

PHOTO- LETTERS TO TB




KNCV
TB|PLUS

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INTRODUCTION

The PhotoLetters method helps you use simple photography and writing techniques to share your lived experience and story of illness – in this case tuberculosis (TB).

You don't need professional equipment or photography skills. You also do not need to be a professional writer just a phone or simple camera, curiosity, and intention. Through photographs and short pieces of writing, you can tell a story about your journey with TB.

Creating PhotoLetters can be a powerful way to **reflect on and process your own experience** with TB. At the same time, your story can help **raise awareness and inspire understanding** within the wider TB community.

By sharing your story, you contribute to making the voices and experiences of people affected by TB more visible.



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What you will learn in this guide:

We will guide you through a series of simple techniques to help you create your own PhotoLetters. You will:

1. **Learn three basic photography techniques** that can help strengthen your images: Focal point, rule of thirds, and light.
2. **Learn the expressive writing method “Writing a Letter to TB,”** which can help you reflect on and describe your personal experience with the disease.
3. **Have the opportunity to participate in the KNCV TB Plus #PhotoLetterstoTB Challenge** by sharing your PhotoLetters with the wider TB community.

These activities are designed to help you **explore, express, and share your story** in a creative and meaningful way.

Your
camera
is not just
a tool.
It is
a voice.

PHOTO TECHNIQUE

Photography is not about technical perfection—it is about intention. You can transform a simple image into a powerful expression of lived experience. Your camera is not just a tool. It is a voice.

In this section you will learn how to apply a few photography techniques to:

- Guide attention clearly (focal point)
- Place your subject thoughtfully (rule of thirds)
- Shape mood intentionally (light)

To begin with, ask yourself these questions and allow this to lead you in terms of how you construct the scene you photograph:

- What do I want to communicate through my photo?
- What emotion do I want to show in my photo?

The following three techniques will guide you in answering these through your photography.



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Terms used in this guide:

Contrast

Contrast refers to the difference between light and dark areas in a photo. Strong contrast can help important parts of the image stand out and guide the viewer's attention.

Object

An object is any item that appears in your photo, such as a chair, a book, a medicine bottle, or a window. Objects can help add context or meaning to your story.

Subject

The subject is the main focus of your photo. The person, object, or scene that you want the viewer to notice first.

Viewer

The viewer is the person looking at your photograph. When taking a photo, it can help to think about what you want the viewer to see, feel, or understand when they look at your image.

Exposure

Exposure refers to how light or dark a photo appears. A well-exposed photo has enough light to clearly show the subject without being too bright or too dark.

TECHNIQUE 1: FOCAL POINT

The **focal point** is the main subject the first thing people notice when they look at your photo.

Ask yourself:

- What object or person will help communicate the message and emotion I want to show?
- What do I want people to look at first?



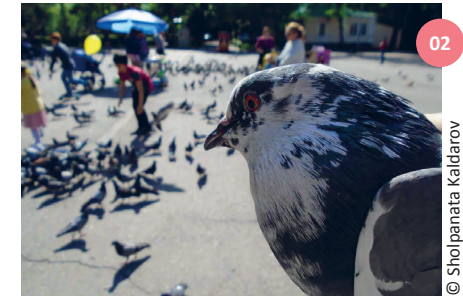
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You can guide the viewers' attention using:

- **Contrast:** Light vs. dark elements within a photo. [Image 01]
- **Sharpness:** In-focus subject; a blurred background. [Image 02]
- **Color differences** between the subject and the background. [Image 03]
- **Isolation:** one object alone. [Image 04]
- **Framing:** use doorways, windows, hands around a face, for example. [Image 05]
- **Foreground:** Consider what you want in the foreground of your photo to add to your story. This image shows a fence in the foreground. [Image 06]
- **Background:** Consider what you want in the background of your photo to add to your story. This image shows a busy city scene (traffic) in the background. [Image 07]



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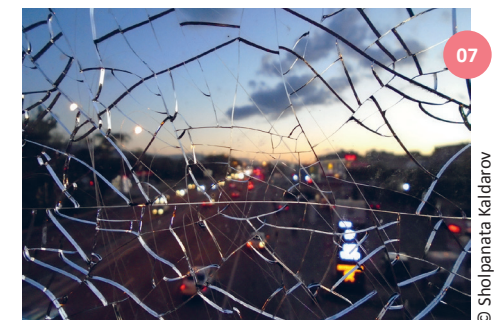
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TECHNIQUE 2: RULE OF THIRDS

