

## **Beginner's Mind in Street Photography**

What's poppin', people? It's Dante. Today I want to dive into the philosophy of the **beginner's mind** in street photography. This is a concept rooted in Zen — called *shoshin* — and it's about treating every day like Day One.

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### **Forget What You Think You Know**

If you want to advance, if you want to improve as a photographer, the path is simple:

**forget everything you think you know.**

Return to the drawing board. Go back to Day One. Approach the streets as a big kid with a camera — waking up each morning eager to play.

My ultimate goal in life is to never miss another sunrise. Each time I witness that light, I feel grateful for the day. And I want my photographs to reflect that same sense of gratitude, curiosity, and wonder.

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### **Destroy the Old, Create the New**

Growth is paradoxical. Over the years, your photography improves, frames get stronger, and success builds — but eventually you risk stagnation.

**To truly advance, you must destroy the old and create anew.**

Empty yourself. Let go. Embrace the unknown.

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## Lessons From the Garden

As a horticulturalist, I work in gardens every day. Recently, I cleared out a huge Bird of Paradise to design a minimalist Zen garden. By stripping away clutter, I allowed the Buddhist pine to stand as the focal point.

Photography works the same way:

- Strip away the unnecessary.
- Focus on what matters.
- Create space for beauty to emerge.

This is why I shoot high-contrast black-and-white, underexposing for highlights and letting shadows crush. It's my way of clearing visual clutter, just like pruning a garden.

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## Photography as Play

Too often, photography becomes *work*: carrying gear, chasing projects, seeking validation. But when you loosen up, throw your camera on your wrist or in your pocket, and simply play — you rediscover joy.

Like pruning or raking sand patterns in a Zen garden, photography should feel playful. **The process itself should bring delight.**

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## Shoshin: The Beginner's Mind

In Zen, *shoshin* means *beginner's mind*.

Treat each day like Day One:

- Going to sleep is a miniature death.
- Waking up is a rebirth.
- Everything you encounter is fresh and new.

Approach the streets this way and even the most mundane — smoke rising from a fountain, a stranger crossing the street — becomes extraordinary.

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## Amateur Spirit

People often ask: *“Are you a professional photographer?”*

I tell them: **I’m an amateur.**

The word *amateur* comes from the Latin *amare* — to love.

*“An amateur is someone who does something for the love of it.”*

This is the most authentic way to approach photography. Not for money. Not for recognition. Just for love.

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## Infinite Potential

A child has infinite upside — infinite potential. A seed grows into a tree that stretches toward the sky.

Photography is the same. As long as you remain an amateur with curiosity at the forefront, you have infinite room to grow.

I don’t want mastery. I want play. I want the streets to surprise me.

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## Childlike vs. Childish

There's a difference between being *childish* and being *childlike*.

- **Childish:** immaturity, lack of responsibility.
- **Childlike:** wonder, curiosity, openness.

Cultivate the childlike. Carry your camera as if you've just discovered the world for the first time.

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## Play Leads to Results

When you let go of the result, you actually find better results.

One summer on Coney Island, my friend Humberto convinced me to climb some slippery rocks by the water. At first, I resisted — I thought there was no photograph to be found. But once we went, the stars aligned and I captured a shot I never expected.

That's the lesson: **through play, the moments come to you.**

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## Photography as a Way of Being

For me, photography is not just an act — it's a philosophy of life.

- **See deeply.**
- **Live fully.**
- **Never miss another sunrise.**

The essence of photography is curiosity and love for life. That's what reflects back in the frame.

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### **A Practical Exercise**

Find a place in your city where the horizon opens up — maybe along a river. Stand there, look beyond the horizon, and remind yourself how open the world is.

As photographers, the world is our canvas. You can create something from nothing, anywhere, at any time.

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### **Final Thoughts**

- Treat every day like it's Day One.
- Forget everything you think you know.
- Stay an amateur forever.

*“The eyes of the amateur will be the eyes that describe what it was like to live during this time.”*

That's the power of the snapshot — authentic reflections of life, created out of curiosity and love.

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