



## **EVOLUTION OF AN INDUSTRY PART 3**

### **Essential Client Care**

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#### **A Judgement is made during the first 5 seconds of contact**

A client who is ringing your business is expecting a certain standard of professionalism. By answering the phone with a positive, low cadence (tone), with a friendly, not hurried "Hello" will give the impression that the client is 'welcome' and conveys professional communication and services available at your business location. It is recommended that staff politely feedback to the client the time of their appointment and ask simple questions like "Have you been to the Salon before?" (using the client's name) or "Do you know where we are located?" requesting more information from the client and providing the client with information enhances the client's initial experience, allowing the client to feel more at ease about utilising your services and attending your business.

This positive, friendly, professional, welcoming attitude is essential and should never be wavered and never be dependent on how the therapist is feeling or the type of day they might be having. It is advisable to confirm appointments of clients who are booking for the first time a day prior to their appointment. Remember this is a courtesy call, the call being welcoming and always using the client's name directly. Appointment confirmation should be done in the most positive and friendly manner encouraging the client to attend. Putting clients on hold at any time can invite the client to hang up through frustration and will invite them to go elsewhere.

#### **Your VIP arrives**

Whether you are in a salon environment with other Therapists or working solo, welcome the client by their name giving eye contact. This says to the client "I am expecting you and you are welcome." Avoid leaving the client standing unattended or un-greeted at reception. Doing so may cause frustration for the client and invite them to experience on a covert level that they may not be expected or you are not ready for them. This does not promote a professional image, all clients need to be treated as VIP's (very important people). Do not leave elderly or unwell clients at Reception. Get them seated, they are already feeling uncomfortable.

At all times whether a client is present or not the Therapist must avoid sitting in the "client's" waiting area. This area is designated for clients to relax and is not for staff members. Sincerely acknowledging each client as quickly as possible after their arrival will assist to establish a sense of welcome and a strong client base. A positive experience by a client will help build your clientele. 45% of most business comes from referral.

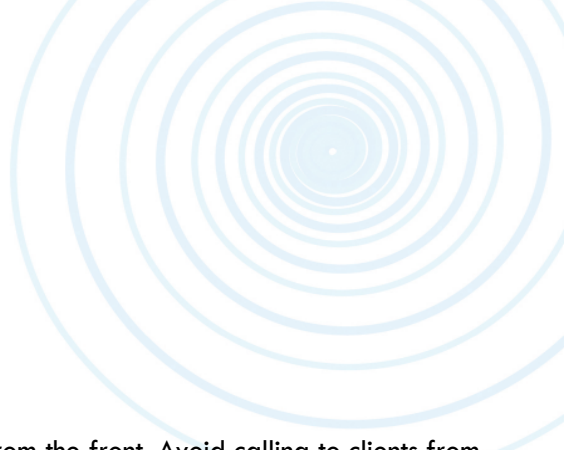
#### **If you don't look after your clients, someone else will**

Referrals to other people are made by happy, satisfied clients who have had a very positive experience. It is important to meet clients at their own level using eye contact. For example if you are seated: stand, welcome them and give directions including walking with them towards the waiting area. As much as possible avoid walking in front of your client. Attempt to stay equal at all times.

Don't assume clients always feel comfortable attending a treatment, particularly if it is the first time they have visited your Salon. Often clients have booked in for a treatment and they know they will have to take clothing off.

Many clients may feel inwardly self-conscious and will be assessing on an internal level how safe they feel even when initially approaching the reception area.

It is important not to underestimate how many decisions are made internally by the client from this initial greeting. If the Therapist is running late and the client will be expected to wait, the client must be informed immediately and not left sitting in the waiting area wondering what is going on. This is not VIP treatment. It is essential to respect the client's time. The Therapist should always endeavour to start and finish the treatment at the nominated times. Apologising to the client and indicating your expected commencement time will allow them to relax, minimise frustration and bad will. The client needs to be informed in an apologetic, positive and professional manner.



## **Essential Client Care cont.**

### **The Therapist is the Leader**

Clients need to be approached with confidence and preferably from the front. Avoid calling to clients from a distance or inviting them to turn and look backwards. Walk to the front of the client, greet and welcome them by name. Shake hands if appropriate and/or give clear directions. The therapist is the leader of the client's consultation. It is recommended to walk behind or shoulder to shoulder with the client giving clear, verbal instructions regarding where you want the client to go. Ensure the treatment room is set up and ready for the client. It is not advised to change towels, sheets etc while the client is in the treatment room as this gives the impression that the therapist is not ready. This also maybe perceived by your precious VIP client as a waste of their precious treatment time and a waste of their hard earned money.

