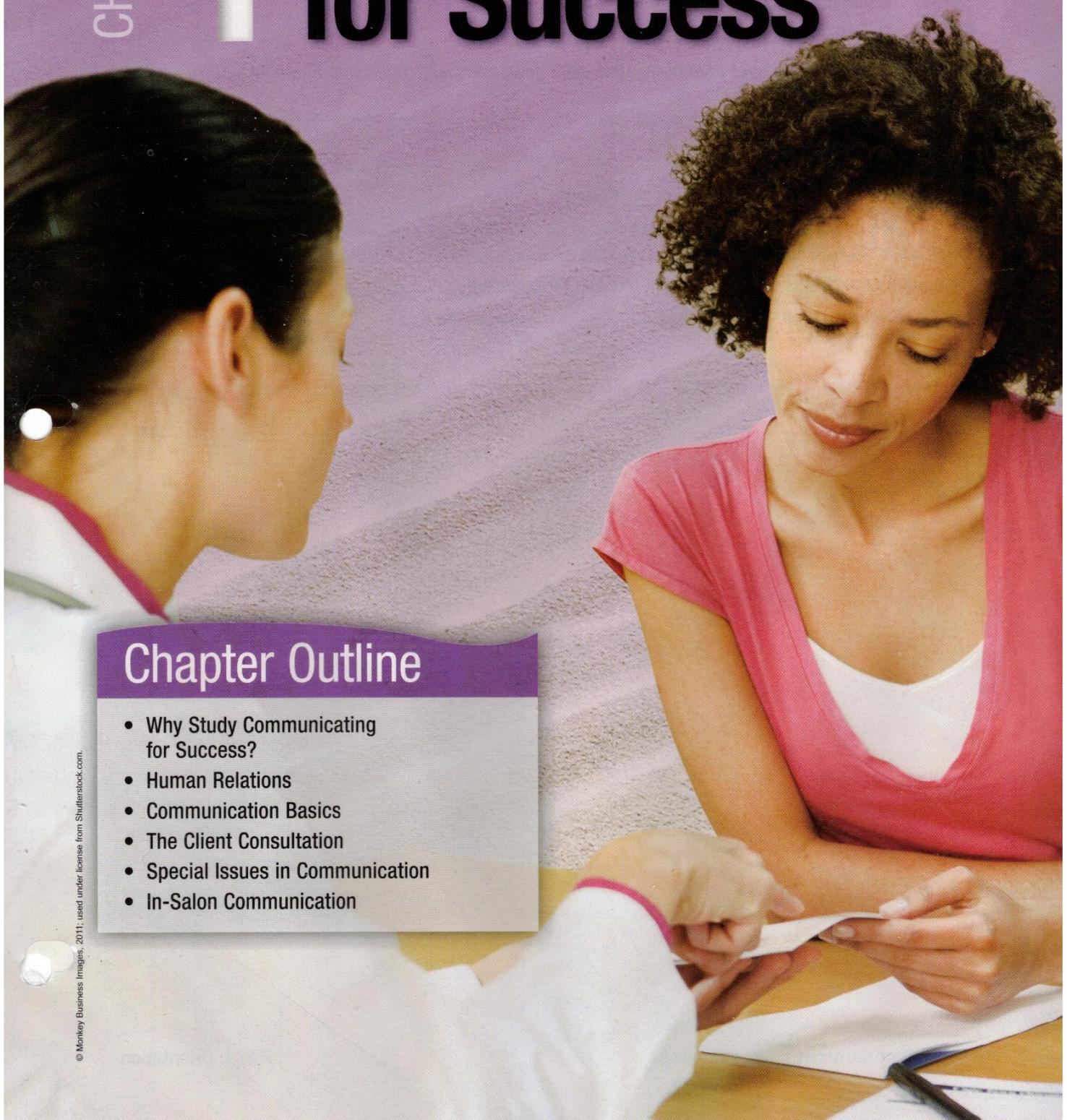


CHAPTER

4 Communicating for Success

Chapter Outline

- Why Study Communicating for Success?
- 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:

- L01** List the golden rules of human relations.
- L02** Explain the importance of effective communication.
- L03** Conduct a successful client consultation.
- L04** Handle delicate communications with your clients.
- L05** Build open lines of communication with coworkers and salon managers.

