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## **Why Your Clients Leave You**

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Have you ever had a regular client disappear for no apparent reason, only to find out he or she became your competitor's regular client? It's hard not to take it personally, and it's frustrating not knowing the reason why.

Sometimes the change is related to the fees you charge, if money is an issue for the client.

More often than not, it's a customer service issue. Customer service is defined as serving the customer.

Outstanding customer service means doing something exceptional and kind for the customer simply because you can. Knowing the difference between the two can make a marked difference in client retention.

L.L. Bean has a company policy in which employees cannot say "no" to a customer without first obtaining senior management approval. Think about that. Their philosophy of simple, legendary service builds fortunes in repeat clients. Average or poor service will drive your clients to your competitors.

So, how can you prevent your customers from leaving you? Consider this short list of suggestions for improving your customer service:

1. **Stop chattering!** The number-one reason clients leave a therapist is because they simply cannot relax during their treatment. Make it a habit to zip your lips the moment the session begins. If the client speaks to you, respond to them and encourage them to relax and breathe. Many therapists make the mistake of thinking the client really wants to talk throughout the session. In most cases, this is not true. Sometimes you need to tell your clients to stop talking and relax before they will, because they feel like they should talk to you. Give them permission to let go and relax.
2. **Maintain a comfortable environment.** The temperature of the treatment room must be warm enough for your client to relax. Nothing will ruin a treatment more than a cold room, for it's impossible to relax when you are shivering. Keep in mind that your client is not moving much during the treatment

and often is unclothed under the sheet, so the room will need to be warmer than your needs. Have extra blankets, a heated table, or a portable floor heater available. As you begin the treatment, ask your client about their comfort level and encourage them to advise you if they become too hot or too cold.

3. **Personalize the treatment.** Go above and beyond the ordinary treatment you offer by enhancing the session. You can use aromatherapy to awaken the senses, special music the client enjoys, subdued lighting for maximum relaxation, and whatever else you can think of to make the treatment extraordinary. Offer the client a glass of water with a lemon wedge after the treatment. It's a refreshing way of waking up. These gestures offer personal attention your clients will love and come back for.
4. **Provide consistent on-time service.** We, as humans, spend years of our lives waiting: waiting in line at the grocery store, waiting for traffic lights to turn green, waiting for doctors to see us, and so forth. The amount of time your clients have to spend waiting for their scheduled appointment with you can have a big impact on whether they will stay with you or go to your competitor. Make your clients feel important by being consistently on time for their appointments, and by greeting them with a warm smile.
5. **Answer calls promptly.** In our service industry, answering calls in a timely manner is critical for getting a new client and keeping an existing one. Clients often will call in pain, seeking immediate help. If you do not return the call quickly, the client will call someone else. In order to obtain and retain clients, make it a habit to answer all calls within 90 minutes. If you verbalize this policy on your answering machine, clients will be more inclined to leave a message and wait for your call.

If you are continually rebuilding your clientele and are never fully booked with appointments, it's time for you to pay more attention to your level of customer service. When you provide customer service that exceeds your customer's expectations and outshines your competition, you no longer have to worry about your clients leaving you for your competitors.

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