

COMMUNICATING FOR SUCCESS CHAPTER

4

chapter outline

Human Relations

Communication Basics

The Client Consultation

Special Issues in

Communication

In-Salon Communication



Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- List the golden rules of human relations.
- Explain the importance of effective communication.
- Conduct a successful client consultation.
- Handle delicate communications with your clients.
- Build open lines of communication with co-workers and salon managers.

Key Terms

Page number indicates where in the chapter the term is used.

client consultation
pg. 40

communication
pg. 37

reflective listening
pg. 43

Client consultation had been bold but was made roman at first pages. Delete term and definition in glossary? Or make bold again on page 38?

Do you have outstanding technical skills? Artistic talents? If you do, you are definitely on your way to becoming successful in your chosen career path within the field of cosmetology. It is important to realize, though, that technical and artistic skills can only take you so far. In order to have a thriving clientele, you must also master the art of communication (Figure 4-1). Effective human relations and communication skills build lasting client relationships, aid in your growth as a salon practitioner, and help prevent misunderstandings and unnecessary tension in the workplace.



Figure 4-1 Communication is part of building lasting practitioner/client relationships.

HUMAN RELATIONS

No matter where you work, you will not always get along with everyone. It is not possible to always understand what people need, even when you know them well. Even if you do think you understand what people want, you cannot always be sure that you will satisfy them. This can lead to tension and misunderstanding.

The ability to understand people is the key to operating effectively in many professions. It is especially important in cosmetology where customer service is central to success. Most of your interactions will depend on your ability to communicate successfully with a wide range of people: your boss, co-workers, clients, and the different vendors who come into the salon to sell products. When you clearly understand the motives and needs of others, you are in a better position to do your job professionally and easily.

The best way to understand others is to begin with a firm understanding of yourself. When you know what makes you tick, it is easier to appreciate others and to help them get what they need. Basically, we all have the same needs. When we are treated with respect and people listen to us, we feel good about them and ourselves. When we create an atmosphere where customers and staff have confidence in us, we will get the respect we deserve. Good relationships are built on mutual respect and understanding. Here is a brief look at the basics of human relations along with some practical tips for dealing with situations that you are likely to encounter.

- A fundamental factor in human relations has to do with how secure we are feeling. When we feel secure, we are happy, calm, and confident, and we act in a cooperative and trusting manner. When we feel insecure, we become worried, anxious, overwhelmed, perhaps angry

and suspicious, and usually we do not behave very well. We might be uncooperative, hostile, or withdrawn.

- Human beings are social animals. When we feel secure, we like to interact with other people. We enjoy giving our opinions, we take pleasure from having people help us, and we take pride in our ability to help others. When people feel secure with us, they are a joy to be with. You can help people feel secure around you by being respectful, trustworthy, and honest.
- No matter how secure you are, there will be times when you will be faced with people and situations that are difficult to handle. You may already have had such experiences. There are always some people who create conflict wherever they go. They can be rude, insensitive, or so full of themselves that being considerate just does not enter their minds. Even though you may wonder how anyone could be so unfeeling, just try to remember that this person at this particular time feels insecure or he/she wouldn't be acting this way.

To become skilled in human relations, learn to make the best of situations that could otherwise drain both your time and your energy. Here are some good ways to handle the ups and downs of human relations.

Respond instead of reacting. A fellow was asked why he did not get angry when a driver cut him off. “Why should I let someone else dictate my emotions?” he replied. A wise fellow, don't you think? He might have even saved his own life by not reacting with “an eye for an eye” mentality.

Believe in yourself. When you do, you trust your judgment, uphold your own values, and stick to what you believe is right. It is easy to believe in yourself when you have a strong sense of self-worth. It comes with the knowledge that you are a good person and you deserve to be successful. Believing in yourself makes you feel strong enough to handle almost any situation in a calm, helpful manner.

Talk less, listen more. There is an old saying that we were given two ears and one mouth for a reason. You get a gold star in human relations when you listen more than you talk. When you are a good listener, you are fully attentive to what the other person is saying. If there is something you do not understand, ask a question to gain understanding.

Be attentive. Each client is different. Some are clear about what they want, others are aggressively demanding, while others may be hesitant. If you have an aggressive client, instead of trying to handle it by yourself, ask your manager for advice. You will likely be told that what usually calms difficult clients down is agreeing with them and then asking what you can do to make the service more to their liking. This approach is virtually guaranteed to work (Figure 4-2).