If the client is in the waiting area, all staff who come into contact with the client should acknowledge their presence with a warm greeting. A smile relays a welcoming message.

### **"Alone Time" Therapist with Client**

Sit or stand with the client at the same level. Avoid having the client sitting and the Therapist standing as this may invite the client to feel uncomfortable. Stay equal.

Ask the client "How can I help you today?" Then listen carefully. It is essential for every client that a Case History and notes are taken. This not only assists in record keeping but also helps to establish a professional caring relationship for the client that you want to become a regular customer.

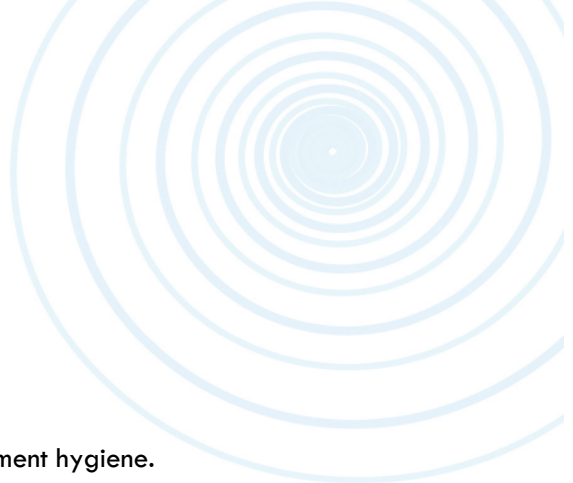
The client needs time to tell you why they are there. Listen, then feedback what you have heard the client is wanting in the treatment. Don't assume you know what the client is wanting, this is the fastest way to lose a client. If the client has multiple requests, assess which area has the "greatest need". Feedback to the client your recommendations, further treatment, mentioning that there needs to be a focus to achieve results. This will assist an ongoing therapeutic treatment plan to be created.

It is preferable that the client agrees with your proposed treatment approach. This should be done in a friendly, positive manner, perhaps by saying something like "This is what I am intending to do for today's treatment, does that sound ok for you?" It is important that the Therapist allows the client to respond. By ensuring both client and Therapist agree on today's treatment, ensures the Therapist has heard and understood and that the client will have their requests attended to. Showing awareness and respect for your client's privacy will assist to make the client a regular customer at your business.

### **Encourage your client to feel safe**

Using professional language, advise the client to undress and leave their underwear on. Using the word 'briefs' will cover both genders. Female clients attending their appointment may prefer to leave their bra on if they feel more comfortable in doing so. Give clear instructions in what you want the client to do. Using common terms, request the client lay face down / face up on the table and give clear instructions in regard to draping. For example if clients are to cover themselves with a towel ensure you have advised them where the towel is or give to them directly. At all times it is essential that the Therapist leaves the room and allows the client to undress in privacy. Staying in the room with a client may cause embarrassment to the client and may effect the opportunity of establishing the client as a long term customer for your business.

Once again giving clear instructions will encourage your client to feel "safe". Advise the client you are going to wash your hands and that you will check prior to your re-entry to ensure they are covered adequately and ready. Use the client's name "Are you ready.....?" before entering, wait for the client's response. Walking in on a client who is not ready may also make the client feel embarrassed and unsafe and may not be seen as professional in many circumstances. This time before the therapist re-enters the treatment room should be no more than 2-4 minutes. Longer may leave the client laying on the table feeling frustrated and wondering where their therapist is. The client may perceive this wasted time is time they are paying for.



## **Essential Client Care cont.**

### **Essential Therapist Responsibilities**

- Appropriate hygienic practices including personal hygiene and equipment hygiene.
- Non-sexual behaviour, clear ethical boundaries.
- Discuss relevant contra-indications or potential outcomes of the treatment.
- Provide the agreed treatment, which has been consented to by the client.
- Review of treatment and referral to a more appropriate therapist if required.

### **Consultation Segments**

1. Case History/Assessment
2. Verbal communication to client regarding proposed treatment. Client's consent/agreement.
3. Client privacy time: therapist leaves room, allows client to undress. Therapist washes hands.
4. Actual hands on treatment.
5. Ensure you have left adequate time for final nurturing at end of treatment which could include gentle head or ear massage or the use of hot towels. Create a signature nurturing regime.

If you move from deep massage work to softer nurturing strokes without advising the client the treatment will be ending, they may not be able to adjust internally. Communicate what you are doing and advise your client "we are about to finish your treatment for today....." (using client name).

