

Blessed Blade

by

Renán Jusino

Blessed Blade: A Barber's Monologue

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Renán The Barber



Renán started cutting hair when he was 13 years old. By the time he turned 18, he became a licensed barber. At that early age, he had already earned two professional licenses, one for barbering and the other for cosmetology. His specialty was classic haircuts, and he proved the quality of his work by entering competitions and consistently earning 1st or 2nd place. In his native Puerto Rico, he had the honor of being asked to teach at the prestigious Puerto Rico Barber College and Modern Hairstyling Institute. He then established himself in Miami, Florida, practicing his craft working exclusively at upscale shops. Constantly seeking the best that Florida has to offer, Renán now works at Blessed Blade Barber Shop, where he offers "the best classic barber experience in town."

Dedicatory




I dedicate this book to my brother Malcon, my parents, family, close friends, and clients who supported me in tough times. To my beloved island, Puerto Rico. I share my blessings with everyone that inspired me to write this book. Cutting hair is an art form, skill, sport, and service learned and offered through gifted patience, trust, understanding, practice, passion, and love for doing everything to the best that we can.

Renán

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Prologue

fter more than 30 years of working as a barber, I've decided to share my experiences and write about my journey working in this profession. I have been blessed with many rewarding and memorable years working around the styling chair, and I have collected countless unique stories while working directly with my clients. I can share some stories, anecdotes, experiences, secrets, and thoughts of daily life from a different perspective; the barber's social and emotional perspective. Barbers are psychologists by experience because people open up with their barbers in the red, white, and blue pole sessions.

I have known through all these years good, humble, and honest people. I have also known and worked with people who walk around and treat others as if they are Louis XIV King of France or maybe Henry VIII King of England. It is simply not possible to please everyone. There are mellow and easygoing clients: the ones who let us work and connect with our muse and are not picky. But some clients describe the haircut they want in the most convoluted way, like the architect who draws the map of Game of Thrones and the seven kingdoms. Don't get me wrong, I like the often cruel and graphic TV series, but that's confusing even to me.

You're over-explaining if you use six words or more to describe your haircut, and over-explaining equals confusion. There is nothing better than a picture to explain what you want or don't want in your haircut. It is vital for service workers like me to know both kinds of

people (easygoing and convoluted) to survive a day at the workplace. That's when our street intelligence and street psychology come in handy.

We all have secrets, angelic and devilish. My clientele through all these years varies from doctors and lawyers to drug dealers, ex-convicts, and assassins. I have seen the best and worst of humanity come and go from my chair. Under my styling cape, they are all the same. It's all about trust in the barber's chair.

I won't refer to any specific name. Like lawyers' and doctors' confidentiality agreements, I will respect my clients' anonymity in writing this literature. After all, they're just looking for a basic necessity we all have. Some clients are looking for a friend more than anything: looking for someone with whom they can vent their problems. We all have to cut our hair. Even with bald men, God's creation is so perfect that he left some hair on the sides so we can also cut it. Even if you're sick in the hospital, you will need a haircut or a shave. Even after death, hair continues growing.

Some clients talk while getting a haircut. Some don't; they prefer to be quiet. I'm pretty quiet myself. It doesn't matter to us. Just being close to the client, we can feel their aura. We can feel if you're having a bad day or a good one. We can detect if you're going through a tough time. Even without talking, we can see who is up to no good.

The barber is a collector of stories from their clients. I have plenty of stories that my clients have shared with me: some with happy endings, some bad or inconclusive. We are, in a way, psychologists. At first, barbers were called barber-surgeons. They were the people doing medical practice in medieval Europe. They were doing everything from cutting hair and counseling to pulling teeth. They also performed minor surgeries and amputations.

We can help you see things from a different point of view. We compare the same situation that other clients experienced before with the

same situation or issue a different person may have. As a friend or as a client, we may have the "angel" you need to fix a problem. If we don't know how to fix it, we have the phone number of someone who does.

Even in the most challenging times in history, our profession was vital. We make people feel better in times of war and economic collapse. After you get a haircut, I bet you feel a lot better. You feel fresh; your self-esteem is higher. That is if you don't get a crappy haircut.

I love my job, it is in my blood; It is in my nature to do good for others. I'm a firm believer that nothing is a coincidence. Everything happens for a reason. I asked myself a question: Do I start cutting hair because of a coincidence, or was it just meant to be? After many long years at work, I realized it was meant to be.

My profession took me on a journey that I wasn't expecting. Economic situations and the search for better jobs forced me to work in barbershops with different people and cultures. I was lucky enough to discover my talent when I was in my early teens; thirteen, to be exact. Some people get old without knowing who they are, what their talent is, or what they are good at. The answer is always around. It is next to you in your surroundings. It is in nature, in the sky, at the beach, in a kid's thoughts, in a forest, or sometimes is right on your face. Be alert. If you see something more than once, what are the odds that may be the answer to your question?

Sometimes, we have to listen to people when we are searching for answers. It is essential to listen to what people have to say. Some people would listen, and some won't, usually because of underestimation or because we already have too much going on in our lives. Don't waste your time on the ones who won't listen.

Going through the course of life, we will know two kinds of people: constructive and destructive. Destructive people never talk with their hearts. Your parents used to see them as a bad influence on you. They don't listen to you, and they will avoid you if you need help with

something. They give you whatever answer or what they have in their immediate memory to get rid of you. Never use this kind of person to share your dreams, plans, or domestic problems. It may be a little tricky to spot this kind of person if they are wearing their "mask." They revealed themselves in your dark nightmares when you were a child. We'll find them everywhere, even at a church, temple, mosque, or synagogue if you go to any. Although I think we don't need destructive people, we need to learn how to "superimpose" them. One of my objectives in writing this is that you'll better understand who they are and what motivates them.

Constructive people are essential to us. In a good way, they can balance a family or a marriage. The first contact we have with them is with our parents, relatives, or close friends. They will open their hearts to you. They will give you their best because they want to help you.

We, as humans, were born to be good to others and to nature. None of us were raised under the same roof with the same family. We all have different setups, values, or circumstances. As we get old, we confront real life, and we will get in contact with other characters, experiences, and economic situations.

Usually, we get the best life advice from older adults' experiences. They are wise in all aspects of life. Life is a cycle, and you will need time to put together what it is like to be around the mystery. By mystery, I mean planet earth, our world. It is a big mystery, isn't it? Hopefully, we will learn this sooner than later. Sometimes we ignore old folks. We don't treat them the best, but they are a book of stories with experiences from many decades. Use them as your best option to get advice. If you notice, they're usually quiet and observing. They're cautious with their responses when answering questions. After all, they lived in better times; "the good old days."

Every day we complicate our lives more with inventions that we probably don't need; that will make us lazier. This is why you are paying

more for getting a haircut than back in the day. The invention of fancy tools that are more expensive in modern times created a spike in haircut prices. Modern barbers have to spend a lot more money on tools to be well prepared to cut all kinds of hair and styles. We have to learn what is important to us. I understand the TV remote control invention, but why do we need to pay more for a phone when we can't tell if the camera is any better than our previous one? After all, most of us are not photographers.

On the other hand, young people are insecure because they don't have experience. Their common sense skills are still developing. Even if they act like they know everything, sometimes they only think about themselves. Some insight, though, can be valuable coming from young people and children. They look at everything in a simple way. They are happy with just a lollipop. You are not satisfied if you don't have the newest gadget. They don't have in their minds the overthinking we have. Their young brains are not focusing on paying bills, taxes, maintaining a job, or what should be the least important, pleasing people.

If you are lucky enough to make it to be old, you'll understand this as you get wiser. At the end of the journey, when you are satisfied with all your material belongings, you will realize it all comes back to family: the important people you probably didn't see as much because you were busy working. The most important thing is that you should never forget to finish this marathon having good mental and physical health. Without it, we are nothing. Never forget to take a break and take a vacation. Over time, we all need a reset. Your mind and body need it. Your clue to getting one will be monotony, when you lose interest in life or pursue happiness. When you put material things before enjoying a simple life, we don't need much to be satisfied. My favorite part of my travels to Europe was the rural way of living of people in villages. They were probably happier than many people trapped in the rat race back home.

It took me several years to write this literature. This is just my experience. Just imagine if every barber in the world writes their own experiences. I'm sure we can do a TV series with endless seasons. I hope this book helps you understand us better as human beings from a different perspective. After 32 years of working in this industry as a barber, I share my experience with you from the bottom of my heart. Enjoy, and God bless you.

Chapter 1

"Coincidences"



would like to start this chapter by writing about my background. I was born and raised in Carolina, Puerto Rico. If you have ever been to Puerto Rico, you have probably been to this city. It is located on the northeast side of the island. The captain, flight attendant, or co-pilot will welcome you to San Juan if you go on a plane. Since San Juan doesn't have an International airport and is the capital of Puerto Rico, they mention it, but it is actually Carolina. San Juan is 15-20 minutes away from Carolina.

This city is beautiful and it has everything: beaches, rivers, cities, farms, mountains, lakes, urban areas, rural areas, and some of the most beautiful women in the world. I'm not bragging about it; I'm just saying. Puerto Rico holds the 3rd place in most Miss Universe winners per country with five crowns, right after #1 USA, which has eight crowns, and #2 Venezuela, which has seven crowns. The five Miss Universe winners are Marisol Malaret (1970), Deborah Carthy-Deu (1985), Dayanara Torres (1993), Denise Quiñones (2001), and Zuleyka Rivera (2006).

Mostly middle-class citizens live here. That is, at least while the middle class still exists. The habitants are hard-working people like my parents. It is the birthplace of the first Latin American baseball player inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame, Roberto Clemente. He played eighteen seasons as a right fielder for the Pittsburgh Pirates

wearing #21. The number was retired on April 6, 1973. It is also the birthplace of poet and activist Julia de Burgos and the tallest Puerto Rican, Felipe Birriel Fernández, "El Gigante de Carolina" (Carolina's Giant), at 7ft 11in tall.

It is the birthplace of modern Reggaeton music as we know it today. The roots and origin of Reggaeton took place in Jamaica in the early 1980s. The music genre came from the Jamaican music style named Dancehall. Jamaican immigrants brought their music to Panama, where locals started to sing Dancehall in Spanish. El General and Nando Boom from Panama were two of the first musicians to sing Reggae music in Spanish. Vico-C and Ruben DJ from Puerto Rico were two of the pioneers of Rap, Hip Hop, and Reggaeton in Spanish. Daddy Yankee, Don Omar, Tego Calderón, Ivy Queen, and Wisin y Yandel, just to mention a few, were Reggaeton music pioneers also. Soon enough, the Dancehall music style arrived on the island in the early 1990s. The new sound was immediately welcomed by the Puerto Rican people.

The island is well known for its musical talents, thanks to Salsa music, Bomba, and Plena. Merengue and Bachata were born in the Dominican Republic, but they also had a significant impact and influence on Puerto Rican music. The first Bachata musical compositions were recorded in Puerto Rico by one of its pioneers José Manuel Calderón. He is considered the first Dominican to record bachata music.

The distance between Rincon, Puerto Rico, and Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, is an average of 79 miles or 65 nautical miles. Flying from Luis Muñoz Marín Airport (SJU) to Punta Cana airport (PUJ) takes about 50 minutes. The distance is less than from Key West, Florida, to Havana, Cuba.

In the early 1990s, younger adults were listening to and being influenced by hip hop music, while older adults were more into Salsa, Merengue, and Bachata music. Hip-hop music is a culture, a lifestyle,

where people want to look good and be in style. My generation (X) wanted to dress just like the music videos we were watching by Run DMC, Public Enemy, Wu-tang clan, Brand Nubian, and Lords of the Underground, to mention a few.

By the time I was thirteen years old and starting the eighth grade, I was in the stage of change, from being a child to becoming a teenager. Of course, I wanted to look good. I wanted to be noticed by girls in middle school. I come from a divorced family, so the custody and immediate decisions were made by my mother. The style and the way my hair looked were also her decision.

My mother used to take us to a department store inside a mall where a small salon was on the second floor. She requested the hairstylist of her choice and wrote my brother's names and mine on the list. Our hairstylist was a tall, pale man close to six feet tall, with the looks of Bon Jovi but long, light, and curly hair like Weird al Yankovic. I still remember how his long nails uncomfortably scratched my scalp. His haircuts were perfect, but he was a hairstylist, not a barber. Most of his clientele were females. He was mainly experienced working with long hair. He didn't know to perfection at the time, how to make blended fades, and the outline I wanted.

By that time, back in the 80s, the Salsa listener's hairstyle trend was (the best way I can describe it) like a Caribbean mullet. We used to call it the "Playero" hairstyle. I used to get the same haircut every month or six weeks, which wasn't bad for a single mother trying to make the most out of her teacher salary and our father's monthly child support. Clearly, from my point of view as a teenager, it was time for a hairstyle change.

Later on, by recommendations, we found a "barber upgrade." He used to cut hair in a barbershop not too far from our house, but he also was our neighbor. He wanted to make extra money out of the shop on his days off, so when he was off, we used to go to his house, where he

charged a fraction of what my mother used to pay at the shop where he worked. It was within walking distance from my home.

At his house, he had a very humble barber station set up. He was an excellent barber, and until this day, I still remember him as one of my motivations for becoming a barber. He didn't teach me how to cut hair, but I consider him one of my mentors. His haircuts were as good as the first stylist, the Bon Jovi one, but with a modern, edgy style. His details were sharp, typically accomplished by a barber. This includes crazy outlines, degradations, and the introduction of spiky and messy hair to me; at that time, as you know, in the 90s, that was cool. Back then, we didn't have pomades or creams. Pretty much all the teenagers were using hair gel or spray.

I looked in the mirror amazed at what was possible to do with my hair. The problem was that I still had the extra hair on the back of my head, as was requested by my mother. It looked like George Clooney's hair in the 1985 "The Facts of Life" sitcom. Since I didn't listen to Salsa music at that age, I didn't want to be associated with the hairstyle of salsa listeners; I didn't like it. I wanted to look like a hip-hop artist and not like Frankie Ruiz, one of the best Salsa singers ever. I wanted to look like one of the hip-hop singers I watched on TV, or perhaps like Will Smith on the "Fresh Prince of Bel-Air."

That was the first time I saw a fade haircut. I wondered how it would look on me. On my beautiful island of Puerto Rico, there's no racism, so wanting to look this way was normal to me. I wasn't even paying attention to his skin color, only the haircut. I'm glad I was raised this way. We are all the same, no matter the color of our skin. Like Bob Marley said in his track, "War," "the colour of a man's skin is of no more significance than the colour of his eyes."

We all have hopes and dreams. We're stronger united than divided. I title this chapter "coincidences" because of what I am about to tell you now. In my household, we always had a pet. My mother always

liked small hairy toy dogs. During my childhood, we had various dogs, which was my mother's pet choice. We used to have a white-haired female Poodle named Dindi. She had a lot of hair, so my mother used to take her to the dog groomer every month or two. The groomer charged her close to \$30-35 dollars back in the 90s, equivalent to about \$60-65 today, to cut Dindi's hair, paint her nails, and put cute colored laces on her ears.

After a few haircuts, my mother realized it was an extra expense that she might be able to eliminate from her bills. One day, she came home with a set of Oster clippers. It was probably one of the first models. It had never crossed my mind that those clippers would be my first working tool, and would eventually change my life. When the dog was ready for a haircut, my mother tried to cut the dog's hair. After a few tries and after watching the dog's hair come out crooked, she decided to take the dog back to the groomer.

One day, bored at home with no homework, I decided to give cutting the dog's hair a shot. It didn't take me long to realize that I wasn't good at it, either, which my mother made very clear. The dog hated me anyway, and used to bite me the entire haircut process with fork-looking teeth. The dog's haircut wasn't terrible, but the outcome looked as if the groomer cut the dog's hair with dilated pupils right after an eye exam.

The clippers were sitting at home with no use and getting rusty. We didn't have video games at that particular age at the house. We used to play mostly outside like most of the kids of our generation would. As a kid being bored at home and looking for something to do, one day I looked for the clippers, and it was hard to resist grabbing them and cutting the dog's hair again. After I cut the dog's hair that day, my mother left the house to do some errands. I looked at my older brother's hair and the pair of clippers, and he decided to let me try it out for the first time.

My older brother cut my hair, and I cut his. After a few hours, and as you can imagine, the haircuts didn't come out well. That's how my mother remembers it. There was hair all over the place, and she was furious and upset. She liked how our hair looked those days. The first thing my brother and I did was get rid of the excess hair on the back of the head. We used number zero from the level of our eyes through the back of the head and finally shaved all the hair down to the neck. For us, it was a relief.

To be honest with you, I loved it. I looked different in a good way. My brother, being older, had more control of his pulse than I did, so my haircut came out better. On the other hand, his was like the Enron Corporation stock market chart. We left all the hair on top. In my eyes, at the age of thirteen, I looked cool. My haircut was like a sport or a limited edition of me. I almost looked like Vanilla Ice or Big Daddy Kane, but with different hair. My hair is wavier when it is long.

The next day when I went to school, girls who once looked at me as a nobody, like Jonah Hill and Michael Cera in the movie "Superbad," started to look at me and even wanted to touch my head to feel the sensation of the shaved hair. I began to dress differently and add hair gel to my morning routine. This was when I discovered how powerful hair was on a teenager and young man trying to look good. My hair was a good tool for finding potential girlfriends at school.

No wonder so many women will spend whatever (like an alcoholic in a bar) at the salon to look good. In her late 80s, even my grandmother had a budget to go to the salon to do her hair and nails once in a while or for special occasions. I waited for my brother's hair and mine to grow back to do it again. We used to cut our hair almost every week. My mother was trying to save money, and she did. But not the way she was expecting. She saved \$30-35 every month for the dog's haircut and our haircuts. We were three boys, and the price was ten

dollars a head or \$30. Plus, we didn't have to wait a month or two for a haircut. We could get one whenever we wanted it.

After a few haircuts, I couldn't wait for my brother to cut my hair, so I started to cut it myself. He didn't like the haircutting experience as much as I did. As you can imagine, cutting your own hair is not an easy task. I used to get frustrated because a self-made haircut would last two hours. The clippers were hot and on fire. They were hard to grip. It was almost like if you throw an egg on it, it will get cooked. I used a sock as a glove to hold the clippers. Now in modern days, we have clipper cooling spray for that. You can also have an extra pair of clippers to use when they become too hot. In those days, I only had one pair. I broke many of my mother's mirrors. Back in those days, we believed that if you break a mirror, you get a seven-year curse. Thankfully I'm blessed, and I didn't get cursed.

Eventually, I got better, and my younger brother and neighbors asked me if I could also cut their hair. I agreed, and suddenly I started to cut all my friends' hair for free. It was an excellent way to get models and practice. We used to wear very short hair and these kinds of haircuts are high-maintenance. The lifetime of these haircuts to keep them looking good was only two weeks. They couldn't complain about it, though, because it was free. Most of them were high on weed, so they didn't care that much in the first place. It was actually fun for them if the cut was terrible. It was an excellent way to spend the afternoon as a teenager who had nothing else to do. My friends used to bring their music, and I had my cassette radio playing Dj Tony Touch mixes at my improvised barber station. I had an aluminum beige chair in the back of the house that I made to be higher by using wood pallets from the warehouse. My friends and I played our music mixtapes from a store in San Juan that used to sell mixes from New York. I found a mirror in the neighbor's trash. For what I wanted, it was perfect. I used to make the folding chair I used a bit higher with concrete blocks. Sometimes one of

the chair's legs would slip off the concrete block and the customer would fall from the chair.

Eventually, the improvised barbershop in the back of my house became popular. At that time, I saw the necessity of making some rules so I didn't upset my mother. Her room was right next to the barbershop. I will always be grateful to my mother because she always supported me and never became an obstacle for me to cut hair, regardless of the "hangout" I created in the back of the house. After all, her dad, my grandfather, was a barber in Chicago. It is in my blood. I saw him maybe four times in my life. I barely remember any conversation I had with him. We didn't have extra money to travel to Chicago, and he didn't travel to Puerto Rico, either. He died in Chicago in recent years. I guess I can say it runs in my blood. How can it be a coincidence that, from the first minute I grabbed the clippers, I liked them so much?

I started to charge a dollar from my neighbors and friends, and their parents happily paid for their haircuts. It was a major saving in both cost and time that they would have spent at the barbershop. It was exciting because now, at parties and hangouts, I was introduced by friends as their barber, not as a friend. This meant that I was something else other than a simple teenager.

My father used to pick me up at home on Sundays. He was amazed to see all the "customers" sitting outside my house, waiting for their turn. Some of them were smoking cigarettes which I bet he didn't like. Sometimes in the morning, I had two or three clients waiting for me to wake up, so they didn't lose their turn. Eventually, I started to charge more. Dollar by dollar until I had a decent amount of money to take my girlfriend to the movies. We had popcorn and chocolate or maybe a slice of pizza with my own money when I was 16 years old. Knowing I earned that money was a good feeling.

My other friends used to go to a barbershop not far from the house. This shop was located across the street from the housing projects.

One day there was a murder that took place inside the barbershop. Somebody entered with a gun and shot a customer sitting and receiving his last haircut in one of the chairs. My friends' parents were worried, and they didn't want them to go to that barbershop anymore, so I added them to my regular clientele.

Eventually, some of those friends were also interested in me cutting their hair. That was good because the demand was higher than I could handle. Of course, there was constant arguing about who was the best at cutting hair in the neighborhood. I don't know who was the best; all I know is that I was the first one. I started to cut hair too early in life, at a young age. I had to wait until I was eighteen years old to go to the barber institute to get my barber diploma.

In the meantime, I started to work at a local pizzeria where my older brother used to work. Eventually, I turned eighteen, and I went to study to become a barber at an institute in Santurce, Puerto Rico. The school was located close to "La Placita," a now well-known tourist attraction. I applied for government aid in the institute, and they assisted with a portion of my tuition. I had to pay the rest using a loan. The cost of the barber course at the institute back in those days was \$5,000 and change. I paid half with the aid and half with the loan.

When I started at the institute, I had complete domination of the clipper machine, and minimal adjustment was needed. I needed help mainly with the scissors. I was lucky enough to meet my second mentor, Roberto Figueroa "Figue," who was one of my teachers at the barber school. To this day, he is the best barber I know with a pair of scissors. This wasn't a coincidence. This guy was so sharp that we would turn the practice doll upside down to show us how the doll's hair was parallel to the comb with a minor error. He occasionally traveled to Europe and Asia to different cities, including Italy, London, France, and Japan, to mention a few. Bringing home first-place trophies from all the competitions abroad.

This was the guy teaching me to cut hair now. I will always be grateful to God for putting this person on my path. Without success, I later tried to look for him on Google, Facebook, or other social media. I wanted to thank him for what he taught me. At that time, I didn't know that I was going to bless students with the same method he taught me all over the world, which was made possible with the help of video platforms like YouTube.

I got my barber and cosmetology diplomas in 1996. I scheduled my examinations for the licenses; barber and cosmetologist. You have to take a theory exam for all the written material, and a practical exam for all the manual labor. It was around six months that I had to wait until the test was scheduled. I passed the tests, and I received my licenses in the mail. At that point, I had all the legal requirements to work as a barber. Immediately, I started to look for potential places to work. First, I started looking for work in places I already knew. After looking in a few places to work, I got my first job at a hair salon inside a mall. It was a big salon chain across the United States. My mother used to do her hair there, so she knew the manager and talked to him. She asked him if there was any job for me at the salon as a barber. She told him I was excellent and I had many years of experience cutting hair, and I recently got my license. The manager seemed to me like a very nice guy. They were hiring and looking for a barber. They only had one barber in that salon. The rest of the employees were hairstylists. He agreed and gave me my first job as a barber.

This job was on a whole other level. These were real clients I didn't know, with real consequences if I messed up their hair. The salon was inside the mall, so during my time off, when I didn't have customers, I used to walk around the mall and have lunch in one of the many places they had to eat, while checking out the girls working at the other shops. I worked there for two years and I liked it a lot. I was in college at the time, and I wasn't working full time. They had a beautiful

and lovely blue-eyed blonde receptionist with a cute accent from Germany who was always fun to talk with. She was always giving me tricks on making money in the shop by selling products and getting the 20% commission we used to get for selling products. What the hell she was doing in Puerto Rico, I never knew... or maybe I just don't remember.

I also learned techniques from the hairstylists working at the salon that I didn't learn at the Institute. I learned how to mix colors, which is one of the most challenging tasks of a hairstylist. Matching the hair color that a customer wants can be a complicated task. I left it because these salon chains pay by the hour or low commission. If I remember well, they paid me by commission if I reach a certain amount of money. If I didn't meet the amount required for the week, I got paid by the hour. They required several clients every two weeks, and sometimes I didn't meet the requirement. This was not because I wasn't good, but because they were guided by United States guidelines, and Puerto Rico doesn't have the same economy as the United States. The salon was inside a mall but didn't have a lot of foot traffic. Also, by being inside a mall, the prices of the services were higher than at a salon outside of the mall. For this reason, many customers tended to look outside the mall to get a hair service.

Looking for better pay and commission, I applied to a barbershop-salon close to my home. Randomly, I went to this place and applied to see if they needed a barber. At the time, they only had two, and the rest of the employees were hairstylists. I met with the barber in charge of hiring the employees for the salon. He was the typical barber character that you would see at any barbershop. He also was a salsa singer, and he had an orchestra, and he used to play on the weekends to earn extra money. It was a big salon with plenty of chairs, and they also did nails in a separate room from the hairstylists. It was a very nice place to work, and it was one of the types of barbershops where everybody

was planning something to do at night and hang out. They had private parking next to the salon, and it was convenient for famous customers to go there and get their service in private.

I saw a few celebrities at this salon. One of them was Elvis Crespo, a very famous Merengue singer. Also, Roberto Roena (R.I.P.) used to go here to cut his hair and hang out. He was a very renowned percussionist. At some point, Hector "El Father" also used to visit here before he was even famous. He's a Reggaeton music singer, and one of the first pioneers of the genre in Puerto Rico. The mayor of the city used to go there as well. Other famous people used to go to this salon, but I don't remember their names. Most of them were salsa music-related, and I didn't know that much about salsa music in those days.

This salon used to pay 50-50% commission, which isn't great considering the price for the haircut was cheap. The haircut at this place was \$12, and a hair wash was included. I didn't wash clients' hair at this salon; they had shampoo girls taking care of this. They used to get paid by the hour and customers also gave them tips. Sometimes they got extra busy by customers hitting on them. I can't blame the customers, as most of them were very pretty. Also, I got a \$200 Christmas gift at the end of the year. It was a fifteen-minute drive from home. I worked there for two years.

This was my introduction to a real beauty workplace environment with different people, backgrounds, ages, and characters. For the most part, funny situations happened in this place. It was a family environment, and I did like it. The owner was a nice person. He was retired but used to go to the shop every day, if his Jeep Cherokee was working and wasn't broken. His car used to spend so much time at the mechanic. He knew firsthand what was going on at the shop. He was in his mid-sixties. He retired after he had a heart attack, and thankfully he survived.

His son also cut hair, and he was the manager at that shop. All the employees got along with each other. I never saw a fight or an argument ever at this place, and nobody talked poorly about another employee there. After-hours they ordered food and drinks for employees and clients; I miss those days, especially, after all I went through working at barbershops in Miami. Later on, I will talk about that. The best thing about working in this kind of salon is learning a lot from different hairstylists and barbers. You can learn other hairstyling techniques that you would never learn working by yourself. They also had a beautiful receptionist answering the phone and taking care of the customers at the front, so we didn't have to worry about that.

After working those two years and being tempted by a better commission, I accepted a job at a similar place, but it was only a barbershop, not a salon. Everybody working in this place was male. They had six chairs in this barbershop. A friend from childhood used to work as a barber here. I don't think he even had a barber license. In Puerto Rico, it is rare to have an inspector going to the barbershops to check barber licenses. I don't remember a single time when an inspector went to a salon or barbershop and inspected the place. The closest I ever came to experiencing that was somebody impersonating an inspector who scammed everybody, asking them for money to renew their licenses and keep them updated. He stole hundreds of dollars from the barbers.

This new shop didn't have a family environment. This place was ghetto-ish. My friend talked to the owner about me, and I got the job. The barbershop was located ideally on a bustling street loaded with different businesses. I got a 10% increase in pay and a 60% commission at this shop. This place was different. It was cooler but with a little bit of a "macho" environment. All the employees were guys. Still, all of the barbers were decent people. Famous people used to visit this place too, but most of them were connected to the Reggaeton music scene. Dj Negro used to go here. He's one of the pioneers of Reggaeton and was

the Disc Jockey for the singer Vico C. He has an excellent collection of old-school Reggaeton mixtapes. Music producers also used to cut their hair here.

I still remember the bakery across the street (panadería). They sold delicious sandwiches and pastries. I bought my second car, brand new straight out of the dealership with the owner's help working at the shop. I worked at this barbershop for two years.

I used to work with a barber in my previous job. We had a very close friendship. He and one of his clients decided to open a shop. Once again, I was tempted by a better commission, so I went to work for them. It was very close to my previous job. It was a smaller barbershop. Leaving my old job to work here was a mistake. We watched movies all day long here with very few customers to cut. It was a waste of time, and I didn't have time to waste because I recently got a new car that I had to pay for. I struggled to make the car payments and had to sell the vehicle. Thankfully my mother got a brand new car, and I kept the old one she used to have. I made a better commission of 70% in this job, but there weren't clients around to be cut. Eventually, they closed, and my friend went to work from his home. His mother had ample space at her house to support a small barbershop with at least three or four chairs.

Since I had some clients left from all my moves, I went to work from my home instead of making him a commission on my work. I could provide the money for my mother and help her. It was a good decision because I was studying in college, trying to finish a degree in something. I wanted to please my parents because both of them were professionals, one a teacher and the other a college professor. I didn't want to disappoint them.

I tried computer science for a few credits, but I didn't like it. I changed my major to criminal justice, and later I realized it wasn't for me. A crazy foreign anthropology professor with a weird accent was enough for me to change my mind. I never understood what the hell he

was talking about. In my final days at college, I decided to take a few credits to get a degree as an English teacher. I like to teach. I thought that I would be able to teach barbering with maybe a few educational credits. Since both of my parents were teachers, I decided to try it. Unfortunately, I didn't finish, and I never graduated from anything after four years of studying in college. I can't say it was a waste of time because I learned some things over those years. I was disappointed, though. I wanted to finish a college degree because my parents are college graduates. I tried to make them proud.

I was getting older, so the necessity for money and the desire for independence increased. Since I did have some credits in teaching, I went to a vocational institute to ask for a job as a barber instructor. They had barber, cosmetology, and nail technician classes. I went to this institute and asked for an instructor job even without teaching experience. I met with the owner, and he agreed to give me a job when he saw my college credits in education. I applied for the position in the branch they had close to my house. They didn't have any job openings at this specific branch. The institute owner decided to send me to the other institute he had on the island's east side. It was far from my home, close to a forty-minute drive.

Overwhelmed by curiosity and trying to do something different, I accepted the job and started to commute every morning to the institute. I was using the old car that my mother gave me. It was an old car, so the commute to work was questionable at times. I was ready for something new, and I wanted to try it. I like teaching, I'm good at it, and it is in my blood. The pay wasn't good. It was \$12 an hour. Remember that I can double or triple that working as a barber. But I enjoyed what I was doing for the two years I spent in that institute. I had outstanding students hungry to learn how to cut hair. Until this day, some of them are grateful to me for teaching them the skill. Having a good barber teacher is rare.

In some of these institutes, they only teach you how to pass the exam and are not focussed on teaching you how to cut hair, which is the essential goal in the end. When I was teaching at the institute, I was more focused on the practical part of the course than the theoretical part. My students were very grateful for that.

I met a lovely lady in that town, so I decided to move close to the institute because I spent all my days and nights there. I even got a part-time job at night at the first institute in Puerto Rico to teach the profession. It opened its doors for people who wanted to get a license in Puerto Rico when it became mandatory. When the owner heard a new good teacher was around, he decided to approach me and ask me if I wanted a job. I worked there at night for a few years. I started at 6 pm, and the classes ended at 9 pm. It was challenging and exhausting for me to work at this location. I was teaching all day, back to back in these institutes.

I was fired from my first teaching job. I received a call from the owner saying he needed me in the institute where I first applied, the one close to my house. I would have had to move back there, and if I didn't want to go back, I would be fired. It basically was a mutual agreement of being fired and me quitting. I wasn't going to move back. I already had everything set up there and a girlfriend I loved. One of the reasons I got fired was because I got involved with one of the cosmetologist students. When I was hired, one of the conditions to getting the job was that I couldn't get involved with any of the students. The Institute director was very clear about it. That will automatically get me fired. I didn't have a strong relationship with the student, but I spent more time with her than the others at lunch. It was noticeable, and people were talking about it.

The economy in the United States was terrible, and in Puerto Rico, it was even worse. This was in the middle of the 2008 housing market crash, so I needed a job. I went to work in a barbershop close to the institute. It looked similar to a barbershop you'd see in one of Ice

Cube's movies. Everybody knew each other in this place. I was an outsider, I wasn't raised there; I didn't have any friends there. The only people I knew were the students at the institute across the street from the barbershop where I just got fired.

The barbershop owner thought it was a good idea to rent the extra chair he had empty at the place. His son was my student at the institute, and he told him about me. This young man was one of my best students when I worked at the institute: an Army veteran who recently finished his contract. This soldier went to the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and often praised me and compared me to the instructors in the Army. I'm quite strict and took my job as a barber instructor at the institute very seriously. He also helped the other students by offering them to cut his hair so they can use him as a model. Although he was a young guy, he had 50% gray hair. We used to dye his hair dark, helping many students needing the requirement of hair color practice. It didn't matter that the hair was short, as it still counted as one service. He gave me good recommendations on places to eat and have lunch around the area.