Key Terms

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

**client consultation
(needs assessment)**
pg. 54

communication
pg. 52

consent form
pg. 54

reflective listening
pg. 58

Do you have outstanding technical skills? Gifted hands? A flair for makeup artistry? If you do, you are definitely on your way to becoming successful in your chosen career path within the field of esthetics. It is important to realize, though, that technical and artistic skills can only take you so far. To thrive in the field of esthetics, you must also master the art of communication. Effective human relations and communication skills build lasting client relationships, aid in your growth as a practitioner, and help prevent misunderstandings and unnecessary tension in the workplace (Figure 4–1).

Why Study Communicating for Success?

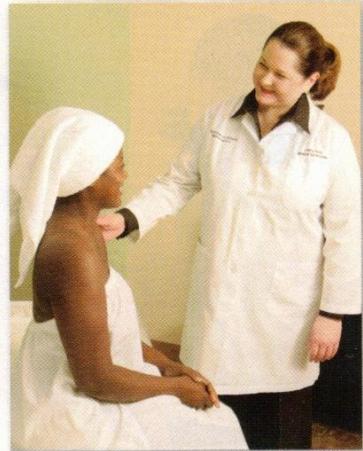
Estheticians work face-to-face with clients—a distinct advantage in determining their needs, wants, likes, and dislikes. To make the most of this prime time together, estheticians must have excellent communication skills.

- Communicating effectively is the basis of all long-lasting relationships with clients and coworkers.
- Strong professional relationships are based on trust. To be successful in building trust, you must be able to verbalize your thoughts and ideas with clients, colleagues, and supervisors in a positive and purposeful way.
- The close-knit salon and spa environment will present complex and sometimes difficult interpersonal dynamics. In order to navigate them successfully, you will need effective ways to communicate.
- Practicing and perfecting professional communication ensures that clients will enjoy their experience with you, and will encourage their continued patronage.
- The ability to control communication and express your ideas in a professional manner is a primary ingredient for success in any career. This is particularly true in one as personal as skin care.

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 esthetics, 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:



▲ Figure 4–1
Good communication is essential to building positive client relations.

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

your boss, coworkers, clients, and the different vendors who come into the skin care salon or spa to sell and educate you about their products. When you clearly understand the motives and needs of others, you are in a better position to do your job professionally and easily (**Figure 4-2**).

The best way to understand others is to begin with a firm understanding of yourself. When you are conscious of your own needs and desires, it is easier to appreciate others and to help them get what they need. Basically, we all have similar 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 react positively and 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 self-centered that being considerate just does not enter their minds. Even though you may wonder how anyone could be so insensitive, just try to remember that this person at that particular time feels insecure, or he or she would not 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 calmly instead of overreacting.** 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? The ability to think thoughtfully rather than react impulsively will help you to maintain control of your emotions. In situations like this, not reacting with "an eye for an eye" mentality might even have saved a life.
- **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 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 who is not responding to your best efforts to communicate effectively, 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 listening without interruption, agreeing with them, and then asking what you can do to make the service more to their liking. This approach works nine out of ten times.
- **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 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.

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; solve problems from your head.
- A smile goes a long way in establishing rapport and making people feel comfortable.
- Be kind to others. Treat people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity.
- Every action brings about a reaction. Think twice before impulsively reacting to a situation.
- Learn to ask for help when you are overwhelmed.
- Show people you care by listening to them and trying to understand their point of view.



- Give compliments freely. An encouraging word at the right moment brings out the best in people.
- Being right is different from acting righteous. Avoid being a know-it-all and offering your unsolicited opinion on every topic.
- Balance your service to others with personal time to renew your own mind, body, and spirit.
- Develop a sense of humor. The ability to laugh makes coping with the demands of life a lot easier.
- Show patience with other people's flaws.
- Take time to evaluate your own attitude and actions.
- Make amends when you are wrong.
- Learn to forgive yourself and others.
- Be compassionate toward others, demonstrating your support in difficult times.
- Build shared goals; be a team player and a partner to your clients.
- A simple thank-you goes a long way in showing your appreciation to clients and colleagues.
- Remember that listening is the best relationship builder. L01

Communication Basics

Communication is the act of successfully sharing information between two people, or groups of people, so that it is effectively understood. There are many facets to communication. You can communicate through words, voice inflections, facial expressions, body language, and visual tools (e.g., before and after photos).

As you develop effective communication skills, consider that many times it is not *what* we say, but rather *how* we say it. Paying attention to the nonverbal cues we use can help us to improve the quality of our relations with both clients and colleagues. The list of positive and negative nonverbal cues in Table 4-1 will help you to become more aware of how you are coming across to others (**Table 4-1**).

