

# CHAPTER 3

# Your Professional Image

## Chapter Outline

- Why Study the Importance of Your Professional Image?
- Beauty and Wellness
- Appearances Count
- Your Physical Presentation
- Professional Conduct



# Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- L01** Explain the characteristics of a professional image.
- L02** Understand the importance of professional hygiene.
- L03** Demonstrate proper standing and sitting posture.
- L04** Understand how your personal conduct affects your professional image.

# Key Terms

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

**ergonomically correct posture**  
pg. 43

**personal hygiene**  
pg. 41

**physical presentation**  
pg. 43

**professional image**  
pg. 40

Judging others by their appearance might seem rather shallow, yet research shows that first impressions are tied closely to our physical appearance. Because you are in the image business, how you look and present yourself will have an even greater impact on how others perceive you. If you are recommending skin care services, it is critical that your own skin be well-cared for. If you are advising clients on the perfect eyebrow shape for their face, then your eyebrows must be in harmony with your facial features. If you are advising your clients about makeup, then your makeup must be current and beautifully applied. When your appearance and the way that you conduct yourself are in harmony with the beauty business, your chances of being successful in the field of esthetics increases by as much as 100 percent! After all, when you look great, your clients will assume that you can make them look great, too.

## Why Study the Importance of Your Professional Image?

The way you look, act, and speak is critical to presenting a polished professional image in the skin care business.

- Clients expect skin care professionals to have skin that is well-cared for and makeup that is current and skillfully applied.
- When you follow your own advice and practice good skin care, clients will develop confidence in your ability to do the same for them.
- The esthetician's work is physically demanding. Maintaining an ergonomically correct posture while working is an important part of staying healthfully and gainfully employed for years to come.
- Your professional image extends to how well you interact with managers, coworkers, and clients. Understanding what behaviors are appropriate in the workplace is vital to flourishing in your career.

## Beauty and Wellness

Your **professional image** is the impression projected by a person engaged in the profession of esthetics, consisting of outward appearance and conduct exhibited in the workplace (Figure 3–1). Your appearance, attitude, and abilities create a mental picture in the minds of your clients and associates. You want that image to earn their respect, trust, and eagerness for your knowledge.

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Your professional image is also tied to your role as a model for your clients. You not only help your clients look their best but also alert them to lifestyle decisions that can affect their beauty and health. That means you will need to look your best and make lifestyle choices that express your commitment to your own well-being. Adequate sun protection, exercise, and avoidance of harmful stimuli, such as alcohol and tobacco, are just a few examples of healthy lifestyle choices. Remember: If you do not make every effort to look good, your clients may assume that you cannot make *them* look good.  L01

## Personal Hygiene

**Personal hygiene** (HY-jeen) is the daily maintenance of cleanliness and healthfulness through certain sanitary practices. The basics of personal hygiene include:

- Daily bathing or showering, shaving for men, and freshening up throughout the day as necessary.
- Shampooing, conditioning, and styling your hair as required to keep it fresh, clean, and contemporary.
- Following a regular skin care regimen.
- Brushing and flossing your teeth, as well as using a mouthwash or breath mints throughout the day as needed.
- Paying attention to what you eat and drink during work hours. The smell of certain foods and beverages, like coffee and onions, can linger long after ingestion.
- Using underarm deodorant or antiperspirant.
- Washing your hands throughout the day as required, such as when beginning and ending a service or after visiting the bathroom.
- Avoiding the use of heavy perfumes. To prevent allergic reactions some salons may ask you to avoid using perfume altogether.

Nail care is particularly important for estheticians. Keep both fingernails and toenails clean, trimmed, and filed (Figure 3–2). Nails that are too long or pointed can scratch your client's skin or interfere with your work. Be meticulous about your manicure and pedicure. Take care of hangnails immediately. Keep your hands and feet well moisturized.  L02

## Appearances Count

As a skin care specialist, your poised and attractive appearance will ensure that your clients think of you as a professional. Many salon and spa managers consider appearance and poise to be just as important for success as technical knowledge and skills. So it is a good idea to establish habits of good health and grooming from the start.