Take your own temperature. If you are tired or upset about a personal problem, or have had an argument with a fellow student, you may be feeling down about yourself and wish you were anywhere but in school. If this feeling lasts a short time, you will be able to get back on

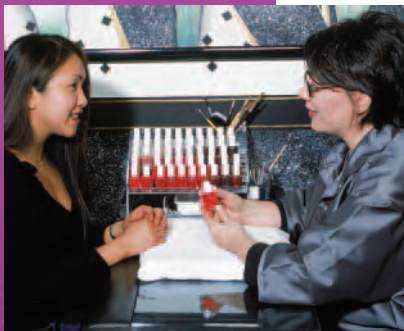


Figure 4-2 Be attentive to your client's needs.

track easily enough and there is no cause for alarm. If, however, you begin to notice certain chronic behaviors about yourself once you are in a job, pay careful attention to what is happening. An important part of being in a service profession is taking care of yourself first and resolving whatever conflicts are going on so that you can take care of your clients. Trust can be lost in a second without even knowing it—and, once lost, trust is almost impossible to regain.

To conclude, human relations can be rewarding or demoralizing. It all depends on how willing you are to give.

THE GOLDEN RULES OF HUMAN RELATIONS

Keep the following guidelines in mind for a crash course in human relations that will always keep you in line and where you should be:

- Communicate from your heart; problem solve from your head.
- A smile is worth a million times more than a sneer.
- It is easy to make an enemy; it is harder to keep a friend.
- See what happens when you ask for help instead of just reacting.
- Show people you care by listening to them and trying to understand their point of view.
- Tell people how great they are (even when they are not acting so great).
- Being right is different from acting righteous.
- For every service you do for others, do not forget to do something for yourself.
- Laugh often.
- Show patience with other people's flaws.
- Build shared goals; be a team player and a partner to your clients.
- Always remember that listening is the best relationship builder.

COMMUNICATION BASICS

Communication is the act of successfully sharing information between two people, or groups of people so that it is effectively understood. You can communicate through words, voice inflections, facial expressions, body language, and visual tools (e.g., a portfolio of your work). When you and your client are both communicating clearly about an upcoming service, your chances of pleasing that person soar.

MEETING AND GREETING NEW CLIENTS

One of the most important communications you will have with a client is the first time you meet that person. Be polite, genuinely friendly and inviting (which you will continue to be in all your encounters), and remember that your clients are coming to you for services for which they are paying hard-earned cash (Figure 4-3). This means you need to court



Figure 4-3 Welcome your client to the salon.

them every time they come to see you; otherwise, you may lose them to another stylist or salon.

To earn clients' trust and loyalty, you need to:

- Always approach a new client with a smile on your face. If you are having a difficult day or have a problem of some sort, keep it to yourself. The time you are with your client is for her needs, not yours.
- Always introduce yourself. Names are powerful and they are meant to be used. Many clients have had the experience of being greeted by the receptionist, ushered back to the service area, and when the service has been performed and the appointment is over, they have not learned the name of a single person.
- Set aside a few minutes to take new clients on a quick tour of the salon.
- Introduce them to people they may have interactions with while in the salon, including potential service providers for other services such as skin care or makeup.
- Be yourself. Do not try to trick your clients into thinking you are someone or something that you are not. Just be who you are. You will be surprised at how well this will work for you.

INTAKE FORM

An intake form—also called a “client questionnaire” or “consultation card”—should be filled out by every new client prior to sitting at your station. Whether in the salon or in school, this form can prove to be extremely useful (Figure 4-4).

Some salon intake forms ask for a lot of detailed information, and some do not. In cosmetology school, the consultation form may be accompanied by a release statement in which the client acknowledges that the service is being provided by a student who is still learning. This helps protect the school and the student from any legal action by a client who may be unhappy with the service.

How to Use the Client Intake Form

The client intake form can be used from the moment a new client calls the salon to make an appointment. When scheduling the appointment, let her know that you and the salon will require some information before you can begin the service, and that it is important for her to arrive 15 minutes prior to her appointment time to fill out a brief form. You will also have to allow time in your schedule to do a 5 minute to 15 minute client consultation, depending on the type of service you will be performing and the needs of the client.

make 'client
consultation' bold?

Client Intake Form

Dear Client,

Our sincerest hope is to serve you with the best hair care services you've ever received! We not only want you to be happy with today's visit, we also want to build a long-lasting relationship with you, the client. In order for us to do so, we would like to learn more about you, your hair care needs and your preferences. Please take a moment now to answer the questions below as completely and as accurately as possible.