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—and remember that your clients are coming to you for services they are paying for. This means it is your job to provide them with excellent customer service every time they come to see you; otherwise, if you don't, you may lose them to another esthetician or salon (**Figure 4-3**).



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▼ Figure 4-3

First impressions are often lasting impressions. When meeting a client for the first time, maintain good eye contact, smile, and extend a warm handshake.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE NONVERBAL CUES

POSITIVE NONVERBAL CUES	NEGATIVE NONVERBAL CUES
• A pleasant tone of voice	• A loud and overpowering voice
• An even rate of speech	• Rapid and jumbled speech
• A moderate tone of voice	• A soft and unassertive voice
• Good eye contact	• Looking away from a person
• A simple nod to demonstrate you are listening	• Yawning, fidgeting with pens, paperclips, etc., or other distracting gestures
• Warm and enthusiastic facial gestures	• Pursing the lips or folding arms in an off-putting manner
• A smile	• A frown
• Appropriate body distance	• Standing uncomfortably close to a person
• The gentle touch of a hand	• Using hand gestures to scold or embarrass

▲ Table 4–1 Positive and Negative Nonverbal Cues.

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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 spend 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 clients to the people they may have interactions with while in the salon, including potential service providers for other services such as nail 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. L02

Intake Form

An intake form—also called a *client questionnaire* or *consultation card*—should be filled out by every new client before receiving services. 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 esthetics school, the intake 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



▲ Figure 4–4
The initial intake form is a critical consultation and communication tool.

A large photograph of a woman's face, framed by a white border. A person wearing blue gloves is gently touching her forehead and chin. The background is a light-colored, textured wall.

with the service. The salon you work in is likely to be equally cautious when it comes to accepting risk, asking clients to sign and date the intake form at each visit, especially when more advanced higher-risk procedures are involved. In the event a client does not disclose a previous treatment that has an adverse affect, the signed intake form may serve as tangible evidence that the information was not disclosed.

How to Use the Client Intake Form

The client intake form should be mentioned the moment a new client calls the skin care salon or spa to make an appointment. When scheduling the appointment, let the client know that you and the salon will require some information before you can begin the service. Some salons ask clients to arrive 15 minutes before their appointment time for this purpose. You will also have to allow time in your schedule to conduct a 5- to 15-minute **client consultation**, also known as **needs assessment**, the verbal communication with a client to determine desired results, depending on the type of service you will be performing and the client's needs (Figure 4–5).

Consent Form

Having a client sign a consent form is standard practice for more aggressive treatments. A **consent form** is a customary written agreement between the client and esthetician (spa/salon) for applying a particular treatment, whether routine or preoperative. It is a legal document that is kept in the client's chart. Typically it states that the client agrees to the treatment, application, or procedure, as well as understands and accepts all risks involved. It is important not to create an atmosphere of apprehension when introducing this form to clients. What you do want to accomplish is a thorough understanding of the benefits and features of the service or product in question. You also want the client to have a complete understanding of any contraindications to its use. Making these things clear at the outset can help reduce any fears or anxiety the client may have and allow the client to feel more comfortable with the treatment process.

How to Use the Consent Form

When introducing the consent form to clients, take time to review all the steps involved in the treatment process. Be sure to carefully explain any home-care directions that may be necessary. Provide the client with a copy of the consent form, and keep the original for your files. It is also wise to maintain a treatment log and have the client initial and date all subsequent treatment procedures. These extra precautionary measures go a long way in safeguarding both you and the client.

The Client Consultation

The client consultation is the verbal communication that determines the desired results. It is the single most important part of

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Did You Know?

Confidentiality

Estheticians can be held liable for a breach of confidentiality. This can result in lawsuits for both the salon and individuals. As a reminder, always adhere to HIPAA rules and regulations when handling client information and remember that the intake information supplied by clients is strictly confidential and should be handled with the utmost discretion at all times and in all situations. Never conduct a client consultation in an area where other guests or service providers might overhear, or discuss client information in public places or open salon areas.

Estheticians working in upscale salons must be particularly cautious when it comes to dealing with celebrity and high-profile clients. Asking for a client's autograph, taking photos of the client in the spa, or disclosing information about the client to the media without consent is a violation of privacy that can have significant legal repercussions. If you work in such a setting, you must be able to balance the celebrity factor with excellent service and the utmost discretion.

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 it allows you to keep your clients feeling satisfied with your services. Most importantly, it helps to reduce the risk of doing harm to a client.

