31 Days to Overcome Your Fear of Shooting Street Photography

Eric Kim

Street photography has helped me become a better person. Before shooting street photography, I would always let myself get pushed around by other people. If you have this problem as well, stand up for your rights and stand your ground. Not only will doing this help your street photography, but your own personal life as well.

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By Eric Kim

Introduction

So why did I decide to write this book? Well one quote that I love is from famous hockey player Wayne Gretsky who said:

You miss 100% of the shots you don't take.

In street photography, one of the biggest problems that most aspiring street photographers is getting over their initial fear of taking photos of strangers in public (without permission).

To photograph strangers without their permission is strange. Most societies in the world teach that it is wrong to take a photo of a stranger without their permission. In-fact, we are so socialized against doing this that we are worried what repercussions may happen to us if we do so. We are worried that the photos of others we shoot may become belligerent, yell at us, or even call the police on us. There-fore "normal" people don't take photographs of strangers without their permission—but who ever said that street photographers were "normal" people?

If I could estimate, I have probably shot over 300,000 street photographs in my last five years in the streets. Out of all of these shots, I have only gotten around 3 really neg-ative responses. The first encounter involves an old man grabbing my arm and asking me what I was doing, the sec-ond a man in Downtown LA trying to grab my camera from me, and the third being an old Chinese man karate-chop-ping me in the back of the neck (from a bike) when I took a photograph of him during the night with my flash. Needles to say I am still alive (and in great health) and haven't ever gotten punched, stabbed, or killed (yet). Also if you do the

math, 3 really negative experiences out of 300,000 is only .001%-- which is statistically insignificant. You are probably more likely to get run over by a car, die in a plane crash, or win the lottery.

But other than that, I rarely have issues when shooting strangers. I would argue that the majority of photographs I take of people—people are either charmed by it, honored, or find it humbling. However it depends on how you do it. If you do it in a sneaky manner and get 'caught' – people are going to be pissed off. If you do it openly, honestly, and smile a lot—people won't feel any negativity towards you. Sure you are going to get some people who look at you funny or some people who ask you to delete the photo—but that's pretty much the worst that ever happens.

For the purposes of this e-book, I wanted to create a 30-day course in which you could overcome your fear of shooting street photography. I am a huge proponent on the idea of "open source" knowledge—information that is shared openly and freely with others. When I first started street photography overcoming my fear of shooting on the streets was the greatest hurdle for me. Now my heart barely flutters when I take a photograph even half a meter away from somebody.

Feel free starting at whatever day feels the most comfortable for you, and also feel free to skip around a bit if you would like. The rough order it is organized is in difficulty (first day being that you are extremely afraid of shooting in the streets, and the last day is that you are fearless).

Regardless, reading this book alone isn't going to help you overcome the fear of shooting street photography. You can read a hundred books on how to swim, but you won't truly learn until you jump into the water. Therefore I suggest that after ever chapter you go out and actually shoot and try out some of the exercises.

Day 1

Identify what you're afraid of

If you want to overcome your fear of shooting street photography, you first have to thoroughly understand why you are afraid of shooting strangers on the street. Are you afraid that people may think that you are a creep? Are you afraid that you will get arrested? Are you afraid of people being belligerent?

Now write down a list of all the reasons why you are afraid of shooting street photography. Now take your top 3 fears and flesh out your ideas. Are the fears that you wrote down truly plausible?

Here is a list of potential things you may have written:

- Fear of being arrested
- Fear of being physically assaulted
- Fear of being perceived as others as "weird"
- Fear of getting your camera hit/broken
- Fear of being yelled/cursed at
- Fear of getting weird or strange looks from others

I will now address all these potential fears from my personal experience of shooting street photography for over 5 years.

1. Fear of being arrested

Depending on what country you are, research your laws on street photography and become knowledgeable. If you are in the United States, it is completely legal to do in the public sector. Print out your rights (you can see a list at the bottom of this page) and carry with you at all times.

2. Fear of being physically assaulted

I have never heard of any story of a street photographer who has ever gotten any serious injuries from shooting strangers in the street. In my experiences I have had only 3 rare occurrences of people getting physical with me. None of those have been serious.

3. Fear of being perceived by others as "weird"

This is something that you will have to deal with. In the end, who the hell cares what other people think? Here is a great quote that describes criticism:

If you find yourself criticizing other people, you're probably doing it out of resistance. When we see others beginning to live their authentic selves, it drives us crazy if we have not lived out our own.