Thank you, and we look forward to building a "beautiful" relationship!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: (day) _____ (evening) _____ (cell) _____

Email address: _____

Sex: _____ Male _____ Female Age: _____

How did you hear about our salon? _____

If you were referred, who referred you? _____

Please answer the following questions in the space provided. Thanks!

1. Approximately when was your last salon visit? _____
2. In the past year have you had any of the following services either in or out of a salon?

_____ Haircut	_____ Manicure
_____ Haircolor	_____ Artificial nail services (please describe)
_____ Permanent Wave or Texturizing Treatment	_____ Pedicure
_____ Chemical Relaxing or Straightening Treatment	_____ Facial/Skin Treatment
_____ Highlighting or Lowlighting	_____ Other (please list any other services you've enjoyed at a salon that may not be listed here).
_____ Full head lightening	
3. What are your expectations for your hair service(s) today?
4. Are you now, or have you ever been, allergic to any of the products, treatments, or chemicals you've received during any salon service—hair, nails, or skin? (Please explain)

5. Are you currently taking any medications? (Please list)

6. Please list all of the products that you use on your hair on a regular basis.
7. What tools do you use at home to style your hair?
8. What is the one thing that you want your stylist to know about you/your hair?
9. Are you interested in receiving a skin care, nail care or makeup consultation?
10. Would you like to be contacted via email about upcoming promotions and special events?
Yes _____ No _____

Figure 4-4 The client intake form gives you an opportunity to build an excellent relationship with your clients.

Continued

NOTE: If this card were used in a beauty school setting, it would include a release form at the bottom such as the one below.

Statement of Release: I hereby understand that cosmetology students render these services for the sole purpose of practice and learning, and that by signing this form, I recognize and agree not to hold the school, its employees or the student liable for my satisfaction or the service outcome.

Client signature _____ Date _____

Service Notes

Today's Date:
 Today's Services:
 Notes:

Today's Date:
 Today's Services:
 Notes:

Today's Date:
 Today's Services:
 Notes:

Today's Date:
 Today's Services:
 Notes:

Today's Date:
 Today's Services:
 Notes:

Figure 4-4 (continued)



THE CLIENT CONSULTATION

The client consultation is the verbal communication that determines the desired results. It is the single most important part of any service and should always be done *before* beginning any part of the service. Some professionals skip the client consultation altogether, or they make time for it only on a client's first visit to the salon. These professionals are making a serious mistake. A consultation should be performed, to some degree, as part of every single service and salon visit. It keeps good communication going, and allows you to keep your clients looking current and feeling satisfied with your services.



PREPARING FOR THE CLIENT CONSULTATION

In order for your time to be well spent during the client consultation, it is important to be prepared. To facilitate the consultation process, you should have certain important items on hand. These include **styling books and hair swatches**.

Have a variety of styling books that your clients can look through. There should be at least one that depicts short hair, one for medium-length hair, and one with longer styles, as well as an assortment of photos representing all hair color possibilities, such as blonds, reds, and darker colors.

In addition, it is always a good idea to have a portfolio of your own work on hand. Keep a camera at your station (a disposable or Polaroid camera is fine) and take photos of whatever cuts, colors, perms, and other types of chemical or styling work you perform. A portfolio will help put new clients at ease about your abilities, and will help them decide what they want to have done. As you show the photos, explain why you performed the various services the way you did. This will help new clients understand why certain things can or cannot be achieved, and will also reassure them that you are knowledgeable and serious about their needs.

A handy tool, great for discussing haircolor, is a swatch book or ring. These are provided by the companies that manufacture hair color, and are generally packaged in a ring, book, or paper chart. Swatches are bundles of hair dyed to match a particular haircolor shade offered by the manufacturer. Usually made from a synthetic material, swatches are very durable and easy to use in consultations. If the swatch is long enough, it can be held up to the client's face or integrated into her own hair to see how it looks. Swatches are perfect "symbols" to help the stylist and client



Figure 4-5 A "classic" look.



Figure 4-6 A "dramatic" look.



Focus on . . . Understanding the Total Look Concept

While the enhancement of your client's image should always be your primary concern, it is important to remember that the nails, skin, and hair adorn the body and are reflective of an entire lifestyle. How can you help a client make choices that reflect a personal sense of style? Start the process by doing a little research. Look for books or articles that describe different fashion styles, and become familiar with them. This exercise is useful for developing a profile of the broad fashion categories that you can refer to when consulting with clients.

For example, a person may be categorized as having a "classic" style if simple and sophisticated clothing, monochromatic colors, and no bright patterns are preferred. A person who prefers classic styling in her clothing would likely want a simple, elegant, and sophisticated look with respect to her nails, makeup, and hair .

