Chapter Outline

Why Study Communicating for Success?

Human Relations

Communication Basics

The Client Consultation/Needs Assessment

Special Issues in Communication

In-Salon Communication
Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- **LO1** List the golden rules of human relations.
- **LO2** Explain the definition of effective communication.
- **LO3** Conduct a successful client consultation/needs assessment.
- **LO4** Handle an unhappy client.
- **LO5** Build open lines of communication with coworkers.

Key Terms

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Do you have outstanding technical skills? Are you ready to unleash your artistic talents? If so, then you are on your way to becoming successful in your chosen career path. It is important to realize, though, that technical and artistic skills can only take you so far. In order to have a thriving clientele, you must also master the art of communication (Figure 4–1). Effective human relations and communication skills build lasting client relationships, accelerate professional growth, and help prevent misunderstandings in the workplace.

Why Study Communicating for Success?

Cosmetologists should study and have a thorough understanding of communicating for success because:

- Communicating effectively—with a purpose—is the basis of all long-lasting relationships with clients and coworkers.
- Professionals need to build strong relationships based on trust, clarity, and loyalty in order to have a successful career, and you must be able to verbalize your thoughts and ideas with clients, colleagues, and supervisors.
- The close-knit salon environment will present complex and sometimes difficult interpersonal issues, and you will need effective ways to communicate, in order to navigate them successfully.
- 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 effectively express ideas in a professional manner is a necessary skill for success in any career. This is particularly true in one as personal as cosmetology.

Human Relations

No matter where you work, you will find some people harder to get along with than others. It is not always possible to understand what people need, even if you know them well. Though you think you understand what people want, you cannot always satisfy their wishes. This can lead to misunderstandings.
The ability to understand people is the key to operating effectively in many professions. It is especially important in cosmetology, where customer service is central to success. Most of your interactions will depend on your ability to communicate successfully with a wide range of people: supervisors, coworkers, clients, and various vendors who come into the salon to sell products. When you understand the motives and needs of others, you will be in a better position to do your job professionally.

People all have the same basic needs, and the best way to understand others is to begin with a clear understanding of yourself. When you know and understand your own motivations, it is easier to appreciate others and to help them meet their goals. When people treat us with respect and listen to us, we feel good about them and about ourselves. By treating others with respect, you create an environment in which customers and staff develop confidence in you. Mutual respect—which transforms a good stylist into a trusted adviser and colleague—follows naturally.

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:

• **Human beings are social animals.** We like to interact with other people. As human beings, we enjoy giving our opinion and take pleasure in having people help us. Also, we feel pride when we use our abilities to help others.

• **A fundamental factor in human relations involves a person’s sense of security.** When people feel secure, they are happy, calm, and confident. When people feel secure, they can be a joy to be around. On the other hand, when people feel insecure, they can become worried, anxious, and overwhelmed.

• **No matter how secure you are as an individual and a professional stylist, there will be times when you encounter people and situations that are difficult to handle.** Some people create conflict wherever they go. Try to remember that these people are feeling insecure; if they weren’t, they wouldn’t be acting that way.

To become skilled in human relations, learn to make the best of any situation. Here are some good ways to handle the ups and downs of human relations:

• **Respond instead of reacting.** A man was asked why he did not get angry when a driver cut him off. “Why should I let someone else dictate my emotions?” he replied. A wise fellow, don’t you think? He might have even saved his own life by not reacting with “an eye for an eye” mentality.
• **Believe in yourself.** When you do, you trust your judgment, uphold your 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. 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. Listen more than you talk. When you are a good listener, you are fully attentive to what other people are saying.

• **Be attentive.** Each client is different. Some are clear about what they want, some are demanding, and still others may be hesitant. If you have an aggressive client, ask your manager for advice. You will likely be advised that what usually calms difficult clients down is agreeing with them. Follow up by asking what you can do to make the service more satisfactory (Figure 4–2).

• **Take your own temperature.** If you are tired or upset, your interactions with clients may be affected. An important part of succeeding in a service profession is taking care of yourself and your own personal conflicts first so that you can take the best possible care of your clients.