– The Art of War.

4. Fear of getting your camera broken

Once again, people are generally not aggressive beings. If people ever do get belligerent, simply offer to delete their photo. This typically gets most people to get off your back.

5. Fear of being yelled/cursed at

As they say, "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never hurt me." If someone curses or yells at you for taking their photo, think about the repercussions. Sure you may feel guilty, but how does it actually harm you in the end? Have you been physically damaged? Realize that you will still be alive at the end of the day, and your life will go on.

6. Fear of getting weird or strange looks from others

Whenever people give you weird looks, simply smile back. This eradicates any feelings of fear from others.

Think hard about the fears you have about shooting street photography. Are they realistic or not?

Day 2
Ask for permission

Although street photography should be shot candidly and without permission, asking for permission is a good way to get your feet wet in overcoming your fears. I remember when I first started shooting on the streets, and thought that everyone hated getting their photos taken. However I was curious about how people would react if I asked them to shoot street photography so I went out and tried it for myself.

In my experience if I asked people to take a photo of them with a smile, around 8 out of 10 people would say yes. Once you are comfortable to ask strangers to take their photos, you will begin to build up the guts to take photos of them without asking for permission.

To get started, here are some ways you can approach people and ask permission to take their photo:

Excuse me, you have a beautiful face. Do you mind if I take a photo of you?

Excuse me, I am a photography student and one of our assignments was to take photos of interesting people. Would you mind if I took a photo of you?

I know this may sound weird, but I am absolutely fascinated with your eyes. Do you mind if I take a photo of you?

You have a gorgeous smile. Do you mind if I took a photo of it?

(if you see someone with an interesting outfit) Wow I have never seen somebody pull of your outfit as well as you did. Do you mind if I took a photo of you and your outfit?

I take photos of extremely well-dressed people on the streets. Do you mind if I take a photo of you?

By using lines like this, you explain exactly why you want to take a photo of them. As long as you show people that you don't have some sort of malicious intent and that you are harmless, people don't mind you taking a photo of them. If anything, people love getting their photos taken (if they take it as a compliment that they're interesting enough for you to take a photo of them).

Day 3
Avoid eye contact

Were you ever out somewhere and then you had the un-comfortable feeling that someone was looking at you? And once you looked nervously over your shoulder you saw someone looking at you? Once they notice you they quickly dart their eyes away.

As humans we have this strange intuition to know when somebody is looking at us. We can notice even from the corner of our eye if someone is glancing over us. Therefore you can use this to your advantage. Don't look directly at people or make eye contact if you wish to be unnoticed when shooting street photography. Pretend like you are looking at sometime else.

However note that this should just be used as an intro-duction to getting over your fear of shooting street pho-tography. I encourage you by the end of this book to make eye-contact with your subjects.

Day 4
Shoot from the hip

Shooting from the hip is a fantastic way to start getting more comfortable shooting in the streets without people's permission. What is shooting from the hip? Basically it is a technique in which you shoot with your camera from your hip or side without bringing your viewfinder to your eye. The advantage of this technique is that people don't realize that you're taking a photo of them. The second you bring your camera to your eye, people instantly know that you are shooting them.

So how do you shoot from the hip without being noticed? First of all, you want to hold your camera with both hands and position it around your waist. Secondly when you are shooting from the hip, you don't want to look directly at your camera. Rather, look elsewhere. Thirdly you want to make sure that your settings are correct and you are using the right lens.

If you are shooting with a DSLR it is preferable that you use a focal length of 35mm or wider (full-frame equivalent). Therefore if you have a 1.6x crop factor DSLR, you want to shoot with at least a 24mm or a 28mm on your camera (which will translate to roughly a 35mm). If you have a full-frame camera, you either want to shoot with a 35mm or 24/28mm. The reason being is that when you are shooting from the hip, it is far more difficult to compose and frame your image. If you use a lens that is too close, you won't be able to frame your subjects properly.

The next thing you need to do is use the correct settings on your camera. What I generally do is first of all figuring out how close you are going to be to your subjects with manual focus. Therefore if you figure that you are going

to shoot people roughly 5 feet away, keep your lens prefocused to 5 feet using manual focus. After that, keep your camera in aperture-priority mode at f/16. This will allow you to have a deep depth-of-field which allows your focusing to much more forgiving. After that, you want to set your ISO to around 800-1600 (depending on how dark it is outside). You simply want your ISO high enough so that your shutter speed is above 320[th]s/second (which will capture people even though they are moving).