Someone who prefers a more dramatic look, on the other hand, will choose nail designs, hairstyles, clothing and accessories that demand greater attention and allow for more options. These clients are likely to be more willing to try a variety of new products and spend more time having additional services that will help achieve the desired look (Figures 4-5 and 4-6).



Figure 4-7 Use a photo collection to help confirm your client's choice.

reach a working level of communication on the subject of haircolor (Figure 4-7).

Many times, you will find yourself consulting with a client who asks for a specific cutting technique or color that she may have heard about from a friend or a previous stylist. You know that not every technique or color will work for everyone, and just because her friend was happy with the results does not mean that she will be. (Guess who will catch the blame?) In this situation, it may be the time to take her step-by-step through the process, explaining why a certain color is either right or wrong for her hair color, skin type, and lifestyle factors.

THE CONSULTATION AREA

Presentation counts for a lot in a business that is concerned with style and appearance. Once you have brought the client to your station to begin the consultation process, make sure she is comfortable. You and she are about to begin an important conversation that will clue you in to her needs and preferences. Your work area needs to be freshly cleaned and uncluttered.

Have your photos, magazine clippings, and all other appropriate aids for the desired service available. You should read the intake form carefully, and refer to it often during the consultation process. Throughout the consultation, and especially once a course of action is decided on, make notes on the intake form. Record any formulations or products that you use and include any specific techniques you follow, or goals you are working toward, so that you can remember them for future visits.

10-STEP CONSULTATION METHOD

Every complete consultation needs to be structured in such a way that you cover all the key points that consistently lead to a successful conclusion. While this may seem like a lot of information to memorize, it will become second nature as you become more experienced and have many consultations under your belt. Depending on the service requested, the consultation will vary to some degree. For example, a full-head bleaching will require a more detailed consultation than a haircut. To ensure that you always cover your bases, keep a list of the following 10 key points at your station for referral, and modify it as needed for the actual service.

1. **Review** the intake form that your client has filled out and feel free to make comments to break the ice and get the consultation going.

2. **Assess** your client's current style. Is it soft and unstructured? Carefully styled? Classic? Avant-garde? Is it in synch with her style of clothing and personal image?
3. **Preference.** Ask your client what she likes least and most about her current style. Is it too conservative? Does she love the fact that she only has to spend 10 minutes a day styling her hair? Was she happy with the style when it was first cut?
4. **Analyze.** Assess your client's thickness, texture, manageability, and condition. Is she particularly thin on top or at the temples? Check for strong hair growth patterns, including unruly cowlicks.
5. **Lifestyle.** Ask your client about her career and personal lifestyle.
 - Does she spend a great deal of time outdoors? Does she swim every day?
 - Is she a businesswoman? An artist? A stay-at-home mom?
 - Does she have a strong personal style that she wishes to project?
 - What are her styling habits? How often does she shampoo her hair? How much time does she want to spend on her hair each day?

6. **Show and tell.** Encourage her to flip through your style books and point out styles, or even parts of styles, that she likes and why. This is a good time to get a real grasp on whether she not only understands, but accepts the limitations of her hair. Does she consistently point out thick, full hairstyles, for instance, when her own hair is quite thin? Is her hair curly, yet she consistently chooses smooth styles?

In addition, listen to how she describes hair length. If she says she wants her hair short, for instance, does she mean up to her shoulders? Her ears? One-inch all over her head? When her bangs are dry, does she want them to still touch her eyebrows? Reiterating what she tells you using specific terms like “chin length” or “resting on the shoulders”—as opposed to short or long—and reinforcing your words both with pictures and your hands by pointing to where the hair would fall, are critical to having a clear understanding of what both of you are really saying.

Listening to the client and then repeating, in your own words, what you think the client is telling you is known as **reflective listening**. Mastering this listening skill will help you to always be on target with your services, and to build a deep trust with your clients.

7. **Suggest.** Once you have enough information to make valid style suggestions, narrow your selections based on the following:
 - Lifestyle. The styles you choose must fit her styling parameters (time and effort), and meet her needs for business, personal, or both.
 - Hair type. You must base your recommendations on whether your client has (a) thick, medium, or thin hair; (b) fine, medium, or coarse hair; and (b) straight, wavy, curly, or extremely curly hair.
 - Face and body. Point out hairstyles that would look good with her face shape. Is she narrow across the temple area? If she is, you

should suggest styles that add a little fullness in this area. If she has a noticeably small head, then a hairstyle that closely hugs her scalp would not be the best choice.