One day we had stormy weather, and the roads were flooded close to the institute. One of the teachers, who happened to be a nail technician teacher, got stuck with her son on the flooded streets. She called the institute crying, telling the director that she was stuck in the rain and her car had stopped working. She feared for her life. The rain wasn't stopping, and more water was getting inside the vehicle. I asked her where she was located, and with the bit of information she gave us, we could locate her. We took off our shoes and removed the items that couldn't get wet, like our cell phones. We took her and her son out of the car and pushed it out of the flooding waters to a safe area. After seeing that the car didn't want to start, we went back to the institute. After a couple of hours, when she and her son felt safe, my student told me at the institute that he remembered some of the instructors he had in the

military. Because we analyzed the situation before just jumping straight to push the car, we saw that we had time to remove some clothing, and that was a smart move.

More than a student, he also was my friend. I respected him for what he did for our country, even if he was younger than I. I don't think it was a coincidence that his stepfather had a barbershop just a couple of steps from the hairstyling institute. After talking with him about the job and the commission, I decided to work there, so he rented me the chair. I used to pay \$75 a week for that spot. I will always be grateful to the barbers at that barbershop.

Three barbers that were childhood friends were working at the shop. They welcomed me to work there like I was one of them. Sometimes when you work in a barbershop, other barbers like to give you nicknames. The nickname they gave me was "The Chosen One." They used to call me "Chosen" just to make it shorter. In a way, it was mockery, but I know they had only good intentions. They were referring to me like I was the chosen one or got lucky to get the job at the institute. What they didn't know was that the pay was miserable compared to what I could make as a barber. I was doing it more because I like to teach. It's in my blood, as I mentioned before that both of my parents were teachers.

The economic scenario wasn't good. My commute to work was rough. One day my car broke, and I sent it to the mechanic. It took a week to get the money to fix my vehicle. Again, we're talking about a forty-minute drive home. I was in the process of moving there, so I didn't have a place yet, and I was crazy enough to sleep at the barbershop without the owner's permission. I even took showers on the shop's patio with gallons of water; it was horrible. The heat in that place was reason enough to turn the A/C on. It wasn't a great idea because electricity in Puerto Rico is expensive, so the increase in the power bill was noticeable.

One day the owner went to the shop at night time to get something, and I was sleeping with the A/C on. I didn't know what to do when I saw him and his younger son coming inside the shop. He didn't know I was there. I didn't know whether I should make a noise and talk to him to let him know I was there, or maintain silence, hoping he didn't go back to where I was. I was hoping they would leave without seeing me. I opted to do this. I waited, but eventually, he went back and saw me. His younger son was there, and he jumped scared, running out of the shop almost like a squirrel. "I yelled, It's just me! It's just me!" I told them I had forgotten something and went there to pick it up. The owner knew it was a lie. I had an improvised mattress I made with the sofa backrests on the floor. Like a mature person with a heart and common sense, he assumed I was sleeping there, so he turned the lights off and left without saying a word.

I worked there until I decided it wouldn't take me far, staying on the island and working as a barber. I wanted to take advantage of my talent, so I started to look at Florida and maybe another state. I met one of the barber's clients on vacation visiting from Orlando, Florida. I couldn't help but listen to their conversation. I asked how he was doing in Orlando and what his experience was there. He told me that he cuts his hair with a barber in Orlando that owns a shop. He offered to tell him about me and that I was looking for a job in Florida. I talked by phone to him from Puerto Rico to Orlando, and he offered to rent a chair and give me a job and even let me stay at the shop for a few nights until I found a place. He told me the shop was doing well, and he needed a barber.

I don't know what I was thinking because I didn't even have a Florida barber license. I saved some money and returned my apartment keys to my landlord one day. I decided to take the chance and travel to Orlando, looking for better opportunities. It was crazy because I didn't have any family in Florida, so if I had any problems in the future, I would be on my own. Well, some things never change.

It could have been worse; at least I had documents. Some illegal immigrants come to the United States with their entire families and no money or documentation. When I arrived in Orlando, my co-worker's client back in Puerto Rico was kind enough to pick me up at the airport and took me straight to the barbershop to work. I started the same day. The owner wasn't there, so I was going to meet with co-workers who probably weren't going to be happy that their slice of pie would be smaller.

It turns out that the shop was in a tourist zone and it was on the second floor almost invisible to the people walking around. I ended up giving flyers to them, hustling a cut from people who probably wouldn't need it because they were on vacation. I didn't last two nights. With almost no money in my pocket, poor planning, and co-workers unhappy because I was there, I wouldn't get too far.

As I mentioned before, the owner of the shop told me that I could stay at the shop for two or three nights until I found an apartment and a car. He wasn't at the shop, and the employees didn't know about this arrangement between the shop's owner and me. The employee who had the key didn't let me stay at the shop, and I was kicked out. It turns out the owner used to work in a casino as a part-time job at night, and he was allegedly stealing the chips. He got caught, and he was in prison. I rented a room in a hotel in front of the shop to spend the night. It was a long day, half of it spent with exciting feelings and half of it spent very disappointed. I decided not to spend a penny more there in Orlando and went back home to Puerto Rico.

When I went back, my landlord was throwing away stuff from the apartment because he planned to renovate it. When he saw me, he was surprised. He asked, didn't you go to Florida yesterday? I replied yes, but I had some complications on my trip. I asked him if I could rent the apartment again because my plans didn't work in Orlando as

expected. He agreed and left the apartment, and I finally had a good night's sleep after three long days.

Everything happens for a reason. I used to have a friend who grew up with me back home in Puerto Rico. His parents were from Cuba. They were one of the few families that, instead of going to Miami, decided to go to Puerto Rico instead, and they lived there for a long time. They were successful at some point, but doing business in Puerto Rico is tough. They used to own a gas station, but all their family was in Miami, so they decided to move to Miami after many years. My friend moved there and helped his family get set up. Eventually, they all left, including his older sister, her son, and her daughter.

We still maintain communication after all these years, probably fifteen years after he left. I went to visit him one time. I saw how he and his parents were living, and I was happy for them. I was always curious about how my life would be if I moved to Miami, so when I failed in my attempt to go to Orlando, I discussed the idea with him. He told me business in Miami is different because of its large population. The economy moves at a faster pace compared to Orlando. He told me there was a need for good barbers because, at that time, most barbers in Miami sucked.

Please, Miami barbers don't get mad at me. Is not me saying this but is it a general perception in Miami. My friend was right. Just ask anyone struggling to get a decent haircut there. I'm sure things have changed since. Now there are good barbers in Miami. My friend was happy to help me. He talked to his wife about letting me stay at his house in Homestead, Florida for three weeks. He also offered to help me search for a job and he told me that he knew a few places where I could apply, even as a teacher if I wanted. He also helped me to get my Florida barber license documentation in order. I was skeptical because of my previous experience in Orlando, but I decided to save some money and give it a try, so I did.

I went to Miami for a few days with a round-trip ticket. We went to the barbershop where he used to cut his hair. That was the craziest barbershop environment I have seen to this day. I looked for the owner and asked him if he needed a barber. My mouth was six inches away from his ear so he could listen to what I was saying. The music was so loud that you could hear the distortion of the home theater sound system from the building's entrance. Barbers that were not busy were asking people walking in front of the store if they wanted to get a haircut. We call it "hustling," and that hustle was as literal as it could get.

It was a perfect scene to make as much money as they wanted. There were many people looking for an affordable well-done haircut in Miami. Nothing is cheap in this city, but they were charging \$15 at that time. This place was the craziest place I ever worked; it was an indoor flea market. The business had fourteen chairs and barbers from all over the world. Six Dominicans were running the shop but also we had the owner who was American, two Hondurans, one Mexican, two Cuban Americans, and one Puerto Rican, and I was going to be the second one. So we almost had a full house by one chair.

At some point, all the chairs were full, but it was hard to keep it that way because it was a crazy and loud place. It was practically a war zone. Playing hip hop, it was like a prediction for a fight. Hip hop will increase the employee's violent behavior. Nobody used to clean. One time, I saw a chicken bone leftover that fell from someone's plate and it was on the floor for a week, without being picked up. The barbershop smelled like fried food mixed with the smell of a prison gym with no air conditioner. Next door, we used to have a seafood place where they used to sell fried fish, shrimp, and french fries all day. The smell and smoke were all day long inside the shop. There was a tattoo shop next to the barbershop, one of nearly twenty tattoo shops inside the flea market. Even if it was a sketchy place, it was a good place to buy gold. They had plenty of gold shops around that also did repairs. The repairing

of jewelry was very good and Jewish or Arab people owned the shops. They had a bunch of fake sunglasses stores. Chinese people owned those.

People smoked cigarettes and other green stuff even inside the barbershop while getting a haircut. The air conditioner wasn't the best, so we have fans all over the shop. All the hairs were flying all over the place and on my face. One of the barbers used to own a Python snake, and every week, he fed it with a mouse he brought to the shop. It was crazy but cool. Employees of other shops, tattoo artists, their clients, barbers, and shop clients gathered to see how the snake stalked the white mouse little by little until the mouse was lunch or dinner for the giant snake. Next to the shop, a tall Jamaican barber with long dreadlocks used to rent a chair from another place by himself. He was the only male at the site. In that salon, they specialized in doing braids. Also there at the shop, he worked with hairstylists who used to make a fortune placing hairpieces (wigs) for black women. He always made me laugh because he told me that I looked like a cop, and he wasn't joking. He thought I was an undercover cop for real. I understand in a way because I started working there out of nowhere. No one knew me there before.

The owner was a nice guy. He was a white Cuban American who barely spoke any Spanish. He used to cut hair very well. I know he liked my work because suddenly he was asking me if I could cut his hair every week. After all, most of the time, I was the only one who was sober. He didn't want anybody to mess up his hair. He was very compressible if any of us had a problem or needed money sooner than payday. Occasionally he suffered from seizures because he had epilepsy. Sometimes he fell to the floor and started to shake and blow bubbles out of his mouth. The first time I saw it, I got freaked out. I didn't know what was going on. I thought he was dying from a heart attack, or someone hurt him. It was a violent place, and fighting was common. One day the owner of the barbershop had a seizure, and he felt in a way

that his concealed weapon was visible. The gun's hammer was cocked, and it was ready to go. That's how crazy this place was. The security officers of the building took the gun and secured it in their office.

I spent two years in this place. I got my barber license but decided to stay working there because I already had a following. It was an excellent place to understand how crazy Miami can be. This was something Miami tourists don't see on TV. It was a boot camp for me, if I can call it that. One of the best things I learned there was to say "I don't know" to anybody asking any questions. If you want to get rid of somebody, just tell them you don't know, even if you do. That made my life easier in this place, and you can apply this to your life, and you will see it is going to be easier dealing with people. The exception, of course, is somebody close to you. After those two years, I felt it was time to move on. I was tired of the fights and being next to sketchy people. I knew I could've done better. I wanted to work in a more professional environment. I wanted to make money so that eventually, I could open my own shop one day. There were rumors that the owner of this barbershop bought it for \$40,000, and at the moment, I didn't see that as something impossible. I didn't ever want to own a shop like that one, though.

The United States is the land of opportunity, so if I wanted to do anything, it would be possible. Opportunities are possible for those who want to take advantage of them. But there, for some reason, I found a lot of lazy people who didn't take advantage of opportunities. I started my search for where the money was in Miami. I went driving in the first vehicle I got in the magic city, my 50cc gray and blue scooter, to the tallest point of John F. Kennedy Causeway or FL 934, in the city's heart. From this point, you can see all of the east side of Miami-Dade county. This is where the Intracoastal and the beaches are. I got off of my scooter, and I looked through the horizon at the most beautiful city around. I looked to the south towards South Beach, the downtown area

in the center, and the north close to the Aventura and Surfside area. On the internet, I found a couple of upscale places. If I was good and had my brand new Florida barber license, why would I stay in my old job? I couldn't work just anywhere anymore. I had to be where I could take advantage of my talent. You have to be where you are valued and where you are essential to people.

I saw an ad on craigslist about a barber job in downtown Miami. This is where government offices, business people, and lawyers have their offices. I scheduled an appointment with the barbershop owner to interview for the position. It was an upscale barbershop, and mostly their clientele were lawyers because the courthouse was within walking distance. They also had business people and wealthy neighbors who frequented the shop. After he saw I was serious about the job and wanted to work there, I got the job and started to work immediately, mainly because he guaranteed me \$400 a week. It is a good way to start a job because if I make less than that, I'll still get what was guaranteed. During my time working there, I think I only needed to use the benefit once.

It was a busy shop, so I didn't have to rely on my clientele. They had an extensive inventory of male haircare products for sale. I used to work there with three other barbers, one from Cuba who didn't speak much English, and the receptionist was in charge of translating what the customer wanted from him. Another barber from Venezuela with a better English vocabulary was also working there. Both of them were older gentlemen. A short white American who used to dye his hair blonde also works at the shop. Some clients told me that he allegedly looked a lot like Beavis, from the MTV series "Beavis and Butt-Head." He didn't speak any Spanish, but he was always paying attention to what the other barbers of the shop did. He loved gossip and liked to say things that were not necessarily good about the other barbers. He was proud of being the barber who had the most clients in the shop, which was

something the other barbers nor I cared about. Another young lady originally from Cuba used to work at the shop doing nails and pedicures for the customers.

It was a little uncomfortable working with a long sleeve shirt and a tie, but I didn't mind and accepted this condition. The shop owner supplied the shirts and a tie, but I got more because I didn't want to wear the same outfit every day. I thought the price for the haircuts was low considering the looks of the shop and the location. They used to charge \$25 for a haircut. Today, they are charging \$35, which I think is still inexpensive. For the place, they can easily charge \$40 a haircut if they wanted to. One of the bad things about the barbershop is that they have crazy hours: 7:30 am to 6:00 pm. That's close to an eleven-hour shift if you include the lunch break. No wonder they struggled with hiring barbers. The owner used to get mad if an unoccupied barber was sitting in his chair, and for any reason, they closed their eyes to rest for a minute. We had to be alert all the time to greet the customers going to the barbershop. I learned in this shop how to do the hot towel lather shave. All the barbers used to do it using different techniques. I gathered some of those techniques, and I did my own, which is the one that I still use these days. I will describe in chapters ahead in detail how I do the hot towel shave.

For the most part, it was a good job. The only downside was the parking bill. It was close to \$85 a month or \$1,020 a year just to park the car, and it was because the parking owner was our client. I worked there for close to a year. I had issues with one of the barbers there. He wasn't respectful and probably saw me as a threat because I was getting clients, and he was determined to let me know he was the main guy. Honestly, I didn't give a crap if he was. Barbers like this are silly. I just wanted to make money. He made my days at the shop very uncomfortable, so I left.

This was also one of the first times I experienced the racism issue in the USA. I was without a job for close to a month. I could start on another right away, but I preferred to wait and explore other counties in Florida, looking for another upscale place like that one. I wanted to check a barbershop in West Palm Beach because I saw an ad saying they were hiring barbers. My car at the moment wasn't reliable. I rented a car for a day to see this place, and get to know the shops around. I didn't mind if I had to move to a different city if I had the job that I was looking for.

I couldn't find one, so I accepted a position at a chain barbershop close to Brickell. This barbershop had the upscale classic look, but it was a franchise. The owner interviewed me. By the way, one of the wisest women in the business, who used to be the manager of 7 hair cutting franchises. She wanted to adopt the business model of those chains, and her way to pay the employees was by the hour. \$7.25 an hour wasn't going to work for me, but it still was better than going back to a bad place again. The job was nice but the pay wasn't. The business model she wanted to project was similar to the business model that Hooters used. She wanted to hire good-looking ladies and make them work using a corset. Sometimes the shop reminded me of the movie "Moulin Rouge." The shop had a swing installed on the ceiling that they would use on special occasions, just like in the movie. The owner was well connected. She knew the mayor of the city and many business owners. Everybody knew her in Miami. She also used to advertise on the local news prime time. She wanted to create a business model that she could present to potential franchise owners in the future. In my final days at this barbershop, she implemented customer subscriptions to the barbershop. This way, the customers can pay a yearly flat fee, and they could get as many haircuts and services as they wanted during the year. This business model benefits the owner and the customers, but is not necessarily suitable for the barbers. The owner was very good at

decorating. On Christmas, she used to decorate the shop, and almost felt like working in a barbershop in New York. She liked to play all the Christmas classics all day long for the customers. Some of them liked it, but some of them were annoyed. They probably heard those songs more than one thousand times in their lives, and some of the songs played in a loop: "All I Want for Christmas is You" by Mariah Carey, "Santa Claus is Coming to Town" by the Jackson 5, "Wonderful Christmas Time" by Paul McCartney, "Jingle Bell Rock" by Bobby Helms, and "Santa Baby" by Eartha Kitt, just to mention a few. You can listen to each song one time per Christmas season, and that will be enough.

After a few months of working there, worried and losing hope, I finally received a call from an upscale barbershop in North Miami. I applied to this place three months before this call. I was lucky enough to be the replacement of a lady who was retiring. I interviewed with the owners. I got used to wearing a tie and a long-sleeved shirt at the other shop I worked in downtown, so I went to the interview wearing the same. It was appropriate, keeping in mind that this is one of the best professional-looking barbershops in Miami. Thankfully I got the job, and I was going to start the week after the interview. This place was hidden, and it was hard to tell how people were aware of it. I was curious, so I went to the shop the week before I was hired to study the movement of the shop. I parked my car under a tree and faced the front of the barbershop. I stayed there for hours. I saw people constantly coming and going, so I felt better about the place.

Most of the customers appeared to be from the upper class. I didn't see anybody going to the barbershop in shorts and flip-flops. I also didn't see anyone wearing gang-looking clothing like at the flea market. It was next to a very good burger place. Dennis Rodman, the basketball player and U.S. peace ambassador to North Korea, was a regular customer at the restaurant. I saw him eating there many times. When I

was a boy, I used to have his jersey with the number 91 when he played for the Chicago Bulls. I had the black one.

This is the best-looking barbershop in Florida. You won't see a place like this ever again. The original owner put more money than he should have in this place. Most of the areas had fine wood decorations. The hall looked like a street in France or Italy, mainly because the floor was built using European street pavers. Also, European street lamps were illuminating the hall. They had a gigantic shoe-shining chair, which the cover of this book shows. Every barber had a station similar to an office. We would close the door and it was just the client and me. Each room had wooden blinds for privacy. It was very private and quiet. The flat television sets were individually customized with satellite TV for the client's preference. At the back of the shop, there were two massage rooms and two manicure and pedicure rooms. When the barbershop first started, they even offered teeth whitening. Beautiful receptionists were always at the front, welcoming the clients and making sure they were comfortable while waiting. Coffee, wine, and irresistible cookies were always in place. For my VIPs, I had some complementary Johnnie Walker Double Black and cigars for the smokers in my station. This should be the new model of barbershops in the future, and it is now with the barber studios. But studios are a mini-me compared to this shop. I was going to get paid a commission of 50%, and the haircut price was double than my previous jobs in Florida.

This was the kind of place I was looking for. In this place, I could be my best; it was made for me. Clients here were more demanding, though. They expected the best and nothing less. Here I learned to listen and obey. Some clients treated me as their servant. They are always right. There's always time to laugh at their sometimes bad jokes. Call them however they want, a doctor or whatever. Trust me, no one needs to know if there's a doctor in the place unless someone is dying.

Working here was very hard. I scheduled my appointments every 30 minutes. At that time, I had to do a haircut and two shampoo services. One shampoo was at the beginning of the haircut and one was after so the customer didn't leave with hair all over them. Sometimes it was very hard for me to stay on schedule, mainly because some customers were late for their appointments. I took them if they were late, as long as it was less than fifteen minutes. If they were more than fifteen minutes late, they had to reschedule their appointment. Since the money working at this place was good, I rarely said no, and I always tried to work around it. The barbers there were very slow cutting hair, and sometimes they thought they were stars. They found any excuse to say no to the customers, which was crazy to me because the opportunity of making money was given, and only an idiot would let it pass. Some barbers talked too much, and they didn't realize that if you treat this job seriously, you can earn more money than a police officer, firefighter, or anybody working in the government. At the shop, we used to share the same duties, like doing the laundry and taking out the trash. Sometimes I was the only one doing the laundry because they looked the other way. There was a Russian nail technician that I respected a lot working in this barbershop, and she also used to do the laundry because she wasn't that busy and she wanted to help. It was always fun to listen to her rantings describing young people as "stupid." To this day, I still call her once in a while to say hi on special days like Christmas or New Year's.


After eight years of working here, I decided to try a new model of business: haircuts on-demand and house and business calls. I always wanted to try this because I thought it was the future. This company brings the barbershop to your home with the simple use of an app. It's like ordering pizza, but you're ordering a vetted, licensed, and ensured barber. I worked with them only for a few days because I wanted to try the model. I did like it, but they were only in central Miami, and traveling to that area was a 30-minute drive or more. They recently

expanded their coverage to my site, so I may give it a try again. I stopped working for them because I also used my car too much. Sometimes I was on my way to do a service, and the customer canceled the appointment saying that he wasn't going to be able to make it. This infuriated me because traffic in Miami is horrible, and I was spending fuel in vain. I quit that job I was doing on the side and went back full-time to my job at the barbershop.

Whenever I have a terrible day with a client, I try to remember my days in Puerto Rico when I was in a dire economic situation: the long walks without a car, waiting at the bus and train station, the times when I was hungry, the uncertainty affecting my mother's nerves, the times when I was almost homeless. Every day I wake up feeling grateful for what I have and what I have accomplished in the United States. I will always be thankful for this country and what it stands for; freedom and better opportunities. Thanks to all the sacrifices our soldiers made, many paid the ultimate sacrifice. On Memorial Day, I like to remind myself about them because we would never be here celebrating our freedom without them. I'm not a soldier, but I feel sad for people who bully another person without knowing them. What if that person you are bullying is a veteran soldier who went to war and sacrificed most of their life to come home just to be harassed by a person who wants to laugh because his life is miserable. I'll always be grateful to them, and if I know I have a war veteran in my chair, he will get special treatment for sure.

Chapter 2

"Nonessential"

fter all those years working for someone else, I couldn't help but notice that I was getting old and time wasn't in my favor. Everybody was asking me when I was going to open my own barbershop. I knew opening a business in Miami wasn't going to be easy, especially a barbershop because leasing retail spaces are very expensive.

Finding barbers is one of the most challenging things a barbershop owner can face. Barbers have the tendency to be lazy and a little crazy. If you ever find a screw on the floor, there are big chances it belongs to a barber. Being a shop owner was one of the only things I had left to do in the barbering world. I never wanted to open one because, like The Notorious B.I.G.'s song says, "Mo money, Mo problems." Finally, I decided to open my barbershop after I saved some money working for fourteen years in Miami.

Miami was getting expensive and very crowded. I didn't want to spend my older years in a costly and cramped city. I started to look for some land in North Florida or a town in the US where eventually I could retire. I watched random videos on YouTube about people telling others where to buy inexpensive land. Buying land can be overwhelming. There are many things that you have to keep in consideration when you have plans to purchase land. You have to keep in mind the location, the weather and if it is a flooding zone, insurance, and the city codes for that land among other details. You also have to consider the taxes you are

going to pay for the property. It was very important to move to a city where I didn't have too many regulations, and I could do whatever I wanted inside my property. I started to look at smaller towns in North Florida.

I also looked for land in other states like Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, New York, Texas, and Colorado. I was born and raised on an island, always surrounded by water. I preferred to live in a city where I could easily access the water and beaches. I'm not comfortable in temperatures lower than 40°. There was cheap land in New York, but New York can get extremely cold in the winter. I looked for inexpensive land in Texas, and I found some, but the only beach Texas has is Galveston. I went to see the beach, and I wouldn't say I liked it. The color of the water was like tea in a white glass. Comparing that with the crystal clear waters of Miami was enough for me to forget about that.

Another issue I was concerned about was the ability to travel and see family. Some places like Alabama and towns in other states didn't have the option to book a nonstop flight. After checking out land in all those states, I decided to stay in Florida. One of the reasons is that I already had my driving, barber, and cosmetologist license in Florida. I didn't want to go through all the processes again as I did when I transferred my licenses from Puerto Rico to Florida.

After two years of research, I finally found the land I wanted. By that time, I already knew the place where I wanted to retire when I got old. Getting there was a little bit of an issue, though. To the property's location from where I used to live in South Florida and Miami, it was a five-hour drive. It was a challenge for me to check out the property and do many things like surveying, land clearing, connecting the electricity, building a fence, etc.

The drive was exciting because it was like an adventure I used to do on weekends. I would work Tuesday through Saturday, and then after I was done with my shift at the barbershop on Saturday, I packed my

backpack with all the things that I needed for the weekend and started driving north. I used to get out of the barbershop at 6 PM, and I was there by 10-11 pm.

For me, moving from one city to another was easy because I wasn't married and I didn't have any children. The hardest thing was leaving my comfort zone in the city where I already had everything. I had built a life, I had a job, and I was going to start from scratch again by moving to a new city. I always think about the future, and at that time, I was thinking about having a good setup for my older years in a place where I didn't have to kill myself working to make money just to survive. I was looking for a city where I didn't have to work as much, and maybe have some extra time to enjoy the fruits of my efforts while still being young.

Now that I had the town where I wanted to live, I needed a job, so I started looking for a bigger city outside of the town that I was moving to because the smaller towns are not suitable for a barber. You'll need movement and volume of people because people are what you depend on. I found a college town about 45 minutes from where I was moving.

I started looking for jobs. When I was researching barbers working in the area, I was surprised that all of them were booked, and they were busy in that city. Barbers take it easy with flexible schedules, not unlike the bigger cities, not like Miami, where you have to hustle a lot and work hard. I was looking at their schedules, and barbers in this city sometimes leave on a Wednesday at noon and work Saturdays from 12 pm to 3 pm, so they start their weekend early. I began to research barbers and barbershops around the city for a potential job. Unfortunately, I didn't like any of the barbershops around that city, maybe because I was used to the professional environment working at the upscale barbershops.

I contemplated renting one of the private studios for only one barber. This, of course, is a risk because nobody knew me in that city, so it was going to be hard to make customers. Without customers, it would be a gamble to rent a space and expect customers to go to the barbershop without even knowing my work or my experience.

I didn't know the movements of the city. With the advantages we have, by using social media and all other platforms, you can upload a portfolio of your work and show it to people who are trying to get a haircut through Google or Yelp. They can see the reviews that you have and the portfolio pictures. They can check out pictures of your work, and if the photos are good, you will make some customers. But of course, this is a risk. These private studios also are not cheap. With the rent they are asking for these days in the studio, you can rent your own space in a barbershop. This is better because then, you can have barbers who rent the chair or charge them a commission for the chair. That was my initial thought, but down the road, I didn't know that it would be hard to hire barbers because it's a small city with limited resources.

I lived in Miami for fourteen years, and with all the hard work I did in those years, I was lucky enough to save some money. That's something very hard to achieve in Puerto Rico working as a barber. I wanted to invest the money, so I started to look for people selling businesses around the city. Maybe somebody was selling a barbershop. I did my first research on craigslist, and I noticed there was somebody selling a barbershop in the area. I went and saw the location. It wasn't an easy decision to make, so I needed time to think it over. I went once again to the site and checked out the shop when it was closed. I noticed the barbershop was vintage and distressed. The furniture and counters inside the business were old and new ones were going to be necessary. It was a 57-year-old business with an outdated name. I sent a text message to the number on the ad asking if that was the final price. The shop was renovated to make it look presentable and attractive to potential buyers.

The shop used to look different than the first time I saw it according to clients that I inherit.

At that time, I wasn't looking for the shop's capabilities. I was more focused on the current looks of the shop. Now I understand that I should have been more focused on the shop's potential. I always knew about the shop's possibilities, but to get there, it needed a lot of work. That's something I wasn't prepared for. Getting out of my comfort zone was challenging. I had everything set up in South Florida and I was about to leave it all for extra hard work I had already done a few times. Probably at some point, I'll have to do it again.

One attribute that the shop had was the location, which was excellent. It was just a mile and a half from a University with almost 70,000 students. Very few barbershops around had the quality of the work I am used to giving to my customers. It would be a challenge if I decided to take over the shop. It was going to be a massive risk. I texted back with my number and I put in a counteroffer, to see if they wanted to agree to sell the shop for that price. They did answer my text message but didn't want it to go lower than the number they had in mind. I stopped texting and decided not to buy the shop because the numbers were not compatible with my budget.

Keep in mind that after I invested in buying the shop, I had to put some money on top of that to make the shop look attractive to new customers. We were texting between November and December of 2019. After a couple of weeks of me not responding, I received a text message asking me to call, so I did. He told me on a Friday morning his final and special price if I bought the shop by Monday. The price he told me wasn't too bad because it was significantly lower than what he was asking the first time. For the price he was asking, I could buy the barbershop and use the extra money from the discount for the renovations.

I told him that I would take the weekend to think about it, and I would give him a response by the following Monday. If I was going to buy the business, it was going to be a business that needed work. I took the weekend to think about it to see if I was going to buy the barbershop or if I was going to stay in Miami at my old job. That was the job I worked for eight years, with an extensive clientele, charging \$40 a head, with a 5-minute commute.

This was one of the most challenging decisions I ever made. I was comfortable in my workplace, I did like my job, I was making money, and I was about to leave everything for something I didn't even know would work. After spending 8 years in the job I had, I decided it was time to move on and find something new. Maybe this would be the start of a new life, where I could meet new people. I decided to give it a chance. In a way, I was tired of the "hustle" in Miami and I felt attracted to the quality of life in rural areas. I saw the opportunity for me to live the simple life that people in remote villages in Europe enjoy.

Monday came and that weekend I was in North Florida. I had to give a response to the shop owner that morning because I had to work on Tuesday. On my way back to South Florida, I stopped at the shop. There was an elegant, well-groomed gentleman with layered silver hair in his mid-sixties with papers in his hands, wearing a long sleeve navy blue shirt, waiting for me to do business. After checking the shop once again and having a good feeling about it, I asked the gentleman how he wanted the money, and he told me he wanted a cashier's check. I went to the bank to withdraw the money. I asked the cashier, in case I changed my mind if I could deposit the check back into my account even if it had another person's name. He told me that was fine because I was the account owner where the money was deducted. I can deposit money back into my account with no problem or just shred the check. I had a couple of hours to think about it before handing the check to him, but I still had some doubts about it.

I was about to buy a business in a city I didn't know, and no one knew me, in a barbershop with not many customers. Most of them were retired gentlemen who were used to paying \$13-15 for a haircut. That's \$27-25 less than what I used to charge in Miami. I am a risk-taker, so I went there without a lawyer and handed him the check. We made a handwritten contract and went to a UPS store to notarize the document.

Before that, I did a Google research to see if he was the proprietor of this business or even the actual owner. After all, you can't just automatically trust a Craigslist transaction. After it was a done deal and I had the shop keys, I told my previous boss that I was leaving. Unfortunately, I didn't have enough time to tell them, and they had to find another employee before the Christmas rush. I needed those weeks before the holidays to move all my stuff from my apartment in South Florida. I had to give the apartment back to the landlord in pristine condition, so he didn't deduct any money from my deposit. They always keep something anyway... right?

Everything happened very fast. I already had my home and land. I bought a utility trailer to do the moving. I went to the closest Home Depot because usually, there were people looking for work. I hired two of the guys waiting for a day job to help me make the move. I wrapped all my stuff in the trailer and drove to North Florida to start my new life. I didn't check the weather up north that day. A small storm was waiting for me, that would wet all the articles I was transporting. Looking at a comfortable but sodden mattress was soul-breaking. I covered everything with tarps, but the torrential rain soaked everything. It was a metaphor for what was coming. Tough times were waiting not only for me but for the entire world.

I didn't put any money into the business during the first weeks. I wanted to start working with what I already had, and that was a wise decision. Keep in mind that in three more months after I bought the

shop, a pandemic would explode, shutting down all businesses for two months, no questions asked.

I started working on January 2, 2020. I was very nervous and excited at the same time. The shop had a small clientele, that's something I didn't know when I bought the barbershop. Since it was a business established for 57 years, I thought that it did many customers, but I was wrong. Perhaps the shop didn't have the best name. I often sat in my chair thinking, "What have I done?" I used to charge \$40 a haircut in Miami, and now I'm sitting here in a business that I bought with limited customers, charging \$13-15 per cut. I kept the same price for a couple of months to not scare the regular customers but a price increase would be necessary.

I had to use all my skills and experience to start gathering a steady clientele in this barbershop. I decided to keep the shop's name since it has been there for almost six decades. I thought it was going to be a good idea to keep it. I kept the same name for a few months until I realized the barbershop didn't have the best name. I used to have a YouTube channel that I did in memory of my younger brother from my father's side. I did a poster with the name of the Blessed Blade YouTube channel, and I framed it. I use it as a background when I was filming haircutting video tutorials. I decided to hang it on the barbershop walls just like another decoration article. Some customers attending the barbershop were looking at the poster, and some of them were telling me, "I like that name!, What's the name on the poster? and What's the story behind the name?"

I didn't want to mention that it was a YouTube channel I did in memory of my brother. He was having issues in Puerto Rico like any other teenager growing up on the island. One time, he decided to study to become a barber to overcome his challenges. He started to attend classes in Puerto Rico to become a barber, and he finished his course at the barber institute. He got his diploma and applied for the license test.

This was when he, unfortunately, passed away. Since I was a barber teacher back in the day, I decided to make a YouTube channel in his memory as if I were teaching him how to cut hair in the distance via videos on YouTube.