Now that your camera is set all you need to do is shoot. When you approach people, don't look directly at them while shooting from the hip. Get close, and aim your camera slightly upwards when taking the photo. Experiment with different angles and positions. Drop your camera to your side and take photos of people sitting on benches or take photos with your camera at chest-level of your subjects.

Shooting from the hip is a great way to get more comfortable shooting in the streets, especially when you want to be more candid. However once you are over to get more comfortable shooting in the streets, I recommend you to shoot less from the hip. Why? Your hands can never frame and compose a scene as well as your eyes.

Day 5

Pretend like you're shooting something else

One technique that works well with a wide-angle lens is to get close to people and pretend you are taking a photograph of something else. The key part of making this a success is to make your body language suggest that you are taking a photograph of "something else".

For example, if you see a person sitting next to an interesting poster, stare intently at the poster from a distance (while looking at the person from your periphery). Then start slowly walking toward them, with your eyes still fixated on the poster. Slowly crouch down, and frame your shot so that the poster and the person are in the frame. Then slowly get up, stare at the poster again, and walk away.

If you turn around and study how people react—they will turn around, look at the poster, shrug their shoulders, and continue with their everyday lives.

Day 6
Shoot with headphones on

A tip that I heard from street photographers who are trying to overcome their fear of shooting street photography is to shoot with headphones on. Although ideally you wouldn't want to shoot with headphones on (you may miss potential photo-opportunities that may occur around you that can be signaled by sound) it is a good way to "get-in-the-zone" and become more relaxed when out shooting.

Not only that, but if people see you shooting with head-phones on, they will have the impression that you cannot hear them—and are less likely to object to you shooting them. Also if people become upset at you shooting them and start bad-mouthing you, you can drown out their nega-tive remarks with the music in your ears.

Day 7
Smile

In modern society, it is very rare to get a random "hello" or smile from a stranger. However whenever it happens, it easily makes our day. I remember one day when I was walking home, I saw a rough and tough guy sitting on a bench staring everyone down. I don't know why, but I instinctively smiled at him and waved hello. I was surprised to see this guy 250-pounds of muscle to look back at me and smile like a child. He instantly lit up and his kind demeanor warmed me up.

As humans we are wired to be social beings. If you smile at somebody, you show to that person that you are harmless and want to be open with them. If you smile at enough people you will notice that the vast majority of people smile back.

When you are out shooting, smile constantly. This way if somebody notices you taking a photo of them, smile and them and tell them "thank you." This eliminates their suspicion of you and they have a much higher degree of trust to you as a photographer. Don't just apply this to street photography, but life. You will be amazed how advantageous moving a few muscles in your mouth can have.

Day 8

Talk with them afterward

Alfred Eisenstaedt once said:

It is more important to click with people than to click the shutter.

Although I like capturing images of people on the street, I actually enjoy talking with them more. If you take a photo of somebody, you capture a piece of their soul and make them vulnerable. By talking to people after you shoot them, you make a human connection with them and you can even hear fascinating life-stories that people may have. Although I don't talk to every single person that I shoot, I try to do it as often as I can.

After taking a photo of somebody, smile at them and ask them how their day is going or talk about the weather. Although these are two very mundane and ordinary things to talk about, almost everybody is able to start a conversation based on these two openers. Also don't talk to people for the sake of talking to them. Be genuine and listen to people more than talking with them.

Day 9

Shoot with a small camera (or an iPhone)

The bigger your camera is, the more threatening and menacing your camera is going to be. Therefore if you want to be as discrete as possible, try shooting with a small camera. The point-and-shoot camera that I recommend is the Ricoh GRDIII, as it is the only camera with a fixed-focal 28mm f/1.9 lens that has virtually no shutter lag and zone-focusing. The camera is all-black and inconspicuous, yet takes phenomenal images. By using the 28mm lens, the camera also challenges you to get closer to your subjects and get great wide-angle shots of them as well.

Another suggestion is to use an iPhone when shooting street photography. This is great because you can pretend that you are texting or surfing the web on your phone, when you are actually taking photos of those in front of you. Not only that, but you can carry it wherever you go which will give you more opportunities to shoot street photography.

