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Top 10 Most Embarrassing Moments

Challenges For Aestheticians, Salon & Spa Owners

By Larry H. Oskin, Marketing Solutions

There are an endless abundance of embarrassing moments in any salon or spa. They are often more embarrassing for our staff and us, than for our clients. Perhaps, every reader of this article could write his or her own book. We don't laugh when they happen. From 'bad phone manners', 'lost or damaged clothing', 'unique bikini hair designs', a full head of hair washed off the scalp and left in the sink' ... there are plenty of fun stories we can all laugh about now.

1. Men & Women ~ Who get sexually aroused during a massage therapy treatment: Some men get erections and / or uncontrollably ejaculate during massage therapy sessions. This has happened numerous times at Robert Andrew ~ The Day Spa in Gambrills, MD. Owner Bob Zupko has advised his staff to do some of the following. "First, if you notice something unusual or rising under the sheets when the male client is face up, allow yourself to back off for a few moments to see if that changes anything. If the situation doesn't relieve itself naturally, don't be afraid to delicately approach your client by communicating your concern, making sure he is fine and ready to calm down before you proceed any further. Do not embarrass the client in any way. Instead, offer to step out for a few moments while he calms down. You can even ask if he would prefer a different masseuse, if one is available. When you return, proceed as long as nothing visibly is noticeable. If it remains a noticeable problem, you may want to excuse yourself, noting that you don't want to embarrass him and that you suggest we end the appointment right away – without any charge."

Zupko continues, "We do have men who embarrass themselves by inadvertently ejaculating on the sheets and towels. Once again, it is important to not embarrass these clients, especially if this is their first massage therapy treatment. This may happen because of the combined physical, visual and emotional stimulation brought on by an attractive masseuse, but it may just be caused by the physical manipulation to their bodies. However, it is also important to ask these men not to return for this professional service, if it happens a second time."

Even though it happens more rarely and it is obviously less noticeable during the service, women have very similar, yet different challenges that should be handled in much the same manner.

2. Men & Women ~ Who get sexually and emotionally attracted to your staff: Yes, it is very embarrassing when a client or patient makes advances towards you and your professional staff. Be prepared for this and train your staff on how to handle each situation appropriately. You can turn down these advances, while not losing any desirable clientele. However, if any client becomes obnoxious, fresh and feels that 'touching' is appropriate, you need to cut it off immediately, while excusing them in a quick and quiet manner. When necessary, get the salon owner or another salon professional to assist you.

3. Surprise Gas Attacks: Some clients and patients get so relaxed, that they embarrass themselves and you with a surprise gas attack. If this happens, we suggest you not let the situation go unnoticed. Instead, we suggest that you explain to each client that this is normal. Tell your client, "Mrs. Jones, don't worry! That is normal as we relax and rejuvenate your body – we really want to help you release all of the toxins and challenges within your body today." If you have a semi-open massage environment, where others can hear yet not see ... they will hear the client's gas expulsion. Once again, softly and gently assure them that everything is fine and not to worry.

4. Small Robes: Many salons, spas, clinics and medical offices have robes where supposedly 'one size fits all'. Large women, large busted women and most of the male clients have trouble keeping their privates – private in these robes. It's even worse, when you only have robes for women, when a large man walks in. I have even seen some aestheticians and masseuse provide pink, floral and other feminine robes to men, because they don't have anything else to offer. You must go shopping for larger robes, towels and body cover-ups. Your robes can all be in white or you can have some in blacks, browns, burgundies or whatever colors match your décor. You can even have your logo emblazoned on the upper body. Just be sure to keep the

5. Tables Collapsing & Equipment Failure: There are times when the massage or facial table will collapse, especially if it is a portable model. There are other still other occasions when the spa and specialty skincare equipment fails. You

must have a contingency plan in place. All you can do is offer sincere apologies and to see if they are all right. If anyone gets hurt, don't waste time calling an ambulance or a rescue worker.

6. Staff Complaints ~ In front of the client: One of our staff members was working in a spa salon when the aesthetician and staff were at the front desk, talking negatively about the most recent client. You know what it looks like. The staff is busy laughing up a storm, while a salon professional is talking mean about a cheap client who doesn't tip well, has a surprise gas attack, says something rude or offers some tasteless commentary about that client. Then, the client comes out of the bathroom or coat closet to hear the end of the conversation.

This happens all the time and it is not only embarrassing for everyone involved – the salon often loses a client. This same person often becomes one of your worst nightmares spreading bad news and gossip about your salon and the offensive spa professional. The best advice here is to always praise in public while keeping all negative commentary about clients private in the backroom. None of your clients should ever hear you talk badly about any other client. You just never know who is listening!

