

EVOLUTION OF AN INDUSTRY PART 2

Introduction to Client Care

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The purpose of this article is to inform and make recommendations for Therapists in regard to working with clients in a professional environment. This heightened awareness for Therapists is with regard to how their attitude and behaviour can be experienced or relayed to the client in a positive or negative way. At all times this awareness will allow the therapist to offer the client not only an “Effective Treatment” but also focus on the “Service Aspect” of the client’s experience.

The service expectations of clients will vary however if the therapist always strives to offer service at a high level, this will invite the client to re-book. Clients will not be encouraged to return if attention to detail is not a consideration. Clients need to feel safe in the environment that you have created but also feel confident that you are professional. Therapists need to reflect that you know what you are doing. This confidence should be expressed to the client in all aspects of the client’s treatment. The client is coming to you as a Therapist for a service. This service includes an “Effective Treatment” but also many other service aspects.

Building a Successful Clientele

Whether the practice is in a Spa, Clinic or Resort with other Therapist’s or you are working in a solo situation, it is important that you take responsibility for your own success.

Treatments allow clients to experience a variety of effects, which may include relief from discomfort, structural correction in regard to ongoing physical imbalances, stress management, maintenance of the body allowing clients to stay healthy, continued mobility and freedom of movement. Client may also experience a sense of connection in a safe professional environment, personal growth and self-development, heightened body awareness, emotional release and or sense of knowing or well being.

It is impossible to meet every client’s expectations and needs for a variety of reasons which include the willingness of a client to participate in their own recovery and take directions from the Therapist ie, stretches at home, strengthen muscles with exercise, drink more water, etc. The client’s willingness to receive treatment on a regular basis as directed by Therapist and for the client to take personal responsibility and actively participate in their recovery.

Why a client is so important?

A client is the reason you are in a position to offer your services. Without clients businesses cannot successfully function. A client is someone who is approaching the business with a particular need. If the business is unable to meet the client’s needs for

(a) effective treatment (b) professional service

the client who does not have this need met will look elsewhere to another business for this service.

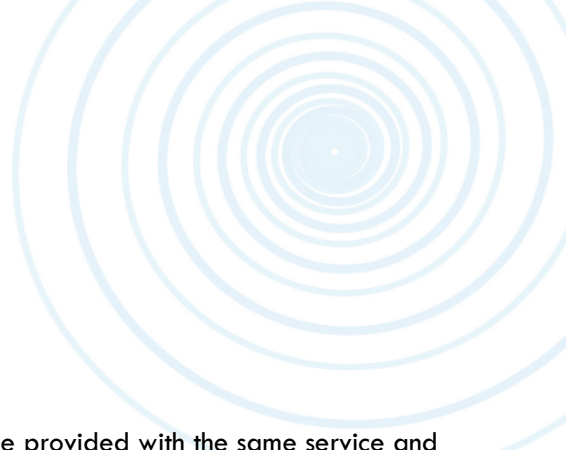
The importance of a “professional attitude”

It is essential for every therapist to consider their own attitude towards the giving of service to a client.

What is the therapists attitude towards

a) The Business/Clinic/Resort/Spa that you may carry out your duties as a therapist.

b) Individual clients of different ages, genders, belief systems, religions, cultures, race and socio-economic backgrounds.



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Generally speaking if you are a professional all clients need to be provided with the same service and personal preferences need to be set aside in order to be an effective therapist. It is essential for therapists to assess their own resistance to giving a client the best service possible.

Resistance may be triggered in areas, which may include:

- a) people with authority
- b) if you are requested to do a task you would prefer not do
- c) aggressive, demanding clients with a rude attitude
- d) fear of making a mistake or doing the wrong thing
- e) a sense of needing to compete to feel adequate

The basic intention of service is to meet the client's needs professionally and to realise that it is part of a requirement to be a successful Therapist.

The importance of attention to detail

It is costly in any Business to continually seek new clients. It is more advantageous to create a regular consistent clientele. "Effective Treatment" combined with "Client Care awareness" will ensure your business is successful. If you were to see 80 clients in a month and only 30 returned, you could ask the question – "Did they all recover after the treatment?" If you want to succeed in this industry take a serious look at your presentation. What the client sees and feels before you even start your work can make or break your future clientele and income.

PLEASE CONSIDER EVERY PART OF YOUR PRESENTATION AS BEING IMPORTANT

a) Personal

Your personal attire and hygiene will be of the utmost interest to your client. Covert messages in regard to these items may provide the client with a positive or negative experience.

Be neat and clean and look professional, ie Plain pastel coloured clothes. Wearing sexually provocative clothing will not enhance your image and may give the "wrong message".

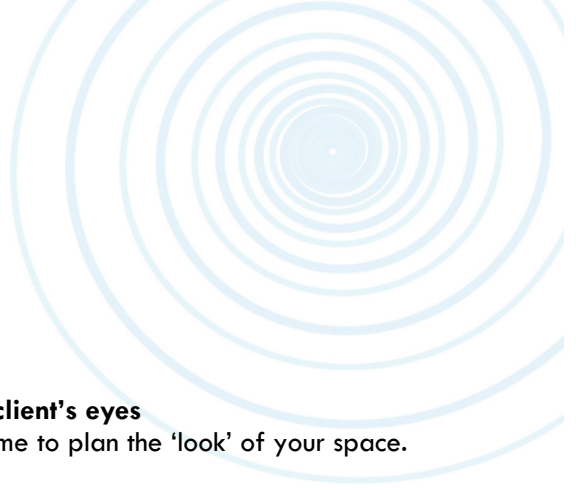
It is recommended that you wear shoes that are clean. Bare feet or open sandals may not be seen as professional by a western client or top end Asian business executive.