Day 10

Shoot with a friend (or a group)

When you are shooting street photography with a group of people it increases your courage by leaps and bounds. The reason behind this is that there is a "diffusion of responsibility" in which you feel more comfortable shooting strangers because the other people are doing it as well. Not only that, but there is a sense of security because if someone makes a big deal of you shooting them, you will have "back-up" from your friend or group.

When shooting street photography in a group, the ideal number of people is around 3. If you have any more photographers in one group clumped together, it affects the people around you react to you. If you want to be even more discrete (yet have a shooting partner) just go out with one another person who is more comfortable shooting on the streets with you.

Shooting in a group (or in pairs) will allow you to encourage one another to go for challenging shots and get closer with your subjects. If you need to find a shooting partner, look on Facebook, Flickr, Google+, 500px, etc of people in your area who may be interested shooting with you. There are also street photography meetup groups all around the world that are a simple Google search away.

Day 11
Look like a tourist

The stereotypical image of a tourist is someone with a big floppy hat, shorts, and tacky flip flops. Nobody seems to mind tourists that much, as they typically have cameras slung around their necks and take photos of the most random things. Therefore if you dress up and act like a tourist, people won't seem to mind you as much.

Therefore if someone is giving you issues for taking their photo, tell them that you are a tourist and you apologize for offending them. If you tell this to people they seem to understand and simply look at you strangely. After that just smile and walk on and take more photos.

Day 12

Look confused after taking someone's photo

One technique that works particularly well when shooting street photography is to look confused and lost after taking somebody's photo. For example, when I am taking somebody's photo I will get really close to them, crouch, and then after taking the photo look up and around me like I am confused or lost. Typically people see this and dismiss me as either being a lost or confused tourist and they don't realize I'm taking their photo.

Day 13
Fidget with your camera while shooting

In a video I saw on YouTube of Garry Winogrand shooting street photography, he fidgets and plays with his camera when he is taking photos of strangers (when he is very close). Although he is indeed taking the photos of the people in front of him, it appears that he is trying to adjust his camera and figure out how it works.

You can try the same technique. After taking a photo of somebody, look at your camera intently, fumble around with it, and play with the buttons. Therefore it will give people the impression that you might have just been taking a test shot and not a photo of the subject in front of you. If you really want to switch it up, take a photo, fidget with your camera, fidget with your camera, and fidget with your camera. Make sure to watch Garry Winogrand do it to truly understand his technique.

Day 14

Have staring contests with people

If you wish to build your courage of shooting street photography, a great exercise is to have staring contests with people. The reason being is that when aspiring street photographers go out and shoot, their biggest fear is that someone notices them. Therefore the best way to overcome this fear is to approach it head-on.

The next time you are in public on a bus or on the subway and people are sitting opposite of you, have a staring contest with them. Now I don't mean to stare them down with a menacing look—just look straight into their eyes. If they notice you and look back at you, don't dart your eyes away. Rather look back at them and smile and say hello. Most people react positively to this, while others quickly dart their eyes away. If you stare at someone and they react negatively toward you, simply apologize and say that you thought they were someone else (which rarely happens). Once you realize that making eye contact with strangers is not so bad, you can do the same in street photography.

Day 15

Get really close (with a wide-angle prime)

Famous street photographer Robert Capa once said:

> *If your photos aren't good enough, you're not close enough.*

When I look at the work of most aspiring street photographers, they are not close enough and their images feel distant and disconnected.

The first step necessary is to get a wide-angle prime. If you are shooting with a 1.6 crop-factor DSLR, I highly recommend a 24mm or a 28mm which translates to around a 35mm. If you have a full-frame DSLR I recommend starting off with a 35mm. I feel that the 35mm is the ideal focal length in street photography as it is quite versatile. It allows you to capture an entire background when you take a step back, and allows you to get great close-ups if you take a step forward.

There are several benefits of shooting street photography with a wide-angle prime. First of all, you are able to save precious time instead of having to zoom in-and-out to capture the decisive moment. Secondly, because you cannot zoom, it challenges you to get closer to people and capture images that feel much more intimate and personal. Last but not least, prime lenses are much smaller in size than zoom lenses and thus less threatening to your viewer.

Day 16

Say some-
thing before
you shoot
someone

Another technique which helps people relax before you shoot them is to say something to them before you take their photo. For example if you see a man on a street corner who has a fascinating hat, let him know that before taking his photo. Slowly approach him with a smile on your face and say, "You have a wonderful hat" and proceed to take a few photos. Most people are quite flattered by this and enjoy the attention of you taking a photo of them. There are still people who don't react well to this technique, but it works more often than it fails.

