

## Get Along to Get Ahead

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During your career in the beauty industry, cooperation takes various forms. At its most basic, to “cooperate” means to work together. There’s no doubt you’re already doing that in school when you learn new skills, complete assignments and perform services along with your fellow students. In a communal

educational environment filled with many different personalities, you don’t have much choice but to get along. Spending so much time together compels you to interact with everyone: students, instructors, administrators and clients. Do you enjoy these daily interactions or do you dread them? That will depend on your personality, priorities and perspective.

**“Getting along with others is the essence of getting ahead, success being linked with cooperation.” - William Feather**

Before meeting through school, these people surrounding you were complete strangers, and now you probably consider some of them friends. However, if you believe that makes it easier to work together, think again. When you form close relationships that limit your interactions or exclude others in your immediate environment, you may be missing this opportunity to develop your social competence, “the ability to handle social interactions effectively.”

**The more social competence you have, the better you’ll be able to manage your relationships with others.**

Relationships, especially personal ones, take effort and rather than trying to connect deeply with any one person you encounter in beauty school, try adapting to everyone around you in a respectful and productive way. Treat beauty school like a workplace environment and communicate your personal and professional boundaries. Do only as much as you’re comfortable with knowing that there’s no expectation of privacy, confidentiality or reciprocation. You’re under no obligation, so resist the pressure to overshare, do favors, socialize outside of school, etc.

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**Challenge yourself to cooperate when you do not have a personal connection; learn to cooperate with someone you find difficult or unpleasant.**

Though stressful and disappointing at times, engaging with others provides excellent training. Not everyone will be your friend, nor should they be when you're in a professional environment. Developing your social competence may not be your first priority in beauty school, but don't underestimate the role it plays in your success.

When I started beauty school, I didn't know a single person there and years later, I still can't remember anyone specifically. In my defense, we didn't have cell phones or social media thirty years ago. Instead of forming connections, I prioritized completing my course as quickly as possible to qualify for the licensing examination. Sometimes that involved group projects, but most of the time we just had to coexist within the same space while attending classes, studying independently or performing services. Despite having a social personality, I focused more on being "friendly" than making friends. Some consider that a wasted opportunity, but in retrospect, attending beauty school remains a very small portion of my career. That may be hard to imagine while still a student, but as the years pass, your perspective, priorities and even your personality may change.

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