Once you are clear about what a client is looking for, and whether or not there are any contraindications to the desired treatments, you can work together to develop a strategy for meeting these needs.

Preparing for the Client Consultation

So that your time is 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. A pen and intake form along with vendor-supplied or salon-manufactured pamphlets, photos, articles, or clinical research papers will help you to present the services or explain the benefits of certain ingredients that will be used to perform a treatment.

As skin care treatments become more sophisticated, many clients will have very specific questions about the outcome. Before and after photos are often a good way to demonstrate the results of a product or treatment. Step-by-step photos of the actual treatment process can also be helpful in letting clients know what to expect. Photos of satisfied customers are ideal for demonstrating the efficacy of a product or service, but they are not always suitable. Although many skin care clinics and medical spas will use before and after photos to document a client's progress, it is important to remember that such client information is confidential. If you have a client whose progress is significant, it is extremely important to gain her permission to use such photos for promotional purposes.

Vendor pamphlets that contain before and after photos are often a better resource for demonstrating the details of more aggressive treatments (Figure 4–6). When presenting such photos, be sure to explain how the procedure is conducted in your salon and to point out any differences. A discussion about whom the best candidates are for specific treatments can help clients to decide if the treatment is suitable for them. Even if a client appears to be a good candidate, it is wise to let clients know that you will be conducting a thorough analysis of their skin before making a final determination as to whether or not you can administer a treatment. Helping new clients understand why certain things can or cannot be achieved will also reassure them that you are knowledgeable and serious about their needs.

On occasion, you will find yourself consulting with a client who insists on a specific treatment or service that is not appropriate for them. In



▲ Figure 4–6

Before and after photos are an excellent way to demonstrate the results of a product or treatment.

some cases a client may even misrepresent the truth about a situation to get you to perform a treatment that could have serious consequences. If you decide to perform a treatment that goes against your best judgment and causes harm to a client, guess who will catch the blame? In this situation, it is important to consult with a qualified superior. Refusing to perform a treatment can be difficult, but it is always better to be safe than sorry.

Letting clients know up front that every treatment is subject to further skin analysis sets the tone for professional conduct and lets clients know that all treatments are subject to specific guidelines. If there is any doubt as to whether or not you should proceed, never be afraid to get a second opinion from your supervisor or a more experienced colleague. As a final measure, always have the client sign the intake form to be sure they understand what the service involves and have fully disclosed any contraindications to treatment. For example, if the client is having a microdermabrasion treatment, you will want to be assured they have not recently undergone a chemical peel, waxing, or laser hair removal. When you frame more aggressive treatments in terms of proper skin analysis and the right skin condition, you let the client know that you are a professional that truly has their best interest at heart.

The Consultation Area

Presentation counts for a lot in a business that is concerned with appearances. Once you have brought a client to the consultation or treatment room 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 any pamphlets, photos, and literature that you will use to describe the benefits, features, or any contraindications to a service available. All other appropriate tools to perform the desired service should be ready for use. Review the intake form carefully with the client, 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.

The 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 conduct many consultations. Depending on the service requested, the consultation will vary to some degree. For example, a chemical peel will require a more detailed consultation than a makeup application. To ensure that you are always thorough, keep a list of the following

FOCUS ON

Understanding the Client's Goals

The initial consultation is the most important interaction you will have with a client. Information gathered at this point will help you to define the client's goals and objectives and create a positive working relationship. Remember that each client is an individual with a personal agenda. Some clients may be interested in age management, while others will be looking to remedy or control a certain skin condition. Many clients will simply want to experience the relaxation benefit associated with skin care services. When you reinforce how these goals will be met, through treatment and at-home treatment products, the client feels heard, and your chances of increasing their satisfaction is high.

To determine the best outcome, you will want to gather as much information as possible without invading the client's privacy or making them feel uncomfortable. This generally includes information about any health problems, allergies, and medications, as well as the use of any prescription skin care products, cosmeceuticals, or other skin care treatments the client has recently received that could adversely affect treatment. When conducting a consultation, remember that the information a client provides is considered privileged and should be held strictly confidential.



▲ **Figure 4-7**
Analyze your client's skin for type,
texture, and skin conditions.