He lived in Puerto Rico, and I lived in Florida. I did the first video in his memory. I noticed many people were watching, so I decided to make more videos, maybe to help people worldwide and teach them how to cut hair. I did the videos in English and Spanish. I wanted to share my experience with others. I wanted to share my unique technique. Cutting hair is very hard. It's not easy to learn how to cut hair. I have always been good at translating hair-cutting movements into words, so people better understand the process of the art of cutting hair.

When my brother was alive, I went for Thanksgiving to visit my family, and I gave my father a red straight razor to give to my brother. The straight razor had "Blessed" written on it. That's why I decided to make a YouTube channel called "Blessed Blade." The Blessed Blade is my brother. After putting the poster in the barbershop, people told me, "I like that name." I always liked that name for a barbershop. I thought it would be a risk to change the name to Blessed Blade since the barbershop had the same name for 57 years, and it has city history as one of the first barbershops in town. But the students come and go, and it was relevant to only a few locals.

I uploaded a portfolio with pictures of my work in Miami and during my time as a barber. I include the portfolio on the Google webpage of the barbershop. I also built my website. When people were googling where to get a haircut, they would see my work pictures. I also did an Instagram page with the same images. Most of the photos are also from my YouTube channel. Each picture is a thumbnail of a video. After the second month, I decided to put some money into the barbershop. I started first with the cheapest, which is paint. I thought the color of the

barbershop was quite dark. I painted the counter a brighter color to give it a more welcoming atmosphere for the customer.

After doing the painting and recovering from the back pain, I decided to change the shampoo bowls. The shampoo bowls were old and not in the best condition to be used. They were there for a long time, and had paint over the original color and couldn't be washed or removed.

After I did the shampoo bowls, I decided to change the counters. I called a few furniture makers in the city for a quote. After a few calls, I never got a response. This is because this city is very busy. It's a small city with a lot of people. Now I thank God that I never got a response. Fixing those counters would probably have set me back thousands of dollars. I decided to keep them the same. I tried to work with what I had and what I had was an old country-style barbershop. I wanted to keep the shop's essence and vintage look. I love antiques and vintage articles. I have an old soul. I kept painting the shop and making it look good, but that was costing money. I knew if I wanted to get new customers, I had to make the shop look good. Making that effort would be necessary. I know how to cut hair, so with a good haircut and a good environment, I'm sure the customer would return and recommend their friends and family to the shop, especially in a college town where students share apartments and dorms.

Once I start a project, I want to finish it. I also did the shop's plumbing myself. I didn't have to pay to see a plumber's crack or to do the job for me. I also did the electrical work for the shop. I included vertical lights. I changed the ceiling fans as well. They were there for a very long time. I installed blinds on the windows because the sun beaming through the glass was unbearable, and made the shop very hot.

After the third month in the shop, which was March (I started in January), I was cutting a customer's hair, and he told me, "I hope they don't put you in jail." I asked him what he meant. He responded,

"There's a city mandate telling all the businesses to shut down and close because there's a stay-at-home order." I already knew something was going on with the virus, but since I don't watch the news at all, very little was going on around me as far as people being sick. I didn't know there was a pandemic at all. The customer explained that there was a city mandate to shut down and close all businesses in the city. After finishing this customer, I went to my neighbor, a shoe repairman. I asked him if we had a mandate to close the shop. He also didn't know about this, so he was working as normal. Since we didn't know what was going on, I searched on the internet for information on the city's website and Facebook to see if there was a shutdown order to close businesses. There was in fact a mandatory shutdown and stay-at-home order in the city.

I felt terrible. I didn't know if I was going to be able to make it. Keep in mind that I bought a business with a significant chunk of my savings and put some money on top of it to renovate the shop, and now I had to shut down after three months of business. That was the last customer I cut that day. I closed the business thinking that it would be only a couple of days. Those couple of days turned into weeks and eventually months. I had to keep paying rent and utilities that I wasn't using.

I wrote a message to the city, asking them if I could cut hair going to people's homes. They told me NO because there's a stay-at-home order, so you have to be at home, and only essential businesses are allowed to remain open. This was ridiculous because I wasn't allowed to work, and I wasn't considered an essential business when other businesses like the bike shop and the coin shop were allowed to stay open. The shoe repairman also had to shut down his business. Walmart, Home Depot, and Lowe's, on the other hand, were allowed to stay open. This was very frustrating to me. I didn't understand why I had to close my business and some other businesses were allowed to continue as normal.

During those months, I felt defeated. I thought I wasn't going to be able to make it. Many businesses didn't. Some barbershops and businesses went broke. Some retail spaces can go for \$3,000 a month, so if you had to shut down for two months, the \$6,000 you owe to your landlord, you still have to pay regardless of whether you were closed or open. That was my case. I still had to pay my landlord the lease for the two months I was closed. So if I thought that it would be hard to start a business with limited clientele and without the best name, I had no idea what was coming.

After the first month, I went to the city's Facebook page to see the not helpful Zoom meeting they were having and to see if my business would be included as an essential business and be allowed to re-open. This sadly wasn't the case. After the first month in the meeting, it was stated that barbershops and salons weren't considered essential businesses and we have to remain closed with a stay-at-home order. To me, this was wrong and unfair. We are essential businesses. In times of war and recessions, barbershops and salons were considered essential because people feel good receiving a haircut or a hair treatment, and your self-esteem increases when you get the services. Even if it's a sad time, you feel good and fresh because you had a haircut or a hair service in the case of a woman. People didn't have barbers because all barbershops were closed. People all over the world started cutting their hair themselves and in most cases, their wives by watching YouTube haircutting tutorials and with clippers they had sitting in the house. It was a disaster, but who cares if you can't go out and you have to stay at home? Some people took their chances.

Even the Flowbee was sold out. For those who are younger, the Flowbee is a vacuum cleaner attachment that is used to cut hair at home. It was patented by the carpenter Rick E. Hunts. It is similar to a hair-cutting clipper, but the difference is that it is connected to the vacuum cleaner and the hair suctioned is cut by the blades, using ten different

guards. These extra attachments are used to adjust the length desired by the person. The patent (4679322) was granted in 1987. George Clooney endorsed Flowbee and even demonstrated how to use it on Jimmy Kimmel's night show, helping sales to skyrocket overnight. The Flowbee price is around \$240.

One of my videos went viral because I was teaching how to cut hair, and it was a very simple haircut that anybody could do with the explanation I gave in the video. I'm pretty sure many barbers were giving clandestine haircuts on the side, behind the city's mandate. That is precisely what I would do if I were in a city where I already had customers, but nobody knew me here, so I couldn't do that. I had to sit at home for two months watching my bank account shrink. Bills didn't stop coming because of the pandemic issue and all the benefits were in favor of big corporations like Amazon, Walmart, Lowe's, and Home Depot, just to mention a few. After the first press conference, the governor announced that barbershops, salons, and nail shops would stay as non-essential businesses for phase two.

At the time, I was heartbroken. I was very disappointed, and I thought my business was dead. After all the efforts I made in those three months, my business would fail. I called my mother crying, telling her that I didn't want to live anymore. I said that without thinking that I would make my mother worry about me. But that was what I was thinking after two weeks of the governor saying that we would stay closed in phase two. By a miracle, he changed his mind. I'm sure it was because of pressure from all the barbers and salon owners to change our status and allow us to re-open business.

I always work, and I don't know how not to work. After two months of not working, something I had never done in my life, we were allowed to re-open. One of the conditions that we had to follow was that we had to work wearing a face mask. Also, another mandate from the governor was that we had to work by appointment, something that I

always did when I was working in Miami. I was trying to establish this at the barbershop because the previous owner didn't work by appointment. He only took walk-ins. We also had to schedule a 15-minute gap between appointments so we had time to clean the station and the chair before the next customer. That way, we could avoid crowds in the barbershops and keep the work environment clean since we were in direct contact with the customers. That mandate was over-regulated and ridiculous at the same time.

The restaurant across the street didn't want to accept cash. This was a silly move because people going to pick up their orders made through the phone and online still have to punch their pin number at the register. That's something everyone touches. I saw clients going to the restroom and then going to the cash register and paying with their card, pressing the pin numbers on the keypad sometimes with a dirty hand. They took that restriction out quickly. I'm sure people didn't like the rule.

Since I reopened, I probably cut more than three thousand people, and I have never caught COVID-19. Perhaps my immune system is very strong since I've been cutting hair since I was thirteen years old. After I bought the shop and made the investment to fix it, we went into lockdown for two months. I hit rock bottom, I thought that it couldn't be worse. That's when I decided to change the barbershop's name. I decided to use the same name that the YouTube channel had in honor of my brother. I had all the logos and designs I used for the channel. I use all of them to create a new email and website for this barbershop. As soon as I changed the name, the status of the business changed immediately. I started to get new clients daily. There was a need for a Latin bilingual barber in the area. Those clients recommended others and word-of-mouth helped a lot.

I ordered a sign and decal for the windows from the best company in the city. The company specialized in racing car lettering,

which was perfect for my needs. I didn't want to go with a boring decal on the front of my window. I needed something that stood out. I wanted to replicate the decal barbershops and businesses in Europe. I ordered the letters in mirror gold and a black background. The decal was huge and people driving by could see the elegant sign. I ordered a vertical flag with the barbershop name. These flags were a huge trend and a lot of businesses had them. The city ordered me to take it down, as apparently, it was against the city's code. I found it funny that other corporate businesses kept their flags with no problem. That's how things always work: big fish eat the small ones.

I decided to change the shop's name and start with a fresh start. This is probably one of my best business decisions. As soon as I changed the shop's name, I began to get new customers. Also, the new customers were recommending other customers to the shop. I hired a new barber looking for a more professional environment than the shop where he worked. He brought all his clientele to the shop. Soon enough, the shop name “Blessed Blade Barbershop” was one of the best barbershops in the city, with only two barbers.

One thing we have as Americans is that we help each other. Many customers were very generous with me when I had to close the shop for two months. When we returned to work, the first customers I had were giving me donations, so I kept the shop open. Because they knew that I just started the business, I will always be appreciative of those people who help me during those difficult times. I thank God that I didn't have to close my business and lose all my investments in the shop. Other businesses didn't have the same luck that I had. Some barbershops in the city closed for good.

Some businesses closed even the month before the mandate as a precaution. Some of them opened a month after we were allowed to re-open. So if you shut down one month before and reopened one month after the mandate, that's four months of paying the lease without any

income. That can kill any business without a doubt. When I was forced to close, I built my website www.blessedblade.net and also did my appointment system so people could schedule appointments without calling the shop. This system is very effective. You go to the website, click on any barber's name, and choose the date, time, and service you want. I receive on my phone the notification that you have an appointment, and you receive a confirmation message saying that you have an appointment. Also, you receive a reminder two hours before the service.

Some of the old customers didn't like that I changed the shop's name because it was a 57-year-old name, but I'm glad I did. It gave the shop a fresh look. I still have some poor reviews on the website from different rating platforms. I changed the barbershop's rating after the client's new reviews until I had almost no bad reviews. It is impossible to please people. There's always going to be one or two sensitive "queens." Some of these reviews are malicious, but we don't care about those. You can tell by what they write it is all a lie.

It was very hard to do all this with all the regulations we had from the county. The city made us put signs in front of the door saying that people must wear a mask indoors, and it's not optional. It's mandatory. Many people weren't happy about this mandate, but we followed all the city's protocols to stay open. Now the shop has been reopened for two years, and I can't handle all our customers. I don't answer the phone anymore to get appointments. When the shop had been reopened after one and a half years, I added another barber that also helped to pay the bills. Eventually, the barbers wanted to go independent. Barbers these days prefer to rent a private studio. They prefer to pay more in weekly rent and be by themselves than working together with other barbers like traditional barbershops used to do. Gathering at barbershops, an iconic image of barbershops will be extinguished soon enough. I know it may not be completely gone

because barbers that get out of the barber institute don't have customers because of inexperience.

Salon chains will keep the same traditional method of working. This is because they make more money by having the old traditional way of work than having independent rooms and hairstyling studios. They will probably adapt to the new model, including some sort of screening between barber stations in the future. They can use blurred glass or plywood to separate each station. To rent a studio and a private room, you need to have customers unless you have been cutting hair for a long time and advertise using social media to promote your services. The use of pictures helps a lot in this case. People want to see the job barbers can do, and with a picture, they can see the barber's ability and style and compare it to the style the customer wants. It's a shame that this is happening.

Hairstylists are making the same move. They are renting a studio to be with their customers in a private room. I can understand why barbers are doing this. Sometimes you can be stuck in a barbershop for years working with a crazy person next to you, talking all day without shutting up. Some people don't consider others, and they have the ringtone on their phone turned up loud. Sometimes they receive forty calls a day, and you have to listen to their childish ringtone almost to the highest bar of the volume. I think this is unnecessary because, with the third bar, you can easily hear your ringtone unless you're deaf. You can be stuck with a coworker for years, talking nonsense nonstop all day. Life is like a movie. Without a doubt, someone will play the role of the hater; the business cancer.

I asked for some feedback on what customers think about this, and most of them told me they don't like it or prefer the iconic traditional barber picture when people gather at the barbershop to talk and be social. Others prefer the privacy given by barber studios.

For barbers to work in this environment, it's a bit easier than for hairstylists. The reason is that hairstylists sometimes are with a customer for two or three hours in a row, and being in a closed room, sometimes very small, can feel a little claustrophobic. The use of chemicals can be more damaging to the hairstylist's health unless you have an extractor that can bring the air and gasses from chemical products out of the place. The customer can entertain themselves better if they are in a traditional hairstyling setup. They can walk around talking to other hairstylists and gossip about what's going on in the neighborhood.

For barbers, it's a bit easier because usually, barber services only last from 30 minutes to 45 minutes. If it lasts more than one hour, I think we should bring a priest or a pastor and "marry" them. One hour on top of a customer I think is too much. The customer doesn't want to sit in the chair for more than 45 minutes. After that, the client starts to feel uncomfortable. In modern times, people don't have much time to spend at the barbershop. Sometimes they bring their children to get their haircut and also get impatient and want to get out of there as soon as possible. I hate to admit that barber studios are the future. We will see more of these barbers wishing to work in a private setting.

Also, barbers want to be their own bosses. Sometimes, business owners have rules the barbers don't want to follow. For example, I used to work in a barbershop where they made me wear a tie, and I hated it. I had another job at a barbershop where I had to work on Sundays, and sometimes I had to work late until 9 pm. In another job that I used to have, I had to wash people's hair, and I didn't want to do it. On one occasion, I couldn't close my eyes to rest them for a second when I didn't have customers because the owner would get mad if I did. When I had my barbershop, I told my employees that I wanted them to dress professionally to respect the customers. Some barbers don't want to do that, and they wanted to be comfortable at work. I saw some barbers wearing shorts, showing their chicken legs, and sometimes wearing flip-

flops, exposing their weird sausage toes. I think doing this is a very unprofessional thing to do.

At my barbershop, I didn't want to have news on the TV. The reason is that I know the news is a source of negativity and also divides people, so I didn't want to play them at the shop. Sometimes, the music playing at the shop was not approved by some barbers working there. You can save all this drama if you own your little spot, and you can dress the way you want. Listen to the music you want to, and talk about all the nonsense you want. That is what is attractive for barbers these days.

Having a business is not easy. You have to comply with a lot of over-regulation, and sometimes, the money you are making is wasted on complying with excessive rules. Sometimes you have to spend money that you are making in profit to resolve issues at the barbershop. For example, I had to spend \$600 on hiring a plumber because somebody clogged the toilet. That was a big headache. When I was making a profit after two years of struggling because of the pandemic regulations and mandates, I had to spend that money on a plumber that had to come several times to fix the issue.

Paying \$1700 a year for insurance doesn't help, either. These corporate thieves increase the policy premium when and however they want. In general, there are many ways to drain money by having a business. I also had to pay to advertise and be able to hire employees. Those ads only last 30 days. After that, they expire, and I have to pay again to post the ad. The electric and water bills are not cheap, either, when you own a business. Cable services and the internet are no different. I only opted for the internet and phone because cable programming is terrible. I don't know how anyone still pays for cable services. Cleaning supplies that you have to buy to clean the shop also add up. These days, the business model is for small businesses not to succeed, or make it hard to earn any money.

You can put all these issues behind you if you choose to rent a space for yourself, and there are no more barbers or employees around. You don't have to babysit employees and be a psychologist to them. And oh men! God knows some of them need them.

As a barbershop owner, you want the best for your business. I was willing to hire barbers with limited experience. Since I was a teacher for a few years in Puerto Rico, I was willing to teach some of my techniques to a barber looking for a job in this city, teaching someone the technique that took me years to develop. They might stay, but this is never guaranteed. You have to do this expecting nothing in return. That's the risk you sometimes have to take.

Some business owners like to require a non-competition agreement. This is a good idea that helps to protect the interest of the business. I prefer to choose the old-school way, like back in the day when real men used to do business.

I am not a fan of involving lawyers in something so simple as cutting hair. One time, one of my past bosses discovered that barbers working at the shop were going to open a barbershop close to the business. They immediately hired a lawyer to make a non-competition agreement requesting the barbers to sign it. Apparently, the barbers had the barbershop almost done and none of them wanted to sign the agreement. They were automatically terminated. Some shops have more to lose than others. I personally don't care if the barber wants to leave. They can take all the customers they want. The way I see it is that I can always make new clients. If you are confident in your potential, you won't care if there is a threat to the business. Many times I saw barbers leaving barbershops and the clients didn't follow the barber, which is something that I find hilarious, even if it happens to me.

I have always liked to teach. For me, it's not a problem to share what I know, especially with somebody who is just starting to cut hair. Learning how to cut hair is very hard. It is a complicated process.

Maybe it doesn't look like it, but it is, especially with the new styles these days that are very elaborate. You probably know it because it's tough to get a good barber and a good haircut. Knowing that is a tough skill to develop. I like to share my talent and experiences with newbies.

I like when people listen and are willing to learn. I consider my technique of cutting hair the best. I simplify the process of cutting hair after more than 30 years of experience. I translate into words movements you have to do with your hands to cut hair. All barbers do this type of movement, but sometimes they don't know how to translate what they are doing with their hands into words. I know this because of my research on different barbers' techniques on YouTube making tutorials. I see the movement they do with their hands while cutting hair, and they should be talking about that. But they talk about everything else but that, and that's the most important part. You have to share that with people who are learning how to cut hair.

I know my technique works because I tried it with different students, and I saw a significant improvement in their work. I changed the lives of many people during my days of teaching. Some of them still thank me to this day for what I've done for them. Sometimes they think that they need better tools to achieve a good result. I won't argue that you need good tools to work, as they will help you work easier, and you don't have to put in too much effort. What is more important, though, is knowing how to do the haircut and the process itself.

During the pandemic of 2020, I had a lot of paranoid customers thinking that they were going to catch the virus by going to the barbershop. I had a customer who was an exchange student from the University. One day, he called and asked me if I could cut his hair with his tools. I briefly thought about it, and I should have said no, but I said yes because I try to please all the customers however I can. He made an appointment and he brought his tools. When he brought his tools for me to cut his hair, they were cheap tools. The barber tools are very

expensive. He said that he had a medical condition and that he couldn't use any other tools than his own. He had to cut his hair with clippers and scissors. What I'm trying to say is that it is a challenge to cut hair with cheap tools, but if you have the knowledge, you can do it regardless. In the equipment he brought, he sometimes didn't bring a comb or a straight razor. The blades were rusty, having not been oiled for weeks. Even with these home-use tools, I always did the haircut he wanted, and he left the barbershop pleased.

Sometimes what does matter is the outcome and not the process. I think modern barbers are victims of capitalism. Back in the day, I only used to have one clipper and one trimmer. They were corded because cordless clippers didn't exist yet, so that's what you had to use. Now in modern days, we have many different options and are surrounded by a lot of different tools. These tools and equipment make the barber and hair styling world a lot cooler than it used to be back in the 1990s when I started to cut hair. The problem is that now the clippers are cordless, and you need to charge them every two hours if you were doing a fade haircut, which is going to take you at least 30 to 45 minutes to complete. In one charge, you can only do maybe two haircuts and two beards. But remember that you have to charge the clipper's battery, so what are you going to use when you are charging your clipper? You can either use your corded clipper to continue the haircut, or you can have an extra cordless clipper to continue cutting the hair. We are in a modern era, and young barbers don't like to use the cord. This is why barbers have a lot of different clippers, sometimes four or five, and also more trimmers to cut hair. That's why I say that they are victims of capitalism because they don't realize that they have to have a bunch of clippers to have a successful day at work. Back in the day, we didn't need to have too many tools, and we could cut hair with only one corded clipper. I see a lot of different clippers going on the market every year, but I always keep the same because I know it's all about capitalism. There's a saying in Puerto

Rico that I can translate into English that says, “It’s not the arrow, it’s the Indian who throws the arrow.”

In 2022 I already had two and a half years in business after opening my barber shop in north Florida. As our world and quality of life continued deteriorating, on February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, creating a spike in fuel prices that affected all the states in the US. For me, that was devastating because every day I had to commute to work, and the traveling distance between my house and the barbershop was forty miles. I have to drive almost eighty miles a day round trip. I was spending too much just to commute to work. That was another issue I wasn't expecting, probably the one that affected me the most during the time I had my barbershop. If the pandemic didn't kill me during the two-month shutdown, the fuel prices probably would, if we continued this for over a year.

Things are not looking better for the future at the moment. We don't know when this is going to end, and it is hard to see a brighter future for the world. It's just one thing after another. After two and a half years, which is half of my five-year lease on the retail space for the barbershop; I decided to sell it. It was a frustrating and sad move to consider after all the hard work I put into the business. It wasn't making any sense to me to spend that kind of money on fuel. I was overworking and my health was deteriorating. I was just working too much, and I have a lot of customers, more than I wanted or needed. I was making money, and it was going in many different directions but my pocket.

One day, I had a conversation with my landlord who wanted to do a restroom renovation. In that conversation, I was telling him my desire to sell the shop before the lease ends and I wouldn't renew it. I was surprised and also felt a very good feeling of relief when he told me that, if I needed to sell the barbershop before the lease ended, he wouldn't enforce the lease term against me. He would agree to terminate

the lease before the five years that I signed at the beginning, when I bought the barbershop.

That was a ray of light under the gray cloud I was under those two and a half years. It was frustrating because all the issues I had when I opened my barbershop were out of my control, and I couldn't do much about it. It was just bad timing for me. The only reason I kept going is because I am a warrior and I don't surrender that easily. At some point, though, it was worthless to keep fighting and denying reality. I was just working for the landlord and for the fuel industry. The barbershop is a very good investment for somebody who lives in this city and knows barbers in the area who want to work with them. I completely changed the barbershop scenario when I started on January 2, 2020, and the new owner won't have to do anything because I already did the dirty work.

The barbershop had too many customers. I would not have been able to manage the clientele on my own. I didn't want it to accept any more new customers, and when regular clients were telling me they wanted to recommend the barbershop to a friend, I asked them not to because I couldn't cut their hair. I preferred taking care of the customers that I already had at the shop and not including any new customers so I could take good care of all the clientele I already had.

Having my barbershop was a good experience after all. It showed me how strong I am, and I developed skills that I didn't know I had when I had to renovate the shop. Sometimes, I ask myself, "If I could go back in time, would I do it again? Knowing that the world will change in 2020 with the pandemic and all the issues it brought to the world?" The answer is no, I wouldn't do it. But I also ask myself another question: "Would I open another barbershop under normal circumstances? Would I be capable of managing it?" The answer to that is yes, I would do it and I would be capable.

I have to think about the future, though, and having a landlord is not the best in the long run. If I have another barbershop in the future, it

will be similar to a barber studio where I can rent different cubicles to barbers, but it will be in my own building, that way I don't have to pay a landlord and the profits will be just for me. That's the ultimate business move any business owner can do by cutting the third party out of the deal. If you own your own building, your chances of being successful will increase dramatically. That's the way business owners should think, always in the long run; always thinking and having a long-term solution.

Chapter 3

"Superimposition"



As you may know, it is necessary for people to interact with others. In my older years, though, I tend to do the opposite. I realize that the smaller my group of people is, the purest I stay in terms of who I am.

When we were children, we didn't know who we were in our early years. We were always in constant search of experiences and memories that may help us define who we are. This is a process that never ends. To this day, I always try new things and new experiences that allow me to find happiness.

Life has different stages. When we were children, it was a different stage in life. After that, we become teenagers and then young adults. Finally, we become adults and eventually old people. All the stages in life are different. What you may have liked when you were a child, you may realize that you don't like anymore. Or vice versa: you might develop a liking to something later in life that you did not like as a child. Take coffee as an example. When I was a teenager, I used to hate coffee, but now, as an adult, I feel the need for caffeine. I have known people who didn't like sushi when they were younger, but later on, their taste for food changed, making it more pleasant to eat.

We start searching for experiences that can replace or fill the happiness that we used to feel: trying a new place to eat, a new club, a new theater, a new partner, or a new country. I began to understand who I was in my late teens. I was raised in a pretty decent and modest way. I

come from a middle-class family. I was raised mostly by my mother. I wasn't into breaking laws or looking for too much trouble. I didn't want in any way to upset or cause trouble for my parents. I still remember the scolding and beating I used to get if I dared to bring difficulty home, either with a flip flop or extension cord, and trust me, the last one hurts. In modern times, it's different. They punish the kids by just taking away their tablet or iPhone. But there was nothing like a slap in the face like the one I got when I stole a Snickers bar. I got caught stealing it, and the owner of the market close to my house called my mother to tell her what I had done. After that slap, I never stole anything ever again.

Of course, when we're young and stupid, we don't know how easy it is to get into trouble. Even when we're not looking for it, for some reason, trouble always finds its way into our lives. At that age, we're careless, without common sense skills, firing at will with every word and every gesture. It is very easy to get in trouble.

My immediate childhood friends were two brothers who lived a couple of houses ahead of mine. They were raised in basically the same type of household. One of them, the older one, used to have the characteristics of the native people of Puerto Rico before Spanish colonization, just like his father. The other one curiously was with lighter skin and curly hair like his mother. They were both skinny. Their mother was an English teacher, their father worked for the city at the aqueduct, and he also was an Army reservist. He sometimes was away for two weeks, complying with his military duties. A single mother raised us and they were raised by both parents living in the same household. Another difference my neighbors and us had is that they were attending a public school, and my brothers and I were in a private school, at least until sixth grade.

We attend elementary school in a Catholic private school. It was a very nice school, and they had a church which we attended every Sunday. Some of the teachers were nuns. It wasn't an all-male school,

though. We took classes with girls. I still remember all the students from the school who used to gather in the morning to say a prayer before going to the classrooms. Sometimes my eyes were blinded by the intense morning sun rays. Unfortunately, praying before a school day is something that got lost over time. After sixth grade and before I became a teenager, my mother thought private school was an expense she could save by transferring us to public school. She didn't make this change without doing some research. She found out that one of the best public middle schools in the area was the school next to my neighborhood, where I could easily walk to. My mother was a teacher, so she knew some of the teachers at this public middle school.

My older brother, on the other hand, had to commute every day because his school was a bit farther away from our home. One of our neighbors used to take him to school because it was on his way to work. He didn't mind making a quick stop to leave my brother there. The school was outstanding. It was a public school specializing in visual arts. It was a historic and ancient school. It was built in 1925 and is part of the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. It was the school my mother went to when she was a teenager. The building itself is historic. It reminds me of some halls I visited when I was in the Louvre Museum in France. Everybody knew this school in Puerto Rico. To be accepted into the school, you needed to pass a test consisting of making three drawings. My brother passed the exam, making it clear he was very good at arts. This is in part because our mother used to take us to take drawing classes, and my older brother used to be better than I was at drawing.

Tolerances in these public schools are very different. Some things that were bad in private school weren't as bad in this school, like wearing sneakers instead of shoes, wearing your shirt out, going to the restroom without permission, and silly stuff like that. Soon enough, my mind was programmed to ask, "If my neighbors can do it, why can't I?"

Eventually, I was adding too much to my daily routines, for example, skipping classes, smoking cigarettes, swearing, stealing stuff from the local shops, and drinking alcohol. Graffiti was also cool in the early 90s, so I also tried my art on the neighborhood walls. We loved to kick and knock down trash cans and escape running out of bicycles. And we used to do a terrible thing, what I consider the ultimate insult to a Mercedes Benz owner. We cut the emblem in front of the hood, stole it, put it on our sneakers, or used it as a pendant. During this stage of my life, I developed a special love for rural areas. In the back of our neighborhood, we used to have a big farm full of cows, pigs, and horses. Sometimes we overfed the animals with the supplies the farm owner had there. I used to love to get lost in there. It was private property, but we used to sneak in if the owner wasn't there. One day we got a big scare when we tried to walk in, and we heard three shotgun shots alerting us that we were trespassing. That never stopped us from going back once in a while.

Puberty is a crazy stage in life without guidance. It is the time for us to learn from our own experiences about who we are, instead of advice from relatives or other people. We learn the hard way. Now that I think about the past, I'm not sure I want to go through all that again. It is a necessary stage in the process of becoming an adult. I was lucky to pass that stage in life without any significant trouble. Some of my friends weren't as lucky. A small percent of them went to jail, became drug addicts, were murdered, or died prematurely. Pretty much all, but me were smoking weed. Before going to a party, they were getting high, drinking alcohol, and popping pills. In moderation, I don't think this is bad at that age. It opens your mind to a new world. It is necessary for the process of understanding who we are. That of course is assuming you're smart enough to not forget about important stuff like going to work or finishing school. Or, more importantly, not getting hooked on those

kinds of habits; good luck with that one. After all, most of us had done it.

More than ten United States presidents have admitted to smoking marijuana or have rumors about smoking it, but I saw this as a bad thing at that age. I was raised with pretty good conversations and warnings about it from my parents. I didn't want to disappoint them, so I didn't try it at first. I was against it. I advised my friends to either not do it or do it less frequently.

It is true that people say weed makes you feel happy, hungry, and romantic, and opens your brain to new feelings in another way you may not experience otherwise. For example, the music I remember they said sounds amazing, almost like you have the radio inside your head, like the echo, you listen to when you hear dub Reggae music. But the most noticeable side effect of weed is that it can make you not care about anything else but smoking. It is very easy to not care about your future and the time you should go back home, the girl you shouldn't flirt with, or the people you shouldn't mess with.

My friends ignored my advice. I wasn't allowed to burst their bubble. Suddenly, they started to ignore me and smoke on their own, getting high for hours with the local weed guy's mobile illegal dispensary products. Sometimes they used to get it from the housing project next to our neighborhood. That was a significant risk because sometimes the cops were waiting outside for customers so they could stop them. I wasn't included in their hangouts anymore. When they returned all high from their smoking sessions, we gathered close to the house of one of my friends who had a Korean background and started to talk about every type of nonsense. I wish I had a recorder to hear now in the present as a grown man how stupid we sounded. That by itself should be funnier clean than high. It was as if Snoop Dogg and Neil Degrasse Tyson were smoking weed together and discussing the galaxy.

They never got in trouble, luckily. On the other hand, I had a friend who didn't smoke anything, and he started to hang out with another friend who used to have relatives in one of the public housing projects. He began to sell drugs and guns and make money, so he eventually moved there. He was from a good family, too. His mother was a social worker, and his dad was a police officer. He didn't need to do these activities. Eventually, he became "successful" and made too much noise. People in the projects noticed that he was an outsider. One night, he was found dead next to another friend inside the back of his red four-door car. He was ambushed by some "friend" he had, but this friend was also friends with an enemy of his. A snitch, if you can call it that.

It is ironic that the one who didn't use any drugs got into trouble. Some people have the opportunity to revert their lives, some aren't lucky enough. Everyone has an older generation ahead of them. I always paid attention to them because they were older, so I tried to learn from them and their mistakes. When I saw some of them getting a kill or going to prison, I knew that life wasn't for me. After all, I wasn't raised like that, and I always was aware of the consequences. I learned how to stay away from trouble by getting a girlfriend and keeping my mind busy with other activities, and not being a drug dealer or a drug addict.

I tried to work more hours of the day and occupy my time cutting hair and making money. I learned to get rid of bad vibes and wear out anger by focusing on working. We are naturally curious, and there's something about illegality that wakes up curiosity in some people, like Cuban cigars. Since tobacco was illegal for many decades, people thought those were the best cigars, but you can find good cigars, or even better, in the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Honduras, just to mention some. Even if I didn't try weed at the beginning, I remained curious and eventually tried it, too. I never was wrong. I shouldn't have tried it. Even though I knew it probably wasn't good for me. I did it just to fit in with my friends.

Marijuana has incredible medicinal benefits we are to this day still discovering. Since marijuana is a schedule one drug, in the eyes of the federal government, it is illegal. Scientists can't conduct trials or experiments on it because of these laws. Dispensaries can't accept credit cards or use bank accounts to deposit their cash. After I quit smoking weed (sorry... I should say "cannabis"), my night sleep was never the same. It is good for insomnia. CBD (Cannabidiol), one of the components found in cannabis, has numerous benefits for us. Research has found that CBD can reduce some symptoms of anxiety and depression. THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol) is another component, and the most potent found in cannabis. It has proven to help increase the appetites of patients with AIDS. It helps with nausea for cancer patients while they're doing chemotherapy. It is good for seizures in children with epilepsy. It is also proven to help patients with Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis, glaucoma, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. It is hard to make a serious case about cannabis being beneficial, mainly because it has always been known as a recreational drug, not as a medicine. If you don't have any of those diseases, in my opinion, it is better to stay clean. Nothing beats a nice dinner with a glass of wine with good company.

Getting tattoos is common in Puerto Rico, but so is drug use, unfortunately. As I was growing up, it was hard to differentiate between normal and weird. Living in the United States is different. The laws here in the USA are implemented sharply, which I like. It gives order to people in general. That's hard to do back in Puerto Rico.

