

## WHY I... do wedding photography

General practitioner Sharul Dube talks to **Kathy Oxtoby** about how her weekend role taking pictures of happy couples, and their friends and family helps her achieve a satisfying work-life balance



**A weekend focusing on human happiness makes me a happier, more balanced person and therefore a better clinician**

### HOW TO MAKE THE CHANGE

- Start by taking photos of what you are interested in—nature, your family, your pet. Getting a “fancy” camera isn’t necessary—most modern phones are good enough
- Invest in education—that may be time or money—but commit yourself to learning more about how to improve your photography
- When you feel brave enough, share your photos with friends, family, and photography groups
- Offer to do family or couple portraits, and build up from there. Be open to all sorts of genres and see what you enjoy most

For four days a week Sharul Dube works as a GP trainee but weekends see her transform into a wedding photographer. “As a GP specialty trainee year 3 in Leeds, my week is about supporting people in discomfort or with illness,” she says. “There are days when I need to break bad news. I see people during the hardest moments of their lives.

“But my weekends are full of people celebrating one of the most joyous days of their lives. Photographing weddings is my balm at the end of a week where the focus may have been dealing with people’s unhappiness.

“I enjoy both these roles with all my heart. And it makes for a satisfying work-life balance.”

Dube’s love of photography began following a time of crisis. She started practising as a doctor in 2014 and loved it. “It was a dream come true,” she says. But working extra shifts to cover staffing gaps, and after many consecutive nights in the emergency department, she felt burnt out.

Her partner, then in a public service role, was going through a similar journey and they decided to take time out.

“We put the rat race on pause, put all our belongings in a suitcase, and set off to travel through almost 50 countries over three years,” she says.

During this time of self-reflection, the pair took up photography as a way of documenting their experiences. This gradually morphed into doing some travel photography projects for companies and campaigns around the world.

Dube decided she wanted to continue her new found passion for photography when she returned to the UK, as part of “living a creative life” alongside life as a GP.

Her wedding photography role happened by chance. “We didn’t set out to be wedding photographers, and when a friend asked us to photograph their sister’s wedding, we weren’t sure what to expect.”

But she found herself pleasantly surprised. “Weddings made me realise you didn’t have to go far away to feel awed by the beauty and inspiration around you—

such as in the look of pure love a dad gives his daughter when he is about to walk her down the aisle.”

Her friends and the newly wed couple were “over the moon” with the photographs, more bookings followed, and now Dube and her partner run their own business—Raj Passy Photography ([rajpassy.com](http://rajpassy.com))—working on wedding projects worldwide, from intimate elopements to large scale events of more than 700 people.

During the wedding, the pair are “completely immersed in the day.”

“It’s normally a long day—between 14 and 18 hours—and typically I will do around 20 000 steps.” No two weddings are the same, she says. “The only constant is that it is physically taxing.”

She says the biggest benefit of doing wedding photography is that after a challenging week of general practice, “a weekend of focusing on human happiness makes me a happier, more balanced person and therefore a better clinician.”

Being a documentary wedding photographer also means “we train ourselves to notice the tiniest of expressions—so I’m now more observant of my patients.”

Having always thought of herself as a scientist, she says practising photography “has made me understand my potential as an artist, and better appreciate the practice of medicine as an art. For me, this means focusing on the aspects of my practice that I can control and enrich.”

Dube also brings her skills as a clinician to her approach to wedding photography. “I’m well versed with working with people from all walks of life and all ages, which helps with connecting and understanding others.

“With my photographs, I hope to show people how I see them—loved, cherished, and celebrated.”

Dube says that wedding photography has brought “a happy ending to my career crisis.”

“While there are still days when work as a GP is difficult, I have better coping strategies—including my wedding photography weekends. And I’m loving medicine again.”

Kathy Oxtoby, London

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2022;378:o2022