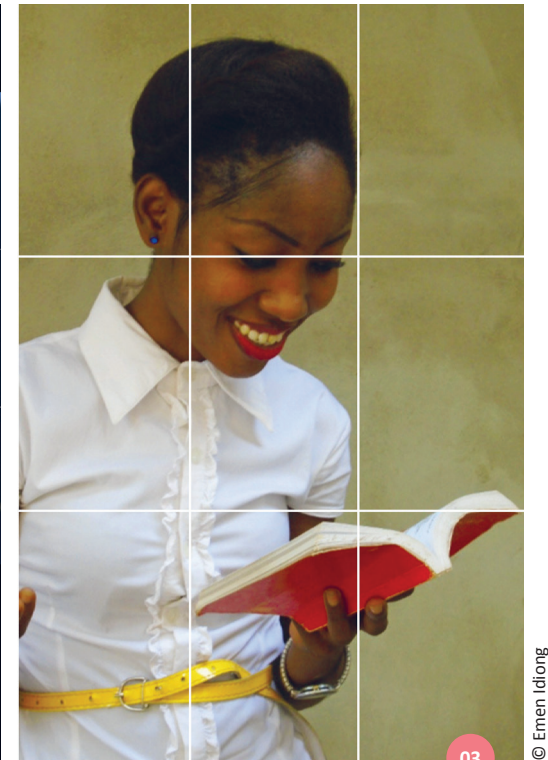
Imagine your image divided into nine equal parts using two horizontal and two vertical lines (like a tic-tac-toe grid). [Image 01]

The rule of thirds suggests placing important elements:

- Along these lines, or
- At the four intersection points

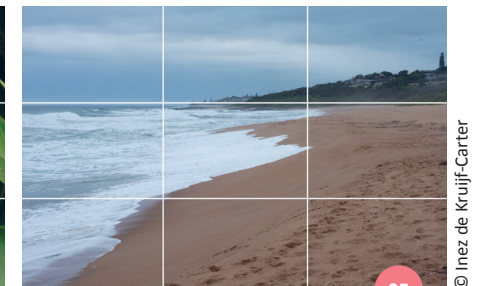
Why it matters:

- Makes images look more natural
- They are often more pleasing to look at
- It provides more context



Tips:

1. Many cameras and smartphones allow you to turn on a 3x3 grid overlay in settings to help you apply this rule. [Image 2]
2. For close-up photo's of people – use their eyes as the focal point to be placed on one of the lines. [Image 03]
3. For a close-up of an object: Try to place the object on one of the lines. [Image 04]
4. For landscapes – try to have the horizon either on the top third or bottom third of the photo. [Image 05]



TECHNIQUE 3: LIGHT

Light is a key technique to define the mood of the photo. Planning how you want to use light is essential to ensure you correctly portray the emotion you want to show.

We will look at two components to influence light – the direction of the light, and the quality of the light.

To start with, ask yourself:

- What emotion do I want to show?
- What type of light would help show this?



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Light direction

Side light

The light is coming from the left or right of the subject. [Image 01]

Effect:

- Creates more shadows
- Shows depth and texture in the photo
- Can create a more dramatic image

Backlight

The light is behind the subject, and shines towards you as the photographer. [Image 02]

Effect:

- It suggests mystery, transition or transformation
- Silhouette: Adjust the exposure on your camera before you take the photo so you can clearly see the background (the subject will end up becoming dark or almost black).

[Image 03]

- 'Halo effect' or glow around the subject: Adjust the exposure on your camera before you take the photo so you can clearly see the subject (the background will end up becoming very light or almost white). [Image 04]



01

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02

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03

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04

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Front light

The light comes from behind you as the photographer, and it shines on the subject directly. [Image 05]

Effect:

- Even lighting on the entire subject
- Ensure minimal shadows
- It provides a clear photograph

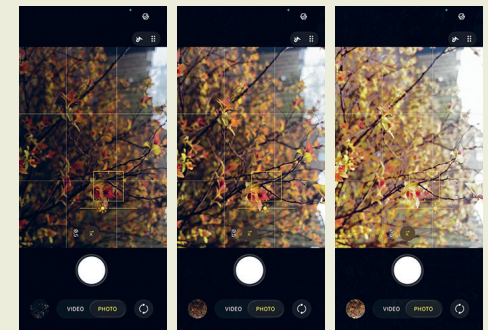


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05

Tips:

1. Move yourself or your subject around so the light comes from the direction you want it to in the photograph.
2. Most smartphones allow you to adjust the 'exposure' before you take the photo. That means you can adjust how light or dark a photo ends up looking once it has been taken. Usually you do this by tapping the screen on the area you want to expose for, and then you slide up with your finger to brighten the photo or down to make it look darker. [Image 06]



06

Light quality

Hard light

Direct midday sun;
Sun shining directly
through windows;
A bright artificial
light. [Image 07]

Effect:

- Strong contrast between light and dark.
- Emphasised shadows
- Increased depth

07



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Soft light

On a cloudy day;
Shade; Window
light with light
curtains;
Early morning
or late afternoon.

[Image 08]

Effect:

- Smoother texture
- Emotional warmth

08



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Tips:

1. Move your subject to a different location to find a different light quality; or plan to take your photograph at a different time of day.
2. For both light direction and light quality, practice the different options to visualise what type of impact it has.