Day 17

Don't ask for permission

The general definition of street photography is to take photos that are candid and without permission. Although there are differing opinions on this subject, asking for permission when shooting your subjects alters the way they react to you and your camera. For example, think about that friend of yours who always has the same pose and smile when you take photos of them. When people pose for the camera you can't look into their true soul. However when you capture them in a candid moment, you see a true reflection of their character which is much more genuine.

Day 18

Focus on different body parts

When you are shooting street photography, you don't only need to take photos of people's faces. Rather, focus on different body parts. Shoot their shoes, their hands, their legs, and even their hair. People are typically conscious when you take photos of their faces, but don't mind so much when you shoot specific body parts as it doesn't make them identifiable in your images.

Day 19

Shoot at a busy place

Shooting street photography in a busy place with a lot of people is far easier than shooting somewhere with a few people. If there is a large mass of people around you, it is easier to disappear into the crowd and people are less likely to notice you taking a photo of them. If you live in a more suburban place without much people, drive into the city at a place with a ton of people. Also feel free to attend carnivals, fairs, and parades which can be full of interesting characters to take photographs of.

Day 20
Shoot some- where with few people

Once you become comfortable shooting somewhere with a lot of people, switch to shooting somewhere with a few number of people. This will be far more awkward and challenging, but will help conquer your fear of shooting street photography.

When you are shooting strangers with not a lot of other people around, you will have to be prepared to explain what you are doing as you cannot simply slip back into a large crowd of people. If people ask you what you are doing, calmly explain that you are a street photographer and you like to capture images of beautiful or interesting people. People might be a bit confused about why you are doing that, but try your best to be honest and genuine.

People will also object to you taking a photo without their permission. Calmly explain the beauty of capturing a photo without somebody's permission—that you are able to look into a much more natural and beautiful depiction of who they are. If people request you to delete their photo you have two choices: 1) Delete their photo and 2) Refuse to do so and walk away. I typically feel that if a person asks kindly for you to delete their image, simply doing so prevents a lot of headache. However if you wish to assert your rights (and really like the photo you captured) you can say no and walk away.

99% of the people will never follow you. For the 1% of those who do, you can continue to assert your rights and explain them the laws of street photography. If they threaten to call the cops, you can let them call the cops. However like I said I prefer to avoid the hassle and just delete the photo (you can always recover the image later by using photo-recovery software on your computer at home if you really want the shot).

Day 21

Go some- where that makes you feel uncom- fortable

If you really wish to develop your courage as a street photographer, don't only shoot in locations that make you feel comfortable. For example if you have a strip that is fairly pedestrian that you enjoy shooting at, go to a more urban location in the inner-city. Although you don't want to go to the most dangerous location to shoot (use your common sense) go to a place that may feel unfamiliar or different to you.

Shooting in different places can often take time to adjust to, but you are able to encounter a wider gamut of people from different socio-economic classes. This allows you to capture a more representative group of people (rather than people who look like tourists and are harmless). Now I am not saying you have to shoot photos of people who look like gangsters, drug dealers, or criminals but use your common-judgment and push your limits. It is surprising—sometimes the toughest people you shoot can be some of the nicest people in the world.

Day 22

Prepare
to explain
yourself

When you are shooting street photography, you have to be cognizant exactly why you are taking a photo of somebody. Therefore always be prepared to explain why you are shooting somebody.

My tip is tell why you are shooting the person. For example, if you think they have a beautiful smile, tell them that. If you like the color of their suit, and think they are full of character, tell them that. If you are fascinated with their face, let them know that as well.

In my experience I have found out that the majority of people don't mind getting their photos taken—as long as they are assured that you aren't going to do anything nefarious with it. Nowadays with all this paranoia about the internet and your personal privacy, people are just worried that you might take their image and somehow steal their identity or something. Remember to always explain why you are shooting and be open about it.

Day 23

Don't take the photo until they look at you

One technique that Thomas Leuthard uses when shooting street photography is to point his camera directly at somebody's face and then patiently waits until they turn around to take their image. He says in that split second when a person notices him they are caught unexpected, and give him a natural and candid look.