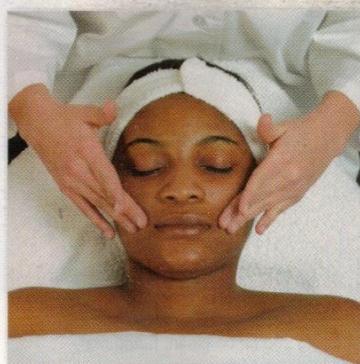
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▲ Figure 3–1  
Project a professional image at all times.

## CAUTION!

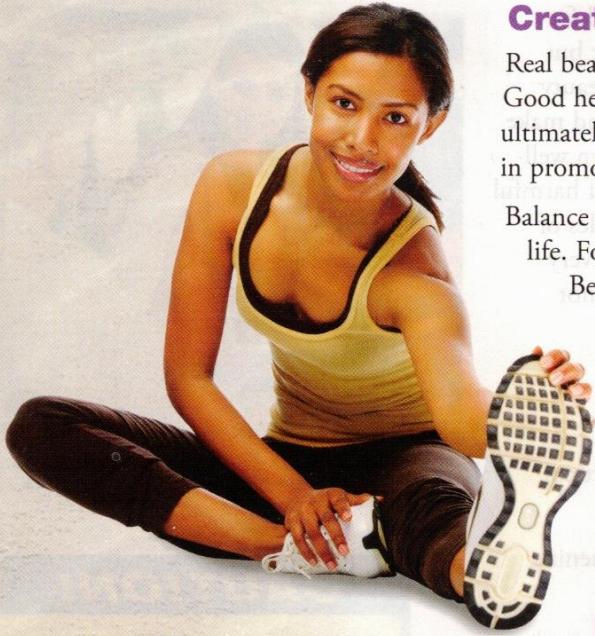
### Fragrances

Many salons have a no-fragrance policy for staff members during work hours because a significant number of people are sensitive or allergic to a variety of chemicals, including perfume oils. For some individuals this sensitivity may also apply to the use of essential oils. Whether or not your salon has a no-fragrance policy, the use of perfume and heavily scented lotions should be saved for after work and always used in moderation.



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▲ Figure 3–2  
An esthetician's nails must be trimmed and filed smooth.



▲ Figure 3–3

Learn to balance your professional life with personal time.



▲ Figure 3–4

Clothing should be clean, functional, and comfortable.

## Creating Balance

Real beauty begins with health and stays grounded in health. Good health greatly affects your energy level, your attitude, and, ultimately, your appearance. One of the most important factors in promoting and maintaining health is balance.

Balance can be hard to achieve in the frantic pace of modern life. For many of us, it can be a challenge to manage stress.

Being in balance enables us to make the right choices for ourselves. If you consistently undermine your well-being with poor choices, you may be putting yourself at risk for disease. Achieving balance is crucial to leading a healthy, productive life (Figure 3–3). You can help create balance by eating a nutritious diet, exercising regularly, getting adequate rest and recreation, and avoiding such habits as smoking, drinking excessively, and taking drugs.

## Dress for Success

At the salon, strive to have your hair, makeup, and clothing express a professional image that is consistent with the image of the salon. You should always comply with the dress code, but the following guidelines are generally appropriate:

- Clothing should be clean and fresh. Uniforms should be comfortable and provide good mobility, especially in the shoulder and elbow areas, but should not be too loose fitting (Figure 3–4).
- Wear clean undergarments every day, and keep them out of view. Underwear elastic peeking out of your pants or exposed bra straps, as well as cleavage exposure and a bare midriff, are inconsistent with a professional image.
- Hair should be neatly coiffed and swept up and off the shoulders if it is long.
- Socks or hosiery should be free of runs and harmonize with your attire.
- Keep shoes clean and comfortable, with good support.
- A clean, natural approach is generally best when applying makeup.
- Dangling jewelry is inappropriate, and it is hazardous to your clients.

## Wearing Makeup in the Salon

Makeup is an exciting category for beauty professionals and may include a wide range of menu options in the skin care salon, such as natural or mineral cosmetics, camouflage, and permanent makeup. Worn tastefully to accentuate your best features, makeup can help promote your professional image and represents profitable sales for salons. That said, it is important to be conscious of the focus of the esthetician's work—

beautiful, healthy skin. When working, take a lighter approach to your makeup regime and reserve trendier looks such as heavily made-up eyes and black nail polish for after hours.

