**Candy Olmstead Speech [No. 16401]**

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Keynote address by Ms. Candy Olmstead at the 2017 annual conference of the State of Kentucky Hair Dressers Association.

good evening, sisters . . . i’’m so glad you’re with us.

now, i want you to listen to the following list of occupations, and then tell me what they all have in common; here they are:

 teacher

 friend

 confidant

 counselor

 psychologist

 medical consultant; and. . .

spiritual supporter.

[**option:** ask a few members of the audience what they think the answer is; if anyone gives anything *like* the right answer, say: “bingo! you’re absolutely right!”]

what all these occupations have in common is that each one is a role that — with one client or another, on any given day or another — a professional hairdresser is called upon to play.

not [“air quotes’] “officially,” of course. but i doubt there’s even one among you in this room who hasn’t been asked by a client for some kind of personal advice . . .or hasn’t provided a shoulder to cry on . . . or hasn’t help-ed a sistah see what’s real . . . or, if the client’s been a young momma, hasn’t thrown a few life lessons in with the cut ‘n’ curl.

it’s amazing to me all the different roles professionals in our line of work are asked to perform. it’s kinda like guys and their barbers or their bartenders. but what’s even more amazing to me is that so many of us *succeed* so well at an occupation that’s so inherently danger-ous to our health — at least to our *mental* health.

we are neither psychologists nor priests, but i’D be willing to bet that we probably hear more “confessions” in a day than all the psychologists and priests do in a week. if you’re not equipped to deal with a steady diet of other people’s woe’s, to absorb them with compas-sion, and to provide faith and comfort in the face of them: then, honey, you’re not really cut out for this line of work.

that doesn’t mean you can’t make a living — even a good living — being a hairdresser. if you’ve got the eye and the hands to make *every* client you serve look more beautiful than she ever thought possible, then you *can* be a successful hairdresser, even if with the personali-ty of a carp and the people skills of a rug.

but unless you’re willing to play all those other roles I mentioned — especially being a non-judgemental friend and caring counselor — you probably won’t last long in, and certainly won’t *enjoy*, the hairdressing business. because hairdressing’s basically a *people* business, and as such it demands that we remain sensitive to whatever psycho-logical and emotional baggage our clients might bring with them into the styling chair. many men’s styl-ists i know tell me it’s not at all uncommon for them to give a shampoo, scalp massage, and full hairstyling, and have not more than five words pass between them and the clients during then entire 45-minute sitting.

how many times you ever been in a silent hairstyling salon?! [wait for possible chuckle]

not too [damned] many, i’ll bet! have you ever walked into a hair salon full of ladies and heard *no* chattering, *no* murmuring, *no* laughing, whatsoever? it’s never hap-pened, ever, and ain’ never *gonna* happen, either, ‘cause We women just can’t help ourselves! we just gotta talk! we might not always start the conversation, but we’ll gladly butt into the one going on between the ladies in the chairs either side of us, arguing about this, that or whatever. and if we’re not talking to our hairdresser, we’re talking to the other patrons, or to the manicur-ist, or even to the mailman if he happens to pop in. the point is, the typical ladies hair solon is not a quiet place for the simple reason that it’s a very *human* place, often a very loud place, and always with a very *female* accent.

that’s why our people skills, our interperson skills, are at *least* as important to success in this business as our hairstyling skills. as i said, you can make a living as a stylist even if you’re not a “people person.” but you’d better have some mad [damned] skills if you think you can grow your clientele and still remain an uncommunica-tive grouch behind the chair.

but what does “success” mean in this business. how do we measure our success? number of clients? average ticket? Gross annual income? client testimonials? number of new-customer referals? how many hours a week or month or year you need to devote to making a living?

there are any number of metrics by which we might meas­ure success in the hairstyling business. but in the final analysis, “success” most fundamentally is a state of mind. the single most important measure of success is very simply this: are you happy in your work?

does your job fulfill you? does it satisfy you in some deep and meaningful way?

if you earn a million dollars a year but are constantly unhappy about your job and bitter about your life, are you a success? I mean, to yourself . . . ?

do you look forward to going to work each day with joy or in dread?

i’d have to guess that most of you here this evening would fall into the “joy” category — otherwise, you’d likely not’ve registered for this conference in the first place. but for any of you here who feel that you fall more into the “dread” category, i urge you to start searching for your bliss in another profession as soon as you possible can. as the syndicated columnist, harvey mackay, said, ***“find something you love to do, and you won’t work a day in your life.”*** and what if you can’t, just at the moment, figure out what that “love” might be? then take the advice of franklin delano rosevelt, who said: “***it is common sense to take a [solution to a prob-lem] and try it. if it fails, admit it frankly and try an-other. but above all, try* something*.”***

the fact is that there are, within practical limits, *always* alternatives. yes . . . it’s probably unlikely that anyone in this room will ever become a michelle obama . . . or even her hairdresser! but within the limits of actual, physical reality, whatever’s in your heart to be — what-ever your heart’s *telling* you to be — *that* is what you must strive to be. if you can dream it and see a real-istic path toward it, then you *must* go for it. you’ve got to give it your best shot. otherwise, you’ll never feel like a success to yourself.

Remember that I said “success is really a state of mind?” well, that state of mind — that “I’m-a-successful-person” state of mind — can only really arise from a deep, per-sonal sense of self-worth.

show me a truly successful person, and i’ll show you a person with high self-esteem; someone who has enorm-ous — if quiet — faith in his god-given talents; someone with a feeling of great self-confidence and self-worth. but show me a failure, and i’ll almost always discover a person with low self-esteem . . . . or no self-esteem wha-ever. a person who’s probably never given his whole heart and his whole mind to any thing or any one. a person with no inner faith in himself — despite what he might portray for the outside world to see. and very typically a person who blames all his failures on some-body or something else.

this a delusion, of course, because we’ve all gotten to where we’re at right now by our own hand. we must realize — indeed, untl we must *embrace* — the truth that the main bar to our success is our own self-image, our own sense of self-worth, our own sense of importance to the universe. without that bedrock confidence, it’s doubtful we’ll ever achieve meaningful success in life. high self-esteem is at the core of every successful per-son. low self-esteem is the most common breeding ground of failure. you don’t develop low self-esteem because you fail. you fail because you started with low self-esteem.

and if that’s where you’re coming from now, that’s the first thing that’s gotta change. no sense trying to find your enduring bliss until you’ve found some measure of inner peace.

[add “success” anecdotes here]

thank you.

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