Human relations can be rewarding or demoralizing. The result you achieve will depend on how much you are willing to give and how well you have prepared yourself for that day’s services.

### The Golden Rules of Human Relations

Keep the following golden rules of human relations in mind, and you will deal with difficult situations more successfully:

• Communicate from your heart; problem-solve from your head.

• A smile is worth a million times more than a sneer.

• It is easy to make an enemy; it is harder to keep a friend.

• See what happens when you ask for help instead of just reacting.

• Show people you care by listening to them and trying to understand their point of view.

• Compliment people even if they are challenging or unpleasant.

• For every service you do for others, do not forget to do something for yourself.

• Laugh often.

• Show patience with other people’s flaws.
• Build shared goals; be a team player and a partner to your clients.

• Always remember that listening is the best relationship builder.

Communication Basics

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

**Meeting and Greeting New Clients**

One of the most important encounters you will have is the first time you meet a client. Be polite, genuinely friendly, and inviting in every way you communicate with the client. You should keep in mind that your clients are coming to you for services and paying for your expertise with their hard-earned money (Figure 4–3). This means you need to court them every time they come to see you; if not, you may lose them to another stylist or salon.

To earn a client’s trust and loyalty, you should:

• Always approach the client with a smile on your face. If you are having a difficult day, keep it to yourself. The time you spend with your client is for his or her needs, not yours.

• Always introduce yourself. Names are a powerful communication tool and should be used.

• Set aside a few minutes to take new clients on a quick tour of the salon.

• Introduce clients to people they may have interactions with while in the salon, including potential providers for other services, such as skin care or nail services.

• Be yourself. Do not try to fool clients by representing yourself as someone or something you are not.

**Intake Form**

Prior to sitting at your station, every new client should fill out an intake form—also called a client questionnaire or consultation card. This form can prove to be an extremely useful communication and business tool (Figure 4–4).
Client Intake Form

Dear Client,

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

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

Name:________________________________________
Address:______________________________________
Phone Number: ______(day)__________ (evening) ________ (cell) _______
E-mail address:_______________________________
Sex: ______ Male ______ Female________ Age:______
How did you hear about our salon?________________________________________
If you were referred, who referred you?________________________________________

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

1. Approximately when was your last salon visit?________________________________________
2. In the past year have you had any of the following services either in or out of a salon?
   ___ Haircut
   ___ Haircolor
   ___ Permanent Wave or Texturizing Treatment
   ___ Chemical Relaxing or Straightening Treatment
   ___ Highlighting or Lowlighting
   ___ Full head lightening
   ___ Manicure
   ___ Artificial nail services (please describe)
   ___ Pedicure
   ___ Facial/Skin Treatment
   ___ Other (please list any other services you’ve enjoyed at a salon that may not be listed here).
3. What are your expectations for your hair service(s) today?
4. Are you now, or have you ever been, allergic to any of the products, treatments, or chemicals you’ve received during any salon service—hair, nails, or skin? (Please explain)
   __________________________________________
5. Are you currently taking any medications? (Please list)
   __________________________________________
6. Please list all of the products that you use on your hair on a regular basis.
   __________________________________________
7. What tools do you use at home to style your hair?
8. What is the one thing that you want your stylist to know about you/your hair?
9. Are you interested in receiving a skin care, nail care or makeup consultation?
10. Would you like to be contacted via email about upcoming promotions and special events?
    Yes ____  No ___

⚠️ Figure 4-4

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

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

### How to Use the Client Intake Form

The client intake form can be used from the moment a new client calls the salon to make an appointment. When scheduling the appointment, let the client know that you and the salon will require some information before you can begin the service, and that it is important for her to arrive fifteen minutes ahead of her appointment time to fill out a brief form. Also, allow time in your schedule to do a five to fifteen minute client consultation.
The Client Consultation / Needs Assessment

The client consultation, also known as needs assessment, is the verbal communication with a client that determines the client’s needs and how to achieve the desired results. The consultation is one of the most important parts of any service and should always be done before starting the actual service. A consultation should be performed, to some degree, as part of every single service and salon visit. The consultation keeps communication on point. Effective client consultations keep your clientele looking current, stylish, and satisfied with your services. A happy client means repeat business for both the salon and you.