## Your Physical Presentation

Another important aspect of your professional image is physical presentation. To a large degree, **physical presentation** is made up of a person's physical posture, walk, and movements. It can enhance or detract from your attractiveness and is an important part of your well-being. Unhealthy or defective body postures can cause a number of physical problems, particularly when these postures become a habit.

**Ergonomics** is the science of designing the workplace, its equipment, and tools to make specific body movements more comfortable, efficient, and safe. We will talk more about ergonomics in Chapter 14, The Treatment Room. Learning how to control your own body in the workplace will give you a head-start.

### Posture

Good posture conveys an image of confidence. When you stand tall with your back straight, stomach in and shoulders back, you appear competent and poised. How you carry yourself can also prevent fatigue and other physical problems. As an esthetician, you will spend a lot of time in one of two positions: standing on your feet or sitting behind the treatment bed or table on a stool. Under these conditions it is essential to maintain an **ergonomically correct posture**, or one that is healthy for the human spine. Hydraulic chairs, stools, and treatment tables that can be raised and lowered to accommodate the individual practitioner's needs are ideal for maintaining healthy work conditions. You will learn more about how to set up an ergonomically viable treatment room in Chapter 14, The Treatment Room. When you are conscious of how you move your body and practice good posture, you not only look more confident, you will feel better throughout the day.

### Standing Posture

Here are some guidelines for achieving and maintaining good standing posture (follow **Figure 3–5**):

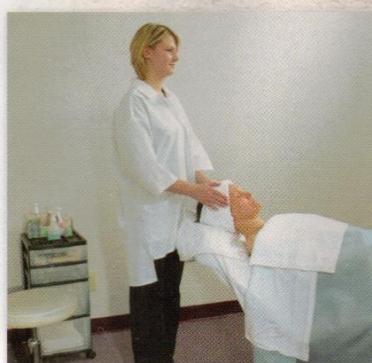
- Keep the neck elongated and balanced directly above the shoulders.
- Lift your upper body so that your chest is out and up (do not slouch).
- Hold your shoulders level and relaxed, not scrunched up.
- Keep your back straight.
- Pull your abdomen in so that it is flat.
- Flex your knees slightly and position them over your feet.

### CAUTION!

Not only can wearing inappropriate shoes at work be uncomfortable, it could be dangerous. Flip-flops and open-toed shoes are just two examples of footwear that are not safe to wear around chemicals, electricity, or sharp implements. Estheticians must adhere to state board regulations and health code requirements for appropriate footwear in the salon.

### Did You Know?

Physical exercise is a great way to relieve stress. Going for a vigorous walk or run, biking, swimming, yoga, or aerobic dancing can make productive use of valuable personal time, allowing you to put aside the demands of your work. This kind of exercise is relaxing and has beneficial physiological effects. One exercise session can generate up to 2 hours of the relaxation response.



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▲ Figure 3–5

Good standing posture can help prevent back strain and other problems.

## ACTIVITY

Practice these quick exercises, which will help you relieve stress from repetitive movements or from standing or sitting in one position for too long:

### For Wrists

1. Stand up straight.
2. Raise both of your arms straight out.
3. Bend your wrists so your fingers point upward and hold for 5 seconds.
4. Hold your wrists steady and turn your hands, so your fingers face the floor.
5. Hold for 5 seconds.
6. Repeat the cycle five times.

### For Fingers

1. Get a ball the size of a tennis ball or a tension ball.
2. Grip it tightly for a count of five, then release.
3. Repeat five times.

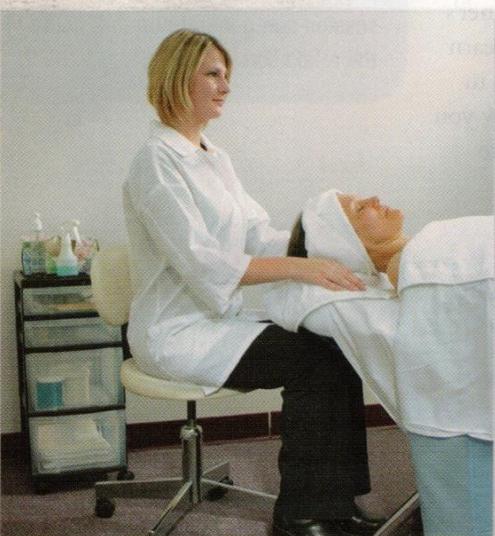
### For Shoulders

1. Stand up straight and shrug your shoulders upward.
2. Now, roll your shoulders back and hold for a count of five.
3. Reverse direction and roll your shoulders forward for a count of five.
4. Repeat five times.