When making suggestions, qualify them by referencing the above parameters. For example: “I think this hairstyle would work well with the texture of your hair.” Tactfully discuss any unreasonable expectations that she may have shared with you by picking out photos that are unrealistic based on her hair and personal needs. If her hair is damaged, you need to address intensive hair treatments, better home-care products, lifestyle changes, and the need to trim off damaged ends.

Never hesitate to suggest additional services to make her new haircut complete or better in some way. In addition to color, this could be a texture service for added movement or body, a relaxing to tame her curls, a makeup lesson to complement her new style, and so on.

8. **Color.** Unless she absolutely does not want to talk about color, color recommendations should be part of every consultation service. Everyone can use a glossing treatment, have their hair color enriched, or add some highlights or low lights to make their hair (and your work) even more attractive.

Ask if she has colored her hair in the past. If she already has haircolor, find out how long it has been since it was last applied. Has she had color challenges in the past? Does she color her hair at home? Would she like to make a subtle or dramatic hair color change?

When talking about color, be very careful to make sure you are both speaking the same language. Hairstylists are accustomed to the technical side of color and tend to use terms like “multidimensional highlighting,” or “no-ammonia semi-permanent tint.” This can be very confusing and misleading to clients. Make sure you explain yourself every step of the way, and use pictures whenever possible.

Another thing you have to be very careful about is not taking clients literally when they say things like, “I want to be blond,” or “I want to have red hair.” Blond to a stylist may be Gwen Stefani platinum, while blond to a client may mean a few thin streaks of medium blonde around the hair line. Red is also a sensitive subject. You may be dreaming of turning her conservative brown hair into a screaming blue-red work of art, and she may be envisioning brown with just a hint of red. Be careful and let pictures be your guide. Take hair swatches and twist them with the client’s own hair strands so she can see the contrast.

9. **Upkeep.** Counsel every client on the salon maintenance, lifestyle limitations (blond hair and chlorine, for instance, are not a good match), and home maintenance that she will need to commit to in order to look her best.
10. **Repeat.** Reiterate everything that you have agreed upon. Make sure to speak in measured precise terms, and use visual tools to demonstrate

the end result. This is the most critical step of the consultation process because it determines the ultimate service(s). Take your time and be thorough.

CONCLUDING THE SERVICE

Once the service is finished and the client has let you know whether she is satisfied, take a few more minutes to record the results on the record card. Ask for her reactions and record them. Note anything you did that you might want to do again, as well as anything that does not bear repeating. Also, make note of the final results and any retail products that you recommended. Be sure to date your notes and file them in the proper place.

SPECIAL ISSUES IN COMMUNICATION

Although you may do everything in your power to communicate effectively, you will sometimes encounter situations that are beyond your control. The solution is not to try to control the circumstances, but to communicate past the issue. Your reactions to situations, and your ability to communicate in the face of problems, are critical to being successful in a “people” profession such as the beauty industry.

HANDLING TARDY CLIENTS

Tardy clients are a fact of life in every service industry. Because beauty professionals are so dependent on appointments and scheduling to maximize working hours, a client who is very late for an appointment, or one who is habitually late, can cause problems. One tardy client can make you late for every other client you service that day, and the pressure involved in making up for lost time can take its toll. You also risk inconveniencing the rest of your clients who are prompt for their appointments.

Here are a few guidelines for handling late clients.

- Know and abide by the salon’s tardy or late policy. Many salons set a limited amount of time they allow a client to be late before they require them to reschedule. Generally, if clients are more than 15 minutes late, they should be asked to reschedule. Most will accept responsibility and be understanding about the rule, but you may come across a few clients who insist on being serviced immediately. Explain that you have other appointments and are responsible to those clients as well. Also explain that rushing through the service is unacceptable to both of you.
- If your tardy client arrives and you have the time to take her without jeopardizing other clients’ appointments, let your client know why you are taking her even though she is late. You can deliver this information and still remain pleasant and upbeat. Say, “Oh, Ms. Lee, we’re in luck!

Even though you're a bit late, I can still take you because my next appointment isn't for two hours. Isn't it great that it worked out?" This lets her know that being late is not acceptable under normal circumstances, but that if you can accommodate her, you will.

- As you get to know your clients, you will learn who is habitually late. You may want to schedule such clients for the last appointment of the day or ask them to arrive earlier than their actual appointments. In other words, if a client is always 30 minutes late, schedule her for 2:30 but tell her to arrive at 2:00!