The title of this chapter is "Superimposition," because we need to know how to differentiate and superimpose constructive people over destructive ones. Destructive people try to break something that isn't broken. They will invite you to do some activity for them to feel they're not alone, even if they know it is not good for you. They will make you feel excluded, useless, and uncool. To be honest with you, that's when

you should know you need some new friends. Trying to fit into a subculture you probably know is not good for you isn't a good idea. For some miserable people, another person's failure is a good thing.

I experienced this in many jobs. Over my career, I had plenty of crazy co-workers. I'm sure you do, too. When some people are successful, the destructive people will feel excluded. They won't be happy, and they will make you think you're doing something wrong. They will lower your self-esteem, make fun of you, or confuse you by trying to convince you you're making an error, or that you're the problem and the weird one. Of course, if they need something from you, they're always going to be there as your friend. They will act as if they care about you. They will even offer you stuff trying to help in any way.

When people are too friendly, I see this as a red flag. They will start asking personal questions about how you do your stuff. They will gather all kinds of information about you. The minute you decide not to help them in any way, they will use this arsenal of information against you. This is especially true if there's some money involved, or if you like the same girl, guy, or the same job.

It's funny how these people wait to ask what they want or their interests when you joke with them. They wait until you're in a good mood to stab you. Not necessarily with a knife, but with jokes, they reveal the truth. For example, a guy that says to a couple, "You guys are together like the Beauty and the Beast." Then he says, "I'm joking." You're supposed to forget that he just called you ugly, and all of that in front of your girlfriend, which makes it even more aggravating.

As I grew older, I understood that the smaller my inner circle was, the better. I'm talking about family, also. I don't have a big family, but I saw it in other people and clients telling me their issues. I see it all the time at the shop. One time, I had a client who came with his wife and daughter to get a haircut. Later on, his big-headed cousin came to get a haircut, too. They gathered at the shop to have lunch later. He went close

to us while I was cutting his hair (something that I hate), and started to join the conversation. As we talked, I noticed he was bashing his cousin, who was in the chair getting a haircut, and trying to make him look bad in front of his wife. He was making all kinds of negative comments about his cousin, from how ugly his hair was to how poor a decision-maker he was. Of course, he was complimenting himself as he was saying all this, all in the name of the famous "I'm joking" that I hate. It's like saying, "Sorry, but not sorry." Even a song about it can sound terrible, just like Demi Lovato's song "Sorry Not Sorry." I see this phrase as a way for some people to tell the truth without getting in trouble. I noticed that this was the way he was flirting with his cousin's wife in a way. Even if she agreed to be with him, there's no excuse. You just don't flirt with your cousin's, brother's, or friend's wife. This type of person disgusts me. If you do this to your cousin, you probably do it with your father's wife. Honestly, I didn't want to see him again in the shop, but we have to learn how to deal with all kinds of people at work.

These people work in your environment and manipulate the way people think because they're psychopaths. I would rather be next to a person that lets me know they don't like me than live a lie or a fantasy, acting like friends, but they gather information for their benefit and use it against you.

I feel respect for workers in the sales industry because they have to act in a way so they can make a sale and eventually a living. Sometimes their products are not good, but they still have to make people believe it works and is suitable for them. I have tried to be a salesman before and it is not for me. I'm straightforward; I don't like to lie or wear people out. That's probably why I was never good at selling products at the shop.

Almost every day, I have a client asking if there's some product for hair loss. There are a bunch of them, but allegedly none of them work. I won't lie to a client just to make a miserable commission. These

companies are allowed to sell their products mainly because they employ people and create jobs. They and their employees pay taxes and help to move the economy. As long as they don't poison or kill anybody with their product, they're allowed to sell them. After all, this is a capitalist economy, and people are free to buy whatever they want. By the time you purchase and try your 4th-5th product, you'll realize that probably it doesn't work, and you'll have made them richer. Then, it will be time for another person to be curious and hope that the product will work for them. And the same thing will happen generation after generation. I had a customer tell me that he was taking pills to make his hair grow, and I told him it's not going to work, just like your penis if you continue using those pills. The only thing good for hair loss is the floor, so just let it fall. You won't be able to do anything about it if it is in your genetics.

If you have a destructive partner, I feel sorry for you. There's nothing worse than waking up in the morning next to a person you hate. If you want me to tell you the truth, a wife or girlfriend complaining about your hair loss doesn't love you. I understand if you have a terrible odor or you don't use hair gel, and she wants to help you. That's something you can control and fix. Complaining and even making fun of you about something you don't have control over is just mean. I never understood why we allow women to say these things. If we did the same with them, we would probably destroy their self-esteem, like if we criticized her breasts or her weight. That's divorce material, so I don't recommend it. But we, of course, are gentlemen, and we won't do it. Although I admit, you'll find one or two animals that will say this straight to her face. But time's up, right?

Bald people are the most secure people in the world, which is probably why most affluent men are bald. After all, they lost something that some men will die for. They don't care about their looks. Guys with too much hair are usually insecure. The more they have, the more

insecure they are. They are always looking at the mirror from a hundred angles, looking for what they think is perfection. Perfection is nonexistent, and we'll talk about it in another chapter.

If you have a wife or a girlfriend like this, you should replace her before you lose the hair you still have. For example, I have a client who came with his girlfriend to the shop one time and wanted to grow a beard, so he did. I could definitely tell there was some kind of previous issue between them, or she didn't want to be there at the shop. I wish she wasn't, by the way. I admit his facial hair looked a little bit patchy. When the full service was done, he politely asked her, "How does it look?" While he was asking, I felt like he put his tail between his legs, almost as dogs do. She replied, "It looks stupid!" Come on!, there are so many ways to say you don't like it. Say he looks better shaved, or he looks more handsome without it. Instead, she chose to talk to him as if she had hired a contractor and paid \$10,000 for a job she didn't like. Like if you own her money. Later on, he told me he got her pregnant, so God have mercy on him.

If your lady, wife, or girlfriend has to tell you to get a haircut before you notice you need one, I have bad news. She's probably checking out all the guys' hair and beards around her, wishing you were more like them. Women will notice everything in or out of place. They have different tastes in styles for their men.

Mature ladies like long hair for men without all the sharpness and square lines, unless she's Latin. Females tend to like long hair on men. That's what they see on television and in films. It is the style some actors use, usually, the "pretty boys" in the movie. They like this type of hairstyle like when she probably went to watch "50 Shades of Grey" or perhaps "Think Like a Man." These ladies are probably past 30 years old. They're looking for a natural look in their man.

Younger generations of ladies below 30 years old like shorter hair with a noticeable grooming look. She wants you to look like a

"Twilight" or "Beyond the Lights" actor right after she went to the movies to watch them.

Some ladies hate to admit they're wrong. Eventually, they will, but you just have to wait for the right time. Don't tell her she's wrong, just let her figure it out by herself. This is one of the best responses to a wife or girlfriend I heard from my chair. One time, I had a client who was a very nice man. He came with his wife, and when I was about to finish the haircut, he asked his wife how it looked. She approached and said it looked good, but pointed at some gray hairs and asked me to cut them. I agreed and cut them. Then she pointed at an area that couldn't be fixed, at least with the scissors. It was a spot with thin hair. It was better to leave it alone, or it would have left a bald spot or a hole in his head. As a way to tell his wife to stop complaining, in a friendly way, my customer said, "Sorry babe, you married an old man." They were about the same age. She started laughing and came back to her chair. She probably said in her mind, "I have an awesome husband. I think I can tolerate this over him being cute but a cheater." These types of ladies are the best. She tried to change something that he or she couldn't, then realized she was expecting more than she should, and she came back to earth as soon as my client said this. Thank God my customer wasn't Kendrick Lamar singing the chorus of his song "Humble." Play this track, and you will know what I'm talking about.

Some girls like grays, some don't. Just tell me what you have, and I will tell you what your girl doesn't like, because it's usually the opposite. I heard some rumors about girls liking gray hair. I may believe it is true. There's more demanding gray coloring from the men ourselves than from women on their men. Sometimes we notice stuff other people wouldn't see unless we tell them. I don't like to do hair coloring because it mostly comes down to trial and error. Nobody wants to look weird. In a couple of attempts, the client can get paranoid and wants the job to be perfect. Hair color is not for everyone. People with 90-100% of grays

shouldn't color their hair. Hair color is for people with a lower percentage of grays than that, so it's easier to hide the growing root and make it look more natural. Otherwise, you'll look like a young wrinkled version of whatever age you want to look. At some point, you have to "let them be," as someone once told me.

Another type of person that can be a problem in your life is your boss. There's no secret or surprise if I tell you that some of them can be terrible, but for some reason, the more evil they are, the more successful they seem to be. I worked with a lot of good bosses and a few bad ones. It is worthless to do anything good to touch these people's hearts. You could kill yourself working and doing overtime, helping with tasks that don't even correspond to your duties, and for some curious reason, they are blind to this. Everybody will notice but them. Even haters at work will do less work, but that's the stuff they see. I learned to just do my job, and that's it. I'm not sure if their behavior is like this because they think you want to take over the shop, or they are not used to people taking care of them in general.

I know all of us, at some point, feel this way. For example, if you have a partner who loves you, but maybe the love they have for you is more than what you want, you might feel scared because you may not be able to open your heart like them. You won't be able to return that love the way they expect, so you start to avoid the love they want to give you. Well, in your boss's case, this may be because they think you're interested in a salary increase or commission. This is not good for them because the love you want to give will cost them money. They prefer you do nothing over your duties, so they don't have to pay you back for all your extra work.

Since I'm a believer in karma, I used to do all this without expecting anything in return. If I decided to open a shop one day, someone like me would be what I want for my shop. So in a way, that was the reason for me to be helpful like this. I know it is going to be this

way, just because all these bad bosses mostly have garbage as employees.

The worst habit these bosses have is that they often don't show up at the workplace. They don't have an idea of what's going on at work. They, of course, ask the biggest idiot what's going on: the eye licker and butt sniffer, the toxic idiot who is actually causing the whole problem. Suddenly they become experts at their shop just because of this crooked information.

I'm afraid that if I open my shop, I'll be like one of these bosses. Then I remember my good bosses and shop owners, and I feel better about it. Remember when you were a kid, your parents told you don't do that, don't be mean, or your children will do worse to you. By now, you should know they were right. This is how I look at this job situation. Just do good, and you'll get it back. I guarantee you that.

Don't look at or pay attention to the haters. Ignore them. Give them a good morning and a good night. If you have to talk about work, do it, but don't get too personal. Avoid giving any personal information about your life. They will eat their crap this way, I promise.

To back all this up, I'll tell you the story about the best boss I had and how he got his shop. He was in his mid-sixties. He opened a shop with a partner, which is a bad idea in most cases. After years of working together, his partner got sick and passed away. Since his partner didn't have communication with his sons or anyone, he got the other half of the shop for free, basically. Of course, it is a tragedy that his friend died. I'm sure he was sad about the loss, and would rather him be alive. Everybody dies, but in this case, I think he got something good from his loss.

Good things happen to good people who spread good things around. If the same thing happened to your bad boss, his partner would probably die owing him 40,000 dollars. He'd never see his money again and start dealing with lenders and money-hungry relatives.

I don't like to make fun of or wish bad on anyone, but it is almost funny to see these haters walk every day under a gray cloud, and they don't seem to understand why. Whatever you wish for someone becomes your aura. This applies to everything around you, good or bad. We have so many bad people in the world because good people die young.

Another boss I had was a young guy who bought his shop from a music producer. He was very talented, and he was getting very busy at the music studio. He didn't have time to continue running the shop. The previous owner decided to sell it because he didn't have time to administrate it. He was too busy with his musical ventures. My boss was a very nice guy with many friends. He was charismatic, funny and a good person to be around. He had beautiful ladies looking for him at the shop every day. He wasn't a tall guy, but he had some characteristics that compensated for his lack of height. He had light amber eyes with nice shaped eyebrows and an athletic body. Every time I saw him, he had a new outfit and fresh new sneakers. He made it clear that making money wasn't his priority at the barbershop. He used to love spending his afternoon making horse bets. Some of the jockeys used to go to the barbershop, sometimes with inside information of who would be the winner in some horse races. Most of the time, the information was accurate.

He even lent me \$2,000 for a down payment so I could buy a new car. He wasn't full-time at the shop, but he came and went all day long. Although I admit he had a business on the side that wasn't legit, he was a nice guy in general, almost in an Escobar way, I guess. Sometimes weird people he didn't know started looking for him at the shop. He stopped going to the shop, and his brother-in-law was administrating the shop. Later on, we found out he died burned inside the trunk of his convertible red Honda S2000. We never saw him again. He was about 27 years old. A member of the 27 club? Who knows. It's dangerous to dig too much into it.

Another barbershop owner I used to work for was a guy that had six chairs at his barbershop. Most of the time, he wasn't at the shop. I used to get paid 60% commission, and he got 40% out of each haircut. This guy falls into the irresponsible business owner category. Since he wasn't at the shop most of the time and we were working by the commission, it was a tough situation for him to get his money accurately. To be honest, he was relying on the barbers when they were getting customers, so they didn't steal from him. This guy was so irresponsible that he told us to put the money in a drawer he used to have in his station after we cut the customer and the customer paid us. He didn't even have a register. I don't think Square appointments or any other credit card processing system was available back then, at least not for independent barbers. When he returned to work, he collected the money in his drawer. I guess he took it to the bank to make a deposit, but the money inside the drawer was often less than the haircuts produced at the shop.

Some barbers want to be smarter than their boss, and they want to skip paying for haircuts sometimes to make more money. The owner was promoting this type of behavior by not being there at the barbershop. I worked in the barbershop probably for just a couple of months. I didn't like the environment or the location, but it was a good experience because that's the only way you learn what a good barbershop location is and what isn't.

I always think that barbershops on a marginal street are not suitable for business, because accessibility is not convenient. Some customers are so lazy that they would park their car next to the chair inside the barbershop if you let them. Some customers don't want to walk to the barbershop. On these streets, you have to wait for the traffic light to get to the barbershop.

Another inconvenient location for a barbershop is the second floor. The first floor is the best location for a barbershop. For the same

reason, people are lazy. They want everything easy. Most of them won't go to the barbershops just because they have to go up the stairs to get there. This location sometimes is good for business owners that don't have much capital to start the business. If the location is not great, at least the rent is lower than in a primetime spot.

Another type of business owner that I hate is those who want to make all the money for themselves. They forget about the barber, who is the person doing the work to get money through the place. These, for example, are the salon chains and business owners who pay the barbers by the hour. These franchises are not into the barber's well-being but are more interested in making money for the franchise owner. If it wasn't for barbers fresh out of school who don't have experience and don't have any other option than grabbing that job and starting work to gain experience, they probably wouldn't have any barbers willing to work there.

I used to work with a lady who worked in a barbershop like this. I worked there for just a few months. She was a single mother and had two kids. I can't imagine how she could pay her bills working in this barbershop. Even if she worked 40 hours a week and she was getting paid, say \$10 an hour, that's \$400 a week, or \$1,600 a month. And keep in mind that that's not the final pay. Out of that, you still have to pay taxes, Social Security, Medicaid, etc.

An apartment in Miami with at least one bedroom runs for about \$1,200-\$1,500 a month at the time I'm writing this. If you are paying \$1,200 a month for the lease and getting paid \$1,600 a month without discounting the duties, you have \$400 left to pay your car lease, groceries, and other bills. I know barbers get tips that help, but tips should not be considered the primary income. She worked in that barbershop for several years until she was lucky enough to work in one of the upscale barbershops I used to work for in Miami. Unfortunately, there was a toxic coworker at the barbershop who made her life difficult.

It is sad and disgusting to see a man fighting with a woman about customers or money. This person sets the bar on the manhood scale very low. One day, she was angry with him because they cut related customers. It was a father and son. The guy was cutting the father, and she was cutting the son. It was one bill, and the father was paying for both. They were arguing because when they split the tip, he got more money than she did, and she got angry because it should have been half and half. Unfortunately, she snapped and quit her job that day. She was an excellent barber. I know wherever she is, she's doing well regardless of what this person did to her. This greedy barber was born and raised in the United States, and he had all the opportunities in the world since he was a little boy to take advantage of being born in this country. This lady, on the other hand, was a Cuban immigrant born and raised in Cuba, trying to manage a million problems here and there, only to now have this kind of issue. That's why this situation infuriated me when it happened. I could maybe understand if the argument was between women, but this argument occurred between a "man" and a woman.

I respect and admire the Cuban people. I went to Cuba and saw with my own eyes the difficult situation they live in every day. On December 17, 2014, United States President Barack Obama and Cuba's President Raúl Castro announced the beginning of the normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba. As soon as it happened, I decided to travel to Cuba in October 2015. People were able to travel to Cuba for different reasons. There was a list of 12 acceptable reasons to travel and enter the interesting and frozen-in-time island of Cuba. I chose the reason that allows Americans to go to Cuba if they are going to help the Cuban people and learn their culture.

One way of helping the Cuban people was to stay in a "Casa Particular." These are private residences converted into hotels and owned by locals in Cuba. It's very similar to the business model Airbnb has. The room that I rented was through Airbnb, believe it or not.

Before I traveled to the island, I bought two pairs of Wahl designer clippers similar to the ones I used to work with. I wanted to give them to barbers in Cuba. I knew they couldn't find good tools for work, even in those brief years that the embargo ended. I stayed in a Casa Particular, behind El Malecón, and I walked through the neighborhood with both clippers. I was looking for barbershops that look very old and distressed. When I located the worst-looking barbershops, I went inside and handed the clippers to those barbers. I told them, "This is from me and your brothers in Puerto Rico." They were very happy that I did that for them. One of them hugged me so hard that I still remember it to this day. I want to do that again in the future. I love Cuban people. The son of a Cuban dissident helped me to emigrate to the United States. My first job in the USA was with the owner of a Cuban American barbershop.

Another former boss that I liked was the boss I had in North Miami. They were a couple. She was a barber, and he owned a construction business and painting company in South Florida and other states. Before she was the owner, she worked at this barbershop for maybe one or two years. Then she decided to open her shop in downtown Miami. Central Miami is different from many city centers in the United States.

Midtown in other states might be very nice with many businesses and upscale shops, but this is not the case in Miami. At that time it was dirty, and there were not many shops to go to other than the occasional store selling luggage or jewelry. Some pawn shops may be shops selling textiles. You'll find a lot of lawyers' offices and small coffee shops. Downtown Miami wasn't what she was expecting. They bought a salon there, but it didn't work out because of these reasons.

Eventually, she knew that the owner of one of the upscale barbershops and her previous boss was selling the shop, and she went back with her husband and bought the unique shop. Her husband didn't cut hair, but

sometimes he went to the shop to help answer the phone and attend to customers. She was the one cutting hair and taking care of the customers. They were very nice to me, and I appreciated what they did for me.

This job came at the right time when I was waiting for a good job after I quit a pay-by-hour position. I liked this job because they didn't bother me too much, telling me what to do or what not to do. They treated me like an adult and not like a kid. Now that I have my shop, I try to copy the way they used to treat me and my barbers the same way. I don't overwhelm them by telling them how to do their job.

In this barbershop, I used to work with an older Russian lady with short golden hair and glasses. At least this is what I called her, but she was actually from a town in Belarus close to the Chernobyl nuclear plant. I learned a few words in Russian just to greet her in the morning and say “thank you,” “hello,” “goodbye,” and things like that. I can say I adopted her as a mother figure. I wonder what her thoughts are about the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. She used to like President Vladimir Putin. I bought her his yearly calendar for the Christmas holidays. I worked in this barbershop for around 8 years, and I never had a problem with the owners.

They were very sad when I told them that I would move to North Florida and buy a barbershop close to the University. Sometimes I feel bad because I didn't have enough time to tell them I was leaving so they could hire a new barber before the Christmas rush. Sometimes they still call me because they have a very expensive barber chair, Takara Belmont, at this barbershop. It's a hydraulic, dentist-grade type of chair. When it was new, the price was \$8,000 for each chair, and they had eight of them. That is \$64,000 in total, just in barber chairs. I knew how to fix the chair since I was working there for a long time, and sometimes the chairs broke. This type of chair needs maintenance because it's like a car. It has hydraulic parts, and sometimes the oil needs to be changed, and

since we were using the chairs all day long, at some point, they were bound to break.

Every time they called me, I was happy to explain to them how to fix the chair by phone. If I ever go back to Miami, this is probably the shop I will go to work in again.

Now that I have my shop, I'm enjoying it. I can manage my schedule; I can work less if I want to. I can play the music that I like in my barbershop. Since I don't have cable services, we don't watch the news at the shop. We only watch music videos. Usually, very old school videos from the 70s, 80s, 90s, and maybe early 2,000 when music was still good. It's hard to find good modern music. Every time I try to play a track at the shop, there's always some swearing involved. I don't like to have that in my barbershop because I want to keep a clean family environment.

From experience working at other barbershops, the worst part of being a business owner is that you have to tell people what to do. Sometimes is necessary to tell people to keep their discharge inside the toilet, believe it or not. People often will do whatever they want or whatever is easy for them, and you have to set boundaries to create an environment that you like. You have to be gifted to deal daily with people. That's why it's tough to find a good boss or a good employee. I'm the kind of person who lets people do whatever they want, and I never tell people what to do. I don't like, and it's in my nature, to nag others, especially grown people who should know right versus wrong. You shouldn't have to tell people to clean the kitchen area after lunch. But surprisingly, you have to ask them to do it, and if you don't say it the right way, they are probably going to get mad at you even if you are entitled to say it.

You shouldn't have to tell employees that they have to show up to work. Believe it or not, my ex-bosses had to say this sometimes to the employees. Some barbers like to take a lot of days off. The worst thing

about this is that when the barber is not at the barbershop, the automatic question that I always get is, “Where is the other barber? Is he still working here?” Then I have to explain to these customers that the barber is not there today because of whatever situation is happening. I hate having to give explanations. It’s like being the parents of an idiot, who has to explain all day to everyone why their son is an idiot.

Chapter 4

"Hygiene"



want to start this chapter by giving you some advice so you can improve your relationship with your barber. Barber and customer relationships are the same as with your partner in many ways. You shouldn't tell them how to do things, but rather how you want them done. You don't tell your partner how to love you. They love you the only way they know how to. It's the same with your barber and hairstylist.

Don't be too demanding at the barber's chair. The professional barbers know you're paying to get the best service, but no words can save you from what I'm about to tell you. If your barber is going to mess up your hair because of inexperience or just because he can't cut, they'll screw it up anyway, no matter what. No matter how hard you try with words or wide-open eyes and raised eyebrows to explain a haircut, there's nothing better than showing a picture. Save the 1,000 comments and bring a picture instead.

Explain your haircut as simply as possible, if you're going to explain what you want. If you're using more than six words, you're over-explaining. Let the barber do their job. Let them connect with their muse. We don't like to feel like servants or slaves. We, the barbers, are like snakes. We can smell fear. That's not good because we as artists need to express our creativity without worrying about the client's anxiety and doubts about us. I prefer or skip the part when the client tells me what they don't want rather than telling me what they do want. Save

telling us the stories of bad experiences you had with another barber. That way, we can focus on what you want rather than what you don't. Let's say that your explanation of a haircut is a paragraph long. Make the last sentence be the one letting me know what you don't want after you explain the style you do want. Don't make the entire paragraph about negative experiences with other barbers. That sounds reasonable and acceptable to us.

This explanation becomes awkward if the wife or girlfriend is the one giving the instructions for the haircut. It is funny when a client brings a picture that his wife texted them about a haircut she wants on them. I picture her in my head, almost like she's saying, "Maybe you don't have much to work with, but get it as close as possible to the picture." Of course, one of the Ryans will be in the picture: either Ryan Gosling or Ryan Reynolds. Or perhaps one of the Chrises: maybe Chris Hemsworth or Chris Pine. I don't want to sound mean, it is just something that comes automatically to my mind. Sometimes they bring a picture of a guy with a lot of hair on top, and maybe it looks good in the picture, but when I do it, it's different. They make me cut it shorter after I'm done with the haircut in a more realistic way. Most of the actors leave a lot of hair in general for a role in a movie. I guarantee you that when they finish the role, the first thing they do is cut all that hair. Usually, men like the low-maintenance type of hairstyle. Sometimes those hairstyles require a lot of maintenance at home and need many products to keep them in place. Females tend to like long hair on men. That's what they see in movies and TV shows, so that's what they want for their man.

Women know more about hair than you think. They have a good eye. They can easily spot a good or a terrible haircut. Some females know more about beards than their men. One time, I had a client's wife at the shop who impressed me. She knew something that sometimes not even a man knows. When a man starts growing a beard in the first few

weeks, some hairs don't grow evenly. At first, it looks patchy and has gaps between hairs. Some hairs may have different colors, lighter or darker. These hairs appear to be separate from each other. You'll see a gap between hairs. Later on, after a couple of weeks, they start to grow, and they will fill those patches in most cases. You'll see some baby hair in the middle of the gap. This happens because not all hairs have the same strength, and some grow slower than others. Some beards won't fill the gaps just because that's the way the beard grows or genetics. This lady knew about this without me saying anything. I let her talk and she definitely knew what she was talking about.

The ultimate compliment I can get is when a client's wife or girlfriend likes the haircut. Of course, I like it if the client approves, too. Some clients have realistic expectations of what's possible with their hair. Some others, on the other hand, don't. Sometimes we want what we can't have or what is hard to get. I'd love to have a Ferrari or perhaps a Lamborghini, but I have realistic expectations about my economic bracket on the ladder of wealth. The same mentality should apply to your hair. You should know what is possible and what is not. By the way, you should know the number of guards or levers you use for your haircut, just like you know the size of your pants, shirt, or shoes. By not knowing this, you tell me you don't care that much about your hairstyle.

WARNING:

Some people may feel disgusted by what they are about to read. Appearance and hygiene are essential. People with poor hygiene age faster than people with good hygiene. This happens because the body is allergic to its own sweat and waste. The worst thing you can do to not stay young on the outside is wake up in the morning and skip the shower before starting your day. Your body in the morning has already spent

about eight hours without being clean. It has been eliminating waste all that time.

On top of that, some people are about to start a workday without taking a shower. Some people do this in Florida in 91-degree weather. To me, this is crazy. By 10-11 in the morning, you'll need just a tiny ray of light from the sun to wake up a monster who their own mother wouldn't want to put up with.

Sometimes hygiene has a significant role in this. It's possible that the barber was the one who didn't feel comfortable with you. Some clients have poor hygiene, and it is a nasty experience giving them service. I rush with clients like this to get them out of the chair as soon as possible. I had clients that made an appointment, and had extra time to kill beforehand, so they went to the gym, did Crossfit, or went for a run first. In the common senseless way of thinking, they probably thought, "Why shower if I'm going to get a haircut, right? I'll be full of hair anyways. I'll kill two birds with one stone." You narrate to me all your sweaty activities before sitting in my chair, acting like it doesn't bother me. Well, this is as if you're telling me, "Screw you, Renan! But how are you?" Well... I was good until you got your nasty butt in my chair. For the next 30 minutes, I'll be smelling your breakfast and lunch through your erupting pores. Come on, men! Take a shower before getting any service that requires another human being to touch you. It's disrespectful. I have seen coworkers deny service to people like this, and it is justified, in my opinion.

I have a few customers who are losing their hair because their hygiene habits are not good. In some cases, the hair falls out because people don't wash their hair frequently. I think you have to wash your hair at least every other day. You need to remove the natural oils from the scalp and follicles so they can get air and breathe to grow healthier.

I recently had to tell a customer this. According to his hair texture, I was doing my best to get the best haircut for him, but I was

having trouble accommodating the hair after I cut it. The reason for that was apparently because he didn't wash his hair for at least a week. All his hair was covered with nasty grease and natural oils, and when this happens, the hair becomes waterproof or impermeable.

It's hard to shape the hair in this condition because the hair takes shape when it's damp before it dries. Once the hair is dry, it will stay like that the entire day until you wet it again. After finishing the haircut, he told me one side was longer than the other, and it wasn't. The hair wasn't getting the shape it was supposed to get because he had so much grease, dirt, and oil in his hair that it was hard for me to get the new form. In this barbershop I was working at, I didn't have a shampoo bowl, so I couldn't wash his hair. I told him he would have to trust me, and I instructed him to go home and wash his hair so the hair takes its new shape. If I picked up that cut hair from the floor and placed it in a brown paper bag, it would look like I had recently fried empanadas.

I knew that, by telling him this, I would put him in an uncomfortable situation, because nobody wants to be told that their hair is dirty and nasty in front of everybody at the barbershop. But I had no option because he assumed and acted like it was my fault the hair wasn't falling in place the way it should be. I worried he would leave me a bad review when he left the barbershop, but he didn't. He probably actually knew his hair was filthy.

I don't understand how people can go to a barbershop to get a haircut with such dirty and nasty hair. You have to think about it; somebody will work on your head. You have to bring your head in the best condition you can. I'm assuming you wouldn't go and get a colonoscopy with a dirty butt, right? It's the same situation when you are going to get a haircut.

I had some people tell me they didn't wash their hair because they knew they were coming to get a haircut, so they figured they would wash it after. I think they should've cleaned it before because they knew

a stranger would be touching their nasty hair, and that's some common sense you've got to have.

However, some people won't care. If I know I'm going to the dentist, I brush my teeth a couple of times, so the person who will work on my mouth doesn't experience a gross odor. It's just common sense, something that is becoming extinct. People's intelligence deteriorated a lot during the 2020 pandemic lockdown. One day, I went to a department store, and ahead of me in the line was an older lady. She was confused about the price of an article that she would purchase. When she went to the cashier, she politely asked the young cashier something related to the article. It was funny to me when I heard the answer she gave the lady. She replied, "I have no idea." That's a response you will get a lot in modern days. People were more respectful to others, especially older people, back in the day. She could respond to her in so many different ways. Even if she didn't know what she was asking for, she could have told the lady, "At the moment, I'm not familiar with that. I'm so sorry, but I'm not quite sure." You have to keep in mind that this younger generation is the one that is going to take care of us. So if that's the case, we are in trouble.

Some clients show up at the barbershop, they sit in the chair, and in just 30 minutes, the place starts smelling like them. Even the tools that touch them can get the odor 12 inches from my nose. I use deodorant spray and add fragrance to camouflage the funky odor, like incense and oils that you burn with a candle. When this type of client is gone, we need to spray some Febreze or Glade at the shop. Otherwise, the next client will think I am the one who stinks. To me, if you don't smell good, you stink. The body sprays are best for this odor because they are made specifically for body odors. I always keep one or two bottles in my station. I think everyone should take a shower before starting the day. Washing your face in the middle of the day is also a good thing to do. It keeps bacteria out and helps your skin stay fresh.

Every time you let bacteria sit on your face, scalp, or skin for a long time, you're more susceptible to getting rashes, pimples, or lacerations on your skin. It could leave a scar or a dark area on your skin when it's healed. Sometimes they're small but visible at a close range. As the years go by, you'll have a collection of these dark spots on your skin. I have clients who wait until their next haircut to get a shampoo. When they come back, they have an irritated scalp with dandruff, and they dare to ask what they can do about it. The first thing that comes to my mind is telling them to get a shampoo every other day for a change, but I can't say that.

When the client brings his hair to the chair in this condition, the hair becomes impermeable or waterproof as we discussed before. The shampoo turns into kryptonite because the hair doesn't even make the foam. The natural oils get collected on the hair, and it would need to be washed at least 2-3 times before it's in a decent condition and not disrespecting my hands by touching it. If you search on the internet about scalp diseases, you will see some of the reasons for the diseases are unknown or unclear. I can tell you from experience that some of these diseases are related to poor hygiene habits. Customers with good hygiene don't have these types of diseases, like excessive dandruff or seborrheic dermatitis. I'm not sure if I should blame their parents for this or if I should blame the client. Or maybe both.

Some customers tell me that they went out the previous night and woke up and took a shower, and they just put water on their hair because they had gel from the previous night. My advice to these people is to rinse old gel from their hair and add fresh gel the next day. Don't use fermented gel, and don't leave it on your scalp for an extended period. Every time you go to bed, rinse your hair gel. Applying too much hair gel sometimes covers the pore, and the follicle can't breathe. Some gels have alcohol and chemicals, which can be harmful to your scalp and hair.

I remember my parents were very strict with hygiene. They weren't afraid to say if I was stinky. I was raised the right way in terms of hygiene, but some people aren't, or they didn't want to listen to their parents as children. They think it is normal to walk around smelling funky. I see this problem becoming common as our society becomes lazier. Customers have told me that they didn't cut their hair for months because they were working at home and nobody was seeing them. Being well-groomed shouldn't be a matter of whether people are looking at you or not. It should be something that you do to feel good. I don't know how some people can have a bunch of hair touching their ears for months and not feel uncomfortable. Sometimes they tell me, "I think I waited too long this time. Do you think I need a haircut?" Well, if you want to stay looking neat, you should get one.

I'll tell you one of the grossest experiences I ever had working as a barber. One time I had a regular customer that had an appointment to get a haircut. He was running late. When he arrived at the shop, he sat on my chair, and I couldn't help but smell a very strange odor coming from this customer. I didn't want to say anything because I didn't want the customer to feel bad about it. I continued doing the haircut for about 30 minutes. When I was nearly finished, the customer told me that he was running late for a couple of minutes because he had fungus on his toes, and somebody told him that dipping his feet in vinegar would help to kill the fungus. He didn't have time to rinse his feet and went to the barbershop right away, so he didn't miss the appointment. I was smelling this weird odor of cheesy feet dipped in vinegar for 30 minutes of my life. As he told me that, I couldn't help the feeling of vomiting in my station while looking at his fungi toes on top of dirty flip-flops. This is how inconsiderate people are. Back in those days, I used to work in a barbershop that was like a studio, and it was a small room with poor ventilation.