Therefore to continue to build up your courage when shooting street photography, be prepared to be patient and wait for them to look at you. This takes a great deal of guts, but the images are well-worth it. They say that eyes are the windows to the soul. Therefore when people look directly at you when you take their photo, you feel a much more humanistic connection with your subjects that is not there when they don't look at you.

Day 24
Get in front of people

Sometimes when you are out shooting street photography, you will see fascinating characters from behind. Don't cower—rather have the courage to go up in front of them and take a photo in-front of them. Generally speaking taking photos from behind people are less interesting, as the human face is absolutely fascinating to look at.

Therefore if you see someone you would like to shoot but they have their back facing you, quickly jog up and pass them, and slowly turn around, walk toward them, and take a photo. You should also use this technique when people are standing stationary at a bus stop or somewhere else. Slowly walk around them and take a photo of them

Day 25

Don't think too much

When it comes to street photography, don't let "paralysis by analysis" affect you. In other words, the more you think when you are shooting street photography, the less courage you will have when shooting strangers. You have to block out those signals in your brain that tell you that you shouldn't be taking photos of people you don't know without their permission and just do it.

When I am out shooting and I start thinking too much about how my subjects will react to me, I start getting cold feet and feel less comfortable getting close to my subjects. However I try to keep my mind on other things when I am out shooting (a movie I would like to watch, the emails I have to catch up on, or what to eat for dinner) which prevents me from being self-conscious when shooting on the streets.

Day 26
Take the first click

There are days when you simply won't "feel it". There are certain days that I feel like I have the courage of a 100 lions, and other days I feel sheepish.

Don't let inspiration be your driving force in shooting street photography. Inspiration only takes you so far—it is the hard work and perseverance that helps you get on top. Even though you will have days when you don't feel "inspired", I say screw it and go out.

The hardest part is to take the first click when you are outside. You might be walking outside and feel like a hundred of people are looking at you, and you feel your muscles tense, and your heart rate begin to rise. My advice to break this is to just take the first click.

Taking the first click is like starting up your car. You will have that initial spark, and you will slowly warm up. Take your first click as a "throwaway" shot. Take a photograph of a blank wall, or a person far away. Don't compose it well. Just click your camera so you can hear your shutter go off—and get accustomed to that sound.

Then start clicking more, and now start to compose again. Get closer to people, and make sure to smile. Then after your first several dozen clicks, you will start getting more comfortable shooting again—and will wonder to yourself, "I wonder what I was so scared about?"

Day 27
Go wider

When I first started street photography, I started off using a 50mm on a 1.6x crop body, which equates to around a 80mm lens. After a year, I started to use the 50mm on my full-frame camera. Another year after that, I started using a 35mm lens on my full-frame camera. A few more years down the road, I have now started to shoot considerably with a 24mm on my full-frame camera.

I have noticed that the wider lens I use, it forces me to become more and more intimate with my subjects and get closer. I also found that the closer I get to my subjects, the more interesting my images become. When you shoot with a wide-angle lens really close to your subjects, the distortion of the image gives the viewer the impression that they are present and a participant in your image, rather than a voyeur. In addition if you crouch down, you can exaggerate their perspective that makes your subjects look taller, more powerful, and greater than they are.

You are not used to seeing people with such exaggerated effects with a wide-angle lens in real life, which makes your photos look far more unique and fascinating. Therefore in your street photography journey, aspire to use wider lenses when it comes to get over your fear of street photography. Bruce Gilden has even used a 21mm lens in his work, and it is something I aspire to in the near future.

Day 28

Bring business cards with you

People respect authority. Use this to your advantage and bring business cards with you. If people question what you are doing, simply explain what you found so interesting about them (their face, their clothes, how they were interacting, etc) and explain that you are a street photographer and meant no harm.

Then give them a business card with your name, contact, website, and even offer to email them their photograph. When you do this, people think that you are professional and not just some random creep taking photographs in the street. People love it when you send them their photos (think about how great it is when your friends 'tag' you on Facebook) so offering to send their photograph is a very kind gesture.

Not only that, but by openly sharing your personal information with them you convey to them that you have nothing to hide. If people are pissed off that you took their photograph, you can even tell them that they have your number—and can call the cops on you. After all, it is your legal right to shoot in public.

For business cards, I recommend "Moo cards" which allow you to print your photographs on the back of your business cards. They are not cheap, but have great quality and it is almost like having a mini-portfolio on you at all times.