Imagine this scenario. In spite of your best efforts, you are running late. You realize that no matter what has happened in the salon that day, your clients want and deserve your promptness. If you have your clients' telephone numbers, call them and let them know about the delays. Give them the opportunity to reschedule, or to come a little later than their scheduled appointments. If you cannot reach them beforehand, be sure to approach them when they come into the salon and let them know that you are delayed. Tell them how long you think the wait will be, and give them the option of changing their appointment. Apologize for the inconvenience and show a little extra attention by personally offering them a beverage. Even if these clients are not happy about the delay, or they need to change their appointment, at least they will feel informed and respected.

HANDLING SCHEDULING MIX-UPS

We are all human, and we all make mistakes. Chances are you have gone to an appointment on a certain day, at a certain time, only to discover that you are in the wrong place, at the wrong time. The way you are treated at that moment will determine if you ever patronize that business again. The number-one thing to remember when you, as a professional, get involved with a scheduling mix-up is to be polite and never argue about who is correct. Being right may sound good, but this kind of situation is not about being right; it is about preserving your relationship with your client. If you handle the matter poorly, you run the risk of never seeing that client again.

Even if you know for sure that she is mistaken, tell yourself that the client is always right. Assume the blame if it helps keep her happy. *Do not, under any circumstances, argue the point with the client.*

Once you have the chance to consult your appointment book, you can say, "Oh, Mrs. Montez, I have you in my appointment book for 10:00, and unfortunately I have already scheduled other clients for 11:00 and 12:00. I'm so sorry about the mix-up. Can I reschedule you for tomorrow at 10:00?" Even though the client may be fuming, you need to stay disengaged. Your focus is to move the conversation away from who is at fault, and squarely in the direction of resolving the confusion. Make another appointment for the client and be sure to get her telephone number so that you can call and confirm the details of the appointment in advance (Figure 4-8).



Figure 4-8 Accommodate an unhappy client promptly and calmly.

HANDLING UNHAPPY CLIENTS

No matter how hard you try to provide excellent service to your clients, once in a while you will encounter a client who is dissatisfied with the service. The way you and the salon handle this difficult situation will have lasting effects on you, the client, and the salon, so you need to know how best to proceed.

Once again, it is important to remember the ultimate goal: make the client happy enough to pay for the service and return for more of the same.

Here are some guidelines to follow.

- Try to find out why the client is unhappy. Ask for specifics. If she has a difficult time expressing herself, break the service down for her piece by piece until you determine exactly what has caused the dissatisfaction.
- If it is possible to change what she dislikes, do so immediately. If that is not possible, look at your schedule to see how soon you can do it. You may need to enlist the help of the receptionist in rescheduling your other appointments. If the client seems open to the suggestion, ask her to return to the salon at a time when you are free. If this is not possible, explain that you will begin her service, but will need to take your next client and will be relying on help from another practitioner. Do whatever you have to do to make her happy, and explain along the way who will be working with her and what the other practitioner will be doing.



Focus on . . . Communication

At some point in your career you will no doubt have a disgruntled client who is unhappy about something that was done either during the service or in scheduling. No matter how well you communicate, handling a situation like this can be difficult. The best way to prepare is to practice. Role-play with a classmate, taking turns being the client and the practitioner. Role playing both sides of the issue will give you a better understanding of the entire situation.



Focus on . . . Professionalism

A long-time client reveals to you one day that she and her husband are going through a messy divorce. You care for her and try to be understanding as she reveals increasingly personal details. Other practitioners and their clients are soon listening to every word of this conversation. You want to be helpful and supportive, but this is not the right time or place. What can you do?

Try this: Tell her you understand the situation is very difficult, but while she is in the salon, you want to do everything in your power to give her a break from it. Let her know that while she is in your care, you should both concentrate on her enjoyment of the services and not on the things that are stressing her.

She will appreciate the suggestion, and you will have put her back on the track of her real reason for coming to see you.

- If you cannot change what the client does not like, or it is simply impossible to change, you must honestly and tactfully explain the reason why you cannot make any changes. The client will not be happy, but you can offer any options that may be available.
- Again, never argue with the client or try to force your opinion. Unless you can change what has caused the dissatisfaction, this will just fuel the fire.
- Do not hesitate to call on a more experienced stylist or your salon manager for help. They have encountered a similar situation at some point in their careers and have insights that can help you.
- If, after you have tried everything, you are unable to satisfy the client, defer to your manager's advice on how to proceed. The client may be too upset to handle the situation maturely, and it may be easier for her to deal with someone else. This does not mean that you have failed; it simply means that another approach is needed.
- Confer with your salon manager after the experience. A good manager will not hold the event against you, but view it instead as an inevitable fact of life from which you can learn. Follow your manager's advice and move on to your next client. Use whatever you may have learned from the experience to perform future client consultations and services better.