Preparing for the Client Consultation / Needs Assessment

For the client consultation to be effective, it is important that you be well prepared to make the most of this dialogue. To facilitate the process, have certain important items on hand. These include styling books and hair swatches. To properly prepare for a consultation you should:

1. **Understand the Total Look Concept**
   - While the enhancement of your client’s image should always be your primary concern, it is important to remember that nails, skin, and hair are reflective of an entire lifestyle. How can you help a client make choices that reflect a personal sense of style? Start by doing a little research. Look for books or articles that describe different fashion styles and become familiar with them. This exercise is useful for developing a profile of the broad fashion categories that you can refer to when consulting with clients.
   - For example, a person may be categorized as having a classic style if simple and sophisticated clothing, monochromatic colors, and no bright patterns are preferred. A person who prefers classic styling in her clothing would likely want a simple, elegant, and sophisticated look with respect to her nails, makeup, and hair.
   - Someone who prefers a more dramatic look, on the other hand, will choose nail designs, hairstyles, clothing, and accessories that demand greater attention and allow for more options. These clients are likely to be more willing to try a variety of new products and spend more time having additional services (Figures 4–5 and 4–6).

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• Have a variety of styling books that your clients can look through. There should be at least one that depicts short hair, one for medium-length hair, and one with longer styles. You should also have—readily available—an assortment of photos representing all hair color options.

• Have a portfolio of your work on hand. To create one, keep a camera at your station (a disposable or digital camera is fine) and, with the client’s permission, take photos after the service.

• When you show the photos, explain why you performed the various services the way you did. This will help new clients understand why certain things can or cannot be achieved, and it will reassure them of your expertise, skill, and knowledge (Figure 4–7).

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

Many times, you will find yourself consulting with a client who asks for a specific cut or color that she may have heard about from a friend or seen on a celebrity. You know that not every technique or color will work for everyone. In this situation, take the client through the process step-by-step, diplomatically explaining why a specific cut has to be adjusted for her hair type, or why a certain color is either right or wrong for her hair color, skin type, desired maintenance, budget, or lifestyle.

The Consultation Area

Presentation counts for a lot in a business that is concerned with style and appearance. Once you have brought the client to your station to begin the consultation process, make sure she is comfortable. The two of you are about to begin an important conversation that will clue you in to her needs and preferences. It is your responsibility to find out what the client’s needs are and to make recommendations that meet those needs. To do so effectively, you will need a freshly cleaned and uncluttered workspace.

Read the intake form carefully, referring to it often during the consultation process. Throughout the consultation, make notes on the intake form. After the service, record any formulations or products that you used. Include any specific techniques you followed, or goals you are working toward, so that you can remember them for future visits.
10-Step Consultation Method

Every consultation should be structured so that you cover all the key points which 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. To ensure that you cover all the bases, keep a list of the following 10 key points at your station. Modify the list as needed for each actual service:

1. **Review the intake form.** Feel free to make comments that break the ice and initiate conversation with the client.

2. **Assess the client’s current style.** Is it soft and unstructured? Carefully styled? Classic? Avant-garde? Is it in sync with her style of clothing and personal image?

3. **Determine the client’s preferences.** Ask your client what they like most and least about their current cut and style. Ask her when was the last time she really loved or liked her hair and other areas of concern (skin, nails, body care). Next ask what she likes least and what challenges she is having. If she could change something what would it be? Is her style too conservative? Does she love the fact that she only has to spend ten minutes a day styling her hair?

4. **Analyze the client’s hair.** Assess your client’s hair, including its thickness, texture, manageability, and condition. Is her hair particularly thin on top or at the temples? Check for strong hair growth patterns, including unruly cowlicks. Ask your client what at-home products they are using and if they are effective for them. Make notes on the intake form.