I had another bad experience, which wasn't the first or last, but I remember this one because it was very gross. I was in the middle of doing a beard trim. I noticed this customer had a massive pimple on his cheek. It was an error on my part to tell the customer about the existence of this pimple. Maybe he knew about it before getting the service. But in the middle of the beard trim, he grabbed the pimple with his fingers and popped it. Suddenly the room became like an episode of TLC's TV series with Dr. Sandra Lee's "Pimple Popper." I told the customer to "PLEASE DO IT LATER!" But it was too late. I had to finish the service with a bloody cheek I didn't want to touch. Couldn't he just have waited until he was out of that chair to do this? That was a very inconsiderate thing to do. I guess his blood is unique and isn't like others.

Sometimes the barber himself is the one practicing poor hygiene habits. The first thing a barber should do is clean and disinfect their tools. I have seen barbers starting the day without cleaning and sanitizing their stations. Every day, a barber has to clean the drawers of his station and remove hair leftovers from a busy day at work. We have to dip the combs in barbicide every day. I also dip the straight razor because it is always in contact with the skin. I also recommend that barbers have a disinfectant spray to clean the chair every time a customer sits on the barber's chair. Sometimes customers sit on the chair having cuts on their elbows or arms. I have had clients with psoriasis on their elbows or legs. If I wouldn't sit on a chair that a customer has sat on with these conditions, why would I let another client sit on a chair with these germs? Some barbers also never remove hairs from the chair, so when the client sits on the chair, all the hairs from a previous customer will stick on their shirts, taking a stranger's DNA home.

After the pandemic started on March 11, 2020, we were required to clean and sanitize the station for 15 minutes. That was one of the conditions the state required to allow us to reopen the barbershops in the

month of May that same year. The amount of time required was too much, but I also think it was good because it obligated the barbers who didn't always sanitize their stations to change that practice. Wearing a mask, of course, was another mandate from the state. It was hard to work nine hours a day wearing them. I wore the bandana type of mask because they were more breathable. Hand sanitizer was always available at the door or inside the barbershop so customers could disinfect their hands after the visit.

Some barbers don't change the blade after haircuts, and you as a customer should be aware of this. Barbers who do this should be put in jail because you don't know if a customer has a transmittable disease and will infect someone with the same condition. There's no excuse to do this because double-edge blades are relatively inexpensive. What I got used to doing is that every time I finished a customer, I removed the blade from the straight razor and put it inside the razor blade disposal container. I did this because when I open the straight razor, the customer will see that there is no razor blade inside. This way, I clear any doubts about me changing the blades because there's not one inside. Foil shavers should also be disinfected with a virucidal, fungicidal spray before every use. This tool goes very close to the skin, and some customers may have a pimple or laceration that can be opened with the shaver with minimal effort. This is the main reason some kids get a rash after a haircut because tools weren't clean before use. Children don't have a complete immune system developed yet. Because of this reason, they can be very easily infected with bacteria. Grown people are less susceptible to getting infected by bacteria, although it can also happen.

I knew a barber with a very nasty habit. When this person was shaving, he used to clean the straight razor's waste with a very gross brush, brushing away all the razor waste in the direction of the floor. I can almost guarantee you that a plant will grow if you plant a seed in this nasty brush and spray water on it. Keep in mind that sometimes

when we shave with the straight razor, we may cut the client, and it does not necessarily have to be blood visual to the naked eye.

The following client will receive all the straight razor waste on the brush from the previous client. This is similar to what you do when you grab butter with a knife and apply it to bread. In this case, you're the bread, and the razor waste is the butter. This usually happens when the person doing this is a cheap barber. They don't want to spend money on disposable paper, which is what sanitary barbers do. Every time we wipe the straight razor's blade, we should be using disposable paper. After each use, it should be thrown away using a closed trash can. We shouldn't use a reusable towel to do this, either. Another unsanitary barber I used to work with would use the restroom and, after doing his business, dried his hands with clean towels and put them back on the rack so people didn't know they had been used. I discovered this when I went to the restroom and saw a semi-folded towel on the floor. When I picked up the towel, it was wet. It was clear that the towel was used to dry his hand and, god forbid, something else, and then placed back in the clean towel rack, but fell on the floor.

Another practice a barber should do is frequently change the barber's cape. This shouldn't have a time frame. Before it is dirty and filthy, we should change the cape. Sometimes it only takes one customer to change the barber's cape. I had customers that appeared not to have showered for three days and when I put a clean cape on them, it felt like it was dirty and sometimes picked up the client's odor. When I was younger, I worked with barbers that didn't wash their capes for months, to the point that you can see the discoloration on a black cape around the neck area product of hundreds of talc applications. Also, you can see natural oils and fluid excreted from many different customers around the neck area, "tattooing" the barber's cape permanently. I hope that if you get one of these barbers, it is not a cheap one and they secure some paper to protect your neck at least. The barbers should have a lot of

capas available for the customers in case of an emergency. I have separate capas for children so they don't come in contact with adult bacteria.

If you're one of the baby boomers who still asks barbers to cut your nose hairs, please don't do that. I received one letter from the state saying that I should stop doing that because of the Staphylococcus bacteria (staph). This is the bacteria commonly associated with food poisoning and can cause various skin infections. You're probably thinking that the barbers should be disinfecting the barber tools, and you're right; we do disinfect them. The problem is that, for this kind of bacteria to be killed, the tools must be sitting in the barbicide for at least one hour. Sometimes in a rush, we have back-to-back clients, and there is not enough time to let the tools sit for that long. By law, we use alcohol, germicidal, pseudomonacidal, virucidal, fungicide, and tuberculocidal disinfectant spray and some astringent between clients. My recommendation is to buy yourself a nose trimmer and use it at home as much as you want. I hate doing this, and some people are so disregarded that they bring their noses all full of nasal junk to my chair. It honestly makes me want to puke. The uncomfortable face I put on is obvious. No poker face is possible doing this. Florida is full of baby boomers, so I guess until I die, I'll have to tell them about this. I don't mind trimming their eyebrows. After all, they grow on men almost like a mustache.

Another irreversible error people make is that they shave their ear hairs and sometimes the hairs on the top of the nose with a razor. People shouldn't do this because the body, as a way of resistance, makes the hairs thicker when you shave them. The ones next to the nose also start to grow nice and thick. These hairs should be waxed or removed with tweezers. I know some people may find waxing painful, but the trick is not to wait too long to wax them again. Wax them as soon as you see them grow back. Don't wait until the root is fat again because that's

when it hurts. I used to have a customer who made me shave his nose and ears with a straight razor. This, of course, is an insane thing to ask for. I made the error to please this customer one time. He was an older guy. Now every time he goes back to the barbershop, I'll be enslaved to do this for the customer. The most uncomfortable part about the situation was that he made me "feel" the hair with my finger when he wasn't satisfied, and I didn't shave as close as he wanted to. I asked him only in my head, "Shouldn't this be something your wife should be doing? The last time I checked, I'm not your wife." This was one of the customers I didn't miss when I left that barbershop. Another customer that I had, one time pulled a cigarette lighter and gave it to me. He pointed at some hairs on his ears, and he wanted me to "torch those hairs." I learned from the previous experience with the other customer, and I told him, "No man, I don't do that! I can cut it with the trimmer if you want, but that's as far as I go."

Puerto Ricans and Latin people love to shape their eyebrows, and I used to do it, too. I stopped because now, as I get older, I like masculine eyebrows. I only cut the long hairs pointing at people. I stopped doing this because I didn't realize that I was adding another problem to my life by shaping my eyebrows. This is because every three weeks, at least, I'll have to shape them again. I was a slave to it. Anyway, I may be wrong, but I think the ladies like them better natural. Most women don't want their men to worry more about their appearance than they do themselves. Men should be worried about fixing things around the house and making their pockets fatter, not their eyebrows skinnier. No offense if you shape your eyebrows, as I say, I used to do it, too.

I think the eyebrow shaping trend in men began when men started to do the outline over the forehead area connecting the sideburns with the forehead edge. What I think happened was that the only area left with hair on the customer's face that wasn't groomed was the eyebrows. Why not shape them as well, right? When men shape their

eyebrows, some hairs are usually left noticeable close to the eyebrow and forehead area. It was a matter of time before men wanted to shave those as well. Now it is a service that is requested on a regular basis, and barbers shape them using a straight razor.

I had a customer whose birthday gift to his wife was trimming his eyebrows. I admit that his eyebrows looked similar to Sam the Eagle, a Muppet show character. I don't blame the lady for wishing this as a birthday gift. Sam looked scary to me when I was a child; I like his patriotism, though. People sometimes ask me why the eyebrows, ears, nose, and back hair grow more when we get older. The only reason I can think of is that as we age, the immune system weakens. This is how the body looks to protect us better as we age. By having this extra hair, our body can filter bacteria from our surroundings easier. Hair, in many ways, is a filter. From the sun, sweat, dust, bacteria, and in the case of the ears, can filter negative comments from idiots. Even the tongue has hair. This happens when the filiform papillae don't shed regularly the way it is supposed to. This creates an accumulation of bacteria on the tongue that looks like hair. Usually, this condition happens to older people and is more common in men than women.

Now let's talk about children. Oh boy! Some kids can also have very bad hygiene habits, as you may imagine. But I think in most cases it is the parents' fault. Children won't shower for days if you let them. Kids will be happy as a pig in mud. As a parent, you have to teach your children how to have good hygiene habits. I have some kids in my chair who sometimes can smell as bad as adults, especially their hair. For some reason, most kids don't shampoo their hair. Maybe it's because of some traumatic experience with shampoos that irritated their eyes, and they don't want to use shampoo to wash their hair. There's even a shampoo from the brand Paul Mitchell named "Baby Don't Cry," specifically made for children. It doesn't irritate their eyes when they shampoo their hair.

Children also can develop skin diseases when they don't have good hygiene habits. It's essential to teach children to always shampoo and wash their hair because they are young and can develop a skin disease or get dandruff at a young age, and this can be irreversible. Children are also susceptible to getting lice in school from other students.

I had a customer who had two kids, and both were infected with lice. As a responsible mother, she told the barbershop's receptionist that her children were infected with the condition. The receptionist passed the message to the barbers, and no one wanted to give them service. According to her, she gave the children a few doses of a pharmacy remedy against the lice, but the treatment wasn't successful.

I agreed to cut the children's hair because I felt sorry for her and her children, and maybe it wasn't their fault that they got the condition. Perhaps they got it from somebody else at school. What I did, in this case, is cut their hair short. I tried to eliminate as much as possible using the least amount of tools: tools that I didn't need right away to cut other customers. After all, it wasn't that bad, but she just wanted to inform the barbers that the children had the condition. After I finished with the children, I disinfected all my tools and let them sit for hours in barbicide, so all the customers I was going to cut after didn't get the condition.

She was very grateful that I did this for her children, and I was happy to do it. I never got lice or my brothers, so it wasn't a problem at my house. Sometimes, children come to the barber chair and get services, and they have lice, and the barber doesn't even realize that the children have this condition. I think this was a good move by the mother to tell the barbers that the children had lice. By not knowing the children had lice, they may have cut the next customer using the same tools without disinfecting them and sanitizing them, especially if the barber is like those who talk too much and are not paying attention to what they

are doing. That's when you can infect somebody: when you don't know if the person has the condition, but you already have them in your chair.

I feel sorry for them because, after that, the rest of the barbers didn't treat them fairly because of what happened that day. I don't like discrimination. She always brought the kids after that experience with me. Some barbers will do whatever to not work or be productive. They will find any excuse they have to keep sitting in their chair, doing nothing.

Another thing I noticed is that sometimes mothers like for their children to have long hair, but they don't want to take care of it. If you want your son to have long hair, you have to take care of their hair like it is yours. Children won't care that much about cleaning themselves up or applying any conditioner or shampoo. They will care more about playing soccer or football at school, getting dirty, and not removing all the dirt afterward. If you don't like to take care of your children's hair, choose a low-maintenance haircut like a fade and short hair on top. If you want a long hairstyle for your children, like a layered type of haircut, maybe like Justin Bieber's when he was a kid, then you should be aware that you may have to take care of your son's hair like it is yours. I had children in my chair with fermented hair gel, leaves, decorative frost, juice, candy, gum, crayon, makeup, soil, sand, sticks, bugs, grasshopper legs, ants, etc. I had kids in my chair whose hair smelled like a damp street dog. Don't let yours be that one.

I had a regular customer who used to bring me his son to get a haircut. When I was cutting his hair, I noticed that he had a small patch of some greasy substance on his head. It was hidden under the hair and glued on the scalp, so it was hard to see it. When I was cutting his hair, I wondered what that stain could be. I never knew what it was. When the customer brought him again for the next haircut, I noticed that he still had the same patch I saw when I cut his hair the last time. It was hard for me to believe that this was the same patch from the previous haircut. It

had already been a month since the previous service, so how could it be possible that this stain is still on his scalp in the same area? I grabbed a paper towel, applied alcohol to it, and rubbed on the stain. I wanted to clean it for him because they probably didn't notice the stain on his scalp for over a month. Immediately after I applied the alcohol and rubbed it, and went away. When I looked at the paper towel to see the remains of the stain, it was a dark product that I am still unsure about to this day. I might be speculating, but I think eyelash mascara probably fell on his scalp. Maybe he grabbed it from his mother and applied it on himself just playing as kids do.

It's funny to me that when children want to play to be a barber, they grab the scissors at home and cut their hair. It's funny because that's how I started to cut hair, but I did it later when I was thirteen years old and grabbed the clippers my mother had at home and cut my brother's hair and mine. Once in a while, I have children that cut their hair in usually the worst possible place or area where you can cut your hair. This area is the forehead. They love to cut the hair over their eyebrows. This is a tricky area to conceal unless the hairstyle is to the front or maybe to the side. That way, you can hide the "accident" more easily. I know some little girls like to do this also. The girl's case is a lot different because the female hair will grow slower, and it will sometimes take months to match the other hair and get it to the same length.

Something that happens to me frequently is that elderly customers get lacerations on their scalps. When they go to my chair, many of them tell me that they got a biopsy and the dermatologist will test it to see if it's cancerous. When they came back for the next haircut, I asked them what had happened with the test and what the results were. In most cases, they come with a negative cancer skin test. I'm not a dermatologist, so I can't tell you that this test will always be negative, but there's a good percentage where it will. And it is for the same reason we discussed before. I'm not going to generalize it, but older people

have the tendency not to be very clean. This is why sometimes they get lacerations on their skin.

As we discussed before, you will get these conditions when you let waste from your body sit for an extended period. Sometimes they scratch the laceration, and older people heal slower than young people. Sometimes the laceration is not healed yet, but they are still messing around with it, scratching it, and it will never heal. A recommendation that I can give is that you frequently change your bed sheets and pillowcases because germs like to incubate in them. Sometimes, it's hard to wash them every week, but don't spend more than two weeks without washing them. Also, if you sit a lot in the same chair or a recliner, use a cover protector, and wash it frequently. I have customers who have some dandruff or rash on the occipital area of the head. The reason for this is that they are reclining their head on a headrest for an extended period, and you can get fungus on them if you don't wash them frequently.

Sometimes, when a customer goes to get a haircut, they tell me that they have this dandruff or rash in the occipital area, and they don't know how they got it. I ask them, "Did you recently have a trip? Did you fly on a plane?" If the response is yes, I tell them they likely got it from the headrest on the plane's chair. Thankfully, this condition goes away quickly after you get a haircut, and the scalp can breathe easily without the extra hair. I recommend that you bring something to cover the headrest when you go on a plane, train trip, or go to the movie theater. When I go to the movie theaters, I like to bring a hoodie because I can easily cover the headrest using the cape of the hoodie. These seats, especially in the movie theaters, are pretty nasty. They rarely get clean at all. You don't see the dirt because usually they are made of dark colors like black or gray. I guarantee you that if those seats were white, you would see all sorts of dirt on them, including chemicals from hair colors that ladies have, and sometimes they can leave it on the chair when their hair is wet. Keep in mind that fungus likes water. Essentially, they are

fertilizing those headrests every time they go to the movie theater and sit on that chair with their hair wet. I heard ladies say that they haven't washed their hair in a week, so don't think for a second that only men have poor hygiene habits. There's a folk song written about this subject by Adam Carroll and Bryan Rung released in the year 2,000. Guess what the name of the song is? Yes! That's the name, "Girl with the Dirty Hair."

Another nasty habit some guys have is wearing the same hat for years without washing it. Hats also can be an incubator for germs. Some men use hats to go to the gym and get sweat all over them, and then they take a shower and put them back on. This is one of the reasons I don't use caps or hats because they can become pretty nasty. If I wear one, I prefer the ones that have polyester or cotton fabric so I can wash them without damaging them. Some hats have carton material that will get damaged if you put them in the washing machine. If you go to the gym, I recommend never wearing a hat. The scalp needs oxygen, and when you cover your head, oxygen will never reach the pore. That's something vital to the skin. I have seen customers that go to the barbershop and get a haircut, and right after the haircut, they put their hats on. I don't understand why they do this because after you get a haircut, a bunch of loose hair will be stuck in your head until you shampoo your hair. Why would you put a cap on without washing your hair? The next time when you shower and are ready to go out, you put the cap on, and you will get all those hairs left over from the previous haircut into your clean hair.

Caps can accumulate a lot of germs, especially sweatbands. The fabric is thicker, and for that reason, it will get more sweat and stay humid for an extended period of time. If you are going to wear one, don't use it too tight so the scalp can breathe easier. Also, when you wear your cap too tight, you will lose some hairs exactly where the hat lands on the scalp. This is a similar effect to the bald spot babies get in the occipital area when they rub their heads on the pillow for hours. I have

customers who wear hats given by their job in fast-food restaurants. These caps are the nastiest. If a corporation is obligating the employees to wear this cap, they should give them several, not only one. If you are one of these employees, you should wash your hat as much as you wash the rest of your uniform.

I had a crazy customer who always used to make me put two capes on him. That's right, he made me put the regular cape an average person would use, and another one in the opposite direction. According to him, he was germaphobic. Some people are crazy, and you have to deal with this every day at the barber chair; please don't be that person. Usually, people who try to avoid something more than they should are the first ones the situation targets. For example, if you don't want hairs on your shirt and you do many unnecessary things so that doesn't happen, you will probably get more hairs on your shirt than anyone else. Maybe you wear a white shirt to get a haircut, which is possibly the worst color you can take to a barbershop. People who are always paying attention to their cars so nobody messes with them are the first to get their cars stolen or scratched. Someone with a new pair of sneakers always avoiding people so nobody steps on them probably will step on dog excrement without noticing. Paranoid men about their ladies, asking them every 30 minutes where they are and making sure she's always visible to him, will probably be the first to get cheated on. It's never good to take things to the extreme.

Once in a while, it's good to be exposed to germs. The immune system gets stronger and helps battle bacteria better if you are exposed to them. I can give you an example. By the time I'm writing this book, I've been cutting hair for thirty-two years. Since I've been cutting hair since I was thirteen years old, I've been exposed to germs and bacteria because I've been working directly with people for that period of time. I can have sick people in my chair, thinking they will infect me with the flu. I ask them to not worry because my immune system is strong. Since

I've been cutting hair for a long time and I'm directly in contact with people, I've been exposed to all kinds of flu and colds; I rarely get sick. I get sick more because of food poisoning from something I ate that my stomach couldn't handle than I do with the seasonal flu.

I used to have a customer with HIV, and he would request a shave once in a while. Although I knew he had the virus, I agreed to shave him because I didn't want him to feel discriminated against. For your information, especially to barbers, it is unlawful to prohibit a person with HIV or AIDS from getting services offered to others. It is illegal to deny them the service because of their HIV/AIDS status. The laws that protect them are the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, section 504, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 title II, and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996.

Of course, I took all the precautions possible so I didn't cut him or myself. I always wear gloves, and I didn't shave him against the grain, which is more likely to cause lacerations. HIV is a virus that can't live outside the body. Let's say that if I shave somebody with HIV and I cut him using a straight razor, the blood dries out after cutting the person and the virus in the blood dies when it gets in contact with air. For this reason, the virus will die. To infect somebody with HIV using a straight razor, you have to shave two people simultaneously. The virus will die in thirty seconds when exposed to air. The only way you can contract HIV is by having direct contact with blood like through a syringe, vaginal contact, rectal fluid, or semen. HIV can be transmitted through breast milk, too. Of course, it doesn't mean that we shouldn't disinfect and sanitize the instruments and tools after each customer. That should be something barbers do automatically. You should worry more about getting infected with Hepatitis than HIV. Hepatitis is a more potent virus and isn't that easy to kill. It can live outside the body for up to twenty-one days. Hepatitis is a virus that creates an infection that eventually can damage the liver and be fatal.

Every two years, when the barbers renew their license, a two-hour HIV/AIDS continuing education training is required. They give us material that we have to read and study and then take the test, which is usually about ten questions to pass the exam. Barbers should pass it with at least 70%.

Shaving with a straight razor could be a thing of the past since some new barbers graduating from the institute don't want to use a straight razor because of liability. Also, some barbers are worried about getting infected with one of the viruses we discussed above. I will say that the trick of using the straight razor is that you can't rush if you're going to use this tool. You have to take your time and study the customer's skin to see if they have any moles or pimples and also the curvature of the neck and face. If the worker or client doesn't feel comfortable using the straight razor, they have all the rights to not use it. Anyway, sometimes it's not even necessary. Some customers have thin hair on the neckline or baby hairs that are easily cut with a good trimmer.

Older barbers used to shave using a one-piece straight razor back in the day. That's the one you don't have the option of changing. Barbers used to sharpen this tool using a strap. Nowadays, barbers can't use this tool because of transmittable diseases like Hepatitis viruses. Barbers used to sharpen these straight razors for hours to keep them sharp. I tried to sharpen them and trust me, it's tough and sometimes it's not even possible.

Now we shave with the disposable straight razor using a double-edged blade. Don't let commercials fool you; you only need one blade to shave your entire face. Sometimes commercials show the model shaving with a safety razor using five blades, and that's completely unnecessary. I can shave your full face using one razor blade. Sometimes if I use the straight razor at home, one blade doesn't last for three shaves before it loses its sharpness. By including multiple blades on the safety razor,

basically, they are selling you five blades instead of one. When you shave your face too close, the immune system creates thicker hair that is harder to cut and grows faster. If you leave your facial hair for at least a week and then you cut it using a trimmer, you will notice that the hair will be softer. If you shave every day using a safety razor against the grain, you will see that your hair will be thicker and harder to cut, and for that reason, you will need more blades. People who don't read this will make them richer. Now that you have this knowledge, you will not.

Shaving is an art, similar to dancing. You have to coordinate the moves you are going to make and predict what will happen after you make that move. Everybody dances in a different way. Every customer's skin is different. Barbers should be able to dance with different types of skin. As time goes by, experience is developed. Barbers will learn the areas that are more susceptible to getting cut because of the face curvature.

Chapter 6

"Wiser"



When we get older, we realize time passes slower than when we were younger. It is like that feeling you get when you are in the last minutes of your goal on an exercise run. It feels like time as you are running is never going to end. You take your sight away from the timer to see if the time moves faster. You feel like a minute has passed, but you look back, and only ten seconds have been added to the time. Those last two minutes can easily feel like ten.

When we are young, time seems to stop or pass slower, and we think time will never end. We believe we have all the time in the world, and even our bodies freeze. You won't see much change from nineteen years old until you're a young adult. This happens until we're about 27-30 years old. We think we know everything when we're young because we already know everything around us that's important to us. At least that's what we believe.

As we get older, time seems to fly. Every month, every season of the year, as you get older, will go faster. Eventually, a decade will feel like five years. When my father used to pick up my brothers and me on Sundays to spend time with him at his house, I knew that it was going to be nap time on the way to the car. It was an hour and a half trip to his home. Back in those days, we didn't have portable video game players or iPads. The choices were to talk to our father about our week while we were drawing in a notebook with crayons or to take a nap. The second

Chapter 5

"Spiced"



It is amazing that a car can drive by itself. We can talk and give commands to a speaker or lightbulb inside the house to play music, and turn the alarm or lights on or off. Soon, a drone will be able to deliver your mail and blood to a hospital to save a life. A robot can perform surgery controlled by a doctor miles away, but we cannot figure out how to make hair grow.

Some men and women lose their hair at some point in life. Men are the most affected by baldness. Women also experience it, but it is mostly thinning and weakness of the hair the way they lose it. Men lose their hair depending on a few factors. It can be genetic. This type of baldness is called male pattern baldness, or Androgenic Alopecia.

When I was learning to cut hair, we were required to take different classes, and the curriculum was divided into an average of ten or twelve topics. We were required to take a trichology course, which teaches the science of hair. I was told that baldness comes from the mother's family's side. After all these years, I agree with that. This is not always the case, but most men who have a mother with thin hair, a prominent forehead, and a receding hairline, are more susceptible to baldness in their adult years.

I'll give you an example. Rick Harrison, the American businessman and reality TV star known for his show "Pawn Stars" and Pawnography," is a bald man. That is not the case for his dad, Richard B. Harrison, "The Old Men" (R.I.P) on the show, or his son, Corey

Harrison. None of them are bald. Why, if his dad and son have plenty of hair, is he bald? I can't say I'm 100% sure it is because his mother had thin hair or her dad or uncles were bald, but it does make me wonder.

I myself have experienced similar circumstances. My hair definitely came from my mother's side of the family. My dad has straight hair, and mine has a wave just like my mother's. I'm lucky enough to still have some fuzz that I can call hair. My brothers, on the other hand, lost it all. When we were younger, I remember our hair was like our mother's. My dad has more hair than his dad, so maybe my grandma "fixed" his genes.

I see balding men all the time who bring their sons to get a haircut, and I see that not all of them will get bald when they are adults. In most of those cases, their mother has good hair genes. I have confirmed this plenty of times.

Baldness can also be caused by stress. Some people with stressful jobs and personal problems can experience baldness temporarily. Also, baldness can be caused by diet. I noticed something a few years ago. I don't want to sound racist, but some people, depending on their ethnicity, can have more hair than others. It is the way they eat and their diet that makes them have more hair. The way we eat affects our bodies in many ways. I think that spicy food is the key. Not everyone in different parts and countries of the world eats spicy food.

People who live in countries that don't include spicy food in their diet have more bald men; Germany, Russia, France, and the United Kingdom, for example. In countries with a diet that includes spicy food, their population has more hair, like Mexico. I can't say that all Mexicans have hair, but I can say that most of their men have plenty of hair. I suspect that is because of the spicy ingredients they have eaten every day for centuries. For some reason, this is not the case with their facial hair. Their lack of beard is another topic.

Also, Indian people have the most desirable hair to make wigs because their hair is strong and abundant. They love spicy food. It has been a part of their diet for hundreds, maybe thousands of years. Not all their men are exempt from becoming bald, but I can tell you even their bodies have a lot of hair. Jamaicans are also known for their jerk chicken and their spicy sauces. This is the country where men have dreadlocks, and you need to have hair to do that. Thai food is also spicy, and if you notice, most of their men also have hair. Japan, China, and Korea also include spices in their diet. Most of the males in those countries have very thick hair.

On the other hand, in countries that don't include spicy ingredients in their dishes, you'll see that their male population, in most cases, has many bald men. Let's do an experiment. This is something I do in my chair all the time. If you have a friend who is bald, ask him if he likes spicy food. In most cases, he will tell you he can't eat it, or he doesn't like it. Some people can't eat it because it makes them sick to their stomachs, so they avoid spicy food. Let's try another experiment. This one you've probably done before without knowing it. Try eating very spicy food. Before you do it, I will let you know that milk is known for blocking the sensation of burning in your mouth created by spices. When you eat it, notice if you get tickles on your scalp with a sweaty sensation. I'm pretty sure you know what I'm talking about. To me, why you don't feel this sensation in another part of your body is a mystery. But it makes me very curious in my journey to find out what causes men to be bald. By having this knowledge, every time somebody asks me if I want the food spicy, I always tell them yes, at least a small portion. In my household, we were three brothers. I'm the only one that still has some hair. My two brothers, the older and the youngest, are completely bald.

After I discovered that a spicy diet might be the reason some people have a lot of hair, I started an experiment to develop a cream to

apply on the scalp so maybe I could grow hair. Keep in mind that growing hair successfully is a multibillion-dollar industry. Whoever discovers how to grow hair will be very wealthy; and his entire genealogical tree. I went to the supermarket and bought some chili peppers and vegetables that I know are spicy. I tried to make different creams and different mixes without success. I thought maybe if I partnered with somebody who studied chemistry and told them about this discovery, there may be a way we could work together to develop a cream or a remedy for hair loss.

Now that this information is out, by writing this book, somebody can develop some product that can help people grow hair and battle male pattern baldness. I'm not sure if this is wanted by all the companies making a profit selling products that allegedly don't work for male baldness. I also noticed that people who let their hair grow so long that it touches their ears tend to grow hair on their ears. It is like the hair has seeds and plants hair next to wherever touched, spreading just like grass. Whenever I have a customer who has overgrown their hair and let it touch their ears for months, I can predict that, when I cut that hair and reveal the ear, it will have hair implanted. You should be aware of this if you are young. The last thing that you want is having hairy ears at a young age.

The only thing I'm sure of is that allegedly no product out there works for male pattern baldness. But sometimes, we buy an illusion. We don't mind having an illusion because it makes us feel better by giving us hope. The fear of failure makes us look for a way to avoid losing. Sometimes we overlook the problem and think about all the possible things we can do to solve an issue. Deep in our hearts, we know the answer as soon as we think about it, but it is in human nature to try to solve a problem and complicate it at the same time. Instead, we take action in a bad "business." Sometimes the fixation on something people

want makes us blind and doesn't let us see it is not good for us, or that we don't need it.

Getting back on topic, these companies that sell hair loss products are abundant. Many people buy them online, but allegedly most of these products don't work. The reason they continue selling the products is because these companies employ people, and these people pay their taxes. For that reason, they are allowed to continue selling their products even if they don't work or have noticeable proof they do. They help and contribute to the economy. As long as they don't kill or damage anybody with their products, they will keep selling them. As a consumer, you have to be smart about your money.

Think about it: Jeff Bezos is one of the richest men in the world, and he is bald. If he has all the resources and money in the world and doesn't have hair, what makes you think that buying a product online will make your hair grow? Companies take advantage of people, especially when they are young. They market their product, and maybe you buy a few products from this company, and by the time you realize it probably won't work, you stop buying it. Another person, with similar hopes that their hair will grow, will buy the product maybe a few additional times. Then it will be the time for the next person to try it and so on and so forth.

Another reason some men will lose their hair is because of hygiene. Sometimes I have customers who go to get a haircut, and their hair is so greasy and looks so nasty I don't even want to touch it. This type of person with lousy hygiene habits will lose their hair faster than a person who takes care of himself and washes their hair at least every other day. You have to remember that our skin is allergic to our sweat and natural oils. Also, if you don't wash your hair, the follicle will clog, and for this reason, the follicle won't be able to breathe, which is essential for good hair health. Good hygiene keeps you young when it is

maintained, and it can prevent skin diseases that are sometimes created by bad hygiene habits.

There's another type of alopecia. This type of alopecia can't be cured. It is not contagious, and it affects almost seven million Americans regardless of age or gender. It forms random patches the size of a quarter around the scalp. It primarily affects people emotionally by the looks of baldness. This type of alopecia is called Alopecia Areata and is also called AA or patchy hair loss. There are different types of AA: Alopecia Totalis, where all the hair on the scalp is gone (rare), and Alopecia Universalis, where all body hair is gone. Although this type of alopecia (areata) is considered common, with 200,000 cases per year, I don't see it quite often in the chair. This type of baldness occurs when the immune system attacks the hair follicles. It can also be caused by severe stress. It requires a medical diagnosis. Barbers can't make a diagnosis based on what they see; you need a medical professional for this. The trichologist is the best medical professional to make a diagnosis. Some of the treatments to prevent AA are cortisone injections, minoxidil, sunscreen, and some steroids, just to mention a few. Alopecia Areata is related to coeliac disease or celiac disease. A low or gluten-free diet helps to recover hair loss.

Recently, there was a scandal at the Oscars. On Tuesday, March 27, 2022, the host for the event, Chris Rock, made an unpleasant comment about Will Smith's wife, Jada Pinkett Smith. He refers to her as G.I. Jane because, at the event, she went with shaved hair because of her alopecia condition. It's hard to believe that he didn't know about her illness before making that "joke." Men should avoid making jokes about women as much as possible. That way, they can show that they are true gentlemen.

Another factor that can create male pattern baldness is stress. People who have very stressful jobs and very stressful lives can develop this type of baldness. Stress literally can kill you. You will learn this as

you get older. When you are young, you're hungry, and you want to work hard for your money and be prepared for the future. That's why, when we are young, we don't realize how bad stress is for us. You will notice how bad stress is for you when you take a break. Let's say you have your winter or summer vacation when you take a couple of weeks' holiday. During that time, you relax, and you enjoy living without the hard work we all have to put in to pay our bills and continue our lifestyles. During this period of vacation, your body is at ease. When you come back to work from this break is when you feel how hard your body was working to keep up with everything. This is especially if you have kids, which is not my case.

Some people going through difficult times at work or have complex conjugal relationships can lose their hair. When it is stress-related you may lose your hair, but you may recover the hair loss in time, and it's not permanent. This type of hair loss is called Telogen Effluvium. This happens when you have significant stress or a life-changing event, and the stem cells go through a resting stage causing the hair growth to stop, just like grass in wintertime. The good news is that stress-related hair loss is often reversible stress, and hair loss is not permanent.

In 2020, it was reported that hair loss was more common due to COVID-19 and the trauma of the pandemic itself. Everybody was following a stay-at-home order, and we couldn't live life the way we were supposed to. The uncertainty of what would happen was causing many people, including women, to temporarily lose their hair. There was even an article in *The Atlantic* named "The Year America's Hair Fell Out," written by Amanda Mull.

