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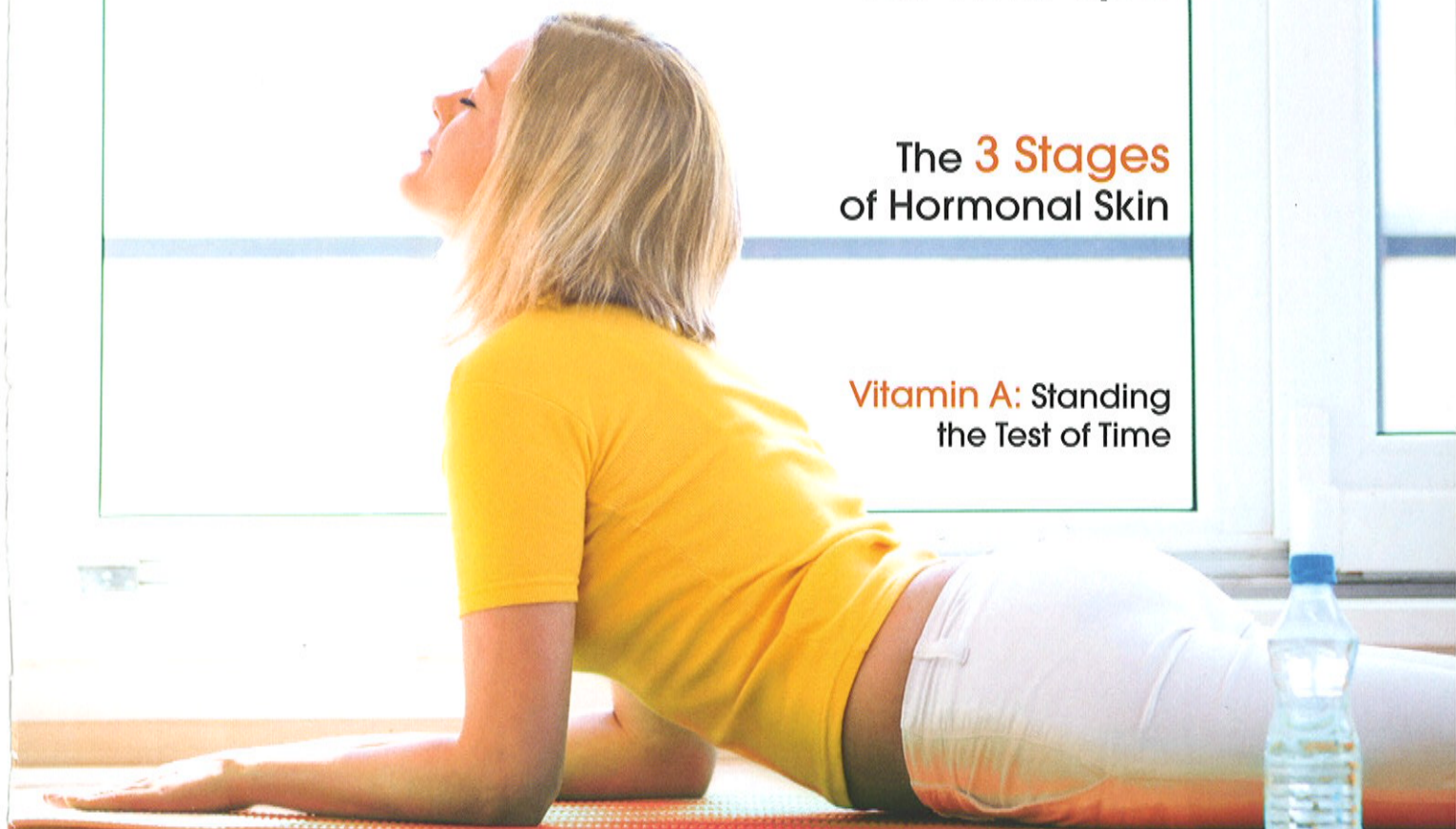
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A Drama-free Workplace

By Eric Stephenson

Your skin care facility is in the business of helping clients feel better inside and out. Consumers expect an oasis; an escape from stress and drama. Are you living up to the expectations? If your business is like so many in America, chances are extremely high that drama—more than anything else—is about to be your downfall. Drama is the business disease of the 21st century.

Professionally and personally, drama spikes stress levels, corrodes relationships, and consumes precious resources of time, money and sanity. Too much time is spent putting out fires that could be avoided, while customer service suffers.

Poor customer experiences result in an estimated \$83 billion loss by U.S. companies annually; 89% of consumers began doing business with a competitor following a poor customer experience; and 86% of consumers will pay more for a better customer experience, according to the *Parature Customer Service Blog* and *RightNow Customer Experience Report*.

If your customer service is not up to par, clients will bail, staff morale will stagnate and your bottom line will be a bust.

A drama-free workplace is the beginning of a stress-free client experience. Creating an atmosphere where employees are self-responsible and are invited to communicate the good and the bad are key aspects of a drama-free workplace. Implement the following tips in your facility before conflict arises.

1. Take a breath. New research has conclusively determined that

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all information coming into the nervous system first goes into the brain's amygdala. The amygdala controls the fight or flight response. Interrupting a reaction with breath will override a purely emotional response to a situation.

2. State the obvious. Say "Help me to understand ..." or "I am noticing ..." to identify the situation in objective terms, by stating facts. Many times, this means giving voice to the elephant in the room. If this statement alone does not initiate a response, say: "I'd like to describe what I'm noticing and get your interpretation of it."

3. Seek the employee's point of view. Gather the employee's interpretation of the situation and seek to understand her intent. Remember, the desire to be seen and heard is a basic human need.

4. Mirror understanding. Ensure that what was said is what you heard. Say: "So, if I am hearing you correctly ... (insert your understanding). Is that right?"

5. Pause. Use your intuition for congruence with their side of the story. Trust your gut feeling. Does the story you are hearing add up

to the facts? Your response might depend on this reading.

6. Speak your truth. With an understanding of their intent, now express your point of view. Use only "I" statements and refrain from "you" statements.

7. Getting agreement. The intent of both parties is weighed and an agreement is made on how to proceed. In some cases, you may agree to disagree. In other cases, you are unable to reach an agreement. No matter what, the situation is ended.

Drama is not just a side-effect of stress; it is the root cause. Creating and leading a drama-free workplace is not going to be easy. However, it's much easier to put out a grass fire than a forest fire. In the end, all drama begins and ends with you. Are you up to the challenge? X



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