5. **Review the client’s lifestyle.** Ask your client the following questions about her career and lifestyle:
   - Does she spend a great deal of time outdoors? Does she swim frequently?
   - Is she a businesswoman? An artist? A stay-at-home mom?
   - Does she wish to project a strong or specific personal style?
   - What are her styling abilities? How often does she shampoo her hair?
   - How much time does she want to spend on her hair each day?

6. **Show and tell.** Encourage your client to flip through your style books and point out styles, or even parts of styles, that she likes and to tell you why she likes them. Does she consistently point out thick, full hairstyles, for instance, when her own hair is quite fine or thin? Is her hair curly, yet she consistently chooses straight styles that would require a chemical straightening service to achieve?
ACTivity

When is the last time you went to a salon for a service yourself? Putting yourself in the client's shoes will help you improve your communication skills in every way. First, recall your most recent salon visit. Now, write down the following information:

- Your first impression of your stylist.
- His or her best verbal and non-verbal communications.
- Any questions you asked your stylist and his or her reply.
- Questions you wanted to ask but did not, and why.
- What you would change, knowing what you know now about how to communicate with clients? Would you have asked more questions to make certain you got what you wanted? Would you have avoided a certain subject?
- Do you think you communicated exactly what you wanted? What questions did you ask that your clients may not know to ask, since they are not stylists?

In addition, listen to how she describes hair length. If she says she wants her hair short, for instance, does she mean shoulder length? Above her ears? One-inch long all over her head? When her bangs are dry, does she want them to still touch her eyebrows? In order to make sure you understand what she is saying, repeat what she tells you, using specific terms like chin-length or resting on the shoulders—as opposed to vague terms like short or long—and reinforce your words both with pictures and by pointing to where the hair would fall. Listening to the client and then repeating, in your own words, what you think the client is telling you is known as reflective listening. It is important to focus on the client and not interrupt while he or she is speaking. After the client is finished, restate and confirm what was said. Following this, ask for confirmation to make certain you understand what the client wants or needs.

7. **Suggest options.** Once you have enough information, ask the client if you may make some recommendations. Before giving any suggestions, wait for her to give you permission to do so. Once she has, base your recommendations on the client's needs and desires. Narrow your selections based on the following criteria:

- **Lifestyle.** The styles you choose must fit the client's styling parameters (time and ability), meet your client's needs for business and casual looks, and provide options within these looks.

- **Hair type.** Base your recommendations on whether your client has thick, medium, or thin hair density; fine, medium, or coarse hair texture; straight, wavy, curly, or extremely curly wave patterns.

- **Face shape.** Point out hairstyles that would look good with her face shape. Is her face narrow across the temple area? If so, you should suggest styles that add a little fullness in this area.
When you make suggestions, qualify them by referencing the above parameters. For example: “I think this hairstyle would work well with the texture of your hair.” Tactfully discuss any unreasonable expectations (based on the client’s hair and personal needs) that the client expresses. If her hair is damaged, address intensive hair treatments, better home-care products, lifestyle changes, and the need to trim damaged ends.

Never hesitate to suggest additional services (be sure to offer two or more services) that will complete the look or improve it in some way. In addition to color, this could be a texture service for added movement or body, a straightening service to tame her curls, a makeup lesson to complement your client’s new style, and so on.

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

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

When talking about color, be very careful to make sure you and the client are speaking the same language. Hairstylists are accustomed to the technical side of color and tend to use terms like *multidimensional highlighting*, or *no-ammonia, semi permanent tint*. This can be very confusing and misleading to clients. Use pictures as much as possible. The term *blond* to a stylist might be platinum blond, while *blond* to a client may mean a few fine streaks of medium-blond around the hair line. Let photos be your guide.

9. **Discuss upkeep and maintenance.** Counsel every client on the salon maintenance, lifestyle limitations (blond hair and chlorine, for instance, are not a good match), and at-home maintenance that she will need to commit to in order to look her best. Let the client know that throughout the service you will be educating her on various products that you would recommend for her home use and that at the end of the service she will have an opportunity to choose those home care products that she needs.