Day 29

Just walk away

There are some people who you can't get through. These are the people that no matter what kind of reason you use with them, they simply won't listen to you. My advice in these circumstances is just walk away. Once you start walking away, rarely do people chase you. And for the few percentage of people who do follow you and tap you on the shoulder, turn around again and ask what they want.

If they are being rational and reasonable, you should stand your ground and try to talk some reason. If you try to talk to them and they ignore what you say, walk away. If they follow you again and tap you, just keep walking and ignore them. For these type of people, the more attention you give them, the more of an issue they will become.

Day 30
Shoot with a flash

Shooting with a flash is the last technique you must try to say that you are truly comfortable shooting in the streets without fear. Why shoot with a flash? You don't shoot with a flash in order to scare people or elicit a response (if you shoot someone with flash you get their expression before the flash goes off) but rather to capture a different sense of energy and mood in a scene. When you are shooting in the shade, against direct sunlight, or at night—the flash acts as a fill-flash which helps illuminate your subject more and have them pop out. Also depending on how you hold and position your flash, you can create different visual moods and create your own lighting.

The technique that I use which I borrowed from Bruce Gilden and other flash street photographers such as Charlie Kirk and Dirty Harrry is using an off-shoe chord when using a flash. Why? Because it allows you to be much more flexible with your flash and control your lighting. Instead of simply being restricted to lighting that is head-on, you can position your flash in different ways. For example, if someone is standing right against a wall and you hold the flash to the left of their face, you can cast a long and interesting shadow to their right. If you crouch down and hold the flash from underneath their face, you can create shadows that cast above them and even create a spooky look (remember when you were a kid and stuck a flashlight under your face?)

Before you go out and shoot flash in your street photography, you need to set up the proper settings in your camera. When shooting with a flash, I always keep my camera in manual and utilize zone focusing (keeping my camera pre-focused to 1.2 meters at 24 or 35mm at f/16 and ISO 800). Depending on how much ambient light I want in my images, I adjust my shutter speed. If I am shooting during the day in the shade, I will use f/16, ISO 800, and 125ths/second. If I am shooting during the night, I will use f/11, ISO 800, and 1/3rd of a second (to get more motion blur in the background).

Then comes the approach. When shooting with a flash on the streets, I walk with a moderately fast speed and try to always keep my eye open for characters—or interesting people that tell a story. Typically I look for people who have interesting outfits such as ties, unique glasses, colorful outfits, funny expressions, or flamboyant pants or shoes. I try to avoid taking photos of homeless people and people who look "too obvious" (think of street performers or people who are dressed a little "over-the-top").

If I am walking on the right side of the street and people are walking by on my left, I will spot someone walking from a far distance and then prepare to take the shot. When a person is about 1 meter away from me, I will take a step to the left to where they are walking, crouch, extend my flash and camera, and take the shot. I then typically look at them in the eyes, smile, and say "thank you" and move on. The majority of the people respond by smiling back and saying "thank you" and move on.

If a person is standing stationary, I will typically circle around them and get really close and take a photo with a flash. If I am feeling in a hurry I typically don't say anything and keep moving. The typical reaction I get is that people either look confused or look behind them to see what I took a photo of. Regardless, sometimes the flash is startling and people don't know what to make out of it. You can also think of a flash as a sort of a "stun-gun" which can momentarily confuse them.

In my experience people notice you using the flash less during the day when you are in the shadows. When you are shooting with a flash at night, you are much more likely to scare people, depending on how attentive people are. Sometimes people don't notice or mind at all. But generally speaking you will elicit more reactions from people when shooting with a flash at night than compared to the day. However shooting with a flash at night really gives you soulful looks into people's character.

Day 31
Tell them to call the cops

There are people who won't listen to what you say and will threaten to call the cops. Although most of the time I just delete people's photographs and just move on, there are times in which I say you should stand your ground and just tell people to call the cops. It is a pain in the ass to deal with the cops, but usually one of two things happen:

a) You tell them to call the cops, and they keep yelling at you, and end up walking away (you call their bluff).

b) You wait for the cops to come, and they ask what happened. The person tells the story, and then the cop tells you that you have every right to shoot in the streets, and they tell both of you to move on.

Street photography has helped me become a better person. Before shooting street photography, I would always let myself get pushed around by other people. If you have this problem as well, stand up for your rights and stand your ground. Not only will doing this help your street photography, but your own personal life as well.