By clearly advising the client you will check again before you re-enter to ensure they are ready will also allow the client to feel safe and provide adequate privacy for the client to re-dress.

Ensure you do re-enter after advising your client. It is not advisable to wait outside the room for your client to come out. Further information could include recommendation for future treatments and re-booking times that are available. Hydrate your client whether they want it or not, make it part of your routine to offer them a glass of water. Allow adequate time to educate and re-book your client.

Escort your client to the reception area, client walks in-front or walk side by side with your client. Preferably re-book your client personally but allow the receptionist to handle the money and write the receipt. When the therapist personally re-books the client it enhances the commitment the client is making for their next treatment and for their recovery.

The therapist should accurately and quickly record information provided by the client and how they have treated the client today.

As a Therapist your Professional success is your own responsibility.

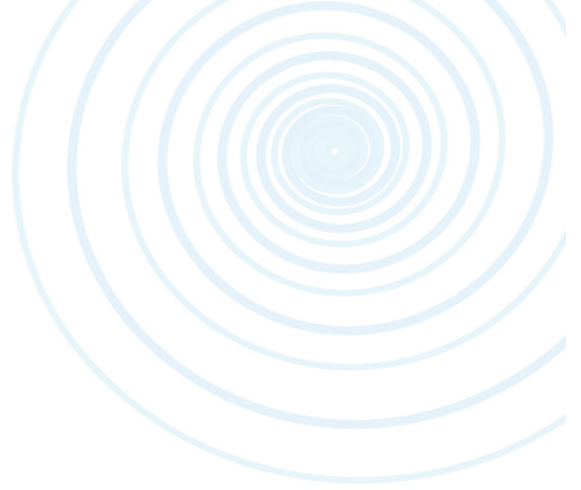
By striving to offer effective treatments with professionally focussed service your clientele numbers will increase over a period of time. Success is achievable by all adequately trained Therapists who understand that clients are the reason you are able to offer your services.

All clients should be treated like VIP's.

### **First Touch**

Touch clients mindfully to avoid the client feeling a sense of invasion, create a "signature" introductory touch that also will allow you, the therapist to be focussed and centred. Encourage your client to breathe with you. Re-visit the "intention" of the client's treatment, draw your "internal presence" to your client. Limit conversation unless about the treatment.

If a client is in discomfort or pain, monitor the depth of your massage by questioning the client on a regular basis. If an area is painful for the client work slowly and monitor the depth of the massage, checking constantly with the client to ensure they are able to work with you during the session.



## **Essential Client Care cont.**

### **If you are working deeply, work slowly.**

This is the key to assisting your client to work with you as a therapist during the client's treatment. With the exception of relaxation massage styles most clients prefer a firm massage. If the massage treatment is experienced by a client as too light there is a strong possibility that the client will not have their treatment needs met and will not return.

Remember if working deeply into a client's muscles stay focussed, work slowly and continue to check the depth of the massage with the client.

### **Background of School of Integrated Body Therapy, Australia Pty Ltd (SIBT)**

The largest specialty massage school in Australia, established in 1985. During SIBT's growth it has aided and witnessed the evolution of massage as a highly respected, viable profession in Australia. These years of experience have allowed SIBT to develop and offer reliable and sound skills-based professional training. SIBT's philosophy embraces a wholistic approach to healing, wellbeing and recovery through massage and bodywork.

SIBT provides cutting edge training with a focus on the latest hands-on techniques and skills. SIBT is an Australian Government Registered Training Organisation and is accredited by three major Australian professional associations:

- Australian Traditional Medicine Society (ATMS),
- Association of Massage Therapists (AMT),
- Reflexology Association of Australia (RAA).

SIBT currently has the assistance of the Australian Trade Commission to export education and has successfully completed over 22 courses throughout Asia over the last 3 years.

The School's website is [www.massageschool.com.au](http://www.massageschool.com.au)

### **Article written by**

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Maggie is a Life Member of the Australian Traditional Medicine Society (ATMS) and has been an Executive Director of ATMS for 18 years, 9 of those years as Vice President. ATMS is the largest professional association for the Natural Therapies Industry in Australia. She has been structurally and politically involved in the development of the Massage profession in Australia. Maggie is also the Founder/Director of Lake Spa Healing, Therapy & Education Centres, Australia, and has an ongoing commitment to sharing knowledge throughout the world and assisting other countries to raise educational standards and awareness in regard to massage as a viable health and wellness therapy and for its treatment of pain and dysfunction.

