“I love it when people tell me about their lives”

Working in the beauty trade requires unexpected practical and theoretical skills, far removed from the general clichés, together with a good dose of psychology. An interview with a beautician.

Denis Grégoire
ETUI

Having left hairdressing, Sandy Masy has now run a beauty institute for the past seven years. She would love to be able to take on some staff in order to reduce her workload a little.

Image: © Martine Zunini
Although I’m just about to leave the hairdressing and beauty salon, I hand her a copy of the book Le corps des autres¹. Written by French author Ivan Jablonka, it’s all about the work of beauticians. Immediately recognising the book’s pale pink cover, Sandy interrupted me: “I’ve already read it, one of my customers gave it to me.” This anecdote tells us a lot about relationships between beauticians and their customers. Via this present, the customer probably wanted to thank the beautician for the good feeling she got from being treated by her, while also expressing her respect for her and her work.

"Though not dermatologists, nurses, social workers, personal coaches or psychoanalysts, that’s all part of their work (…) A beautician is a socialising ‘body professional’," writes Jablonka, whose investigation demolished the stereotype of a young super-sized bimbo. Over and above the opportunity to acquire new skills in the vast beauty domain, she was above all guided by human reasons.

“The young woman told me that she spent three years training to become a beautician: "When I talk to people not from my trade, I can see that they are surprised when I tell them which technical skills and theoretical knowledge are needed. You have to know all the muscles, all the bones, the skin, the whole lymphatic and circulatory system. When massaging someone, you need to know which muscle you are just massaging, what you are just draining", she explained. When doing the work, she insists on the protocols imposed by the French chain with which she works as a franchisee.

"During hair removal, we touch their legs, their arms. This makes my customers want to talk, to tell me about very personal problems, to get things off their minds."