10. **Review the consultation.** Reiterate everything that you have agreed upon by using a phrase like, “What I heard you say is . . . ” Make sure to speak in measured, precise terms and use visual tools to demonstrate the intended end result. This is the most critical step of the consultation process because it determines the ultimate service(s). Always take your time and be thorough. Pause for your client’s confirmation or ask her if you have understood everything correctly. Once you are sure that you both have the same understanding of
her needs, ask if she is ready to start the service as you have both outlined. Once your client has agreed, you can proceed with the service.

**Concluding the Service**
Once the service is finished and the client lets you know they are satisfied, take a few minutes to record the results. Note anything you did that you might want to do again, as well as anything that does not bear repeating. Also, make note of the final results and any retail products that the client purchased. Be sure to date your notes and file them in the proper place.

**Special Issues in Communication**

Although you may do everything in your power to communicate effectively, you will sometimes encounter situations that are beyond your control. Your reactions to situations and your ability to communicate in the face of challenges are critical to being successful in a people profession.

**Handling Tardy Clients**

Tardy clients are a fact of life in every service industry. Because beauty professionals depend on appointments and scheduling to maximize working hours, a client who is overly late for an appointment, or one who is habitually late, causes problems. One tardy client can set back your appointment calendar and make you late for every other service that day. The pressure involved in making up for lost time takes its toll. Beyond being rushed and feeling harried, you risk inconveniencing the rest of your clients who are prompt for their appointments. No one benefits—not you, not the salon, and certainly not your clients—when scheduling conflicts arise that are caused by tardy clients.

Here are a few guidelines for handling late clients:

- Know and abide by the salon’s appointment policy. Many salons set a limit on the amount of time they allow a client to be late before requiring them to reschedule. Generally, if clients are more than fifteen minutes late, they should be asked to reschedule. Most clients will accept responsibility and be understanding about the rule, but you may come across a few clients who insist on being serviced immediately. Explain to them that you have other appointments and are responsible to those clients as well. Also explain that rushing through the service would be unacceptable to both of you.

- If your tardy client arrives and you have the time to take her without jeopardizing other appointments, let your client know why you are taking her even though she is late. You can deliver this information diplomatically and still remain pleasant and upbeat.
• 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.

• If you are running very late, have the receptionist call your clients and let them know. The receptionist can give them the opportunity to reschedule or to come a little later than their scheduled time.

Handling Scheduling Mix-Ups
We are all human, and we all make mistakes. Chances are you have gone to an appointment only to discover that you are in the wrong place at the wrong time. The way you are treated at that moment determines whether you patronize that business again. When you, as a professional, are involved with a scheduling mix-up, always remember to be polite. Never argue about who is correct.

Once you have the chance to consult your appointment book, you can say, “Oh, Mrs. Montez, I have you in my appointment book for ten o’clock, and unfortunately I already have clients scheduled for eleven and twelve o’clock. I’m so sorry about the mix-up. Can I reschedule you for tomorrow at ten o’clock?” Even though the client may be fuming, you need to stay detached. Move the conversation away from who is at fault, and squarely into resolving the confusion. Make another appointment for the client and be sure the salon has her telephone number so that the appointment can be confirmed (Figure 4–8).

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. Remember the ultimate goal: make the client happy enough to pay for the service and return to the salon in the future.

Here are some guidelines:
• Try to find out why the client is unhappy. Ask for specifics.
• If it is possible to change what she dislikes, do so immediately. If that is not possible, look at your schedule book to see how soon you can fit her in to make the adjustment. You may need to enlist the help of the receptionist if you have to reschedule other appointments.
• If the problem cannot be fixed; honestly and tactfully explain why. The client may not be happy but will usually appreciate your honesty. Sometimes you can offer other options that minimize the client’s disappointment.
• Never argue with the client or try to force your opinion on her.
ACTivity

At some point in your career you will have a client who is unhappy about something, either related to service or scheduling. The best way to prepare for this scenario is to practice. Role-play with a classmate, taking turns being the client and the stylist.