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 take a few minutes to develop rapport with the client and get the consultation going.
2. **Assess** your client's current goals and objectives. Is she looking to remedy a skin condition? Rejuvenate her appearance? Relax and unwind?
3. **Preference.** Ask your client what skin care products she is currently using. Does she love the fact that she only has to spend 10 minutes a day taking care of her skin? What professional treatments has she had in the past? Was she happy with the results? What is the reason for today's visit?
4. **Analyze.** Use a magnifying loupe and/or Wood's lamp to assess the client's skin. Note the skin type, texture, and any skin conditions on the consultation analysis form. Determine the client's Fitzpatrick type (more detailed information on the Fitzpatrick scale will be discussed in Chapter 12, Skin Analysis). Are there any contraindications, allergies, or sensitivities that will affect treatment (**Figure 4-7**)?
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 skin care habits? How often does she have facials? How much time does she want to spend taking care of her skin each day?
 - Note all of the intrinsic and extrinsic factors.
6. **Show and tell.** Review the various treatment options. This is a good time to get a real grasp on whether the client's goals are realistic. What does the client hope to achieve? If she says she wants to look like a certain celebrity, does this mean she likes the shape of the celebrity's eyebrows or is interested in having dermatological or plastic surgery? Reinforcing your words with literature and before and after photos is 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 suggestions, narrow the treatment options based on the following factors:
 - **Lifestyle.** The products and services you recommend must fit the client's needs in terms of time and effort, stress level, medical conditions, and other intrinsic and extrinsic factors such as hormonal issues, poor nutrition, smoking or alcohol habits, and personal appearance goals.
 - **Skin type.** You must base your recommendations on whether your client has dry, normal, oily, combination, or sensitive skin.

- **Skin conditions.** Point out any contraindications to treatment or special considerations related to conditions, such as acne and hyper- or hypopigmentation.
- **Fitzpatrick typing.** Determine the client's Fitzpatrick type, and explain how this will affect any of the treatments or services you recommend. Advise the client on the appropriate sun protection products.

When making suggestions qualify them by referencing the preceding factors. For example: "This treatment will help to improve the overall tone and texture of your skin." Tactfully discuss any unreasonable expectations the client may have shared with you by pointing out any contraindications or limitations to the product or service that are unrealistic based on her personal goals. If the client's skin is damaged, you may need to address the need for a series of treatments, better home-care products, or lifestyle changes, or refer the client to a medical professional who is better able to meet her needs.

Never hesitate to suggest additional services that will provide added value to the treatment or enhance the service. For example, adding an enzyme to a basic facial will help to improve skin tone and texture, while an eyebrow wax and new makeup palette can give the client a completely new look that will better suit her lifestyle, fulfill her desire to improve her appearance, and so on.

8. **Sun exposure.** Instructions regarding proper sun protection should be part of every consultation service. Use the Fitzpatrick scale to recommend the appropriate level of sun-protection products and caution all clients against the harmful effects of overexposure to the sun. Estheticians should stress to clients that overexposure to the sun may not only lead to skin cancer but can also contribute to aging, hyperpigmentation, capillary damage, free-radical damage, and collagen and elastin deterioration (these will be discussed in detail in upcoming chapters). It is especially important to advise clients who have exfoliating treatments to keep out of the sun to avoid serious side effects.
9. **Maintenance.** Counsel every client on proper skin care, a regular schedule of salon treatments, the benefit of a series of treatments, lifestyle limitations, 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 ultimately determines the service(s) you will perform. Take your time, and be thorough. L03

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 enter the results on the consultation form. 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





▲ Figure 4-8

Take time to record your results on the client consultation form after each and every service.

the final results and any retail products that you have recommended. This is the perfect time to review the client's goals and objectives. Always supply the client with a written recommendation of the products and treatments you have suggested, with specific directions for product use and recommended time frames for in-salon treatments. This is an excellent tool that the client can use for future reference if they are not ready to purchase at the time of service. Be sure to review your recommendations with the client verbally as well, otherwise the client may ignore them or view them as an impersonal sales pitch. When you take time to make a personal connection with the client, you will be seen as a caring professional who is invested in helping clients stay on track. You also have a better chance of increasing the benefit of salon services. Before moving on to the next client be sure to date your notes and file them in the proper place (**Figure 4-8**).

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 esthetics industry.

Handling Tardy Clients

Tardy clients are a fact of life in every service industry. Because skin care 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 seen immediately. In many skin care salons, the front desk manager or receptionist handles this type of problem, but sometimes a client will insist on speaking to the service provider. If you are called upon, 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 there is enough time to go ahead with the treatment be sure the client understands that you may not be able to conduct the full treatment given the shortened time period; for example, there may be less time for a relaxing massage. In certain instances you may consider offering an alternative treatment, such as a 60-minute facial instead of the 90-minute signature service that was scheduled. Most salons also have policies in place when it comes to fees for late arrivals and missed appointments. The client should be made aware of these policies prior to scheduling or it will be hard to enforce them.