7. Nudity & Exhibitionists: Many new salon, spa clients and medical patients are unsure of what to wear or not wear for their aesthetic and spa services. They are also afraid to ask, for fear of being embarrassed that will look like a spa-dummy! Your preliminary service instructions, service menu and brochures must explain your policies and procedures for any potential nude or semi-nude situation. If you offer clients the option of a bathing suit, underwear, towel or any other cover up during treatments such as a Swedish Shower, Massage, Vichy Shower or any Hydrotherapy Treatment – than clearly communicate this in writing and verbally. Don't leave anything for guesswork.

Some clients are comfortable with their nudity and prefer to remain nude during many skincare and spacare services in front of you. However, some of these same clients feel it is fine to expose themselves to your other staff members or guests in the treatment rooms, hallways and in the locker rooms. Even if it is not embarrassing to them, it may be for someone else.

We have even experienced exhibitionists at salons, inclusive of at our professional photography sessions. Some of these clients and models apparently want to show off their new breast enhancements, beautiful bodies or they just want to march around semi-nude in a mud treatment. We even had a spa photo model seriously want to parade around through the reception area, while all she was wearing – was mud. She was so proud of herself. But, we did grab her as she headed for the door.

You must carefully and appropriately deal with this with open communications. Even if a client does not ask, you must tell them your service policies as well as the proper dress and undress procedures.

8. "WHO did your last haircut, nailcare service or whatever!" "You did!" Be careful not to embarrass you client or yourself by asking a "who did it" question. Too often, I have heard of the manicurist or hairstylist who were displeased thinking their regular client went somewhere else for their last appointment, because the manicure or haircut looked so terrible when they came back in. When the client says, 'You did it!', everyone is terribly embarrassed.

Any embarrassing accusation will cause you to permanently lose a client for yourself and for the salon or spa. If you don't like they way they look, be careful not to offend them. Always pay your clients and patients a series of compliments, while asking what they would like to try that's new, fresh or different this time and next time. It's a great way to sell up, while keeping your clientele loyal to you!

9. Heart Failure, Death & More: Yes, this too happens in salons and spas. You may think the woman is comfortably snoozing under the dryer hood, yet you are shocked to learn that she has quietly passed away during her visit. It is best to handle this situation quietly, immediately and professionally. I know several salons that experienced clients dying under the hairdryer hoods near the end of the day and they waited a few extra minutes until 5 PM to close the salon early. Everyone who left thought the woman was sleeping. However, the emergency plan implemented was not to freak out the rest of the salon guests – while getting her out of there ASAP.

We suggest that you waste no time and take no chances. Call the paramedics immediately in case of any accident or death. If necessary, carefully and quietly close the salon for a few hours, without making a big deal of it in front of your other guests. Have a backup plan where your staff can work at a competitive salon across the street for a few hours or a few days.

There have been cases of broken water pipes, fire damage, tornadoes and other natural disasters that force your salon or spa to close unexpectedly. It actually pays to be a friendly competitor in case of any emergency, inclusive of power and

water failures. Be prepared by having a 'Buddy System' in place with another salon, spa or medical office. It's better than taking these clients home to finish their haircolor, massage or facial.

10. Bad Breath! This is so embarrassing. Salon and spa professionals don't realize that they can lose clients by bad breath! Your clients and fellow staff members will be too embarrassed to tell you, especially if you are one of the most respected people on the team. Keep a toothbrush and mouthwash handy in your locker or in the backroom. WE deal so intimately with our clients, that you need to freshen up several times per day, especially if you have anything to eat.

Recovery Manuals: Be prepared. If necessary, we suggest that you write a documented 'Recovery Manual' with your staff's complete input for detailed solutions for any possible challenge. Currie Hair'Skin'Nails in West Chester, PA has such an operations manual. This manual covers everything, including what to do about hot water tanks that don't work and electrical failures. They are extremely well prepared for most any challenging situation or emergency. With 100 salon professionals on staff and a huge clientele, they have found this has made a world of difference in their success story.

Even some salon and spa service requests can be embarrassing. We've heard of male clients asking for professional hair removal in private places that embarrass the spa professionals, much more than the client. Sometimes, these hair removal services are for medical and cleanliness reasons. We've heard of salon haircolor and relaxer treatments ending with the clients hair completely off of their scalp and in the shampoo bowl. Or, the hair is an awful new haircolor that you can't fix. Before the client sits back up, you need to figure out how to break the news to them about the free wig, you plan to offer. We know many women are now asking for heart shaped or designer bikini hair removal with creative haircolor. They love it and it is getting much more popular everyday ... but some aestheticians are turning away the business – saying, "I can't do that!" This openly public or private refusal also embarrasses the client.

Embarrassments can and should be avoided, but anything can happen! Follow the Golden Rule every day. As tempting as it sometimes may be, we must never purposefully embarrass our clients or ourselves. Even if a client is the one who is embarrassing you or someone on your team, just let it go. When embarrassments happen, offer apologies, flowers, free services, products or whatever it takes to keep your clients happy. It's our job to do whatever it takes to make the salon and spa experience a completely positive memory.

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