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What treatments can I offer to help my older clients ease arthritis and rheumatism?

Arthritis is a common condition that causes stiffness, swelling and pain in one or more joints, which can sometimes lead to low mood and depression, particularly in elderly clients. If you're suitably qualified, aromatherapy massage is one therapy that can be beneficial.

Possible carrier oils include sweet almond, calendula, grapeseed, jojoba or olive oil and there is a wide selection of anti-inflammatory and pain-relieving essential oils to choose from such as rosemary, black pepper, ginger, plai, peppermint, eucalyptus, lavender, Roman chamomile, vetivert, clary sage, cajeput, sweet marjoram and lemon. Light massage of the affected area or joint, followed by some gentle exercises or movements, can be particularly beneficial.

When working with elderly clients, bear in mind that there may be a higher incidence of other conditions affecting their health, which in turn may require medication. It's therefore important to check that any essential oils you choose will not interfere with their medication or aggravate other health problems. Also, select oils that will not irritate more mature skin (which may be thinner and drier) and ensure that your essential oils are diluted to 1-2%.

You may have to adapt your massage and essential oil selection according to how the client feels on the day and avoid massage over any joint that is actively inflamed. To err on the side of caution, make the initial treatment quite short, so you can gauge their response at the next appointment, and then gradually increase the length over time.

Kate Mulliss has worked as a complementary therapy lecturer and assessor for more than 10 years and now teaches reflexology and aromatherapy courses in London and at Teach Therapy in Wales.



Ultimately, the use of essential oils and massage can provide great relief to painful joints, helping to reduce pain and improve the quality and outlook on life in elderly clients.

What exactly is a "brand identity" and how can I develop one for my salon?

Your brand identity is the essence of what makes your salon unique. It's about knowing who you are as a brand and curating a distinct image of your salon that you present to both employees and customers.

Brand identity is shaped through all communications, from your marketing copy, social media presence and staff interaction with customers, through to your salon's interior. Your brand should be evident in all aspects of your business and if you want your salon to stand out from the competition and encourage customer loyalty, it's incredibly important to get your identity right.

Take the time to research and formulate your identity, setting down ideas and guidelines to ensure you're going in the right direction. What kind of personality does your salon have? Is it retro, punky, personal or luxury? Who is your ideal customer and what are their interests and aspirations? Look at what your competitors are doing - is there a customer base they are ignoring that you could pick up?

Across your salon interior and exterior, marketing materials and your online presence, avoid using too many different fonts or designs which might dilute brand impact. Stick to your signature style to build trust with clients and create a recognisable brand.



Jo Martin is marketing director at salon supply wholesaler Sally Europe, where she runs all customer and marketing activities for the store and web-based businesses.



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