

‘OH, DO PUT A SOCK IN IT!’

That’s what you’re thinking when your beauty therapist is babbling on and all you want to do is bliss out in silence. Here’s how to keep them quiet – nice and politely. By Gemma Burgess

Whichever Personal Grooming Ritual (PGR) we book, from pedicures to massages, we always face the same dilemma: how to tell beauty therapists ‘shut it, sharpish’... without being churlish?

Now, I’m the chatty type. Friendly to the point of annoying, in fact. But sometimes, in a beauty parlour, I want total quiet so I can relax. Detach from everything and everyone. Catch up on emails, Twitter, Facebook and trashy magazines. Think about important stuff such as shoes. My PGRs are sometimes the only chance I have to do all that. The problem: asking a beauty therapist for silence makes me feel evil. What if I hurt their feelings? What if they think I’m bad-mannered? What if it becomes awkward? It’s really hard to find a good colourist, dagnabbit. I have unusually demanding hair.

It’s a chronic case of Sixeritis: the lifelong belief that you have to be a good girl and behave like a Brownie Sixer at all times. As some of you will know, the Brownie Law states that a Brownie thinks of others before herself and does a good turn every day. So we do. Constantly. And it’s



exhausting. Sixeritis is the reason I once spent longer counselling a masseur about her boyfriend problems than the massage lasted. It’s why I avoid an entire stretch of Portobello Road rather than risk seeing the delightful stylist who over-peroxidised my hair so severely it went brittle and snapped. And it’s why I know a disturbing amount of C-list gossip: when you’ve been talking for an hour and a half, you get desperate for conversation. (Duncan from Blue gets spray tans in the nude. He’s still alive! Who knew?)

If you’ve got Sixeritis, you also know the agony of constantly striving for good behaviour badges. Sixeritis is why we try to charm everyone, particularly if they don’t like us. Why overachieving and its evil twin, worrying, is practically a hobby. Why we lie awake fretting about that time we did the splits on the bar at the work Christmas party... four years ago. In short, it’s a constant source of bloody anguish. So what are our options when we want blessed silence in the salon? The truth is

that the only way to really insult a professional beauty therapist is to turn up late or cancel at the last minute. And that’s something that no Brownie would ever do. □

SALON ETIQUETTE

DOS

Do remember that your PGR isn’t a social call: you don’t have to ask about their dog/mother/holidays. And yes, that means you can stop giving everyone in the salon a kiss hello.

Do remind yourself that you’re paying for a service, so you ARE allowed to say ‘Do you mind if we don’t chat?’ You’re in charge, not your manicurist, even if she is the one wielding a really sharp pointy thing.

Do feel free to just close your eyes and smile if you’re not feeling talkative. Rather than being rude, it shows that you completely trust your therapist – after all, they’re there to do a job, not just talk about (insert reality TV show of your choice HERE). In fact, it’s distinctly possible that most therapists would rather concentrate on their actual work because – lightbulb moment – it’s their work, and they want to do the best possible job.

DON'TS

Don’t be a stand-up comic. ‘I’m as hungover as hell and just resting my eyes, so if I start drooling, get the defibrillator,’ or ‘If I don’t answer some of these emails, my boss will whip me, and not in the fun way,’ won’t work: once you’re laughing with someone, it’s very difficult to go mute. Humour is a bitch.

Don’t act super-stressed. Faking acute deafness or pretending to be distracted/upright/frazzled in the hope that conversation will peter out is far too rude and un-Sixerish.

Don’t shoot yourself in the (pedicured) foot by muttering ‘Scuse me – terminally deadline-plagued, don’t you know,’ with an open laptop on your knees. Yes, it’s a surefire conversation-stopper, but unless you set up a windbreak around your computer, she’ll be able to see you browsing Perez Hilton and your cover will be blown.