- 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 scheduled for another hour. 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 appointment time.
- Imagine this scenario: Despite 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 extenuating circumstances beyond your control have placed you in a position where the next client will be kept waiting for longer than 15 minutes, have the receptionist look up your client's records and call them to advise them of the situation. 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

CAUTION!

A client who continually disrupts your schedule or a unique mishap is one thing, but continually asking clients to check in because you are always running late is another and is not recommended as a routine fix. Estheticians must learn to perform treatments within the allotted time frame for services. Salons have equal responsibility when it comes to abiding by their policies for tardy clients. When you are on time for clients and abide by salon and spa policies, you show clients that you are a professional and your time is valuable.





▲ **Figure 4-9**
Accommodate an unhappy client promptly and calmly.

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 a.m. tomorrow, and unfortunately I already have a fully scheduled day today. I’m so sorry about the mix-up. Is it possible for you to come in at 10 a.m. tomorrow? Or shall I reschedule you for another time?” 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. When the client does return, be sure to add something of value to her service to make amends for the inconvenience, such as a complimentary hand and foot massage.

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 (**Figure 4-9**).

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.

Many salons and spas will have set guidelines for handling difficult situations. When in doubt, here are some guidelines to follow.

- The first thing you should do is express your most sincere apology for the client’s displeasure. Let the client know that your goal is to have every client walk out of the salon or spa completely satisfied. While you may not be able to remedy the situation immediately—for instance if the client just had a chemical peel, it would not be appropriate to repeat the service—it is important to let the client know you are interested in fixing the problem.

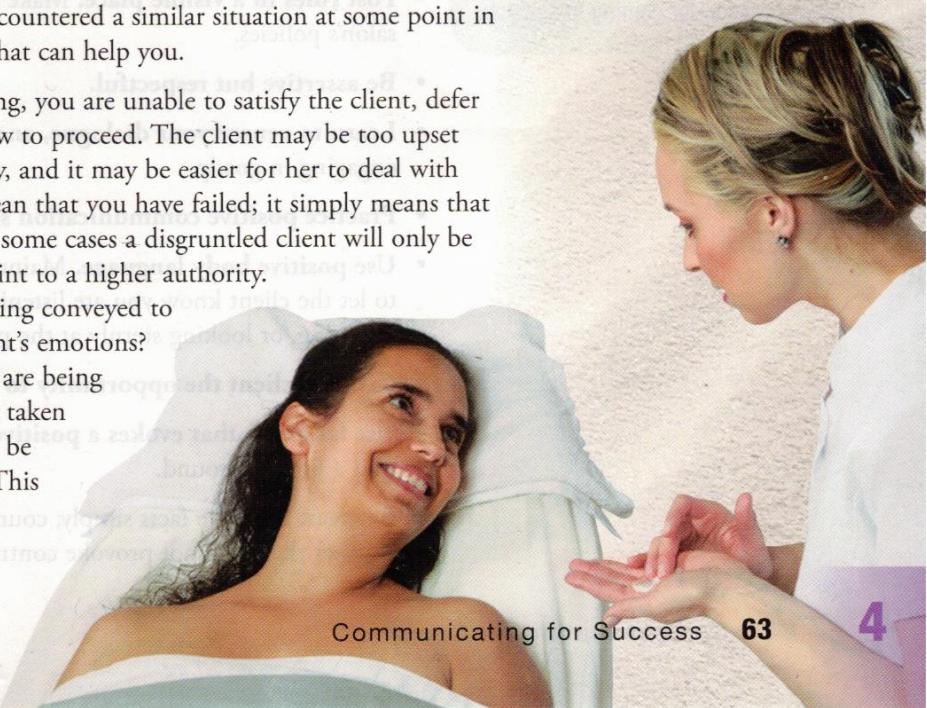
- Give the client an opportunity to vent. In many cases the client simply wants to be heard. Listen attentively without interrupting, paying close attention as to why the client is dissatisfied. Most clients will be able to identify the cause of their displeasure in a few minutes, although some clients may be vague. If the client has a difficult time expressing herself, look for clues by asking several open-ended questions but do not get caught up in a detailed interrogation, as this may only serve to fuel the client's dissatisfaction. If it is possible to change what she dislikes, do so immediately. If that is not possible, ask the client what would satisfy her and work toward achieving that goal as quickly as possible. You may need to enlist the help of the receptionist or front desk manager in rescheduling your other appointments or arranging for another practitioner to step in. If the client seems open to the suggestion of rescheduling, ask her to return to the salon at a time when you are free. If this is not possible, and you will be relying on help from another practitioner, explain who will be working with her and what the other practitioner will be doing. The bottom line is: Do whatever you have to do to make her happy.
- If you cannot change what the client is unhappy with, 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 to remedy the situation. A follow-up note with a gift certificate or special offer, such as a complimentary makeup session or eye treatment that can be redeemed at her next facial appointment, is generally a nice way to make amends.
- When engaging with clients under difficult circumstances it is extremely important to keep your emotions in check at all times. Never argue with the client, resort to disparaging remarks, or try to force your opinion. Unless you can change what has caused the dissatisfaction, arguing will just fuel the fire.
- Do not hesitate to call on the spa director, front desk manager, or a senior staff member 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. In some cases a disgruntled client will only be satisfied by taking their complaint to a higher authority.
Listen to how the message is being conveyed to you. Can you pinpoint the client's emotions? Does she feel that her concerns are being ignored or feel that she is being taken advantage of? Does she want to be sure the manager is informed? This is valuable information for the next customer service agent.