Many factors can affect your hair growth. I believe that hats or caps can contribute to hair loss. Some people won't agree to say that hair loss is primarily genetic, but it can't be healthy to wear a hat or a cap at the gym if you are exercising because your hair follicles need to breathe.

If you combine that with poor hygiene habits, that's even worse. That's why I try to avoid any hats or caps. You can feel your scalp hurting when wearing a tight cap or hat, especially if you have it on all day.

Some people may lose or reduce their hair growth in summer. This happens because of exposure to sunlight. Exposure to sunlight creates a scenario where your body produces less melatonin. This is not the case with everybody. Some people will grow more hair on summer days because the heat opens the pores, and also the sweat acts like a lubricant allowing the hair to grow faster.

Another factor that can contribute to hair loss is domestic problems. These can include toxic relationships with your partner and problematic sons or daughters. This reminds me of some relationships I had in the past. I knew it wasn't the best for me to be in some of these relationships, but I forced the situation until I accepted that I lost, and faith was right.

Another reason why some people lose their hair is because of chemotherapy. This is a very strong chemical procedure that targets all rapidly dividing cells, healthy cells, and cancer cells. Alopecia is one of the side effects of chemotherapy, and one of the reasons around 14% of women refuse to partake in the treatments. That should remind us how important hair is and how it affects our self-esteem. If you have to choose between having hair and losing your life, you definitely should choose to stay alive. Males can wear a hat, and females can wear a wig. There are very natural-looking wigs for sale online, and if you have a friend or family member who knows that you are going through cancer treatment, they won't say a thing if you're wearing one. I'm not an expert on this topic because I have never been diagnosed with cancer, so I apologize if I offended somebody by saying this.

During my years as a barber, I had customers going through this challenging process. When they told me their story, I didn't even want to charge them for the haircut. This was not because I felt sorry for them,

but because I know people going through this challenging process are going through tough economic times. I recently had two customers going through their cancer treatment. One of them had Jon Hopkins lymphoma. I asked him how he discovered that he had this disease: what were the symptoms that made him schedule a doctor's appointment. He told me that when he was sleeping, he was sweating a lot. This problem was forcing him to change his clothes at least two times overnight because he was all wet and catching the chills. When he went to the doctor and they did the lab tests on him, he was diagnosed with this type of cancer. This type of cancer, according to him, was treatable, and he will recover soon because they discovered the illness soon enough.

Another customer that I have also was recently diagnosed with cancer. This customer migrated to Florida to find a better job and better pay. He rented an apartment and bought a car, and he was in the process of bringing his wife to Florida when he came down with an extreme fever that wouldn't go away. He was waiting to see if the fever went away, but it didn't. That's when he decided to go to the doctor. At first, he didn't want to go because he didn't have health insurance. He was worried that he would have to pay a lot for the check-up. His fever was so high that he started to bleed from his ears and his nose. After they did some labs on him, they discovered that he had Leukemia, which is the type of cancer that attacks your blood.

Leukemia is also called blood cancer, and is rare in the United States with fewer than 200,000 cases per year. Treatments for this type of cancer depend on the severity. Leukemia is a cancer of the body's blood-forming tissues, including the bone marrow and the lymphatic system. After the first round of chemotherapy, he came back from the hospital, and he lost at least 80% of his hair. He still has some hair, which I cut and he had enough to do an outline. In the case of a man, it's a bit easier to hide because men can wear a hat, and it is less noticeable because many men use hats daily.

Another method I have discovered that prevents hair loss is stimulating your scalp by scratching or massaging it. By doing this, you can attract blood flow to the hair follicles so they get the nutrients needed for hair growth. These nutrients are in your blood by eating the food you usually eat every day. When you scratch your scalp, you will notice that it gets red, which means the blood is around the area you scratched.

Some people also think that gravity affects hair growth. It may make sense if you think about it from the perspective that the head is the tallest part of your body, which is the reason it's difficult for the blood to reach the scalp. I think that's not the case because some parts of your head grow hair, but others don't, so I think male pattern baldness is more a genetic problem, rather than a blood circulation issue. That doesn't mean that poor blood circulation can't affect your hair growth, though. That's why I suggest you massage your scalp and scratch it once in a while to bring blood to your scalp so it can get the nutrients it needs for hair to grow.

Perfection is better accomplished (if you reach that level) when you're not looking for it. It has to be a balance between doing and overdoing things. Remedies for health issues are discovered by error or by experiments on something that wasn't related to the illness they were researching.

In hairstyling or barbering, sometimes overdoing a style is as bad as a bad haircut. If your hair grows quickly, you want a shorter haircut so it will last. Well, this may not be the case. The shorter you cut your hair, the faster it grows. It is the natural body's reaction to do the opposite to compensate itself when needed.

That's why when we're hot, our body looks for a way to get cooler by sweating. Our pupils will contract naturally when exposed to sunlight. They will expand in darkness in search of better vision. Some

clients go to the shop asking me to cut their hair shorter because it is growing too fast. This isn't necessarily the best thing to do.

Some hairstyles last longer than others. A classic haircut can last four to six weeks, depending on the hairstyle and hair texture. With straight hair, like Asian hair, the haircut can last longer. This happens because the hair sits close to the scalp and is less noticeable when it is longer. Curly hair may need frequent maintenance or the application of a product to keep it looking presentable. This happens because the hair sits far from the scalp, giving it an abundant look quicker. Hairstyles on the short side are high maintenance because it is more noticeable when the hair is growing back. Haircuts that are lower than a 3mm or a #1 guard double weekly in the amount of hair growth. So a shorter haircut will not necessarily last longer than a long one.

When men shave their facial hair, the hair grows back quickly. If you shave today or tomorrow, you'll have double the amount of hair as yesterday. By the third day of the shaving, you'll have three times the amount of hair as when you shaved. On the other hand, if you have a beard and you cut it today with a #2 guard and wait a week to cut it again, you won't have double the amount of hair you had the first day you shaved it. It is less noticeable because the amount of hair is greater than the amount it will grow in a week.

Skin fades and head shaves are the most high-maintenance haircuts. It is the natural way the body has to solve a "problem." Your body knows there's supposed to be hair, and it recognizes something is going on, so its natural reaction is to grow hair faster.

It is the same when gentlemen dye their hair. The longer it is, the less maintenance is needed. When the hair is longer, it covers the gray hair growing under the dyed hair. When the hair is shorter than a #2 guard, the gray will be noticeable faster. This is because it doesn't have a "roof" on top with dyed hair, so the grays are in plain sight. You can get

away with it for no more than two weeks. You can get away with it with longer hair for up to four weeks.

It is not easy to notice when you're not a barber, but the pores can shift the angle in which the hair grows. When people with curly hair cut their hair short after wearing it long for a long time, the pores and follicles organize the natural way the hair grows. As soon as the hair starts to grow, and the length of the hair starts to make the waves, the pores begin to take shape in favor of the wave. Sometimes, when you cut this type of hair short after wearing it long, you will notice the pores and follicles shifting. It will take from two to four days, maybe less, so the pores revert to the natural way they grow.

Frequently, when I cut the hair of people with curly hair, I have to explain to them how their hair behaves because sometimes after the haircut is complete, they want to make adjustments to the haircut based on what they see at the moment. This type of hair needs to be washed and conditioned before making any change after the barber or hairstylist thinks it is done. Sometimes they will need to place a little bit of trust in us. After years of experience, we can predict how the hair will look after the hair is washed. The hair and haircut will take a new shape after this.

I learned this with the first friend I cut with curly hair. After his haircut, I was frustrated because I thought that I had completely messed up his hair. I was sad because I couldn't make him look good like I always did with my other friends. After I was done with the haircut, he went home, took a shower, shampooed, and conditioned his hair. We were going to gather on the street corner at night because we were going to a party. When we gathered later that night, I looked at his hair, and it was amazing how it looked, to the point that I asked him if he went to another place to fix it. He told me, "No, man! This is your haircut! I didn't do anything after you cut it." From that moment on, after I cut curly hair, I spray some water while I shave the edges with the straight razor to give the hair a few minutes to re-shape.

Even with straight hair, when it is not properly maintained and dirty, this can happen, too. This is because the hair becomes impermeable (waterproof) because of the excess of natural oils created by the body to protect it. Water alone will not suffice in this case. It needs to be washed and conditioned to take a new shape.

Overdoing a haircut is the most common mistake that hairstyling students and beginners make. It is important to know the clipper guard number you prefer on your hairstyle. As a client, this is basic, so your barber doesn't over-cut or guess while doing your haircut. I have many clients who sit in the chair and I ask them, "How do you want your haircut?" Most of them reply that they want it short on the sides and a little longer on top. Saying this is essentially the same as ordering a burger, and when the server asks you how you want your burger, you tell them you want a piece of meat between two buns. It is going to be hard for her to understand exactly how you want your burger. Knowing the clipper guides that you regularly use for your haircut should be on your repertory of measurements, like your shirt, pants, and shoe size. This will decrease the chances of overdoing your cut and misunderstandings at the barber chair.

Some barbers, much like myself, work by appointment, and we have a limited and tight schedule to work within. Usually, each cut takes between 30 and 45 minutes. Some haircuts will need more time, but if the barber is busy, he'll do it in 30 minutes. Time is money; time is always the answer. Time is what made Albert Einstein's hair grayer and wilder. Time affects our quality of life in many ways. If you don't know exactly how you want your haircut, that means that from those 30 minutes the barber has for your cut, he'll now waste 10 minutes working with a trial-and-error situation with you. He could use those 10 minutes perfecting what he already knows you want.

"Do whatever you want" is not the best answer, either, when explaining how you want your style. If you go to a restaurant and say

this, you're only going to confuse the server. After all, they're not going to eat it, right? You are the one who's going to be eating it, so you should know what you want.

That's why I think the best tip is to bring your pictures to a barbershop or salon. As long as you have realistic expectations about your hair, and the hair of the model in the picture looks like yours, you should be ok. Realistic expectations are also included when you realize the hairstyle in the picture took close to one hour to accomplish. Your barber only will have 30-45 minutes unless he or she doesn't have anyone after your turn. In that case, they will have time to polish your style more. In my case, I don't like to extend more than the time I have because if you "spoil" that client that day, he is going to expect the same treatment during the next session. On the next occasion, the barber will probably have the next appointment right after yours. The style won't be as detailed as the previous one, and you will likely get mad.

Another situation that can affect the outcome of a haircut is barbers being distracted by their phones. Texting and talking on the phone isn't the best way to show respect for a client as a barber. It is very hard to try to accomplish perfection while talking on the phone, or even with a co-worker while cutting hair.

Barbers who do this are unprofessional, and I will explain why. When the barber or stylist is talking on the phone, depending on the subject, this talking can impact their emotions, especially if they're too happy or too mad. So if they're excited while cutting hair, there is a possibility that they will overdo your haircut. When you're excited, you may do things too fast or too slow, or even forget what you were doing and lose the steps and sequence you were taking to cut the hair.

On the other hand, if your emotions are low, you may be under-doing the haircut. This is because the dip in energy causes you to lose interest in what you are doing. That's why I don't answer my phone when I'm working. If I answer the phone because of an emergency, I

stop cutting hair until I finish and try to make it brief. I like to show respect for my customers. I want them to understand also that the time they are in my chair, I will make the best of their time. After all, they are paying for that time and service.

I'll probably never understand how life works. I know how we are supposed to live it, how we're told in our households and school to behave in society and not get in trouble or arrested. A customer once told me his grandfather's advice to avoid trouble: "Don't do stupid things." That advice covers pretty much everything in life. I try not to follow stereotypes unless they are a fact. Just because the sky is gray doesn't mean that it is going to rain. But if it is zero degrees outside and most people walk out wet and barefoot without a coat, they will likely catch a cold; that's a fact.

If a lawyer walks into the courthouse with a mohawk hairstyle, at first, people in the courthouse are going to think he looks stupid. But if he wins a number of cases, people will respect him no matter what. To me, it is a fact that, if you want something from a person and you think that you are going to get it by being nice all the time, you're wrong.

That may work with a long-lasting relationship like with a spouse or a family member, but outside, the inner circle isn't going to work all the time. That's why I do not want to be the one who "loves more than the other" in a relationship. They usually get hurt the most. Like a government worker at a government office, you have to push them so they do their job. If you don't do it, you will end up with fewer documents or errors.

You can't be too soft or too good to people because they will take advantage of you. They will think you are stupid, and they will try you and ride you like a horse. They will suck every drop of blood from you like parasites do. Start to be strong with people. Start with the barista or the to-go order waitress without being too exigent about it. But don't

walk the world lowballing yourself. Speak up, and you will get better service; people are customizable.

I recently got in communication with an ex. After two years, she saw me on a dating app. I was trying to avoid her and didn't want to talk to her. Eventually, she sent a message to ask how I was. I told her I was fine, and I was here in the app just meeting people occasionally, looking for nothing serious. In the third message, she wrote this: "It is your life, you can waste it as you want, but you're old. Don't you want to get married and have kids? Or do you just want to mess around? Really? What's wrong with you?" Excuse me if I can't help to replay some flashbacks of previous toxic fights and arguments. I didn't reply to the message when I saw hell's gate semi-open. She waited a day and a half and then sent me four additional messages and deleted her account. If I were younger and with less wisdom, I would've jumped right in again. Now I know better, and I know it probably isn't good to get back in a toxic relationship just to get some of "it."

I have seen clients paying child support for a son or daughter they don't see. I don't want that to be my case. The irony is that some clients have kids that they don't have to pay child support for because they're not theirs, and they see them every day. I admire men in this situation because, in that relationship, they are second, and the child is first no matter what. If I would've stayed in that relationship, I probably would have lost my hair. But some people have to stay in those toxic relationships because they have children together, and they have to think about them and their future.

In my chair, I have some picky clients and some people who are not. I don't want to stereotype, but picky clients usually lack confidence. They think if there's something wrong with the haircut, this will make them uglier, or they don't feel like themselves. The truth is that your personality, not a bad haircut, can change it. If you shave your head and have the same personality as when you had long hair, your confidence in

yourself will still be there. People will notice this, and they will treat you in kind. But if you act shy and not confident, people will notice a change in your personality. Then they will ask why you're acting like that.

I was never a fan of verbally flamboyant people: the ones who "never shut up," who are loud and want attention from everyone so they feel alive. Many of my experiences with people like this are bad. Some people also like to ask many questions about personal things. I don't like this kind of person, either. I think they are full of it. I have clients in my chair who sit for the first time, and the third question they ask is where I live. I keep the thoughts in my head, but I just want to ask them why they want to know that much. Asking for details like where I live... I mean, I just met you! I've worked with receptionists and co-workers for years, and we never discussed where we live. In most cases, they have never been to my house, so why should I tell this stranger that? I get that, as a barber, we have to be friendly and polite. Maybe that client just wants to know about the area you live in, and that's fine with me. Some clients won't be satisfied if you tell them a random place. They want the condominium building with the number and everything.

Sometimes I wish I were more of a liar than a straight-answer kind of guy. I'd probably have more fun at work, but for some reason, it doesn't work that way for me. I'm straightforward; I don't like to lie. One time, I told a client I had to leave because I had to pick up my daughter. I don't have a daughter! I don't have kids. The next time he went for a haircut, he asked me how my daughter was. I forgot about what I said during his last session and I told him the truth: I didn't have a daughter. Then he was confused because I told him I had one the last time he was there. I didn't have any option but to tell him it was an excuse I used to leave early that day. That's why I always tell the truth to my clients.

I'm also quiet while I'm cutting hair because I tend to be misunderstood. I also don't like to repeat myself. Sometimes that's not good because some people ask me if they are balding. That's when I tell

them one of those neutral lawyers' answers like “yes, but no.” But trust me, if I put the mirror on top of their head, I won't even need to talk. I will scare the hell out of them. Sometimes I still do, though. If I have a client who I don't like, that has made my life difficult for the last thirty minutes, I put the mirror on top of their head to make it clear it is not my fault the haircut isn't working. Since I don't care about balding or losing hair, I'm happy to burst that bubble. When I show them the "crown," they look like a kid when you tell them there's no more candy. Sometimes you have to be mean, and you have to tell people some things they don't want to hear.

I lived through the new undercut and pompadour haircut trend in 2013. With this trend, it has become clear to me that some people think we're magicians. You can't leave a bunch of hair on top if you don't have abundant hair. Those haircuts are for people with very long, thick hair. These types of haircuts also are mostly for people with straight hair, at least back then. Unless you're lucky enough to wake up early to blow dry your hair, this style isn't for you.

For wavy hair, a pompadour haircut looks good, depending on the length and style of the hair. If you straighten your hair with a hair relaxer or keratin, this hairstyle is possible with long hair. The pompadour haircut can be similar to curly hair with a fade and quiff trend that started in 2019-2020. In this case, though, the haircut includes a medium or low skin fade. It also can be done with a different or longer guard like two or one. This is typically the haircut teenagers prefer. This haircut looks very nice with curly hair. It naturally falls on the client's forehead with curls instead of combing the hair up and back like the pompadour. It is almost the same style but combed differently. If you choose to have this haircut, you should wash your hair frequently, especially if you use a product. This is because the hair falls on the forehead, and sometimes, if the customer doesn't have the proper

hygiene, they can get pimples on the forehead. Remember, our skin is allergic to our own body waste.

The pompadour hairstyle was named after Jeanne Antoinette Poisson or Madame de Pompadour. She was a member of the French court and the mistress of King Louie XV of France from 1745 to 1751. This haircut has different variations for women, men, and children. To better describe this haircut, it has the bulk of the hair on the top, is combed back, and as it goes back, it gets shorter. The hair on the side is combed up to meet the hair on the top.

Clients who sit in the chair and quietly observe what the barber is doing have a better outcome than clients who interrupt them every two minutes. Interruption is a muse killer in art or anything that requires concentration. Let the barber do their job. Don't kill their muse unless the barber is killing your hair, of course. If you need an adjustment to the haircut, let them know either at the beginning or the end of the haircut.

I apologize if I offend anyone by saying this, but for some reason, insecure and demanding clients are ugly. I don't want to sound like I'm making fun of anyone, so let me explain. A handsome client needs very little to look good, although sometimes they can be picky, too. If a client is handsome and has good symmetry in his facial characteristics, he would need an awful haircut to look ugly. Some customers who are "difficult to look at," though, need very little to make them look even uglier. Some clients look very good bald. They don't even need hair to look good. Look at Jason Statham or Vin Diesel; the guys are bald, and there's not a hotel room in the world that they can't bring company to if they wanted. On the other hand, when clients don't have good symmetry in their facial characteristics, it is easy to make them look uglier. Unfortunately, we have been programmed to think ugly means the looks that models, actors in TV commercials, and fashion magazines don't have.

We are all, in our own way, beautiful. Some handsome clients have no personality, so what makes them look beautiful is their looks. Other clients are not the most attractive, but they have remarkable and extraordinary personalities. Their personality is what makes them beautiful. If you have seen the 2013 crime/drama "American Hustle," you'll remember Amy Adams' character (Sydney Prosser) describing Christian Bale's character (Irvin Rosenfeld), and you'll know what I'm talking about. None of the compliments that she describes are about his looks, but about his character and confidence in himself. Some clients don't have looks or personalities, but they have money, so what makes them beautiful is their money. Some clients don't have looks, character, or money, but they have brains, so their brain is what makes them attractive. Some women are attracted to brains other than looks, personality, or money.

Clients who sit in the chair to get a haircut and remain quiet and observe are people who have more realistic expectations about the outcome of their haircut. They are secure about themselves and the barber doing their job. These clients are the best to work with. Finding a good barber is mostly a trial-and-error situation, much like most of our daily necessities at a restaurant, a grocery store, looking for a doctor, a construction company, etc. You try them, and if you don't like the services, you don't go back. Why bother trying to change the world?

During my years at work, I understand that you can't listen to everything people has to say. When you're learning another language, you just need a few words to understand what someone is trying to communicate; keywords. Sometimes the phonetics of the language sound rude. Some languages like Cantonese make the speaker sound unpleasant. They may be saying a beautiful quote, but it sounds rough. The same thing happens with some clients. The tone they use when giving instructions sounds bad. It's almost as if they are mad, even if it is their first haircut with us. They just sound mad, but I understand it is

because of their previous experiences with other barbers. The sound of their instructions is a paranoid sound.

It is like when you're getting to know a new partner in life. Sometimes you will be treated as if you're the ex-partner. Because of previous experiences, the person is molded to the past behavior of the former partner. Even if you're not into some kind of behavior, you will be guilty even if you are innocent. This may sound funny, but barber-client relationships are like a marriage. If I have a client and I know it has been a long time since I last saw them, and suddenly I see them talking with a coworker, I may think they're flirting with my client. It may be considered cheating if they cut their hair with another barber. Of course, marriage relationships are different. Cheating is not acceptable in marriages, but cheating in the barber-client relationship is permitted and is even considered healthy by me.

You can't marry just one barber because daily life situations, like sickness or vacations can happen. If your regular barber is not around because he is sick or on vacation, it is good to have an extra hand around to help. Don't think you're cheating. Maybe you don't like my work as much as another barber. Perhaps I'm giving 100% of my effort to please you, but you're still not satisfied. Another barber may use 10-20% of effort on your cut, and you'll like it even better. Maybe it is not the cut you don't like, but it is my personality, and I understand that. Sometimes I feel the same way with a few customers.

One time, I was going to cut a new client's hair, and I called his name so he could sit on the chair and start the service. I couldn't believe what he told me: "You don't look like a barber." That was funny because I already knew he was the type of client guided by stereotypes and appearances. I wanted to reply to him, "and what do I look like? A florist? A mechanic?" In fractions of a second, he studied my entire face, my hair, tattoos, clothes, and the shoes I was wearing. He made a conclusion about me based on what he was looking at, like the profiling

some undercover security guards in Florida do to me while shopping at the supermarket. Pleasing a guy like this was almost as if I had to orchestrate a Cirque du Soleil performance to get his approval. I don't even want business from people like this. I don't need approval from anyone. What you see is what you get. I would be happier if we just skipped the whole freak show and you just get another barber.

That's why I don't like reviews, bad or good. I'd rather be neutral. I don't like bad reviews for obvious reasons. I don't like good ones, either, because you just attract picky and demanding clients. Clients referred by good reviews have high expectations of what the service will be. Not necessarily the experience; the client who wrote the review will be yours. Maybe he's not a demanding client, and he's just happy with what the barber did with his hair, but the reader's interpretation is that he's going to meet a superhero. The salvation to all his prayers, and the magician who is going to fix his hair. The reality is not necessarily that the client's experience will be the same as yours. You should try your faith.

A review can help, but it isn't going to do all the work. I'm a sharp barber. All my cuts are even and sharp. That maybe isn't what you're looking for. Perhaps you're looking for an uneven type of cut. No matter the effort I put forth with a client, if he doesn't like the cut, he just won't. One day they go to the barber next to me, and he does a terrible, uneven haircut. He didn't do it on purpose, he just didn't know what he was doing. But he gave you a friendly conversation and you liked the experience. In that case, the client isn't looking for a skillful barber, but a barber that he can be comfortable with. I respect that.

choice was almost involuntary. When I was in the car, it was almost automatic that, after the first thirty minutes, I was going to fall asleep. It was inevitable not to while listening to the relaxing gospel music, white noise, and car vibration.

For people who don't know, white noise is often used to help people sleep better, reduce stress, and relax. The sound of a car is an example of white noise. You can find different examples of white noise on Youtube. Those thirty minutes were like two hours. If for any reason, there was a loud noise when I was asleep during the trip, or my father suddenly pressed the break, I was going to wake up. Even if it was just a thirty-minute nap, I woke up with a sleepy face thinking we were already at my father's house, just to be disappointed because we were only less than halfway.

I see the same situation at the barbershop when a client comes to get a haircut with his son or daughter. I politely play some cartoons for them while they wait. That's the time for me to catch up with what's going on in kids' TV shows. Although I find modern cartoons weird and sexualized, they seem to enjoy them very much and forget about how long the haircut is taking. Meanwhile, their parents and I get tortured with some of these high pitch cartoon songs. It's ok with me because at least they're entertained and I can do my job without their parents or me being distracted by their behavior.

Some kids are too small to get distracted or understand the cartoons, so that's when the client and I are in trouble. Trying to give a haircut in this situation is like being stuck in traffic. You feel happy when suddenly you start to move, but you get angry when not even five seconds pass, and you have to stop again. Trust me, you have to have patience to do this job. I finish those haircut sessions with a headache if there is more than one kid. I have a client who has four boys, so that's close to two hours of these annoying cartoon theme songs.

If you want a taste of it, try listening to the Phineas and Ferb theme song. Play it on a loop for like four episodes in a row. You'll feel like you're in a war zone getting psychologically tortured. Spoiler alert, they love to sing them too! Keep in mind that they like the volume nice and loud for some reason. Even playing these cartoons for them, I can see how the kids get uncomfortable and impatient before they finish getting their haircut. The trick to cutting children's hair is to do so as fast as you can.

When they see it is time for the father's haircut, they won't even let me put the cape on their dad, and they're already asking if we're done. They have one foot in the shop and the other out the door, ready to go. I know they feel just like I did when I was going to my father's house. If I go on an international or long flight and see kids around my chair, I start to pull my headphones or earplugs out immediately. Only their parents and sometimes not even they can handle that kind of "natural high." When we get older, time seems to fly. Our bodies get slower, and for that reason, time will move faster.

Every year, thanks to capitalism, people try to solve a problem, and they try to make money in the process. They think they can simplify the way people do things. In reality, what they're doing is complicating it. Now we have to work harder to pay for their new expensive gadget. That means more hours at work and less time at home. This is another reason why, when you are older, time shrinks. We get busier and busier with things that are not always necessary. If you see an old movie or the recreation of a period in the 1950s, families used to gather in the mornings to have breakfast in the dining room. You'll see how they read the newspaper, drinking coffee and orange juice with all the time in the world to cook their bacon. They took their time before preparing to go to work. Even if they had to go to work or school, they still had time to kill and have a relaxing morning before going to work.

Those times were less complicated, and the cost of living was cheaper. Contrary to modern days, every dollar was worth more back then. We didn't need as much money as in current times. We didn't have to work and overwork like now, either. Back in those days, there was less traffic. Now you see women texting, applying makeup, putting on deodorant, removing nail polish, gluing on fake eyelashes, and having breakfast in their car. By setting this example, they train their children to do the same: "Monkey see, monkey do."

I have seen men shaving with electric razors, flossing teeth, cleaning their noses, ears, and having breakfast behind the wheel. When I lived in Miami, my old retired clients told me how the city used to be fifty years ago before vs. after the Cuban revolution. It used to be a city where older people went to enjoy retirement. After living there for fourteen years, I can tell you it's not anymore. North or Central Florida are better for that these days. Some of them left but kept their homes in South Florida, looking for better weather and escaping the winter season up north. These are the famous "Snowbirds." You can easily spot them because they like to wear short cargo pants, colorful Hawaiian shirts, and leather sandals. They also have terrible driving skills.

After the Cuban migration, close to a million Cubans arrived in Miami looking for a better scenario than the Communist-Socialist new government in Cuba. This was made possible through the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966. This act allows Cubans to become permanent residents of the United States after two years of living in the US. Later in 1976, this law was amended and was reduced to only one year. The retirees won't be alone anymore. Also, the criminality, drugs, and economic situations in central and South America force people to move to Miami.

Suddenly, retirees started to avoid death with all the crazy drivers in Miami (not necessarily Cubans, but Miami drivers in general), giving away their relaxing days to hurried people trying to get home from work

or vice versa. One time, I was parking my car at the supermarket, and this old lady, probably 75 years old, was crossing the street, and there was a guy in his car who stopped to let her pass. In the middle of crossing the street, she stopped and made a scared gesture, like she forgot something at the store. She looked at her purse. After looking, she realized the object she was looking for was probably inside her wallet and kept walking forward. The guy letting her pass pressed the accelerator in the middle of that process when he thought she was returning to the store and almost ran her over. I realized that day that the city my old retired clients described to me was long gone.

Miami is a young city with young and ambitious residents in the middle of a construction boom. Everywhere you look, there's a construction project. Trying to make a living in this beautiful, crowded, and expensive city can be overwhelming. Miami recently passed New York as the most expensive housing market in the United States. The consideration and common sense for older people seem to be less common as the years go by. I try to maintain my respect and manners with older people as much as possible. After all, I aspire to be one in the future. We're having fun one day, and we don't know how it will be the next day.

I recently had a request at the barbershop. One young lady called the barbershop to request an outcall shave for her father, who was in a hospital recovering from a stroke he had while going to the Bahamas on a boat. The receptionist passed the message through all the barbers to see if anyone could or wanted to do it, and all of them said no. As expected, they were lazy, selfish bastards anyways. I don't do outcalls because I'm very busy at the shop. I work close to ten hours a day, so I didn't have time to do it. But I agreed to do this one. I went mainly because I felt terrible for him, and it isn't easy for a person to shave when they are in this situation. I put myself in his position. I respect older people.

Going there was a good experience for me. It was a reminder to enjoy life. Life is so short, and we don't realize it until we age. The healthier times we have are when we are young. Although we know it, we spend most of that time working. We don't have a choice, do we? Maybe wealthy people do have this choice. When I see younger people in my chair, it reminds me of that "frozen" stage in life. I almost want to tell them what Alan Arkin's character, "Grandpa Edwin," told his step-grandson, "Dwayne," during a road trip on a yellow bus in the 2006 movie "Little Miss Sunshine." Search on the internet, and you'll find the speech. Once I realized life was going too fast, I decided to start traveling while still young. Sometimes we have to force ourselves to do it. If I see a good deal on a plane ticket, I buy it, sometimes without even knowing if I will be able to go. This is how I force myself to look for the time or make room to enjoy myself and take a break from the crazy routine at work. I skipped traveling to Europe a few years sometimes because I didn't have a partner or friend who matched the same time off. Now, if I don't have anyone to go with, I go solo. I like it also, and you can go at a different pace than if you were traveling with someone.

I was amazed by how many people have blogs or videos on the internet traveling solo. Although he didn't travel solo, Chef and TV host Anthony Bourdain (R.I.P.) makes traveling look effortless and natural to me. This also inspired me to do the same. I did a few travels worldwide, and I learned a lot from those travels. So far, I have been to 25 countries. The only thing I regret is not doing it before. Traveling is not going to another state in the USA as some people think. I needed to experience other cultures and people outside of my ethnicity, and the awkwardness of trying to communicate with someone who doesn't speak our language.

Traveling is not going to Disney World. Traveling is leaving everything you know about your culture and experiencing another one and learning how other people live and do things in a different

environment. I think this is the best way to know who you are and what you represent in the world. When you travel, you compare yourself to other people, and you understand better who you are.

I took the example from my father. Every year, he would travel to a new country almost to the point that he barely had any place left, or at least somewhere that he wanted to go to. He was a college professor until retirement. He wanted to travel to countries related to his curriculum at the university. That way, he could teach his students firsthand from experiences he had in those countries. Also, he could show his students pictures as examples and articles he got from those specific countries. I have tremendous respect for my father. He is also a writer. He has published nine novels during his career. He writes about cultural issues on the island of Puerto Rico. He also writes stories and books for children and teenagers. He has tremendous knowledge of words, and his vocabulary is vast. If he were the one writing this, the choice of words would be very different.

The fact that I am writing is no coincidence. I followed his example. I wanted to put in his hands a book written by me. I try to make him proud. He is the wiser man to whom I dedicate this chapter. The wiser are the older people who know and understand by their experiences different life situations. Wisdom is the combination of experience, knowledge, common sense, and careful judgment. They know how to spot a red flag in a business or a deal. They also know if a lady is good for you or not. They can often spot when things are not going to go in the right direction from the start.

In many cultures like India, China, and Russia, parents choose the wife or husband for their sons or daughters through arranged marriages. Sometimes, I guess it is good, but sometimes it is not because they mainly focus on the wealth or family of the chosen individual. This can create some problems because, as we know, not everything in life is money. The wiser also know what to do at work if you have a hater or

some kind of enemy. My father once gave me the best response to this issue. It is not good to have an enemy at work because sometimes you could need each other for any reason; he was right. Although I choose to ignore haters, it is better to make things work and forget differences.

The problem is that these people sometimes don't have the same way of thinking as you, so no matter what, they will always hate you even if you do something nice for them. Life is like a movie, and somebody has to participate in that role. This happened to me with a guy who used to work with me at the same barbershop. No matter how poorly this person talked about me, if he needed my help, I was always there. One time this person had a flat tire. No one had a jack, four-way lug wrench, or a cross-wheel spanner. Guess who had it? You're right, me!

There was a rush at the barbershop on another occasion, so time for lunch was limited. I always bring different snacks during the day, so I have food available in case of an emergency. This person was almost to the point of passing out. I took one of my snacks, this one happened to be a banana, and I passed it over. He ate it along with the shit he always used to talk. You'll need help sometimes, and it will often come from the person you would least expect.

My father was right: although I wasn't the one needing the help, I ended up helping the hater. My father didn't know how to deal with racism, not because he missed anything, but because he had never lived in the United States. The racism game here is significant and disgraceful. It is unbelievable how we are in the first quarter of the 2000s and people still think this way. In Puerto Rico and many Latin countries, racism doesn't exist. If it does, it is very limited. One of my best childhood friends is black. The husband of my cousin is black. I had a few girlfriends in my life who are black. They're eye candy for me, and I'm eye candy for them. I love my black Latinas. In Puerto Rico, we copy the way black people dress, talk, and make music. Even if I'm a

white skin Latin, I consider myself to have blackness in my blood. My grand grandfather was also black.