As you play the role of client:

- Do not hesitate to ask for help from a more experienced stylist or your salon manager. If, after you have tried everything, you are unable to satisfy the client, defer to your manager’s advice on how to proceed.
- Confer with your salon manager after the experience. A good manager will not hold the event against you but will view it instead as an inevitable fact of life from which you can learn. Follow your manager’s advice and move on to your next client.

As you play the role of stylist:

- Pay attention to the tone and level of your voice.
- Make certain you understand the problem.
- Avoid being defensive.
- Offer more than one solution.
- Determine when you should involve a manager.

Handling Differences

As a stylist, you’ll find the clients you are most likely to attract are similar to yourself in age, style, and taste. On the other hand, you will also service clients who are very different from you; this is a positive element in your career as a stylist. Without both older and younger clients, and ones from different social groups, you won’t be able to build a solid client base for future business.

When working with clients who come from a different generation, the basic rules of professionalism should guide you. Older clients, in particular, do not like gum chewing, slang, or the use of *yeah* instead of *yes*. They like to hear *please* and *thank you*. They prefer to keep the topics of conversation professional. Some like to be addressed by the honorific, such as “Mrs. Smith,” rather than by their first names. When you meet an older client for the first time, ask how he or she would like to be addressed. Some clients are sensitive to verbiage about aging. When delivering skin care services, do not refer to aging skin; instead, talk about dryness and solutions to remedy the condition.
Younger clients may not be up on proper etiquette, but many keep up with the latest celebrity styles, so you need to do the same. If these clients are your peers, relate to their image needs but don’t act too much like a peer; it is always better to maintain a professional demeanor.

When it comes to slang, the same word can have a different meaning across cultures, which is why it is always best to avoid using slang terms. If the word is fashion-related and your client uses it, you can too, indicating that you understand and are aware of current trends. Never use cultural slang words or regionalisms you do not fully understand. When in doubt say, “I have never heard that expression before. What, exactly, do you mean?”

Getting Too Personal

Sometimes when a client forms a bond of trust with her stylist, the client can have a hard time differentiating between a professional relationship and a personal one. This will be her problem. Be sure you do not make it your problem. Your job is to handle your client relationships tactfully and sensitively, with professionalism and respect. Do not engage in an attempt to fulfill the role of counselor, career guide, parental sounding board, or motivational coach for any of your clients.

If your client gets too far off topic, use neutral subjects to bring her back to a conversation about her beauty needs. If she tells you about a personal problem, simply listen and tell her you are sorry. Then ask, “What can we do to make your visit better today?”

If your client is gossiping, change the subject as soon as you can. Try something like, “I just noticed your ends are drier than I thought. We’ll do a deep-conditioning treatment after your color.” Then describe the treatment and home care.

Books, movies, and celebrities can all be used to move into conversations about a particular look or style. As a rule, avoid discussing religion and politics. When you cannot find a way to move the conversation back to something hair- or beauty-related, simply listen; then change the subject. In a worst-case scenario, apologize and excuse yourself, either verbally or physically, to check her client records, to ask another stylist an important question, or to see if a certain conditioner is in stock. When you return your attention to the client, move the conversation back to beauty.

In-Salon Communication

 Behaving in a professional manner is the first step in making meaningful in-salon communication a reality. The salon community is a close-knit one in which people spend long hours working side by side. For this reason, it is important to maintain boundaries. Remember, the salon is your place of business and, as such, must be treated respectfully and carefully.
Communicating with Coworkers

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. Keep these points in mind as you interact and communicate with coworkers:

• **Treat everyone with respect.** Regardless of whether you like someone, your colleagues are professionals who deserve respect.

• ** Remain objective.** Different types of personalities working together over long and intense hours can breed some degree of dissension and disagreement. Make every effort to remain objective. Resist being pulled into spats and cliques.

• **Be honest and 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 at work is never a good idea. Be sensitive, and think before you speak.