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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.



- **Acknowledge concerns, and state how you can address them.** Assure clients as necessary.
- **Compliment coworkers, managers, or bosses for a job that is well done.** Everyone benefits from a well-deserved and genuine compliment. L04

Getting Too Personal

Sometimes when a client forms a bond of trust with her esthetician, 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 client's 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 skin care needs, and nothing more.

In-Salon Communication

Behaving in a professional manner is the first step in making meaningful in-salon communication possible. Unfortunately, some skin care 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 together. 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.

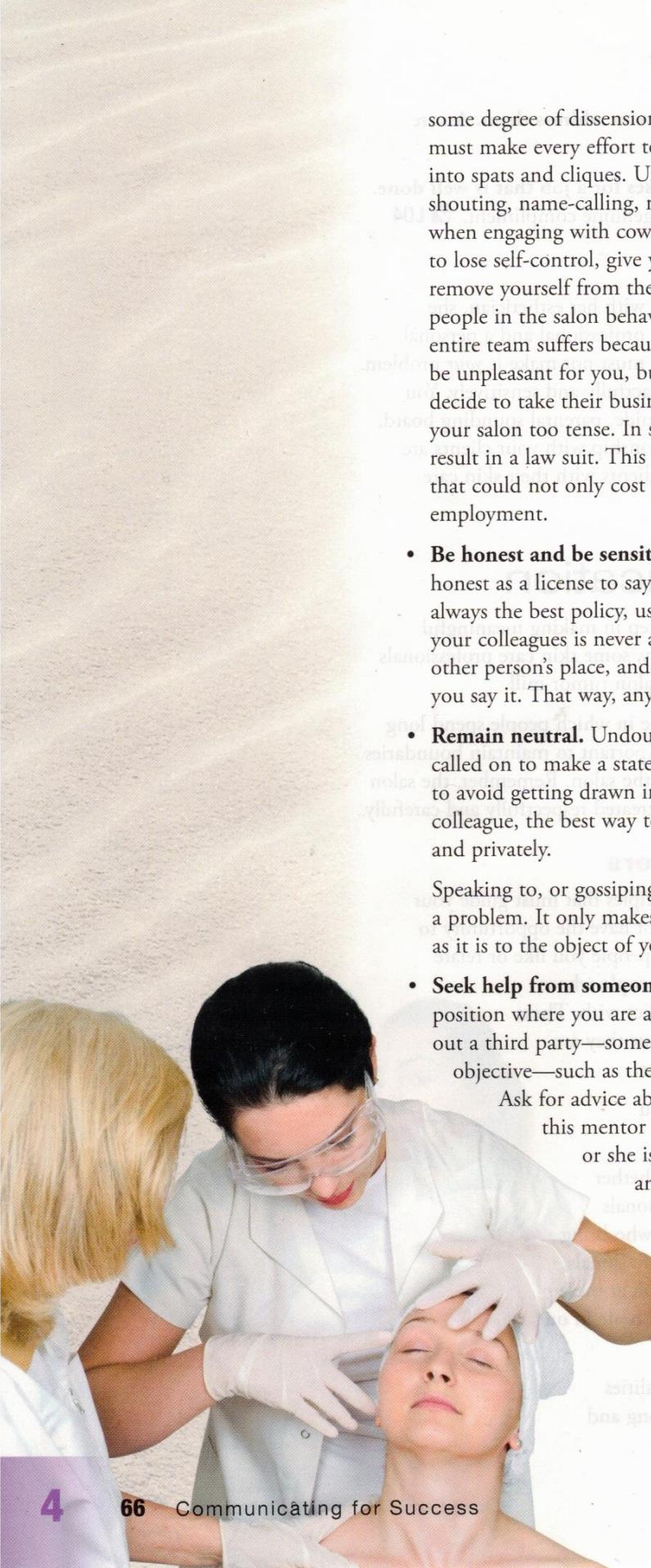
Communicating with Coworkers

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 there will always be 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, just like you, provide services to 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 in the same treatment rooms over long and intense hours are likely to breed





some degree of dissension and disagreement. To learn and grow, you must make every effort to remain objective and resist being pulled into spats and cliques. Under no circumstances should you resort to shouting, name-calling, racist remarks, or other inappropriate language when engaging with coworkers. If at any point you feel you are about to lose self-control, give yourself permission to take a “time-out” and remove yourself from the situation immediately. 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. In some cases inappropriate behavior could even result in a law suit. This can have long-term damaging repercussions that could not only cost you your job, but prevent you from future employment.

- **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 coworker, 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 is wrong, or wonders if you are mad at them? Just because someone is behaving in a certain 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 he or 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. Coworkers can become friends, but those whom you selectively turn into friends are different from the ones whose facial or massage room happens to be next to yours (Figure 4-10).

Communicating with Managers

Another 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 on how the salon is run in terms of daily maintenance, operations, and client service. The manager's job is a demanding one. In some cases, in addition to running a busy salon, the manager may also be a service provider. This person deserves your utmost respect and cooperation.

Your manager is likely to be the one who hired you and is responsible for your training and 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 is not 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, sometimes 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 babysit temperamental practitioners.

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▲ Figure 4-10
Getting along with coworkers is in everyone's best interest.

CAUTION!

In this age of technology there may be a number of communication tools that you rely on to keep you informed throughout the day, such as a cell phone, iPhone, or iPad device. Some salons may specify how, where, and when you can use these items during work hours. It is important to respect these rules. But even if you are not given specific guidelines, it is imperative for estheticians to exercise caution when revealing private information in public areas. A personal conversation or private photos overheard or seen by guests, coworkers, or your supervisor can quickly become the target of unwanted gossip and innuendo. Save the sharing of very personal information for a time when you can be assured of your privacy.

