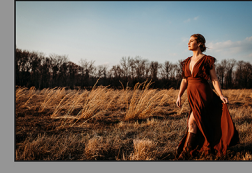
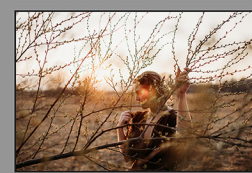
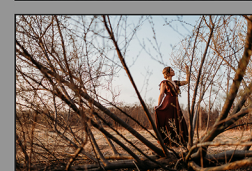
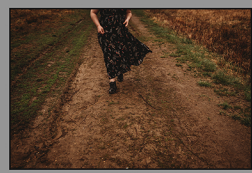
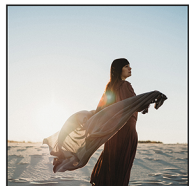


# THE ART OF EMPOWERMENT: THE ROLE OF PHOTOGRAPHY IN TRAUMA, HEALING & SELF-PERCEPTION

BRIDGET LAUDIEN, BSN, BA, RN, CNOR



"The last thing I want (before this) was my brother's obituary in September of 2016. Although this veteran army medic was able to serve two tours in Iraq and then graduate with honors from medical school, the effects of PTSD were responsible for how he died. He had used his life to save other people, but he could not save his own. As his big sister I felt responsible for his death. For months, I had stepped up for all the things I could've not and should've done. I became paranoid. I lived in a state for months. Believing that stress had dampened my insulin. Went to a routine check up and left with the news that my stress had been linked with my friends and my ovaries with cysts. I had just turned 40. I already had three kids, but I wasn't sure I was done having children. Being a mother, especially a single one, hasn't been easy. But having to make a decision this final at a time when I was still grieving was nearly impossible. In just a matter of months I had lost both my baby brother and my ability to have any more children. I lived in darkness for longer than I'd like to remember. Writing about it now still pains me. But through it all, I was somehow able to hold onto my happiness and find gratitude in what I could still do. On the day of our shoot, we visited the mountains on a rare warm day surrounded by the absolute majesty of the intricate, the calm of the sea and the striking vibrance of being alive. The shoot was not simply a glimpse into empowerment. It was a reminder that we can always find light even in our darkest hours and that life is too short not to celebrate the sheer beauty of being here." - December, 2018



"Securing these beautiful images amidst the most difficult of times was cathartic. Although I no longer feel like my self, I still wanted to capture the true essence of who I am and that encompasses how I look to my daughter, as her mother. I no longer wanted to wait until I'm 60, have more than back, can get my skin under control. This is how she sees me for real and how I hope to live on in her memory. The opportunity has been so positive for both of us. We will always remember our magical experience exploring the garden with our pal, Bridget. Most of the photos we have together are smiles, tears and peace. Through your photography you were able to capture the essence of our relationship, the love, the warmth, all the feelings. We have your photos all over the house and they bring us such a peace and comfort during the hardest of days. Our lives were made a little easier. It's not fair, it's not fair, it's not fair, it's not fair, it's not fair. I'm glad you're not here, but we have for each other. That only grows stronger. I want to be able to remember to give and to receive. On those days when I feel sad and missing from outside your self, show us your pretty daughter face a little with your still look." - Kimberly, 2018

