

## **Thank God for Photography**

What's popping, people? It's Dante, getting my morning started here in Center City, Philadelphia. Headed to the Schuylkill River Trail, starting the day with a nice walk by the river. This is my perfect start — just go straight to the water, take a long walk, and make some photographs.

You know, walking is kinda boring when you think about it. You're just walking. Like, who wants to just walk around all day? But when you pair it with photography and you've got a camera in your hand, it's like — wow. Thank God for photography. Like, genuinely. With photography, I feel unstoppable. I feel like I've got a sword that I wield, cutting through all the noise, all the chaos on the streets.

I actually feel the most alive when I'm surrounded by chaos. It takes me back to when I was on the front lines in Jericho, photographing Palestinians getting shot at with live ammo at the border. Israelis shooting at me. It's kinda crazy thinking about it — did I really do that? How did I do that?

I'm 29 now. I was 20 then. I think as you get older, your brain develops or something. You start making more decisions, thinking too much. You get in your head. But back then? Man, I was just like — fuck it. Full force. I ran through that desert.

Was I scared? Of course. But you can be scared and still push through it. You overcome cowardice with courage. With spiritedness. With thumos.

## **The Lion Within**

When I think of thumos, I think of the lion inside you that wants to roar. That's what we should be channeling as photographers. Because how you engage with the world is what gets reflected in your photos. That energy, that vitality — that's everything. Without power, how are you ever going to cultivate curiosity?

Photography takes vitality. When I have vitality, I have clarity. So let me break this down practically — how to increase your vitality.

### **Barefoot Shoes**

First off, barefoot shoes. Game changer. Been wearing them for over two years now. I feel so much more connected to the ground, to the earth. I feel the sidewalk under me right now. It's like saying fuck you to the system that wants you domesticated. The zoo-animal lifestyle. But barefoot, I feel wild again.

And on a physical level, they're fixing my posture, strengthening my feet, calves, back, spine. My gait is stronger. I feel more in tune with my body.

### **Fasting**

And I fast. Not even for health reasons anymore. I fast because I feel more spiritually connected when I'm fasted. I do one meal a day. When I'm fasted and walking the streets, I feel this connection between my gut, my heart, and my mind — that's the trinity for me.

Since I started fasting, I have zero decision fatigue. I'm just locked in. Laser focused. I notice patterns in nature, in people. I see the light, and the moments just come to me. I respond fast. Intuitively.

Street photography is spontaneous. You want your intuition to be sharp. That vagus nerve runs from your gut to your heart to your brain — 80% of the signals come from the gut up. You're not living in your fucking head. You're a biped. You stand upright. You walk. Your head is on a swivel. But everything begins in the body.

### **Delete Instagram**

If you're waking up in bed and checking Instagram first thing, posting for likes, scrolling — that's like waking up, taking a shit in your hands, and smearing it on your face. In your eyes. In your mouth.

Why would you wanna start your day like that?

Delete your Instagram. For real. What are you even using it for? It's cancer for a photographer. When you photograph for yourself, purely for yourself, without an audience, *that's* when you find your real voice.

Even the praise, the followers, the likes — it's all just noise. I removed comments. I removed likes. I don't care what anyone thinks. And that's exactly why I can photograph with clarity now. I only focus on what matters to me.

### **Publish Independently**

If you want to publish your work, good. I think you should. But do it *for yourself*.

I use [WordPress.org](https://WordPress.org) and Bluehost to host my own site — my name dot com — and I use the Astra theme. It's minimal. Like Tumblr in 2012. I post my photos, write my thoughts, and move on. It's part of the discipline.

Wake up. Walk. Make pictures. Cull. Post. Repeat. That's my practice. That's how I stay clear.

### **Courage Is Everything**

Courage — it comes from *cor*, meaning heart. With courage, you go into the unknown, into danger, into chaos, and come out unscathed. Like David walking up to Goliath with a slingshot, armored with God.

When you're out in the world with your camera, that spiritedness matters. Tap into something bigger than yourself. For me, I'm a disciple of Christ. Not even "Christian" — I don't like that term. I just follow Christ. That's it.

It means I'm connected to the source. There's a light in all of us. If you believe in Providence — not just believe, but *know* — then you move with courage. You don't fear death.

