

Bellies & Babies

The Business of Maternity and Newborn Photography



Sandy Puc'

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Published by **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.** 10475 Crosspoint Blvd. Indianapolis, IN 46256 www.wiley.com

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Published simultaneously in Canada

ISBN: 978-1-118-40750-9

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Library of Congress CIP Data: 2012949010

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About the Author

Sandy Puc' is a nationally acclaimed photographer and businesswoman. She delights in sharing her knowledge and experience and spreading her passion for photography through her many speaking engagements, her international tours, and Sandy Puc' University. A 20-plus-year veteran of photography, Sandy served on the Board of Directors of the Professional Photographers of America for many years. She holds the prestigious titles of Print Master and Explorer of Light from Canon USA.

Sandy's commitment to community and giving back also inspired her to co-found the Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep Foundation in 2005. As the organization has grown over the years, seeing it touch so many lives has been one of the most meaningful aspects of her career. She received the Framed Network's 2012 Humanitarian of the Year award for her work with NILMDTS. L'Oréal Paris has also recognized her humanitarian work, naming Sandy a 2012 Woman of Worth.

Sandy resides in Littleton, Colorado, with her four wonderful children and her dog, Canon.



To my beautiful children, Katie, Alek, Nik,
and Julz, who are the inspiration for
everything I do.



Acknowledgments

The journey of life is full of unexpected twists and turns. There are magnificent highs and painful lows as we forge our way down an uncertain path. Sometimes it feels that the only things we can really count on are the people we surround ourselves with every day. I have learned that possessions come and go, but the people who touch your life create an indelible mark on your heart. They ultimately become the glue that helps you keep your sanity when all feels lost.

During my journey, I have been blessed to have some remarkable people entering my world. Some have been a fixture from an early age. These people were the caretakers who forged the foundation of who I am. Others have become dear friends along the way as they helped me build my dream from the ground up. Some have entered and exited so quickly that they were but brief encounters or fading memories, but even those fleeting relationships left permanent marks.

I am blessed to have been raised by the most loving and kindhearted people on this Earth. My parents taught me so much about life and the gift of choice that to this day, I consider their opinions in everything I do. They taught me to love, and that ultimately it is not what we do or become but who we are and how we love that matters.

For the last 27 years, I have worked with tremendous thinkers who bring so much passion and energy to the table. I sit in awe as I have watched my company grow over the years, guided by individual minds with a common purpose. Their constant energy source has been the fuel that has propelled us through many adventures full of laughter and good memories. It would take an entire book to thank all the

people who have helped build the company that we are today. But I want to thank a few special people who dedicated time to this book project to ensure that it was everything we hoped it would be.

To my dear soul sister, Erin: You are the most patient and forgiving person I know. After 17 years, I do not know how you put up with me, but I am quite sure we will be rocking in chairs far into the future. You are a gifted artist and my greatest friend. Who could have known that the day you randomly called me 17 years ago would have started an entire life adventure together?

Stephanie, you are an editor extraordinaire, and I appreciate that you can take my jumbled thoughts and put it all together so it makes sense. It is so nice to know someone who can cross the t's and dot the i's and get all of those thoughts on paper. Without your dedication, this book would still be just a good idea.

Finally, Cecelia, you are one of the smartest, most courageous women I know. I have been so blessed that in spite of me, you stuck around for the full ride. Your witty charm and constant humor keep everyone smiling. It is a blessing to know that if you are in charge, I have nothing to worry about.

There are so many others with whom I would love to share my thanks. However, there are not pages enough in the world to truly express my gratitude. So today, I focus on thanking those who helped with this book. Then tomorrow and beyond, I hope my actions will thank the others for their part in my life story.



Introduction



“Dream no small dreams for they have no power to
move the hearts of men.”

—Goethe

I remember the first time I picked up a “real” camera and held it in my hands. I was only 17 years old, but to this day I remember the overwhelming feeling of excitement as I looked through the lens and saw the world with new eyes. I can remember the weather, where I was standing, and how excited I was to play with this new tool. More than 20 years later, I still feel that emotion every time I pick up my camera and start my day.

Making my dream of building a successful portrait studio into a reality has been quite a process. There were many times when I wasn’t sure whether my plans were going to work out. Through patience and a lot of hard work, I eventually was able to earn a living doing what I love. This dream and my love for photography stopped me from turning back and retreating in the face of difficulties. There was a significant learning curve, as I had no formal training and a young family along for the ride. The challenges were numerous, but the solutions came—lesson by lesson, one day at a time. I can’t promise you that pursuing your own dream will be easy, but I can say that the goal of earning a good living as a full-time, working photographer is a real possibility for you, regardless of your circumstances as you read this book.

