

How to Handle **Difficult Clients**

From flakiness to rudeness to indecision, some clients will inevitably display more less-than-considerate behavior than others. The following are some tips for handling your more challenging clientele and making the salon run as smoothly as possible in spite of bad behavior.

THE LATE/NO SHOW CLIENT:

- > Give your client a courtesy call or text 48 hours in advance to remind her of her appointment.
- > Have a cancellation policy in place and adhere to it. Some salons require a 24-hour cancellation notification or the client will be charged for the missed visit. You can also have a tardiness policy: If a client is more than 10 minutes late, explain that you can't take her that day, as it will cause all of your appointments to run late.
- > Book frequent cancellers as your first or last appointment of the day so you can come in later or leave earlier.
- > Create a waiting list so you can fill a missed appointment with someone who may be willing to come in at the last minute.
- > Always give your clients one opportunity to miss an appointment without penalty.

THE INDECISIVE CLIENT:

- > If your client is having trouble deciding on a service, ask her questions about why she's there. Is she getting ready for a special event? A vacation? An interview?
- > Offer a solution based on her answer. For instance, if she's going on vacation, suggest a gel-polish manicure, as it will last longer.
- > Limit her choices. Indecisive clients will be overwhelmed by too many options. Limit your suggestions to three at most.
- > Firmly nudge her toward a safe decision and reinforce that she's made a good choice before she has a chance to change her mind again.

THE CLIENT WITH UNRULY CHILDREN:

- > Keep a well-defined policy in your salon regarding whether or not children are allowed and post it where it's highly visible. If your salon does not allow children, clients should be aware of it.
- > If your salon allows children, impose rules and post them. For example, your rules can include things like "children must use 'inside voices,'" and "your children must be seated next to you for the duration of your service."
- > Consider establishing special mothers' hours. During certain days and hours, mothers are welcome to bring their children. Babies and toddlers can be seated on their mother's lap or next to them. You might provide games and puzzles for the older children (in a safe area of the salon).

THE RUDE/NASTY CLIENT:

- > Find a quiet spot in the salon and speak to your client privately.
- > Ask your client if the salon has done something to make her unhappy. She may offer constructive criticism, or she may take the opportunity to simply complain.
- > Actively listen and do not interrupt until she's finished speaking. It's important not to be defensive or make excuses. Tell her you understand how she feels.
- > Accept that some clients will never be satisfied. If she is not appeased by your willingness to listen to her concerns, you might suggest to her kindly that you would hate to lose her as a client but you are unsure you can fix the things that are bothering her. Ask her if she might not be happier at another salon.