Saint Michael the Archangel is on my shoulder. If God wills it, I'll fall into the water right now. I'm gonna walk on the edge of danger. Because that's the only life worth living. A life of vitality, danger, exploration. Through photography, I conquer the day. I give my life meaning and zest.

### **The Next Photo Is the Best Photo**

I don't dwell on yesterday's shots. I'm not thinking about tomorrow's. I'm right here. Right now. Observing the light bounce off the water. Just making pictures. Snapshotting my way through life.

If you haven't been getting the results you want in photography, I've got the answer: add some limits. Give yourself structure. Challenges. Make things uncomfortable again.

I used to shoot comfortably for years. But the past three? I made it harder. I changed everything. Destroyed my old habits. Rebuilt new ones. And that's where the growth happened.

### **The Ricoh GR Method**

Go to [dantesisofo.com](http://dantesisofo.com), hit the Start Here page. You'll find my guide to the Ricoh GR.

Use:

- Small JPEG
- High contrast black and white
- No editing
- No excuses

Follow my autistic step-by-step breakdown. Do it for a month. Hell, even a week. You'll start seeing photos that actually resonate with you. All through constraint.

Photography is light and shadow. Strip everything else away. Return to play. Return to joy.

## **Play and Joy**

Adults stop playing. But play is the superpower.

When you're in the street and you treat the world like a playground — when you're tinkering, exploring, snapshotting — that's where your voice shows up.

Each day, I go back to the drawing board. I reset to Day One. I don't let the complexity overwhelm me. I find infinite beauty in the mundane.

Can you walk the same block every day and still find something beautiful?

That's the real challenge. That's the name of the game.

## **Vitality Through Simplicity**

I joined a boxing gym. Not to become a pro. Just to play. Just to move.

No more counting macros. No more split routines. Just:

- Barefoot walking
- Pull-ups
- Push-ups
- Dips
- Squats
- Shadowboxing

My recovery drink? Raw honey, raw milk, and salt. Shake it up. Drink after class. Deep sleep. Instant recovery. Wake up and repeat.

My morning? Espresso and a spoon of raw honey with salt. Hydrate. Simple protocols. Huge results.

Fasting isn't even about health anymore. It's about *photographic clarity*. I just feel better fasted. Gut over mind. Body over mind.

## **Shoot From the Gut**

You ever have gut issues? Feel like shit? That's real. Gut health drives everything. Emotions, anxiety, clarity.

Photography? It's gut work. Not brain work. People think it's visual, cerebral, technical. Nah. Shoot from the gut. Shoot from the heart. That's how your soul shows up.

Use the LCD screen. It's 2025. Who's still using a viewfinder?

## **Repetition Is Key**

Treat photography like reps at the gym. The more you shoot, the more you grow. Simple.

- More walking = more seeing
- More seeing = more photographs
- More photographs = more improvement
- More improvement = more curiosity

That curiosity becomes courage. That courage becomes confidence. That confidence becomes joy.

## **Let Go of the Seriousness**

Stop trying to be some visual storyteller with a vest and a “youth in the city” thesis. That shit is boring. Same photos. Same art. Same dead-eyed gallery nonsense.

Let go. Have fun. This is for joy. For you.

Photography has given me an insatiable love for life. I haven’t missed a sunrise in three years. I haven’t sat down in three years. I just keep moving. I’m working on something bigger than me.

My project? **Archive Philadelphia.**

That’s it. No subheading. No artist statement. Just the truth.

## **Sketchbooks and Simplicity**

You don’t need a publisher. Get a Canon Selphy CP1500. Print 4x6s. Tape them into a sketchbook. That’s your book. Done.

That’s enough for me.

## **Philly Is Paradise**

Fairmount Waterworks — this is paradise. Peace and clarity in nature. I can walk the forest trails, be deep in the woods, then snap into the chaos of 15th and Chestnut. Gritty. Raw. Real.

Philadelphia is just small enough to walk every day and still find newness. My new philosophy? I have zero desire to travel. There’s so much here.

When you find peace in where you are, that’s power. That’s freedom.

## **Outro**

Random thought logs are back. These are my favorite videos to make. If I could just walk a trail and rant to my GoPro every morning, that's heaven.

This is the perfect way to start the day.

Rock on.