We Puerto Ricans are a mix of three races: white Europeans, blacks from Africa, and the native Puerto Ricans or Indians. Their name was Indios Taínos. We called Indians the native people of Puerto Rico before Spain's colonization on November 19, 1493. The term "Indian" in some countries of Latin America could be an insult. It can sometimes refer to people with no manners or education. It is almost like the term "redneck" or "cracker" in the United States. In Puerto Rico, however, the term "Indian" is totally fine to use. The native people of Puerto Rico were the first habitants of the island. In our eyes, Puerto Rico was never discovered by Spanish conquistadors. The island discovery was a discovery for them but not for us. People used to live a happy life there before colonization. There's evidence that Taínos occupied the island for 1,000 years before colonization. The Taíno culture died out during the latter half of the 16th century because of exploitation, war, and diseases brought by the Spanish people.

The second habitats of the island were the Europeans or Spanish people. When Spanish people realized Puerto Rico's strategic importance, minerals, and land to be exploited, they brought and enslaved black men from Africa to do the hard jobs. They were located in San Juan, especially La Perla, which is a neighborhood that still exists today. The music video "Despacito" by Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee, with more than 7 billion views on Youtube, was filmed in La Perla. They housed the enslaved people there because they were close to the fortresses built to protect San Juan from enemies like France, England, Holland, and pirates. The fort constructed there was San Felipe del Morro, named in honor of King Philip the Second of Spain. The purpose of its construction was to protect the city of San Juan from sea-based attacks. Also, Fort San Cristóbal is a 15-20 minutes walk from El Morro, and its main purpose was to protect the city from land-based attacks.

Another neighborhood that still exists today and was used to house enslaved black people was Loíza, "The capital of traditions." This is one of the cities that introduced the music style and traditional folk dance of Bomba and Plena. Every year, they have a carnival or festival in which people wear a mask, called the "Vegigante mask." This mask is made out of a coconut shell, and they paint it by hand using bright colors. The African culture in Loíza is noticeable. There are different rumors about the city's name origin. I like to think that it was in honor of a female Cacique (Cacica) named Yuiza Loáiza, "The Last Taíno Queen." This was the tribal chief or Taíno version of a King or Queen. She was the only Cacica in Borikén; the Pre-columbian name of Puerto Rico. It means "The great land of the valiant and noble Lord." She was one of only two Caciccas in the entire Caribbean. She was the person whom Lior Patcher was describing in his blog as the closest neighbor of the "The perfect human" is HG00737: a female who is Puerto Rican. People argue that he sarcastically wrote this, but I like the idea of Mr. Patcher.

That's three different races, and I will also add the North American influence as the most recent race to be added. This resulted from the Spanish War with the United States in 1898. We are one race, not four; we are blended into one race. The North American addition is more of a cultural influence in our culture. When I came to the United States, I noticed a sharp dividing line between races. I didn't know anything about this, and I learned the hard way.

My first job in Miami was located in Liberty City, a primarily black community. Is ranked #1 as the most dangerous city in Miami. Since I'm not racist and I came to the United States with a Puerto Rican mentality, I moved right next to the barbershop where I used to work. I didn't have a car, so I walked from the barbershop to the studio (efficiency) I rented. It was a five-minute walk. I noticed the neighbors were a little uncomfortable with my presence there. They were making

funny comments to me at the time, like "I think it is snowing around here" when I was walking back home. They treated me differently, so eventually, I had to move. I decided to move when I bought a used scooter to get to work and get to know the city on my days off. When I came back from buying the scooter, I noticed someone in my apartment. As soon as I opened the front door, they came out of the apartment through a window in the bathroom. The window was connected to the patio. They waited for me to go inside so they could leave my apartment, and I didn't follow them. I couldn't tell the thief's race, and I don't want to stereotype.

I decided to move to Miami Beach because I love the beach and it has a similar vibe to Puerto Rico. You'll see that every race has its area or neighborhood in Miami. The Jews are around Aventura and Surfside, Russians are in Sunny Isles, and Cubans are in Hialeah and Little Havana. Little Haiti is obvious, but they are being pushed out because of real estate inflation, along with Little Jamaica. White Americans are in Downtown Brickell, Hollywood, Ft Lauderdale, and Las Olas. African Americans are in Liberty City, North Miami, some areas of Opa Locka, and Carol city. Argentinian and Latin people from different countries are in North Miami Beach and Wynwood. Wynwood is a Hipster City with a fantastic nightlife. It is also known worldwide for the famous Art Basel and street art and graffiti.

I moved to Miami Beach because the ethnicity here is more mixed and is what I am used to. I can see how racism impacts United States residents even in my chair. When I have a black client in my chair, I can tell they wonder if I'm going to judge them or if they are going to be treated like everybody else. In my barber chair, my life, there's no racism, so I treat everyone the same. I take the same time and effort with them. I do the same process, and they appreciate that from me. I already know better about racism, so I do my best to make them

know I'm not one they need to worry about. After all, they like my "Chico" touch, and I hook them up.

In my barbershop, Blessed Blade, I have different decorations related to black heritage. I had never been to Africa, but one of these days I want to go. I ordered a traditional handmade necklace from Ghana, Africa. I also ordered a painting by Jean Discart named *The Barber Shop*. In this painting, you can see two black men from North Africa; one of them is getting his head shaved by another black man in a street barbershop. This type of setup is prevalent in North Africa, India, Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines. The author of this painting was an Italian-born painter known for his portraits and Orientalist scenes. He worked in France and the Netherlands, but he identified himself as French. Some of his famous paintings are *The Connoisseurs*, *The Pottery Workshop*, *The Cobbler*, and *The Barbershop*; all of them feature black men.

I wanted the barbershop to look welcoming to all kinds of ethnicities. I also have a handmade plaque that says "Welcome" (Nawartona) نورتونا in the Arab language. Sometimes I have customers from Africa who are exchange students from the University. When they are googling names of barbershops around to get a haircut, they come across my barbershop's profile and see the pictures and good reviews and decide to give my shop a try. Some of them feel grateful that I have these items at the barbershop. They say they feel welcome as customers in the shop. This is why I put these articles around so that people from other ethnicities different from mine can see them on the wall and feel welcome.

I don't like to have any articles related to religion in my barbershop. I want to keep a neutral environment so people from all ethnicities can feel comfortable there. This is my personal opinion and experience, but sometimes religion, instead of unifying, divides. I have seen many people having arguments about the different interpretations

of the Bible. Some people want to pretend they know more than others about the subject, and they can get upset if the other person doesn't accept their point of view. To prove this to yourself, you can do a simple experiment. Keep in mind that when you listen to two people talking about what was written in the Bible and what it says, you will notice that they agree on what is written on very few occasions. That's why I'm not particularly eager to talk about religion at the barbershop. A wise barbershop owner who I used to work for once told me you should never talk about religion, sports, or politics at the barbershop, but if you do, don't dig too much into it.

What is written is not the most important; instead, we should learn to tolerate and respect each other face to face in real-time and understand our different points of view without fighting. To me, there's no "correct" religion. "The right one." Remember, you are who you are based on experiences learned in your culture. You can't JUDGE somebody who doesn't have the same religion as you because they were raised in a different country with different beliefs. They will think they are the ones who have the perfect or correct religion, just like you think you are lucky enough to have been indoctrinated with "the one." Understand this and learn how to live in harmony with others. After all, we all want to be happy. Don't impose your religion onto others; after all, "salvation" is individual. Being knowledgeable about your religion doesn't mean you are right if you see it from a more broad perspective.

For example, you are wrong if you preach the Bible but don't tolerate homosexuality. How can love be a sin? They just decided to love a person of the same sex. Regardless of their sexual orientation, you should love your brother like yourself. I have seen religious people bragging about their bible knowledge hating and making fun of gay people contrary to their beliefs. After all, it's no one's business whom people sleep with. Or is that the excuse some people use to feel superior to others? I came to the conclusion that may be the reason. In a world

where you can be anything, be kind to people. I've seen people preaching the Bible as if they were theologians, but after the church service, they talk crap about their fellow "brothers," check out their wives' curves and go eat like a horse at a buffet, forgetting that gluttony is a sin. I guess that makes them feel happy, so why JUDGE a person who just wants to feel happy as well? If you feel uncomfortable or disagree when reading this, that will be enough to prove my theory. I don't want to divide my readers, so let's continue.

Being from Puerto Rico, I'm used to cut all kinds of hair, including black hair. I know how to cut black men's hair quite well. I also have on my YouTube channel a few tutorials featuring black men so all barbers who don't know how to cut this type of hair can learn. This type of hair is easy to cut. Curly hair is fine hair. That's the reason it curls. Asian hair, for example, is a very thick type of hair, and for that reason, it grows straight. Asian hair, for me, is the most challenging hair to cut. The reason is that the hair doesn't lean flat, close to the scalp, and for that reason, the hair does what it wants. It doesn't stay close to the head. You have to create a sculpture and draw for the hair to look good. This type of hair needs a lot of texture.

Curly hair, on the other hand, doesn't need much texture. Sometimes I use the thinning shears if the customer wants to leave the hair long. The reason I do this is to remove volume from the hair. By texturizing the hair of a black man, you remove hair to make it look less puffy. Hair is hair, and you cut it in the same way, so it doesn't matter if the texture is different. I can cut a black man's hair with scissors. I just need a wide comb with more widely separated teeth, similar to the ones that ladies used to detangle their hair. That way, you can grab the hair easily and cut it. If the teeth of the comb are too tight, it will be hard to hold the hair.

The reason black men get ingrown hairs is that this type of hair can't be shaved too close to the scalp. It is almost funny to me when I

see a commercial advertising shaving razors with four blades, and they show the model shaving his face with the grain and against the grain, sometimes stretching the scalp. This is the worst you can do for your face. This shaving style creates a lot of ingrown hairs on black men and white men with thin facial hair.

It's hard for me to explain this without a visual example, but I'll try anyway. When you shave, you have to leave the ends of the hair outside of the pore. When you shave too close to the scalp, the end of the hair goes behind the pore. Then, when the hair tries to grow back behind the pore line, the hair gets stuck inside the walls of the pore and can't get out. The immune system's natural reaction is to create an infection. That infection allows the skin to break, and that's the only way the hair can escape the pore again. You should never shave against the grain if you are a black man, unless you're black but have straight or curly hair as Indian people do.

Some men have different growing patterns in their facial hair. In this case, the best way to remove your facial hair is by using a trimmer. Some trimmers can get pretty close without getting too close to the scalp. Keep in mind that some hairs growing inside the skin due to a close shave will not exit the pore again. In cases like these, the dermatologist will have to make an incision on the area where the hair is growing inside the skin to allow the hair to escape. If you can see the hair inside the skin, you can grab it and take it out using tweezers. Don't remove it altogether. Take the hair's end out of the pore and leave it there.

Teenagers who have this problem can use a trimmer to shave their facial hair. You can save money by using a trimmer because it requires less maintenance, and you don't have to buy as many blades. Razor blades are costly, and you can save money by using a straight razor because the blades are cheaper. I can buy 1,000 double-edge blades for \$50-60 online, but I know it can be risky to shave with a

straight razor for some people. It can be dangerous if you don't have the time and patience to shave this way. Patience is a virtue and what you need in order to shave with a straight razor.

When I was eighteen years old and studying at the barber institute, we used to "shave" balloons. We applied shaving cream to them. If the balloon popped when you were shaving it, that represented a cut you made on the customer's face. You can also buy a safety razor. That way, you don't have to buy the other brands of blades that are as expensive at the pharmacy. You can fit a double-edge blade in the safety razors, and as I say, you can buy 1,000 for \$50-60 online. Just don't buy a cheap one; get a good safety razor.

I learned how to shave with a straight razor when I was thirteen years old. In Puerto Rico, skin fades are very common, and everybody gets them. I think the best shaving cream is a hair conditioner. You can mix a portion of hair conditioner and water in a spray bottle and apply it directly to your face. Also, you can throw a couple of drops of hair conditioner in your hand and mix it with water in the sink, then apply it with your hands on your face. You can make this mixture yourself, and you will see there's no better cream to shave your face with. It's also perfect for people who have beards because the conditioner is transparent, and you can see the lines of your beard easily. If you shave your face with foam, it will be hard to see the lines of your beard.

I included the hot towel shave to my list of services when I worked at my first job in an upscale barbershop in Miami. When I studied at the barber institute, they taught us to shave using fourteen steps, but I don't follow them. I have my own technique for shaving, which needs to be customized according to the client's hair growth pattern. I will explain the process of the hot towel shave so you understand how it's done. If the customer has excessive facial hair, I think it's good to remove some with the trimmer. I cut the excess hair before reclining the chair. The reason why is because all the hair I'm

cutting will fall on the barber's cape. If I recline the chair first and then cut the excess hair, all the hair will fall on the customer's face and neck. Now without the extra hair, it is time to prepare the customer's skin. The creams and oils will reach the skin and not the excess hair.

First, you recline the barber chair in a comfortable position for the customer and adjust the headrest. Place a dry clean towel on the customer's chest reaching the collar off his shirt to protect it from the shaving cream and water dripping from the hot towel. Then I place a special paper towel for barbers on top. We will use this disposable paper and not the towel to clean the straight razor. We are going to use two hot towels and a cold one. It's time to place the first hot towel and leave it for at least one to two minutes. After you remove the first hot towel, we will put it away and apply the pre-shave oil. Then we are going to use the shaving cream of your preference. You can start shaving now, but I like to add some hot lather foam to the customer's face after the shaving cream.

I shave it with the grain at the first pass according to the customer's hair growth pattern. After I'm done with the first pass, I place a second hot towel and change the straight razor's blade. In the second pass, I shave against the grain. I give a facial massage on the beard area to study and feel the customer's hair growth pattern using a second pass of shaving cream. I prefer this cream to be on the more oily side. That way, you can shave multiple times without damaging the skin. Also, you can use something like coconut oil or cocoa butter. Sometimes I don't shave against the grain because some customers can be already irritated from their previous shave because they have sensitive skin. In that case, I do a second shave with the grain once again.

After I'm done with the second pass shave, I use a cold towel to refresh the customer's face in case it's irritated or damaged from the shave. The last step will be applying some liquid aftershave or cream. Depending on your location, this service can be from \$20-50 or even

more, depending on the area, product, and equipment used. In some barbershops, they include a facial with the shave service. Very few barbershops have this service, but I like to include it because it makes me feel like a real barber. I'm not saying barbers who don't do it are not. Some barbers don't like to shave with a straight razor because of liability and lawsuits if they cut the customer. I have so much experience with the straight razor that it is not an issue.

Restricted barbers and cosmetologists can't use the straight razor to shave. This law varies depending on the state. Some cosmetologists can use a straight razor but only to shave the neck area and not a full facial shave. Shaving can be dramatic and intimidating. But after all, it is not a movie like Sweeney Todd: "The Demon Barber of Fleet Street." Johnny Depp played the character in 2007. He plays a barber who murders their customers with a huge machete-looking straight razor. The association between straight razor shaves and movies has been around for decades. In films like "Kung Fu" (1986), "The untouchables" (1987), "Dracula" (1992), "Dumb and Dumber" (1994), "Pan's Labyrinth" (2006), and "Skyfall" (2012), Hollywood has been dramatically using straight razors in shave scenes for decades.

Some customers like to shave using an electric shaver, but they don't realize the electric shaver has a trick. I will tell you what it is and the correct way to use this machine. You can't leave the hair too long, otherwise, the hair will never go inside the electric shaver's foil holes. If you have noticed, these holes are super tiny. When the hair is too long, you will comb the hair instead of cutting it. If the hair is short, like, let's say, after three days without shaving, the hair will stay steady, and it will be easier for the head of the electric shaver to grab the hair and pass it through the hole of the foil. I see many customers in my chair who shave using the electric shaver, and they always have patches of long hair that they miss because they left the hair too long. I tell them, don't wait too long between shaves because if they leave the hair too long, it will be

impossible to cut it using an electric shaver. They will need a trimmer or a clipper to make it shorter again, and then they can shave it using the electric shaver.

The electric shavers are a tool used daily in modern barbershops. This machine is used on the bottom part of the fade haircut to make it as close as possible to the skin. I always use this machine when a customer asks for a skin fade. Also, after I use this machine, I shave with a straight razor because some of the hairs can't get inside the foil holes and because the straight razor represents the ultimate shaving work.

There are many models of shavers. I always say the simpler, the better. Some of the biggest shavers that include three wheels are not the best. The best shavers are the ones that have a bar-looking blade. I'm not saying that the other ones with the three wheels are not going to shave the hairs, but I feel the other ones like the bar model are slightly better. This style of shaver is also better for people who have beards. It would be easier work to sharpen the edges of your beard if you have a bar-looking shaver. If you have a shaver with circular blades, you will notice that it will be harder to make a straight line. I can tell you that not a single electric shaver that barbers use has circular blades. All the shavers that barbers use have bar blades. That doesn't mean you won't find an "alien" barber doing it differently, though.

If you ever buy a tool related to cutting hair, I recommend you go to your barber and ask them for the best tool to cut your facial hair. Sometimes the clippers and shavers that are for sale for home use are not the best. I have seen tools like this even more expensive than the tools barbers use. Always buy a professional tool when you buy a machine to cut either your hair or your facial hair. The difference is slight, and it will last forever. Barbers have used them every single day with different people for years. A barber's clipper used daily at work can easily last four or five years. It will last a lifetime for home use if you take care of it.

The maintenance is very easy, but don't rely on the small bottle of oil they give you when you buy the machine. You have to buy a bigger bottle of clipper oil. After you're done with the clipper and finished cutting your hair or your beard, apply oil to the blades before storing them. That will help prevent rust on the blades when you put them away for an extended period of time. If you need to adjust your clippers, just bring them to your barber. I'm sure he will be pleased to adjust them or fix them if you have any issues.

Some of the tools that I can recommend to you are the ones that I use to cut hair, which are made by the Wahl brand. I use this clipper only for haircuts and maybe to trim down the beard. They have a reasonable price. Another good brand of clippers is the Gamma + Ergo. This is an Italian brand of clippers and hairstyling tools. Most of the newer models are cordless, but you don't need that for home use if you don't want to. Keep in mind that cordless clippers are more expensive. If you have the money, that doesn't matter, but you can buy one with the cord if you want to save money. Both will do the same job.

An excellent trimmer that you can buy to do the edges on your beard or maybe the line of the neck area is the Baby Liss Gold FX Trimmer. This is also an Italian brand of hair styling tools. This is the best trimmer you can find these days. The car brand Ferrari paired with this company to design this trimmer. I highly recommend this tool. I bought it recently for around \$129, but you have to do a good search to find a cheap one because it runs about \$160. One of the best trimmers and the trimmer I have used for more than 20 years is the Andis Styliner 2 and Outliner trimmers. They are not too expensive. They run about \$50 or \$60 per trimmer if you buy it online, assuming you are purchasing the one with the cord. The cordless, as I said, is more expensive. Their foil shavers are also one of the best you can find.

You have to keep in mind that, if you have a beard, you might need both of these tools: a haircutting clipper and a trimmer. The clipper

will cut the length of your beard while the trimmer shaves the edges. You can do the edges with the shaver, but if you always have a beard and don't want to shave, it is better to get one to have it shaped all the time, like in the barbershop. I also tell my customers that, if you have a beard, you should have a clipper at home and learn to use it. The facial hair grows too fast, and you can't be at the barbershop every week. Between haircuts, you can maintain your beard if you have good tools at home.

If you are a bit overweight, maybe a beard will look good if you have enough hair. Sometimes I leave a full beard because it helps me hide my double chin. I look skinnier, and it shapes my face in a way that appears as if I don't have the extra weight. Having a beard is like using makeup sometimes, only instead of using colors, you are using hair. You can correct and hide some facial characteristics that you may not like. I recommend people keep their beards fairly short, so they keep looking good and well-groomed. It's hard not to look scraggly if you have a very long beard. And what's the reason anyway? There is very little you can do to make it look neat if you have a lot of hair in your beard. Unless you want to look like a bong or like Socrates, the Greek philosopher from Athens, you can do it. But if your wife doesn't like it and you want to stay married, you should keep it trimmed.

Most of the girls who like beards like them well-groomed. Very few ladies like their men having an industrial mop on their faces, so I don't understand why some men do this. I find these very gross unless you are at the barbershop every other week. If you keep a lot of facial hair, you will start developing skin conditions like dandruff. Remember that your skin is allergic to the waste from your own body. I recommend that you dry it well after your shower if you have a long beard. If you leave your beard humid for an extended period of time, you will start getting fungus on your skin.

I also recommend that if you have a long beard, you buy some oil or beard butter to keep it hydrated. Having a beard is not for everybody. Some people can't grow a full beard and have many patches on their faces. This, to me, looks very bad. It looks like you're trying too hard. Trust me, there's nothing worse and more painful than a lady telling you that you shouldn't have a beard because you can barely grow one. Some people grow a beard, but shouldn't. They look as if they are sick or if they were hospitalized for two months.

In ancient times, beards were a symbol of knowledge and wisdom. Unfortunately, we know that is not necessarily the case in modern times. The length of your beard doesn't tell you the size of your intellect, nor does the amount of experience indicate whether you are a wise man. Some people with much experience in a particular situation continue to make the same errors and do not learn from their mistakes. That is because some people don't want to change who they are.

For example, if you are a cheap person and are completing a house project, you buy cheap materials to cut corners and save money. Down the road, you realize the cheap materials are breaking or not lasting long enough, but if you continue to get those cheap materials, you haven't reached that level of wisdom that your experience gave you.

I don't judge you if you don't have enough money to buy the more expensive material, but you have to keep in mind that in the end, you will save more money if you get the higher quality material, even if it is more expensive. By making an effort to get that stronger material in the future, you will realize you won't have to buy so many cheap ones because they will last longer. I'm trying to say that if you are one of these types of people, you are not wise whether you have a beard or not.

Another example I can give you is students who are about to graduate from high school. They go to the senior prom, and some will have a beard. The guys that have a beard are not necessarily the wiser

students graduating. They just look older at the event. What will make you wiser is knowing what will be your next step after you graduate. That's probably the most challenging situation a student will face after graduation.

Making the right decisions in life is one of the most challenging things anybody can do. I have always known that I wanted to cut hair since I was a teenager. Cutting hair for me is fun, It's an easy job after you have experience and eventually wisdom. You do not necessarily have to go to college or a university to succeed in life. Some people with different positions that didn't require a college education are very successful. Sometimes they work even fewer hours than somebody who went to a university and studied for four years or more.

People who cut trees for a living are an example of this. In just a couple of hours, they can make thousands of dollars, and if they want, they don't have to work for the rest of the week. Somebody specializing in stump grinding can charge \$500 in just one hour. If that person has two more jobs that day for about the same price, that's \$1,500 in one day. Somebody who cuts grass can make about \$1,000 in a day if they want to. After you gain that wisdom, you will realize that at the end of the road, it is better to have a low-stress job than a stressful one. That will allow you to enjoy life better and have time to smell the roses.

Steve Jobs once said, "simplicity is the ultimate sophistication." Something that I found simultaneously funny and frustrating is the fact that my YouTube channel doesn't have many subscribers or views. My technique simplifies years of the barbering learning process for students. I simplify this technique so much that I can even talk to a student and tell him what to do, and they will understand it without having the much-needed manual ability to cut hair. It took me years to do in twenty minutes what skilled barbers do in 45 minutes or one hour if they are not talking nonsense all day. My technique is not common, and it's not what most barbers do when they work. It takes somebody with wisdom to

understand that what's being done is different and more straightforward. Some people don't think outside of the box, though, and they want to follow whatever most people are doing. Some people prefer to follow what is colorful and flamboyant and don't teach you anything but being a clown. Be on the search for simplicity, and don't be none the wiser.

Chapter 7

"Issues"



In this chapter, we will discuss some of the customers' complaints about barbers, which I gather over the years when they go to the barbershop to get a haircut. These are issues that bother the customer and sometimes make them not even want to go to the barbershop. You probably experienced some of them before.

Some of the issues that a customer can find in a barbershop are, for example:

❖ **Feeling unwelcome or ignored when they walk into the barbershop.**

Usually, this happens in barbershops where they don't have a receptionist, and it's just the barbers working at the business. Many barbers like to talk to their customers, and sometimes they don't even realize somebody opens the door and walks inside the shop.

Every time a customer walks through the door of my barbershop, I always at least say hello. I never ignore them, even if I can't make eye contact at the moment because I'm shaving or doing something delicate that requires concentration. Since we work by appointment and usually my next customer has a familiar face, I ask them if they have an appointment. Some customers don't know they need an appointment to get their haircut these days. Some barbershops still work on a walk-in basis. I prefer the appointment system because I can manage my workday better.

I think it's very rude for the barbers to ignore the customers when they are working. That, of course, makes the customer feel uncomfortable because they don't know if they are welcome in the barbershop. Sometimes they even think they are a problem or are bothering the barber by being there. On occasion, I have to ask my coworkers if the customer that walked through the door is their customer or if it's a walk-in because sometimes they are actually their customers, but they don't even say hello or look at them. This creates confusion, so I have to ask the customer if he has an appointment to make sure he doesn't waste his time since we are so busy and I can't take walk-ins.

Some barbers are so lazy that they don't even want to work. I worked in the past in Miami barbershops, and barbers always had an excuse not to cut the customer. This job might not look like it, but it is a very physically demanding job. You have to be standing all day and moving around the chair, lifting your arms, and being on your feet all day. Sometimes the barber feels worn up or tired, and when the customer arrives, they ignore them because they don't want to cut their hair.

This happens a lot if, for example, you go to a barbershop when they're about to close and you showed up without an appointment or previous notice. We, the barbers, like to feel that you trust us. If you are asking too many questions about the barber's experience to make sure that they can do the job, it creates an uncomfortable feeling that makes us not want to cut their hair.

This happened to me a few times. Sometimes, when the customer shows up at the shop, I already know there will be a problem just by looking at them. They give me that look of no trust whatsoever, and they expect that we, by using words, should prove to them that we are capable of doing our jobs. This is a terrible way to start an interaction with a barber. Jokes about the looks or the type of shoe barbers wear are things that you shouldn't talk about. I recommend keeping it to yourself. Remember, we will be working on you, and saying things like this just

makes me not want to do it. It makes me want to do what your pizza maker does when you are rude on the phone.

Some people think they are stars, like a movie star or a musician. I think the haircut and the hairstyle are very important, but having one like a movie star is not going to save you if you say something stupid. You will look silly even if you have a nice haircut. People who leave their hair too long, to the point that you can't see their faces, are sometimes a problem for the barber.

This job is already pretty hard to do. If you bring your hair in a condition that requires much extra work, the barber won't be happy to see you. When a customer opens the door looking like a bong with long hair and ZZ Top's beard, I don't even want to do it. That may be one of the few cases where I'll think twice about greeting and welcoming the customer to the shop. If I know somebody else at the shop is going to do it, that will make me happy. To be honest, with customers like these, I prefer to pull out my wallet and pay the barber next to me with my own money so that anyone but me will cut their hair.

Another issue a customer may face in the barbershops is:

❖ **The barber misunderstands your haircut, or there's poor planning before the start of service.**

This is why I tell customers to bring a couple of pictures because explaining hair is very hard. What can be short for you can be long for another person. What can be an inch for you, can be three for another. What can be a terrible wife for you, can be a gem for another; you get the point. People have very peculiar concepts about inches. Sometimes the client tells me to take an inch off. I take an inch off, and after I finish, they tell me it's too long, and by the time I finish the hair, I cut off at least 3-4 inches. When they bring their non-reliable measuring method, I ask them instead if they feel their hair is very long on top or if they like the hair the way it is. That gives me a better understanding of what the customer wants.

In my experience, sometimes the haircut comes out better when we receive instruction from only one person. I have customers who bring their wives or friends, and there are four people at the barbershop, everybody with a different opinion about the cut. I always listen to the customer because he's the one who is getting the service, and sometimes, these other people influencing what is being discussed between the barber and the customer is just unnecessary. It creates confusion for the barber. Sometimes it's not possible, but if you can go by yourself to the barbershop, or at least don't bring a bunch of people to get a haircut, the barber will be able to concentrate better.

Another type of customer that I don't like is the one who tells you what not to do: "Don't do this," "Don't do that," "Don't cut here or there." In the end, I'm thinking, "So if I can't do all that, what the hell are we going to do here?" With this type of customer, I almost want to just say, "Here are the clippers and the scissors. Why don't you cut it yourself."

Another issue that you might find in a barbershop that is entirely understandable is:

❖ **Weird and vulgar conversations.**

Barbershops are the perfect place for people who want to take the "macho" in themselves and let it out at the shop, like bragging about how many times they've gotten laid. During my time cutting hair, I have heard a lot of weird and vulgar conversations. Sometimes, even talking about sports, the conversation may turn ghetto. In my barbershop, I like to keep everything very civilized and professional. Once in a while, I know that there will be a customer who throws F-bombs at the shop. If it's just me at the barbershop, I don't mind, but sometimes some customers bring their children or wife, and that's when I have to say something before damaging the shop's environment.

I like to maintain a family environment at the barbershop, but not because I think I'm better or more educated than anybody. This is the

best way you can attract quality customers, which are the ones who like to pay for the service and they are grateful by giving you a nice tip. If I have professionals at my barbershop, like people who work in an office (lawyers, doctors, and business people), I prefer it that way. That doesn't mean, however, that I don't welcome any and all customers to my shop.

I know barbers who like to talk to their customers. I don't talk much, but if I have to talk, I talk. I don't like to talk about politics, religion, or sports. Some people can be very fanatic about their team, and sometimes there's somebody at the barbershop who disagrees with the X team's accomplishments. That's the reason I don't have news at the shop. News is a source of negativity. Everything you see in the news is negative; things made to divide us.

One of the weirdest conversations I heard in a barbershop was a guy telling the barber how he had sexy ears. He was telling the barber that, everywhere he went, all the women loved his ears, to the point that they wanted to touch them. He was very serious about it; he was not joking in the slightest. This was so damn weird that I wish I were off that day. I couldn't believe what I was listening to. I was thinking, "Why the hell am I listening to this?" Was I supposed to like his ears also and give him feedback? Sorry, I know you don't want to read this, either, but that is the best way to describe the weird conversations you sometimes overhear at the barbershop. How do you go to a barbershop where there are a lot of people and make this kind of story? You have to have no shame whatsoever. To me, his ears looked like a Colombian arepa anyways!

Sometimes, I bring my ear pods, and I play music in the background because it's tough working nine hours a day listening to all kinds of conversations people are having. People's mental health deteriorated during the pandemic, and people seem to have gotten very stupid.

Another issue that some customers may have at the barbershop is:

❖ **Drugs and narcotics.**

One time, I was working by myself at the barbershop, and one barber came to the shop asking for a job. He opened the door and asked me if I was the owner, and I told him yes. He asked if I was looking for barbers, but I couldn't ignore the fact that he had a very strong marijuana smell. It was so bad that, when he left, the barbershop was smelling like weed for around five minutes. I had to use odor sprays. Otherwise, the next customer would have thought I was the one smelling like Cheech and Chong. Thank God it was just me there, as that was when it was slower at the shop.

I don't know why, but some barbers are addicted to drugs. I know marijuana is legal now for medical purposes, but how can you show up at a barbershop and ask for a job if you are high and smell like marijuana? Regardless of whether it is legal or not, people still have in their minds that it is a bad thing to do. Some barbers like to sell narcotics at the barbershop too. I don't know why, because if you do it the right way and work hard, you will make money in this job. I don't like drug activity at the barbershop because I like to keep it a family environment.

When I used to work in Miami, this was very common. I never met a barber who didn't do at least one kind of drug while they were working. One shop I used to work at was very crazy and if it wasn't drugs, it was alcohol. Everybody used to gather \$10 here, \$10 there, and we used to buy the big bottle of Johnny Walker Black Label 1.75L; sometimes, we bought two. Everybody got a glass full of ice, and we filled it all the way up with whiskey. Then, we played music all day long cutting people's hair, and some barbers got very drunk by doing it.

I'd be lying if I said I don't miss those days. There was a barber who used to sell small baggies of weed. One day, he was working when his wife came with a uniformed police officer and started pointing at the

lower part of his cabinet. She looked very angry and told the cop, “Look! Look! check there, you will see it!” The cop told the barber to stay back, and he opened the door of his station. On the lower part, they found a big bag full of smaller bags of weed. The cop arrested him that day, but he was working again the next day. I don't know how he got out, but they let him go.

Another issue that a customer can find in a barbershop is:

❖ **Bullying.**

Bullying often happens at the barbershop, sometimes when barbers and customers don't have anything better to do, and they want to laugh. This is one of the things I tell my barbers that I don't like at the barbershop. I don't like when customers or barbers talk badly about another person inside the barbershop because of the way they look or dress. Bullying is terrible because you don't know what's going through anybody's head. It's better not to do it. That person might be thinking about killing themselves. You don't want to mess around and push those bottoms.

I don't like to talk badly about anybody, because nobody is perfect. We are all humans. We are brothers who should be worried about helping each other instead of being divided. Bullying cost me my job one time. A barber always said bad things about me and paid attention to what I was doing. I didn't like this, and it was a very uncomfortable situation to be in every day at work. I had this problem until one day, I snapped. Unfortunately, I handled the situation the wrong way, and I got very angry and quit that day. I didn't want to quit, but everything happened so fast, and at the end of the day, I realized I had made an error.

Sometimes, that's precisely what these people want: to get rid of you. I tried to talk to the owner to see if he would allow me to come back to the barbershop, but he said no. Once he makes a decision, he

doesn't go back, according to him. That's the reason I don't like bullying at the barbershop.

Another issue a customer might find at the barbershop is:

❖ **The barber is not paying attention to what the client is saying when describing a haircut.**

Occasionally, the barber may act indifferent to the customer and does not pay attention to what he is saying. Sometimes this happens because the barbers only know how to cut hair one way, and they cut pretty much the same way for all customers. When you explain to them how you want your haircut, they filter your words, and they will only do what they know.

