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ELECTROLOGISTS

as

CAREGIVERS

The Importance of “Other Care”

by Gloria Eggert

The essence of what we do as electrolysis practitioners is to give care to our clients. While it's true that our care addresses a very specific need, it is still the way in which we personally offer “other-care” which can contribute to the success and failure of our practices. From our client's perspective, an electrolysis treatment is very intimate, no matter the area we treat. If you think of the client entering your office, lying on a table with eyes covered, alone in a room with a practitioner who is touching her/him; a level of trust and confidence must be present for this unique service to take place, not once but repeatedly.

In this arena, we all know that hair removal is what got our clients into our offices, but we're also pretty clear that if the level of other-care isn't there, their treatment record will be short indeed. No patient stays where they're not feeling cared for.

What is Care?

Care is first and foremost defined as good electrolysis treatment. I'm assuming good care to be a given and want to address the rest. Yes, it's true that some treatment is perceived to be

better than others, but it is also true that clients interpret treatment through the eyes of not only results, but through how they experience the other-care they are given. The technical care and the other-care are interwoven and interpreted by the client as a single experience.

Other-Care Through Sensing

Learning to sense what your client requires from you beyond treatment is a good muscle to exercise. Learn to read your client to see what else they need from you. One client may want her treatment time to represent down-time. She requires a quiet, peaceful environment. Maybe soft music and a place to be is all she needs in addition to her treatment. Another client may look at her treatment time as an opportunity to commune with another adult. She may be spending most of her time with young children or an aging parent and would love to discuss almost anything. Still another is eager to relate her newest life tribulation. Though we, as practitioners, really must resist the urge to advise based on our “wealth of life experience,” listening becomes the gift we can give this client. We also can't

draw conclusions about their circumstances or offer solutions. Our time with our clients is not about resolving any problem they may have beyond what we're charged with doing – permanently removing excess hair.

Other-Care Through Presentation

Offering important other-care is also a function of your office presentation. I suggest that you take yourself outside of your office and see how it looks to the approaching client. How are the grounds? How welcoming is your entry door? Is your waiting room comfortable and cozy? Are there critters in your lighting fixtures? Are your credentials appropriately displayed? Is the music pleasant? Is your treatment room spotless with everything in order? All of these things and more represent your first personal contact with your client. They are all statements of you, personally and professionally, and they matter very much.

Other-Care The Sweet Approach

Many years ago, I took to placing a small jar of wrapped candy in my waiting room. I had resisted doing that for

a long time given that I didn't want to be my own best customer. But, after I placed the candy out and noticed the reaction to it, the jar became a bowl and the bowl was never empty. I also noticed which candies were favored and, from time to time, experimented with new offerings. I now have a good supply of root beer barrels, cinnamon discs, butterscotch drops and Sunkist Gems (a great wrapped jelly candy). I keep a careful eye on what needs refreshing because my clients have come to rely on the treats.

I hear them enter my waiting room, rustle through the bowl, unwrap their choice and emit a sigh as they pop it into their mouths. Yes, a literal sigh. I get that to some degree all day long, but it's the clients who come in after work who really appreciate the lift, the caring that the candy represents to them.

It's something they've come to count on and I make very sure it's there waiting. It's a very little thing to do, but it has a huge impact on how welcomed and cared for my clients feel.

Other-Care Through Scheduling

I know of no one who enjoys waiting much beyond appointment times. We all have stories of waiting endlessly in the doctor's office or at the hair salon, among others. Waiting seems to be a cultural staple these days. I remember reading an article in a hairdresser's magazine which lauded increasing revenues by triple booking.

It instructed, for instance, that at 10am the salon should book a haircut, a color and a perm with the same hairdresser. At 10am start the perm. After the perm is "cooking," begin the color and while the color is taking, do the cut. We all know that even if the hairdresser began on time, the last two clients were purposely kept waiting. It was the plan to not have the hairdresser lose a minute but it was at the expense of paying customers.

I find that to be very disrespectful and no one can feel cared for if they are not treated with respect. I can't claim any particular familiarity with running a hairdressing establishment or doctor's office, but I DO know that there is little excuse for an electrologist to run late. Very few true crises happen in our day that would neces-



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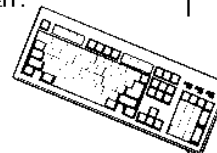
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sitate anyone waiting for more than a few minutes.

I knew three important things when I began my practice many years ago. One, I hated to be kept waiting for no good reason; two, I hated to feel someone was waiting for me (if it was her appointment time) and, three, if I booked my clients in a way that truly represented what had to accomplish between the time they came in and the time they left, there was no reason to have the next client waiting. My recognition of those three things continues to follow what I was taught at Electrology School and the "Fifteen minutes between clients" rule has worked very well for over 23 years now.

Other Care Because We Can

Delivery of other-care is, I believe, critical to the success of our practices and who we are as practitioners. It is that subtle distinction that clients feel and respond to in the face of other choices. When we choose to show up as true caregivers, our clients also tend to show up on time and adhere to treatment

plans. This respectful give and take with our clients has a financial benefit, to be sure. But, as time goes on, we've all come to know that a day in the office needs to be more than that. When we give care, our clients give in return. Who knows how far that sort of interaction reaches into the world and what else it impacts? *JK*

About the author

Gloria Eggert, CPE, an electrologist in Massachusetts is a past president of the Massachusetts Association of Electrologists and a former editor of AEA's Electrology World. She is also a Certified Life Coach, Licensed Third Age Coach and founder of SteppingStones Coaching Services.



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