EXPRESSIVE WRITING

Expressive writing can help reduce fear, anxiety, or process emotions through labeling and identifying our feelings and thoughts. Importantly, it can help us gain a new perspective on a difficult situation.

Expressive Writing is about:

- Writing without censoring yourself.
- Focusing on feelings, not just events.
- Addressing someone or something directly.

When utilizing Expressive Writing, you are invited to let go of grammar, structure or “good writing”.

Quick writing warm-up exercise:

- Write three sentences related to a challenge you are facing today.
- Write continuously for 3 minutes.
- Do not stop to edit or reread.
- If you get stuck, write: “What I really want to say is...” and continue.

Letter to TB - Expressive Writing:

1. Select a recipient that is NOT a person (an object, TB, a pill, a concept, a system).
2. Take one slow breathe and give the recipient a face, tone or personality.
3. Start the letter in the way you prefer (i.e. Dear TB,...).
4. Take a pause if you need to, and restart when you are ready.
5. Keep writing, don't stop for editing or re-reading.
6. End the letter in any way that feels right.



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Tip:

Remember that your letters can take any tone (angry, curious, happy, sad, etc.) and that there is no right or wrong way to express your thoughts or feelings.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE:

Now let's tie the techniques you learnt in photography and expressive writing together to form your PhotoLetters.

1. Choose one of the above techniques to practice with (focal point, rule of thirds or light).
2. Take 5 photos for each theme (fear, surprise, shame, hope, gratitude) experimenting with small changes.

Remember:

You are not trying to create a "perfect" image. You are trying to create an **honest** one that reflects your experience.

3. Review the photos and ask:
 - Is the emotion clear?
 - Is the focal point obvious?
 - Does the light support the feeling?
4. Choose one photo per theme that resonates best with your experience and write 3-5 sentences per photo using the 'letters to TB' method (you should end up with 5 photo's, each with a few sentences).
5. Consider submitting your photographs and letters for the KNCV #PhotoLetterstoTB challenge.



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THEMES ASSOCIATED WITH TB



Fear

Fear is a powerful emotion in response to perceived threat or danger.



Surprise

An emotion caused by information that doesn't fit with our current understanding or expectation.



Shame

Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love, belonging and connection.



Hope

We feel hope when we desire a positive outcome, and we expect or believe that it is possible - we believe that we can actively participate in achieving it.



Gratitude

An emotion that reflects our deep appreciation for what we value, what brings meaning to our lives, and what makes us feel connected to ourselves and others.

There may be another emotional experience related to TB that is not described here – please feel free to adapt a theme that may be better aligned with your own experience during the exercise.

**Emotion definitions are adapted from Atlas of the Heart, by Brene Brown.*

PARTICIPATE IN THE KNCV TB PLUS #PHOTOLETTERSTOTB CHALLENGE

KNCV is hosting a PhotoLetters challenge, and we would love for you to join us!

At KNCV it is important to us that the voices and lived experiences of people affected by tuberculosis (TB) are heard across the TB community. Your story matters, and PhotoLetters can be a powerful way to express it. To support this, we are creating a PhotoLetters blog on the KNCV TB Plus website, where participants can share photographs and personal reflections about their experiences with TB. If we receive enough PhotoLetters, we plan to organize a **PhotoLetters exhibition at the Union Conference in Brazil in 2026**, where these images

and stories can be displayed to a global audience. But... we need your help!

We invite you to **submit your PhotoLetters**.

Your submission should include:

- 5 photographs (one photo per theme described earlier).
- Along with each photograph, a short personal perspective on each theme written in the 'Letter to TB' format on your experience with TB.

You are not required to be a professional photographer or writer.

What matters most is the story you want to tell about your journey with TB.



PhotoLetters can be submitted through this weblink:
<https://forms.gle/oUWHZcs39DLin4rv6>

Scan this QR code to submit your PhotoLetters

Do you also want to publish your PhotoLetters on social media? You can use **#photoletterstoTB** as the social media hashtag to join the PhotoLetters movement.

Important

Your **PhotoLetters always remain your property**. By sharing them with us, you are simply allowing KNCV TB Plus to feature them on our website and in exhibitions. We will acknowledge you as photographer and writer in all formats that these materials will be published.

We do not provide remuneration for any materials submitted.

We would like to recognize and thank Alla Isayeva, Emen Idiong, Godfrey Asuqu, Punay, Sholpanata Kaldarov, Symbat Sapargaliyeva, and Uwem George for their photographs used in this guide.

These photographs were developed by them as participants in the KNCV TB Plus Photovoices initiative as a tool for reducing stigma within their communities.

We are grateful for their openness and vulnerability in sharing their TB story with the wider TB community.

PHOTO- LETTERS TO TB

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