

Proposed solution

Practice example 1: "Critical customer!"

Sara has recently begun as a hairdresser trainee and may now shampoo her first customer. She accompanies the customer to the sink and puts on her gloves.

Suddenly the female customer says: "Why are you wearing gloves? Because you don't want to touch me? My hair is not that dirty and besides, gloves pull on my hair!"

How can you react in this situation?

 "I'm sorry you have that impression. I'm not wearing gloves because of you, but rather for myself, because I have to protect my skin from so much contact with moisture. Hairdressers often suffer from contact dermatitis of the skin.

"Besides, we use single-use gloves that don't pull on the hair. We'll try it out and you let me know if it is uncomfortable."

"If I only washed customers' hair once a day it wouldn't be so bad. But the frequent contact with water and shampoos results in a constant washing out of the fats from my skin. Then over time, my skin gets dry and chapped, and my skin barrier is damaged.

"Did you know that some hairdressers must even give up their profession, because they get an occupational skin disease? Please give me a chance to prove my skill with gloves as well!

"A professional hairdresser wears gloves these days, just like a dentist for example. Or would you let someone put their naked fingers in your mouth?"

Practice example 2: "That's nonsense!"

Your new colleague Maria has taken on the tasks of washing, blow-drying, colouring and perming which you have assigned to her, and is carrying them out conscientiously. The customers are impressed with Maria's creativity and professionalism. For some days, you have noticed some changes in the skin of your colleague's hands. Above all, the spaces between her fingers already appear to have reddened unmistakably.

Maria plays down the issue. "That's nonsense! My hands are okay. I don't wear gloves because I have no feeling with them."

How can you convince Maria?

 "Maria, you should go to a skin doctor, because even minor changes in the skin, such as dry areas and reddening, need to be taken seriously. Don't wait until it gets painful and chapped and makes your work difficult! The earlier a skin disease is recognized and treated, the more easily it can be healed! If you start now you can get your skin back in good condition without much trouble!

"Wearing gloves has to be practiced. Trust me, the sensitivity will come back in a while! Doctors can operate even with two pairs of gloves on at the same time – and they need a lot of sensitivity!"

"Studies show that one can acquire skill at working with gloves and that the tactile sensitivity comes back quickly! It is important to keep practicing with them and, above all, to be patient with oneself in the beginning! After all, every hairdresser must learn to cut hair at first too, and practice until it becomes second nature!

"An important precondition is that the gloves fit well, because no one can conduct delicate activities with gloves that are too small or too large."

Practice example 3: "A matter for the boss!"

It's only been a while since you've been allowed to conduct all typical hairdressing activities yourself, such as washing, cutting and blow-drying. But already your hands are burning from contact with shampoo and hair: they are red and they itch.

Your boss Pierre is not concerned. When you ask for appropriate gloves and protective skin cream he shakes his head and says: "Protective gloves and protective skin cream are not necessary for hairdressing work here. That little bit of water and shampoo won't hurt your hands! Only the best and easiest products on the skin are used in my salon. Besides, gloves and creams for all employees would be way too expensive! Don't make such a fuss and just take care of your hands better at home. After all, you're responsible for yourself!"

How can you convince your boss?

 "Frequent contact with water and shampoo on the job lead to a washing away of the fats from my skin. That makes my skin dry and chapped over time and my skin barrier is damaged. This happens no matter how skin-friendly or high-quality the products that we use are. Even water can dry out the skin. My hands already look inflamed and they hurt. Besides, I've learned that we hairdressers get more contact dermatitis than anyone.

"Fortunately you're wrong about the cost of gloves and creams! The truth is, gloves save money! Because when someone can't work due to a skin disease, it's much more expensive! And actually, as my employer you are responsible for my safety on the job."

"It may sound contradictory, but spending money to buy gloves saves money!

"When I or a co-worker have to miss work for just one day because of a skin disease, the amount it costs in lost business would buy gloves for a whole year! And with skin diseases, one is usually out of work longer than one day!

"By the way: gloves are not at all as expensive as you might think! As with all products there are different manufacturers, it is worthwhile to compare costs. When they are ordered in bulk, money can usually be saved. And calculations show that an employer must only invest about 1% of his/her total sales in order to protect the employees."