

A Note from Your Collaborator

The model you're working with today has navigated the male gaze their entire career. They've felt the shift when direction moves from collaborative to extractive. They've held poses that made their skin crawl while staying professional. They've been treated like props, interrupted mid-sentence, reduced to body parts. They've learned to read photographers in the first five minutes—assessing whether this shoot will respect them or reduce them.

That's not paranoia. That's professional survival. Before you begin directing, understand: your model is an expert in their own representation. They know the difference between a pose that feels authentic and one that performs for the male gaze. When they express discomfort or suggest adjustments, they're not being difficult—they're offering professional expertise you should respect.

ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS BEFORE AND DURING THE SHOOT:

1. Am I directing poses, or collaborating on them?

Invite input. Ask: "How does this feel?" Listen to the answer.

2. Would I direct a male model this way?

If the answer is no, reconsider the pose.

3. Am I emphasizing body parts over the person?

Cropping, angles, and framing reveal your priorities.

4. Is this pose something they'd naturally do?

Or does it exist only to please a viewer?

5. Does my model have agency in this image?

Or are they simply there to be looked at?

6. Am I listening when they say something feels off?

Your model's discomfort is data, not an obstacle.

WHAT RESPECTFUL COLLABORATION LOOKS LIKE:

- Discussing the concept and mood before posing begins
- Asking permission before adjusting pose or proximity
- Checking in regularly: "How does this feel?"
- Taking feedback seriously and adjusting without defensiveness
- Treating the model as creative collaborator, not object
- Sharing images during the shoot for their input

THE BOTTOM LINE:

Your model has earned the right to be demanding. They've earned the right to say no. They've earned the right to walk off sets that don't honor their boundaries. If you want to create work that respects the full humanity of your subjects, start by respecting the expertise of the person in front of your camera.

This page was given to you by someone who trusts you to do better.

Don't prove them wrong.