GETTING TOO PERSONAL

Sometimes when a client forms a bond of trust with her stylist she may have a hard time differentiating between a professional and a personal relationship. That will be *her* problem, but you must not make it *your* problem. Your job is to handle your client relationships tactfully and sensitively. You cannot become your clients' counselor, career guide, parental sounding board, or motivational coach. Your job and your relationship with your clients are very specific: the goal is to advise and service clients with their beauty needs, and nothing more.

IN-SALON COMMUNICATION

Behaving in a professional manner is the first step in making this meaningful communication possible. Unfortunately, many beauty professionals act immaturely and get overly involved in the salon rumor mill.

The salon community is usually a close-knit one in which people spend long hours working side by side. For this reason, it is important to maintain boundaries around what you will and will not do or say at the salon. Remember, the salon is your place of business and, as such, must be treated respectfully and carefully.

COMMUNICATING WITH CO-WORKERS

As with all communication, there are basic principles that must guide your interactions. In a work environment, you will not have the opportunity to handpick your colleagues. There will always be people you like or relate to better than others, and people whose behaviors or opinions you find yourself in conflict with. These people can try your patience and your nerves, but they are your colleagues and are deserving of your respect.

Here are some guidelines to keep in mind as you interact and communicate with fellow staffers.

Treat everyone with respect. Regardless of whether you like someone, your colleagues are professionals who service clients who bring revenue into the salon. And, as practicing professionals, they have information they can offer you. Look at these people as having something to teach you, and hone in on their talents and their techniques.

Remain objective. Different types of personalities working side by side over long and intense hours are likely to breed some degree of dissension and disagreement. In order to learn and grow, you must make every effort to remain objective and resist being pulled into spats and cliques. When one or two people in the salon behave disrespectfully toward one another, the entire team suffers because the atmosphere changes. Not only will this be unpleasant for you, but it will also be felt by the clients who may decide to take their business elsewhere if they find the atmosphere in your salon too tense.

Be honest and be sensitive. Many people use the excuse of being honest as a license to say anything to anyone. While honesty is always the best policy, using unkind words or actions with regard to your colleagues is never a good idea. Be sensitive. Put yourself in the other person's place and think through what you want to say before you say it. That way, any negative or hurtful words can be suppressed.

Remain neutral. Undoubtedly, there will come a time when you are called on to make a statement or to “pick a side.” Do whatever you can to avoid getting drawn into the conflict. If you have a problem with a colleague, the best way to resolve it is to speak with her or him directly and privately.

Speaking to, or gossiping with, others about someone never resolves a problem. It only makes it worse, and is often as damaging to you as it is to the object of your gossip.

Seek help from someone you respect. If you find yourself in a position where you are at odds with a co-worker, you may want to seek out a third party—someone who is not involved and who can remain objective—such as the manager or a more experienced practitioner. Ask for advice about how to proceed and really listen to what this mentor has to say. Since this person is not involved, he or she is more likely to see the situation as it truly is and can offer you valuable insights.

Do not take things personally. This is often easier said than done. How many times have you had a bad day, or been thinking about something totally unrelated, when a person asks you what's wrong, or wonders if you are mad at them? Just because someone is behaving in a certain



Focus on . . . The Goal

Too much time spent on your personal life means time away from the task of perfecting your skills and artistry, and building up the business for yourself and the salon.

manner and you happen to be there, do not interpret the words or behaviors as being meant for you. If you are confused or concerned by someone's actions, find a quiet and private place to ask the person about it. The person may not even realize she was giving off any signals.

Keep your private life private. There is a time and a place for everything, but the salon is never the place to discuss your personal life and relationships. It may be tempting to engage in that kind of conversation, especially if others in the salon are doing so, and to solicit advice and opinions, but that is why you have friends. Co-workers can become friends, but those whom you selectively turn into friends are different from the ones whose chairs happen to be next to yours.

COMMUNICATING WITH MANAGERS

Another very important relationship for you within the salon is the one you will build with your manager. The salon manager is generally the person who has the most responsibility for how the salon is run in terms of daily maintenance and operations and client service. The manager's job is a very demanding one. Often, in addition to running a hectic salon, she also has a clientele that she personally services.