You may face similar challenges to the ones that I dealt with years ago. I know how it feels to be a young photographer whom no one takes seriously. In an industry that continues to grow rapidly, I understand the worry that you will not stand out in a field crowded with too many photographers.

As a baby and child photographer, I know how it feels to forge new territory, having entered the industry at a time when family and wedding photography were the main categories of professional work being done. Photographing babies and children exclusively was almost unheard of unless you were employed by a chain studio. As the mother of four beautiful children, I know how difficult it can be to

balance a hectic family and work schedule. When I started working as a photographer full-time, I was also a foster mother to six teenage boys. Our household was bursting with activity at all hours. By the time I opened my first commercial space, I was pregnant with biological child number four. With our foster children, we officially had ten energetic kids in the house while I was trying to launch a demanding business. In addition, my husband retired after the birth of our last daughter to be a stay-at-home dad, leaving me fully responsible for our financial future. So it is with full confidence that I assure you that if I could find a way, with everything that I had going on, you can, too. It is possible for you today, with the resources that you have: time, ambition, and a dream.



The Puc' children

“Cherish your visions and your dreams, as they are the children of your soul; the blueprints of your ultimate achievements.”

—Napoleon Hill

Few of us allow ourselves to really believe in our dreams.

However, you owe it to yourself to discover your dream and pursue it relentlessly, fully believing that you will realize that dream and achieve the success you desire. But how do you know when you've reached that pinnacle? Many people measure success by how much money they have in the bank, how many cars sit in their garage, or how many influential friends they have in their contact list. To me, success is summed up simply by how many times I get to experience my version of a perfect day. Take a moment to consider your perfect day. Grab a scrap of paper and a pen and jot down your entire vision, from the moment you wake up in the morning to the moment you go to bed at night. Now ask yourself: does your perfect day include a camera? Don't feel bad if the honest answer is "no." I don't know whether I can say now that my perfect day would include a camera, but when I was young, it definitely did. During that phase of my life, the best thing I could do would be to explore a new place, camera in hand, clicking away and feeling like a professional. Today, my perfect day involves spending time with my children while doing just about anything, although ideally a beach and a fruity drink are in the picture somewhere.

In reality, this question has no right or wrong answer—there is no one "perfect day." Instead, there are thousands and millions of them, each one unique to its dreamer. My perfect day might be a disaster for someone else. Another person's perfect day might be miserable for me. The truth of the matter is that only when you take time to ponder what "success" means to you can you find your perfect day. Once you know that answer, you can make the necessary adjustments in your life that will bring you one step closer to achieving your own version of perfection.

A wise person once said, "What you do today is important, because you are exchanging a day of your life for it." This phenomenal concept has become crucial in my personal

philosophy. As we work and struggle through our days, putting off our dreams of happiness and contentment for “tomorrow,” we are exchanging one day at a time for the promise of a tomorrow that is not guaranteed to even exist. When I first read that quotation, I decided to figure out about how many days I really had left on this earth.

According to my calculations at the time, if I lived to see my senior years, I would have approximately 13,000 days left. I remember looking at that number and feeling numb for a few moments. Only 13,000 days? That did not seem nearly enough to do all the things I had dreamed about, especially when you consider how few “perfect days” we really get in our lifetimes. We work very hard for the few moments of peace and enjoyment that we do get. When I ask my students how many perfect days they get per year, a typical answer is four to eight. When you consider this number, it doesn’t seem nearly adequate. Recognizing that most of us truly enjoy so few days each year is a strong motivation to make every day count.

Although this book is intended to help you find your dream, understand that achieving it will take hard work and determination. Most people think that money will get them what they want, but in the end, only time gives us the memories that we will cherish for the rest of our lives.

Although this book is full of ideas to help you make a living at your dream, always remember that my ultimate goal is to help you spend time with the people you love. Your goal is to earn enough money to then have the *time* you need—the money itself is not the thing you need.

Maintaining this perspective helps me discover and pursue my dreams every day, and I hope it will do the same for you. I have found fulfillment in my life by continuing to pursue my perfect day. Knowing that time is a gift that you must earn will help you set your priorities so that you can reach your goals and realize your full potential. On your

journey as a photographer, I promise that having a good plan can truly be the wind in your sails, taking you wherever you want to go. I'm honored to share the lessons, methods, and techniques that I have acquired and applied over the years to build the career and the studio that I have today. If you modify them to work for you, they can help you realize your dream and give you many perfect days.



“Life begins at the end of your comfort zone.”
—Neale Donald Walsch