### Sitting Posture

Guidelines for a proper sitting position (follow **Figure 3–6**) include:

- Keep your back straight.
- Keep the soles of your feet entirely on the floor.
- Do not cross your legs or your feet at the ankles.
- Do not bend forward from the waist or stoop forward from the shoulders. Bend from the hips, or sit on a chair or wedge-shaped cushion that tilts forward. **L03**



▲ Figure 3–6

Proper body alignment while sitting is important for an esthetician.

## Professional Conduct

In addition to your appearance, your professional image consists of your conduct in the workplace—or how you behave and get along with your clients, coworkers, and your employer.

Good manners are the hallmark of all professional interactions. In business, no matter what the day brings you must be prepared to deal with it in a positive and professional manner. Ask yourself: “Am I warm, pleasant, and friendly to each person that I come in contact with?”; “Do I maintain appropriate boundaries and treat even the most benign client information as privileged?”; “Do I keep my ego in check and compromise as needed to maintain professional relationships?” Before you cross a line that you might later regret, think about how you would feel if salon guests overheard you and your client discussing the details of your's and your client's personal life, or if a colleague

you trusted was overheard judging your ability to maintain a clientele in the lunchroom with several other coworkers.

Beyond the very serious legal ramifications associated with breaking HIPPA rules and regulations or the unsavory repercussions of workplace politics, how you look, listen, and engage with clients, coworkers, and supervisors are all factors in your professional presentation. When you steer clear of the gossip mill, practice confidentiality, and treat everyone with the respect and kindness that you would want for yourself throughout the course of your day, your professional image is greatly enhanced.

### Mastering Self-Control

Practicing proper etiquette in the workplace is a must; however, as long as we are working for and with people, there will always be some who are more difficult than others.

While they do present a challenge, you need to remember that you are in a professional setting, and your standards for dealing with others must be high. Difficult clients are still a source of income, and difficult coworkers may not go away. We will discuss best practices for communicating with clients and coworkers further in Chapter 4, Communicating for Success. For now, the important thing to remember is that you always have the power to make positive choices.

When conflicts arise consider the following coping mechanisms:

- Count to 10 and think before you speak.
- Distance yourself from a situation to regain your composure.
- Avoid engaging in a no-win situation or argument.
- Get another opinion before making a judgment.
- Stand your ground when necessary. You can be assertive without being overbearing when you use proper business etiquette.
- Direct a situation to a higher authority if necessary.
- Take the high road and refrain from criticizing.
- Help others meet their goals by assuming more responsibility (**Figure 3–7**).

Ultimately, if you are invested in working cooperatively with others, have a strong work ethic, use proper etiquette, and practice good communication techniques the potential for conflict is greatly decreased. **LO4**



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**▲ Figure 3–7**  
Pitching in wherever help is needed  
is part of being a team player.

## Review Questions

1. Define the term professional image.
2. What practices can you incorporate into your everyday routine to create balance and promote health?
3. List the basic habits of personal hygiene.
4. What is the best way to ensure you are dressed for success?
5. What is the role of good posture in professional presentation and health?
6. How can you avoid ergonomically related injuries?
7. What is the most important factor in professional conduct?
8. List five ways you can master self-control in the workplace.

## Glossary

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>ergonomically correct posture</b> | One that is healthy for the human spine.   |
| <b>ergonomics</b>                    | The science of designing the workplace, its equipment, and tools to make specific body movements more comfortable, efficient, and safe.  |
| <b>personal hygiene</b>              | Daily maintenance of cleanliness and healthfulness through certain sanitary practices.   |
| <b>physical presentation</b>         | A person's physical posture, walk, and movements.  |
| <b>professional image</b>            | The impression projected by a person engaged in any profession, consisting of outward appearance and conduct exhibited in the workplace. |