Your manager is likely to be the one who hired you and is responsible for your training and for how well you move into the salon culture. Therefore, your manager has a vested interest in your success. As a salon employee, you will see the manager as a powerful and influential person, but it is also important to remember that she is a human being. She isn't perfect, and she will not be able to do everything you think should be done in every instance. Whether she personally likes you or not, her job is to look beyond her personal feelings and make decisions that are best for the salon as a whole. The best thing you can do is to try to understand the decisions and rules that she makes whether you agree with them or not.

Many salon professionals utilize their salon managers in inappropriate ways by asking them to solve personal issues between staff members.

Inexperienced managers, hoping to keep everything flowing smoothly, may make the mistake of getting involved in petty issues. You and your manager must both understand that her job is to make sure the business is running smoothly, not to baby-sit temperamental practitioners.

Here are some guidelines for interacting and communicating with your salon manager.

Be a problem solver. When you need to speak with your manager about some issue or problem, think of some possible solutions beforehand. This will indicate that you are working in the salon's best interest and are trying to help, not make things worse.

Get your facts straight. Make sure that all your facts and information are accurate before you speak to your salon manager. This way you will avoid wasting time solving a "problem" that really does not exist.

Be open and honest. When you find yourself in a situation you do not understand or do not have the experience to deal with, tell your salon manager immediately and be willing to learn.

Do not gossip or complain about colleagues. Going to your manager with gossip or to “tattle” on a co-worker tells your manager that you are a troublemaker. If you are having a legitimate problem with someone and have tried everything in your power to handle the problem yourself, then it is appropriate to go to your manager. But you must approach her with a true desire to solve the problem, not just to vent.

Check your attitude. The salon environment, although fun and friendly, can also be stressful, so it is important to take a moment between clients to “take your temperature.” Ask yourself how you are feeling. Do you need an attitude adjustment? Be honest with yourself.

Be open to constructive criticism. It is never easy to hear that you need improvement in any area, but keep in mind that part of your manager’s job is to help you achieve your professional goals. She is supposed to evaluate your skills and offer suggestions on how to increase them. Keep an open mind and do not take her criticism personally.

COMMUNICATING DURING AN EMPLOYEE EVALUATION

Salons that are well run will make it a priority to conduct frequent and thorough employee evaluations. Sometime in the course of your first few days of work, your salon manager will tell you when you can expect your first evaluation. If she does not mention it, you might ask her about it and request a copy of the form she will use or the criteria on which you will be evaluated.

Take some time to look over this document. Be mindful that the behaviors and/or activities most important to the salon are likely to be the ones on which you will be evaluated. This is very useful information. You can begin to watch and rate yourself in the weeks and months ahead so you can assess how you are doing. Remember, everything you are being evaluated on is there for the purpose of helping you improve. Make the decision to approach these communications positively. As the time draws near for the evaluation, try filling out the form yourself. In other words, give yourself an evaluation, even if the salon has not asked you to do so. Be objective, and carefully think out your comments. Then, when you meet with the manager, show her your evaluation and tell her you are serious about your improvement and growth. She will appreciate your input and your desire. And, if you are being honest with yourself, there should be no surprises (Figure 4-9).

Before your evaluation meeting, write down any thoughts or questions you may have so you can share them with your manager. Do not be shy. If you want to know when you can take on more services, when your pay scale will be increased, or when you might be considered for promotion, this meeting is the appropriate time and place to ask. Many beauty professionals never take advantage of this crucial communication opportunity to discuss their future because they are too nervous, intimidated, or unprepared. Do not let that happen to you. Participate proactively in your career and in your success by communicating your desires and interests.

At the end of the meeting, thank your manager for taking the time to do an evaluation and for the feedback and guidance she has given you.

Figure 4-9 Your employee evaluation is a good time to discuss your progress with your manager.



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. List the golden rules of human relations.
2. Define “communication.”
3. How should you prepare for a client consultation?
4. What is the “total look” concept?
5. List and describe the 10 elements of a successful client consultation.
6. Name some types of information that should go on a client consultation card.
7. How should you handle tardy clients?
8. How should you handle a scheduling mix-up?
9. How should you handle an unhappy client?
10. List at least five things to remember when communicating with your co-workers.
11. List at least four guidelines for communicating with salon managers.

CHAPTER GLOSSARY

<i>client consultation</i>	Verbal communication with a client to determine desired results.
<i>communication</i>	The act of accurately sharing information between two people, or groups of people.
<i>reflective listening</i>	Listening to the client and then repeating, in your own words, what you think the client is telling you.