say, be the "anti-Weird Harold"

Never tell them to smile or do something: let them be children- they'll be expressive and interesting!

Give them a choice of two things

Process comments are a great way to show attention with recognition and acceptance without judgment - observing what they are doing.

### **Plan ahead, Plan ahead, Plan ahead**

Study their habits and movements plan ahead for background, light, camera position and clutter clean up. Look for frames with dark backgrounds and good light in which the child will appear.

Turn off focus light and never use anti red eye with built in flash

Always use the lens hood

Keep camera handy and try to anticipate

Speed is the word: use at least 1/200 sec, don't hesitate to use very high ISO

Use F5.6 to 11 for most shots, F2 to 4 is great for isolation but problematic for an active child

Get down or get the child up.

Try grab shots

Go wide, use center focus point, and shoot horizontally

Don't try to compose and crop in camera, leave a good margin all around child.

The time to be thoughtful is at the computer. The time for action is at the shoot and the simpler can make the second to second decisions through preplanning and eliminating needless steps the more keepers of high quality you will nail.

Lastly always share how cool it was to have a chance to take their picture and ask if they have a prized toy, possession or article of clothing they'd like to include next time - perhaps with their "Light Saber", bicycle, pet rat or best friend. When next time arrives check to see if it is OK at the time.