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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 coworker 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. Perhaps you are being overly sensitive or feeling insecure. Lots of times our unhappiness does not stem from the situation directly at hand, instead it may be a reflection of our own insecurities, or something else that is going on in our lives at the time.
- **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.
- **Do not challenge a manager's authority unless there is a legitimate reason to do so.** Some employees challenge everything a manager says. This is counterproductive to team building and undermines the manager's authority. On the other hand, there are times when unethical or inappropriate behaviors, such as sexual harassment, verbal abuse, or misappropriating funds and clients, are legitimate cause for concern. If you find yourself in a difficult situation in which you must go over the head of your immediate supervisor, be prepared with detailed documentation to state your case and take the time to think it through with a trusted confidant beforehand. If a number of coworkers are experiencing the same

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FOCUS ON

The Goal

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

situation, there may be strength in numbers. Still, the road to arbitration can be difficult, so it is critical to distinguish between a personality problem, a petty annoyance, and a legitimate concern. In some cases the best solution may be to seek employment elsewhere.

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 you will be evaluated on are most likely to be the ones listed on your job description. This is 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 about 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 4–11**).

Many salons have performance standards that clearly identify their human resource policies on wage increases and the protocol for advancement. If the salon you work at does not, be prepared to raise these important issues yourself. 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.

While it is important to be prepared for your evaluation, it is also important to remember who is in charge of the meeting. Be respectful toward your supervisor and demonstrate the appropriate professional courtesies at all times. 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. **L05**



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▲ **Figure 4–11**

The employee evaluation provides an excellent opportunity to solicit your manager's advice on the best way to improve your skills.

Review Questions

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

Glossary

client consultation	Also known as the needs assessment; the verbal communication with a client that determines what the client's needs are and how to achieve the desired results.
communication	The act of successfully sharing information between two people, or groups of people, so that it is effectively understood.
consent form	A customary written agreement between the client and esthetician (salon/spa) for applying a particular treatment, whether routine or preoperative.
reflective listening	Listening to the client and then repeating, in your own words, what you think the client is telling you.