HYGIENE – AT ALL TIMES:

- Shower or bathe regularly and prior to commencement of treatments.
- Use deodorant (re-apply deodorant throughout day if needed).
- Clean hair, hair tied back, looking professional and neat.
- Clean, trimmed and filed fingernails.
- Fresh Breath (refresh breath regularly preferably before each client).
- A non-smoking client will find any suggestion of smoking offensive. Smokers should avoid smoking around treatment times, otherwise take suitable steps to discourage the client smelling any smoking odour.

b) Equipment

- Clean, fresh equipment at all times (cutting costs in this area will invite clients to feel unsafe).
- Matching, fresh equipment (tired looking towels and sheets are not professional and will reflect on your reputation).
- Adequate equipment, ensure there is enough fresh sheets and towels for each client.
- Change pillow case, face-hole cover, eye-pillow tissues & hot towels for each client.
- Wash equipment with suitable products, which may include washing powder, 2 drops of eucalyptus oil as a disinfectant and fabric conditioner.



Introduction to Client Care cont.

c) The Massage Environment - See the treatment space through your client's eyes

The way the space is set up will reflect on the professionalism. Take time to plan the 'look' of your space. Colour co-ordinate towels, sheets, etc. Exceptionally clean and tidy.

- Fresh, uncluttered, suitable professional decorations. Use pastel, neutral colours.
- Ensure any pictures are passive and invite relaxation (and are professionally framed).
- Ensure area is private and as quiet as possible. All personal belongings out of sight.
- Have room at correct temperature for clients. OH&S safe for Therapist and client.
- Dust, cobwebs, dirty windows, dirty light shades and fans, etc will also reflect badly on the treatment environment.

d) Special Features - Things That Will Make the Client's Treatment Stand Out

The small extra services you provide clients can really make a huge difference to how people feel. Try to provide extra comfort for all clients at all times. By making this effort it will invite the clients to return. Some Suggestions -

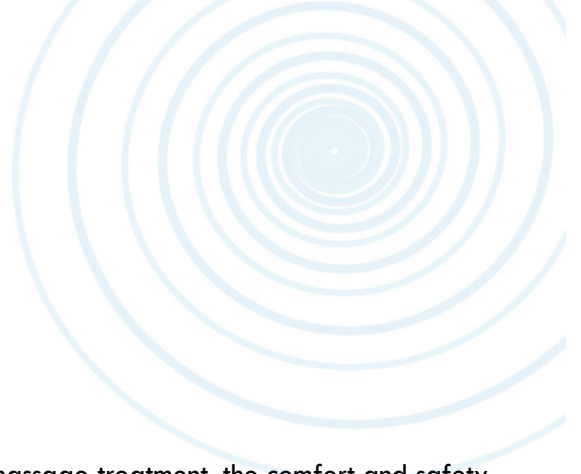
- Heat towels. Lay one heated towel on table just before leaving the room so client initially lies on the warmth. Use warm towels for draping.
- Washing hands in warm water will be more comfortable for clients. Cold hands give a "shock" effect.
- Warm oil in a bowl of hot water before application. Burn oils in a burner. Fragrances add a nice touch, remember the preferences between genders, ie Wintergreen/men, Lavender/women. Ask the client so they have a choice.
- Use appropriate music to enhance the client's experience. Always check the volume with client.
- Provide coat hanger and gowns for clients.
- Using Eye Covers will aid relaxation.
- Offer disposable ear plugs to clients if you regularly expect intrusive noises.
- Tucking towels tightly around draped limbs will offer a sense of containment and safety.
- Always being mindful of client's safety and modesty will invite clients back.
- Dimmer switches, avoid fluorescent lights, particularly when client is supine.

Draping - Keep your client in their "Comfort Zone"

In western countries undressing and dressing in front of a Therapist is unethical and seen as not professionally respecting the client. This applies also to regular clients with whom you have established a therapeutic relationship. Always give "the Right Message"

Always drape your client thoroughly. Draping exposed areas must become an automatic part of every treatment. Leaving clients uncovered is unethical and will not invite client safety. In hot weather, smaller towels can be used, but the client must still be covered. Using pillows, sheets and towels, always maintain good draping procedures.

**AREAS NOT BEING TREATED MUST BE SUITABLY DRAPED,
THE AREA BEING TREATED ONLY NEED BE EXPOSED.**



Introduction to Client Care cont.

Posture “Therapist Self Care”

Not only are the client’s needs taken into consideration during a massage treatment, the comfort and safety of the Therapist should also be considered. It is desirable for each Therapist to have their treatment table the correct height to suit their own body height and arm length, in order to maintain a suitable posture during the massage. A suitable posture would be the Therapist stands with feet apart, knees bent, using their body lean and legs to move them forward, rather than their back, which for the therapists own well being should be kept as straight as possible. In western cultures climbing onto a table with the client may be seen as inappropriate, unprofessional and in some cases, unethical, and often does not relay the “right message”.

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

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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.