• **Remain neutral.** There may come a time when you are called on to pick a side. Do whatever you can in order to avoid taking sides in a dispute.

• **Avoid gossip.** Gossiping never resolves a problem; it only makes it worse. Participating in gossip can be just as damaging to you as it is to the object of your gossip.

• ** Seek help from someone you respect.** If you find yourself at odds with a coworker, seek out someone who is not involved and can be objective, such as the manager. Ask for advice about how to proceed, and then really listen.

• **Do not take things personally.** How many times have you had a bad day, or been thinking about something totally unrelated to work, when a colleague asks you what is wrong, or if you are mad at her? Just because someone is behaving in a certain manner, and you happen to be there, does not mean their behavior involves you. If you are confused or concerned by someone’s actions, find a private place and an appropriate time to ask her if something is wrong.

• ** 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.

Communicating with Managers

Another important relationship for you is the one you will build with your manager. The salon manager is usually the person with the most responsibility regarding the salon’s overall operation. The manager’s job is a demanding one. Often, in addition to running a hectic salon, he or she also has a personal clientele.
Your manager is probably the one who hired you and who is responsible for your training. Therefore, your manager has a vested interest in your success. As a salon employee, you might perceive the manager as a powerful figure of authority, but it is important to remember that your manager is a human being. The best thing you can do to support your manager and the salon is to try to understand the decisions and rules that the salon manager makes, whether you agree with them or not.

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 possible solutions beforehand. This will indicate that you are working in the salon's best interest and trying to be an asset in the salon's success.

- **Get your facts straight.** Make sure that all your facts and information are accurate before you speak to your salon manager. This way you avoid wasting your manager's time trying to solve a problem that might not really 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 listen and learn.

- **Do not gossip or complain about colleagues.** Going to your manager with gossip or to tattle on a coworker could very well lead your manager to consider you a troublemaker. If you are having a legitimate problem with someone and have tried everything you can to handle the problem with your own resources, only then is it appropriate to go to your manager.

- **Check your attitude.** The salon environment, although fun and friendly, can also be stressful, so take a moment between clients to ask yourself how you are feeling. Do you need an attitude adjustment? Be honest with yourself.

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

Communicating During an Employee Evaluation

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

• Take some time to look over the employee evaluation document. Be mindful that the behaviors and activities most important to the salon are likely to be the ones on which you will be evaluated. You can begin to review and rate yourself in the weeks and months ahead, so you can assess your progress and performance.

• Remember, the criteria on the evaluation are there for the purpose of helping you become a better stylist and to ensure the salon’s success. Make the decision to approach the evaluation positively.

• As the time for the evaluation draws near, try filling out the form yourself. In other words, perform a self-evaluation, even if the salon has not asked you to do so. Be objective, and carefully think out your comments.

• Before your evaluation meeting, write down any thoughts or questions 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 might 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 advancement because they are too nervous, intimidated, or unprepared to discuss these issues. Participate proactively in your career and in your success by communicating your desires and interests.

• When you meet with your manager, show her your self-evaluation and tell her you are serious about your improvement and growth. Your manager will appreciate your input and your initiative. If you are being honest with yourself, there should be no surprises.

• At the end of the meeting, thank your manager for taking the time to do the evaluation and for the feedback and guidance they gave you (Figure 4–9).
## Review Questions

1. What are the golden rules of human relations?
2. What is the definition of effective communication?
3. What are the elements of the 10-Step Consultation Method?
4. What are four examples of how a salon professional should handle an unhappy client?
5. List at least five things to remember when communicating with your coworkers.

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## Chapter Glossary

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>client consultation</td>
<td>Also known as <em>needs assessment</em>; the verbal communication with a client that determines what the client's needs are and how to achieve the desired results.</td>
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<tr>
<td>effective communication</td>
<td>The act of sharing information between two people (or groups of people) so that the information is successfully understood.</td>
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<tr>
<td>reflective listening</td>
<td>Listening to the client and then repeating, in your own words, what you think the client is telling you.</td>
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