I like when the customers describe the haircut as clearly as possible, but I don't like the customer to over-explain. Remember that explaining hair is difficult. Recently, I had a customer who didn't know how to describe his haircut, and he showed me a picture. By looking at the picture, I saw I had a pretty good idea of what I would do. But the customer wanted me to give him feedback so he felt better knowing that I had a good understanding of what he was saying.

I told the customer not to complicate things too much and start little by little. I asked him how short he wanted his haircut on the sides, and he told me he wanted a low fade on the bottom skin. Then I asked him if he wanted the top disconnected from the sides like an undercut. He agreed and he told me, yes, but at first, he never said to me that it was an undercut. He didn't know how to explain it, or maybe he didn't know the name of the haircut. But by starting with a little at a time, sometimes you better understand what the customer wants. Later, when I did the sides and it was time to cut the top, I asked him if he wanted to leave the top long or if he wanted me to cut a decent amount. He replied that he only wanted to cut a little bit, like an inch. I started cutting the top. I cut an inch and then asked him if he liked the length on top, and he told me yes.

That was pretty much it. The haircut came out the same as the picture he showed me, and he was satisfied in the end. I also texturized the top and removed the volume and explained to him what the thinning shears do to the hair. I know that some barbers are not the same, and when the customer is explaining the haircut, they have a dismissive attitude. This can infuriate the customer, which is understandable because they are paying for a service, and they expect the best from you.

Another issue that people have, especially black people, is:

❖ **When they go to a barbershop, the barber doesn't know how to cut their hair.**

I have seen barbershops tell black people they don't know how to cut "that type of hair," and they have to leave and go somewhere else. I feel terrible because sometimes it seems as if they don't want to cut their hair because of the color of their skin. To me, hair is hair, you should know as a barber how to cut all kinds of hair.

In the barbershop, I have different decorations on the walls related to black people, so they know in my barbershop they are welcome. I was raised in Puerto Rico, and on the island, we have plenty of black people, so I know how to cut this type of hair. For me, it is easy to cut this type of hair, but some barbers, especially in north Florida, are not used to cutting this hair. They turn the customer away.

Another issue a customer may have when barbers are cutting their hair is:

❖ **The absence of the barber at the workplace.**

When the customers go to the barbershop looking for the barber who cut their hair the last time, the barber is often not there. Sometimes, the barber has a weird, inconsistent schedule, and they start working at noon, or sometimes they leave too early when the customer tries to look for them at the shop.

Over my career, I have worked at a barbershop where the barber was never there, or they would go to work every other day. It was tough for the customer to get their hair cut, to the point that they had to look for another barber to cut their hair. In my opinion, you should always have two barbers. Never rely on only one barber because one day, the barber can be sick, and he won't be at the barbershop. Maybe he took a vacation for one or two weeks, and you can't cut your hair. It is very important that every customer has two barbers who can cut their hair. That will help you avoid the situation when you go to the barbershop and look for a barber, and he's not there. Then you can go to the other one.

Another issue a customer may have is:

❖ **Having a disrespectful barber who is not listening to you or being rude.**

I have seen many barbers like this. They feel angry when you interrupt them to tell them something about the haircut, or something that you want them to change before he finishes the cut. I don't mind when the customer tells me to fix something on their hair. As I say, they are paying for a service, and I should be able to please them and do my job.

One time, I was at a barbershop and the customer in the chair was one of those guys who belong to a gang. By looking at these guys, you can tell that you shouldn't mess with them, but the barber decided to be stupid that day. While he was cutting his hair, the barber got angry and started to act very disrespectfully to him. The customer stood up from the chair with the cape still on and grabbed a straight razor. He held it to the barber's neck and started screaming at him, "What did you say? What did you say?" The barber looked very stupid, and told the guy he was sorry, and it wouldn't happen again.

There are some people you should just never mess with. Some people are "special," even if you don't think so. He looked crazy, and he

was a gang member. They should respect this type of person even more and not mistreat him just because he dresses with a strange look.

Another issue a customer might have at the shop is:

❖ **A barber that will never shut up.**

Some customers just want to go to the barbershop to enjoy a relaxing time. Sometimes the customer doesn't want to talk. These are my type of customers because I am the same way. I don't speak much. I speak very few words before the haircut, then I stay quiet and concentrate on what I'm doing. But I have seen barbers who are always talking when they are at work and will never shut up during the entire haircut.

You have to understand that it's nice to talk, but you also have to concentrate on what you are doing. Sometimes, when you talk too much, you are not paying attention to what you are doing, and you bring your emotions into the conversations. This may cause you to overdo the haircut or not do the haircut the way the customer wants. I have seen barbers talking to a customer for an hour, asking different personal questions. When the customer returns for the next haircut, they don't even remember what they were talking about and they have to answer the same questions to the barber again.

I've seen customers returning to the shop to fix a sideburn that the barber never did, or the neck area that they never shaved so the customer leaves with one side cut and the other one not cut. I saw barbers who chop an eyebrow off the customers without even realizing it, and then the customer takes a look at the mirror, and they see they don't have the tip of an eyebrow just because they were talking too much.

Another issue that a customer may face may be related to a previous topic and is:

❖ **When the barber is high or drunk at work.**

Some barbers, especially in modern times, like getting high and going to the barbershop to cut hair. I'm not going to say that this is completely bad because sometimes, for example, marijuana can enhance people's creativity. Since we are working with art, sometimes that can be a good thing, but some barbers don't know how to control that, and they show up very high to the shop. This is an awkward situation for the customer because, of course, the customer prefers the barber to be clean while cutting their hair. It can be awful when the customer is in the chair, and the barber is so high that the customer can smell the odor.

I'm not going to lie... I did this when I was younger. As I mentioned, I'm a quiet barber, so I mainly concentrated on what I was doing and listened to music in the background, and this helped me to create an excellent cut. Some barbers are different. They like to talk to the barber next to them, and they completely forget that they are cutting hair, and they start arguing with barbers inside the barbershop. For me, it is better if the barber is clean. Outside of work, I don't care what they do in their private lives because that's private. But at work, I don't like this type of behavior.

Another issue clients have at the barbershop is:

❖ **Unlicensed barbers.**

Sometimes barbers tell the business owner that they have a license when they don't. Sometimes the business owner agrees to hire these barbers even without a license. This is not a good situation for the customer because usually, these barbers haven't formally learned how to cut hair at the institute or taken the classes to take that state exam. They also don't know how to properly sanitize the tools to prevent infecting a client with a virus.

It's funny, but this happened to me in a barbershop where I was working. It was actually in an upscale barbershop. One day, the inspector came to the barbershop to check for our licenses. One of the barbers noticed the inspector around, and he took off and left the

customer sitting in the chair with a half-completed haircut. The inspector was not stupid, so she knew that a barber was there cutting hair. She asked for the barber who was working in that station. In this barbershop, every barber had a cubicle. I didn't see where he went. I assume that he went to the restroom or the kitchen or the laundry area. It never crossed my mind that he didn't have a license. I showed the inspector my license. By law, we are required to have the license at our station. For some reason, the barber didn't have his license. Eventually, he had to return to the station and assume responsibility for what he did.

After that, the shop owner gave him a few weeks so he could get his license and continue working at the shop, but he never came back. I think he went to work at another barbershop. I always thought that wasn't a good decision because that barbershop was excellent and the owners were very friendly.

Another issue that the customer may face at the barbershop is:

❖ **Lack of motivation from the barbers.**

At some point in their career, barbers may become unmotivated and don't want to reach their full potential. They perform poorly at the shop, and that affects the customer because they expect the best service. Some barbers settle by just giving the customer a simple haircut to get them out of the way. Sometimes the barber comes to work feeling the monotony of doing the same thing every day.

I think a barber should never tell a customer that they'd rather be at home sleeping or that he's tired because the customer will assume that they won't give the 100% he deserves. But all barbers are not the same, and they like to tell the customers that they are tired and already want to leave, or they are hungry, and they are looking forward to their lunch break, telling the customer that they want to get rid of them.

I always try to give the best of myself for the customer. Like I said before, the customer is paying for the haircut, so we should be able to provide them with the full potential they deserve. I understand if

you're sick one day or don't feel well, but this behavior shouldn't last more than those days that you are sick or don't feel well. After that, you should be able to give your full potential to the customer.

Also, some barbers don't want to learn any more than what they already know, and they don't take seminars or continued education. They don't look at videos on YouTube, and they simply just don't want to learn any additional skills than what they already know: "lazy barbers," as I call them.

Another issue customers face is:

❖ **The clients want to cut their hair on a Monday.**

Sometimes, because of work, Monday is the only option customers have to get a haircut. It was a tradition that barbershops were closed on Mondays in the old times. The explanation why might be very simple, and if you use a bit of common sense, you will know the answer. Some people might need the explanation since they can't use their brains for themselves and need people to tell them how things work. The reason is that we work Saturdays. We replace Mondays with Saturdays. That's how we can take two days off in a row as everybody else does. In current times, this has changed, since a Monday can be as busy as a Saturday. Some barbers work on Monday because they want to be off on Saturday, maybe because they share the same day off with their wives. Then they can enjoy their time off together, unless they hate each other, then maybe it is better if the barber chooses to work Saturday. That way, they can see their faces a day less during the week. Some of them end up receiving orders from their bossy wives all day telling them they have to cut the grass, paint the house, wash their car, and be productive that day off.

I like to take Mondays off because that's the day there are not many people out while doing my errands. Saturdays can be busy at the grocery store, parks, beaches, and any place in general. To me, Monday is an easygoing day. If I want to go to the post office, the supermarket,

or have fun at the beach, parks, rivers, or springs, there are not many people. For that reason, I love having Mondays off. There are some people who might hate Mondays. I completely understand that because it is the first day of the week for them. It might be like a Tuesday for me when I'm not in the best mood because it is the first day of the week for me. For that reason, many networks create shows to make Mondays enjoyable, like Monday night football, Monday night raw, etc.

The first school massacre pretty much inspired the phrase "I hate Mondays." You better not push anybody's buttons on a Monday. On January 29, 1979, Brenda Spencer, a 16-year-old girl living across the street from the Cleveland Elementary School, shot two people with a Ruger semi-automatic 22 caliber rifle. When a reporter asked her on the phone before being arrested why she committed the crime, the response she gave was, "I hate Mondays; this livens up the day." She was convicted of the crime and sentenced to 25 years in prison. She was charged as an adult. This phrase was also the inspiration for the very annoying song "I don't like Mondays," by The Boomtown Rats, released the same year (1979). I prefer to be off Mondays because I'm not married. If I had a partner who had Saturdays off, I'd probably take Saturdays off as well. That way, I could share the same day off as my partner. After all, women and men are a "necessary evil" for each other.

When you are a newbie, part of the bad thing about it is that you can't choose the day off you have. If you work for one of those haircut chains and franchises, you will be given the day off that they prefer to fulfill a schedule. When you have experience and years of cutting hair and developing a clientele, you are the boss. You can choose the days off you want. The worst thing you can do not to rest is to have random days off and not have your days off together. I did that for many years when working as a newbie in barbershops. This usually happens when the owner wants to open six or seven days a week. Then the employees have to rotate their days off.

Another issue that a client might face at the barbershop is:

❖ **Headbanging.**

This happens when the barber is very rude to the customer. When barbers are doing a fade, they have to go over and over to blend the line. Sometimes the barber rushes, and he doesn't realize that he's knocking the customer's head, almost like a woodpecker on a tree. I'm sure most people, at least once in their lifetime, have had a barber like this. Some barbers like to alter their clipper's blade making them too close. This results in the barber lining up the customer and cutting their skin. Some areas like the neck are very sensitive, and some clippers can be powerful, almost like a chainsaw. Even to me, when I know this information and I'm being cautious, I may hurt a customer with the corner of the trimmer's blade. You can imagine if a barber is not being careful, that's when the cuts and accidents occur. I have received many complaints from customers that they got a haircut with another barber, and then when they go to my chair, they tell me that the previous barber cut them on the forehead or neck area using the trimmer. That's why I prefer not to mess around with my trimmer's blades too much. Sometimes, the type of brush used is too strong. When I buy brushes, I try to buy the ones that have soft bristles. This way, when I brush the hair away, I don't hurt the customer.

Another issue customers face at the barbershop is:

❖ **The barber confuses the client with another client.**

One time, I had a customer similar to another, almost to the point that they looked like twins. When he got in my chair, I accidentally did that person's haircut according to the preference of the client whom I thought was in my chair. I discovered that I had confused the customers, and by accident, I did a line on his haircut. I felt sorry for the customer. It was my fault, and I admit we are humans and sometimes make these mistakes. Thank God the customer wasn't mad, and he understood that could happen. After all, I didn't charge him for the extra line. That's why

no matter how many times a customer sits on my chair, I always ask them if they want the same as usual, asking them to refresh my memory before I start making the haircut to avoid any confusion.

Those were sixteen issues a client may encounter at the barbershop. I'm sure there's more, but those are the most common. I hope this chapter helps you understand some issues that you may encounter at the barbershop, and I hope that you don't come across most of these types of barbers.

Issues:

- ❖ **Feeling unwelcome or ignored when they walk into the barbershop.**
- ❖ **The barber misunderstands your haircut or there's poor planning before the start of service.**
- ❖ **Weird and vulgar conversations.**
- ❖ **Drugs and narcotics.**
- ❖ **Bullying.**
- ❖ **The barber is not paying attention to what the client is saying when describing a haircut.**
- ❖ **When they go to a barbershop, the barber doesn't know how to cut their hair.**
- ❖ **The absence of the barber at the workplace.**
- ❖ **Having a disrespectful barber who is not listening to you or being rude.**
- ❖ **A barber that will never shut up.**
- ❖ **When the barber is high or drunk at work.**
- ❖ **Unlicensed barbers.**
- ❖ **Lack of motivation from the barbers.**
- ❖ **The clients want to cut their hair on a Monday.**
- ❖ **Headbanging.**
- ❖ **The barber confuses the client with another client.**

Chapter 8

"Prices"



ver the course of my career, people have always asked me about one specific topic. Something that makes the customer very curious is how barbers get paid. There are at least five different ways that a barber can get paid.

Let's start with the worst way to get paid as a barber or a hairstylist, and that is:

❖ **Getting paid by the hour.**

If "they" (barbers and hairstylists) work by the hour, there's not much difference between them and somebody working at McDonald's, Burger King, or any retail store. Keep in mind that barbers have to go to the barber school or hairstyling academy to get their licenses. They have to pay for the school tuition. When I was studying in Puerto Rico to become a barber, the course duration took longer than in the United States.

When I studied, it was about fourteen months and 1,200 hours to get my diploma. That is a lot of time to study for being a barber, and keep in mind that sometimes they don't learn that much in terms of manual ability or cutting hair itself. Most of the time, these schools and academies don't have the best teachers, and they don't teach the students how to cut hair. Most of the time, the academies are there to teach them how to pass the state exam to get the licenses. In the United States, in Florida, for example, it takes about six months before they get their diploma. Then they can apply for a barber or cosmetology license. Six

months is a reasonable amount of time to get all you need to pass the state exam. What I'm trying to say is that to be a barber, we have to spend time and money going to an institute or academy to get our license, so why would we want to get paid the same wages that somebody working by the hour would get without going through any education whatsoever? The only training they get in their jobs is usually two to three days. Some salon chains across the United States only pay by the hour. Sometimes they give them a small commission if they sell a product. These chains sometimes require the barber to get at least two to three haircuts in one hour.

Sometimes they teach them and require them to cut hair in a certain way. They like when all stylists cut the same way at the salon. They have methods that we have to follow to work there, so everybody working in that shop pretty much cuts the same way. They do this because they want the customer to come back to the shop regardless of who is cutting their hair.

Let's say I'm sick and I have a customer who always cuts his hair with me. That day, if I'm not there, the business wants the customer to go with somebody else instead of waiting for me to come back. That's why they teach us a specific technique and everybody has to follow it if we want to work there.

I worked before in barbershops and salon chains that use this way of paying the barbers, and it's not good. The only one making money is the owner. After they work hard for a week or two, and they receive their paycheck, it pretty much comes empty. Why? This is because the profits have been transferred to the business owner and not the barber.

It is like somebody working at Walmart, for example. Regardless of how much people buy stuff at Walmart, the employee is always going to get the same pay. It is the same with this way of payment. The barber will receive the same on their checks at these shops regardless of how

much effort, work, time, and experience they put into cutting hair. They will always get the same because they're working and getting paid by the hour, and sometimes they pay them the minimum wage. They have so-called "benefits," which don't actually benefit them. But if they can cut two or three people in one hour and get paid by commission, the payment will be more.

That brings us to the second way of getting paid as a barber or a hairstylist:

❖ **Commission.**

Barbershops and salon owners prefer this way barbers get paid because they get more money out of the worker. This is not as much as paying by the hour, though, because from every single customer the barber cuts, the business owner will get a commission. Commissions can range from 40% to 70%, and barbers usually keep the highest cut, whereas the shop owner holds the rest.

This is a good way to get paid if the haircut is not cheap. Even if they're getting paid half the price of the haircut, they will make a decent amount. But if the haircut in that particular establishment is inexpensive, then this is not a good way to get paid. Let's say that they cut hair in an establishment that charges \$12 a haircut and the owner pays the barber 50%, then they're only going to get \$6 plus tips if the customer wants to give one.

That's not much money because, even if they can cut two or three customers in one hour, they will only get \$12-18 plus the tip. If they are working in an establishment where the haircuts are not expensive, they have to get paid at least 60%, and the owner receives 40% or sometimes even more. I have seen some barbers get paid 70%, and the business owner gets 30%. It can be less or sometimes more.

In this particular case, they have to bring their hair styling products to use at the barbershop. That includes hair gel, pomades, creams, barbicide, razor blades, paper, and a styling cape. We also have

to take care of our laundry by washing our styling capes, towels, etc. But if we work in a barbershop where the owner pays 50% or 60%, sometimes the business owner gives us the products and sometimes the blades. Also, they take care of the laundry.

I worked at an upscale barbershop in Miami, where I used to get paid 50% because the haircut was expensive for the customer. It was \$40 a haircut, so even if I cut one customer, I would receive \$20 for each customer, which is good even if I'm getting paid 50%. But in this barbershop, they used to deduct one dollar, sometimes two, out of the cut I got from the haircuts because they didn't provide the products, so we had to pay for them.

They have a section where barbers can grab any product they want and use them. That includes shampoos, creams, gels, blades, and papers, but they deduct that small fee from every customer. This is good for the business owner because, for example, if we cut 50 customers in a week and they deduct \$50 or sometimes more of the pay because they charge a two-dollar fee if it was two services in one client. But sometimes you don't use that many products. Sometimes people don't want anything in their hair, and a shampoo bottle that I used to use can last two or three weeks, so it's a good business model for the owner, and I didn't mind paying for it. As I said, the haircuts were expensive, and I was getting a good commission out of them. One time, I was explaining to a new co-worker for almost fifteen minutes how this works, and he didn't get it. Looking at him, by the twentieth minute when he was still asking questions, I was in my head like, “Man, you really are an idiot, aren't you?”

The third way barbers get paid is:

❖ **Renting a chair at the barbershop or hairstyling salon.**

This way of getting paid means we pay a flat fee every week so, when we gather the amount that we have to pay to the shop owner, everything else after that fee is profit for us. Sometimes, those

barbershops and hairstyling salons can rent the chair for around \$75-220. Shops that charge that much usually have many customers and there's always work. We'll pay that flat fee and still receive a decent amount in a week.

This way, we are our own boss. We can do whatever we want. If we're going to take a day off or a vacation, we can do it. But we have to remember that we have an agreement with the shop owner. They won't care if you took a day or two off; you will still have to pay him the flat fee you agreed to pay. Some barbers are afraid to do this and don't want to agree to pay the fee to the shop owner because they think they won't reach the required amount of money they have to pay.

In most cases, the barbershop owner will charge less when the barber is just starting to work at the shop. When they make progress and start making customers and creating a following, the shop owner will increase the amount the barber has to pay for the chair until they reach the amount the business owner is asking. For example, let's say that you are required to pay \$200 a week for the chair or the station. If you don't have customers, or maybe you have just a small clientele, you'll be afraid that you won't reach that amount of money.

When you first start, sometimes the shop owner gives you the first week or two for free. By the third week, you are going to start developing a clientele. You will get paid more, so you start to pay more to the shop owner. For example, you start by paying \$50. Then the next week you make more clients, and you are getting more money, and you see that you can pay \$80. Then you pay \$80 to the business owner and so on until you have enough clientele to meet the requirement.

The barbershop owner sometimes will give us time, but sometimes they won't put a date until you reach the amount. That way, it's less stressful for us, and we can focus on making customers more than making the required fee for the barbershop owner. Barbers who prefer booth rent usually have a following. They already have

customers, so they are just looking to change the workplace environment. Sometimes, they have an issue with the business owner or at work. Maybe there was a fight or disagreement with a coworker at that location, and they are tired of being there. Then, they can just transfer their clientele to the new barbershop.

Barbers without a clientele often choose to get paid by commission. Since they don't have a following, they don't have to worry about making any flat fee. They will only get paid if they work. If they don't work, they won't get paid. Then they don't have that stress of paying the owner. The reason you see so many bad barbers in salon chains or barbershops is that no senior barber wants to get paid by the hour, because there's no money in getting paid by the hour.

You usually see in these salons and barbershop chains students fresh out of the barber school or institute. That's the only job they could get, because they don't have a following and they lack customers, experience, and they are the only ones willing to accept the payment by the hour. Eventually, when they get the check and see that it is pretty much empty, they will leave and go to a real barbershop or salon and make their customers. That's why, when people who go to these barbershops or hair styling salons go back to look for the barber who cut their hair the last time, usually that barber is gone. These chains never have a steady barber. I'm not saying it's not possible, but usually, barbers come and go in these places. I've seen barbers that get paid that way, and they stay for years in these chains.

There is another way barbers make money:

❖ **The private salon-barber studios.**

In this establishment, usually the size of a house, they divide and build rooms that are rented by barbers or hairstylists. The building owner needs to have a barbershop license to open the establishment. Each barber needs to have a license and place it in front of the mirror so the customer can see it.

These cubicles include shampoo bowls and cabinets so barbers can put their tools, proper lighting, plumbing, and restrooms. Everything necessary is ready to go so the barber can start working. This is another way the barber can be their own boss. These establishments require a contract. Usually, the typical arrangement for these places is one or two years.

Let's say you sign a contract with the studio owner. You will be required to pay X amount every month, just like a cell phone contract bill. This business model is also suitable for barbers who already have a following and clientele so they won't have a problem paying the monthly requirement. Also, it's good because these places usually have power, water, and internet included, so you only have to cut hair. The studio owner does everything else and pays for maintenance.

But don't think that this is cheap. Sometimes, it's very expensive because the studio owner wants to make a profit and wants to get as much as possible out of you. He will only be getting a portion of the money being made in this establishment. I think it's a good business model because you can be your own boss. Also, you can work privately in your cubicle, so you don't have more barbers around you talking, making noises, borrowing tools, or fighting about stupid things like the music being played at the shop or the TV show or movie playing.

You can avoid arguing about politics, sports, or religion in the barbershop because you can be cutting the hair off, for example, a democrat, and then the next guy waiting is a republican. He will start making arguments the other guy may not like, and that's when people start fighting at the barbershop.

One time, I was cutting an old guy, and another one who was probably the same age, went to the shop and waited for his haircut. These two guys had the looks of people glued to the TV news all day long. Since they think they are well informed, they think they know everything. One of them was saying that he's a God believer and

believes in Jesus, and that's why he's blessed. The other guy who came later and had no business in our conversation didn't agree too much with that, because he was making it pretty clear that we were atheists. Suddenly, what was a good peaceful environment, became a cock fight. I rushed with the customer I had in my chair so he could leave and they would stop fighting.

People don't always agree about sports, either. Let's say I'm cutting a guy's hair whose favorite team to win is X team. But then suddenly another dude comes to the barbershop, and he wants the other team to win because of some ridiculous statistics and other arguments. This will create a problem, because some people can be very serious when they are talking about sports. I don't understand this, and that's when, instead of being a barbershop, the place becomes a place of angry people defending their team. You can avoid all this by just having your studio in which you and your customer will be the only ones inside.

The older designs of the barbershops changed many years ago. In the past, barbershops were designed to facilitate direct interaction between the barbers and the customers waiting. The modern barbershop design now has the working area separate from the customers waiting. That's why, in the past, barbershops were a social gathering place. They still are, but now you have the obstacle of separating the working area from the waiting room.

There's another way and the last way that barbers get paid. The fifth-way barbers can get paid is:

❖ **Sponsorship.**

Some barbers get a sponsor because they are very good and famous or have many followers on social media. They can get paid by salary, or also they can get paid by posts when they post something on their social media. Sometimes, they also can get paid through an exchange of products or tools.

These are the five ways barbers get paid: by **hour, commission, renting the chair, having a private studio, and sponsorships**. I think back in the day, barbers were very underpaid. For some reason, haircuts were cheap. Back in the day, those haircuts were easier because people left more hair or they wanted to keep it long. They used to have a classic type of haircut like, let's say, James Bond or more like a business type of haircut, which are pretty easy to do if you know how to do them. If you don't, it's probably going to be hard, but these are very simple haircuts done by scissors, and that's mostly why haircuts back in the days were cheaper than today. Sometimes back in the day, the haircut service included the beard. This doesn't make sense because, why would you want to charge somebody the same price for a client that is getting two services versus someone only getting a haircut? But in modern times, haircuts have become very elaborate and time-consuming, so that's the reason you have seen an increase in barber prices.

Older barbers used to charge less for a classic haircut, which they can sometimes do in 15 minutes. These days, barbers spend 45 minutes or even an hour with one customer if they're in love. So that's more than double the time barbers spent with their customers, which, of course, creates a price spike in barbershop prices. I have different prices for senior citizens and people getting a regular modern haircut. Now, I make appointments for the senior citizen's service for only 15 minutes long. The customers getting a haircut that requires more elaborate work, usually, the younger guys, have about 30 to 45 minute appointments.

Back in the day, the older guys didn't do the edges on the forehead or the temples since they have a classic type of haircut. They are "real men," so they don't do the eyebrows with a straight razor. Just kidding!... eyebrows shapers. We have to charge for all that because this is the only way we make money. We can't give away what we do or include that in the haircut for free. Like I said before, why charge the

same price to a client that is only getting a haircut as a client who will get the haircut, eyebrows, and beard?

Some people don't like the price spike because modern haircuts are high maintenance, and they have to come back to the barbershop sooner than a classic haircut. The life of a classic haircut is about four to six weeks, but the modern haircuts, especially the skin fades, only last for two weeks, three at the most. You can extend it, but you have to come back at least every two weeks if you want to keep the haircut looking the same. Some people come back every week. Of course, the haircuts are not cheap anymore and you have to come back to the shop sooner than back in the day. It's not going to be affordable for you, but we can't charge less just because you want to come back sooner, because we are busy, and we could get another customer instead of you.

If you make the appointment, I will have to charge you the same, unless we are friends or your haircut is easy. But more than charging for the haircuts, barbers also charge for the time they spend with each client. So if you make an appointment for a haircut and you only want to cut the sides, I still have to charge you the same. That's because I will spend the same amount of time with you. After all, you'll occupy that spot another client could have. Sometimes, people think that we will charge less just because it's only trimming the sides. But what they don't know is that that's the hardest part of the haircut. The top is very easy to cut. I can do it even in two or three minutes. But blending a fade on the sides will require almost the same amount of time as an entire haircut.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, prices were raised. That was because we were required to buy cleaning products that are not cheap. Anything a barber uses is cheap, and also we were required to spend an over-regulated amount of time, fifteen minutes per service, cleaning and disinfecting the chair and buying cleaning products that are not cheap. We had to take a chunk off the time that we should be cutting hair, but we had to spend this time cleaning. Fifteen minutes here, fifteen minutes

there, and at the end of the day, we spent two hours doing nothing but cleaning. We are not getting paid for that.

Barbers get paid for their time, but also they get paid for the experience. You will probably get a better haircut from an experienced barber than a barber who doesn't have any experience. A barber with more experience will charge according to what he knows because he knows that the outcome of the haircut will be very good and is guaranteed. The service will be good, but sometimes barbers without experience charge a little less because they know they don't have the experience.

Barbers with experience should respect themselves and charge according to their experience and the time they will be spending with each customer. Experience is something tough to acquire because, more than anything, a haircut is a work of art; we are sculpting. Sometimes people don't have the best material to work with. We have to make the best out of what we have. A haircut is a drawing, and the clippers are our brush.

Another reason barbers increase their prices is because tools have become very expensive in modern times. You can spend \$300 or even \$1,000 on one pair of scissors if you want to pay that amount. I don't pay that much for scissors, but they are not cheap. Sometimes you have to have more than one pair because all hair is different and unique. We need other tools to cut different types of hair. Also, hair clippers are super expensive because now the clippers don't have a cord. The clippers these days are cordless.

The least you can spend for a decent pair of clippers to cut hair is at least \$150, and that doesn't include the outliner that you also need to have. A trimmer can cost you as much as the clipper itself. These clippers sometimes have to cut tough and thick hair. Now they make these clippers with powerful motors so they can cut all types of hair all day without getting damaged. That also increases the price of tools.

The blades are not cheap, either. The papers that we use and everything, in general, a barber or a hairstylist uses is not cheap. A hairdryer, a decent one to use every day all day long, can cost you \$100 at least; and that's a cheap one.

Now we also cut hair by appointment, which increases the price of haircuts. We, of course, are providing convenience, and that has to be charged as well. We can't give that for free because the apps we use to schedule appointments are not free. They take a chunk out of the profit and a commission for each haircut. We have been charged per transaction through the processing system. Working by appointment is a convenience for both the customers and the barber, because when the customer arrives at the barbershop, it is almost guaranteed that he will be the next if he shows up on time. Also, the barber can schedule his workday and organize his time better.

Back in the day when barbers used to work without appointments, it was very hard for them. This was the case when I started working at my barbershop. The previous owner didn't work by appointment, so every day when I used to open the barbershop, five to six people were waiting just for me. I didn't like that because I couldn't plan my day. Sometimes I couldn't have lunch, or if I had one, it was just a quick five or ten minutes. That's not quality of life because, why should I take a ten-minute lunch break when people take an hour sometimes, and they can go out and sit and enjoy their lunch?

That's why I implemented the online appointment system as soon as I took over the barbershop that I own. It was a little hard for me because all the customers who used to come to this barbershop were older retired customers. They didn't know how to make appointments through the website. Most of them didn't want to learn how to do it. Some of them stopped coming to the barbershop just because of that.

I don't like to answer the phone to make an appointment. I prefer when people go straight to the website and do it themselves. Remember

that I have limited time to cut hair. When you work by appointment, the time is limited. I can't spend two or three minutes making an appointment on the phone when I have a customer sitting in the chair. I don't want to interrupt the haircut to make an appointment. Remember, we are creating art, and we need to focus on what we are doing. It is also very disrespectful to stop a conversation with a customer to answer the phone.

One time, a customer called to say that he would be fifteen minutes late because, when he opened the front door of his house, the dog took off, and he had to chase the dog throughout the neighborhood. When he came back home with the dog, he realized his wife had taken the car keys and he couldn't start his car to go and get a haircut. Since I didn't have enough time to cut his hair, he wanted to reschedule. I had to be in a back-and-forth situation, reading him the schedule and trying to make the best time for him to come and get the haircut. I was on the phone having this conversation for around five minutes, and my customer was waiting, and I had the next appointment showing up. That day, I decided I won't answer the phone anymore to make appointments or reschedule them.

Another problem that I used to have was that I was receiving many marketing calls. That infuriates me because I don't want anybody calling my phone, the one I pay for every month, to sell me something. I don't need it, and I don't want that. That's another reason I stopped answering phones to make appointments. I was also having some issues with some customers calling to make an appointment, to tell me that they were running late, or they will no-show to the appointment. Sometimes they call to tell me a story about why they were going to be late for the appointment. They told me that they would be late because they fell asleep or had forgotten the appointment.

This was a big headache for me. I couldn't do it anymore. Sometimes people call two or three times to reschedule their

appointment or cancel them. These appointment and processing services do all that for me now. They can reschedule and cancel your appointment through the website, and you can select the day you want so you don't have to go to or call the barbershop to cancel or reschedule an appointment.

I understand older people can't make the appointment, but I had to look out for my convenience instead of theirs because I am only one, and there are many customers that I have to take care of. Now, what I do with older guys who can't make an appointment online is we schedule the next one right when we finish the haircut. That seems to help them. I know sometimes it's hard to plan, especially the older guys who get a haircut every month or six weeks, sometimes two months, and they don't know if they will have a doctor's appointment in the future when they select a haircut appointment. As cruel as it might sound, that is not my problem.

Some of them don't even want to try, nor are they interested in learning how to do it. I never understood why they couldn't make the appointment because my website is written in English, not Chinese. It's very simple to just go to the website, click on my name, select your date and time, write your name and phone number, and that's it. You will receive a confirmation and a reminder one hour before your haircut.

Also, you will have your spot reserved only for you, so you will sit at the chair during the time you selected. I feel sorry for them, but I had to make that change so I didn't go crazy at the shop from this issue.

Barbers also charge for all their seminars and continued education. They have to be well prepared to cut all kinds of hair. Every barber should have a continued education after they finish barber school. This is because trends change every year. There's always something new, and there are many ways a hairstyle can be created. Every two years, when we renew our state barber license, we must take continuing education courses.

It's funny, but they give us the same continued education package every two years, which can cost around \$15-20. If you are an experienced barber who has been cutting hair for many years, you probably won't even read the material before answering the questions because it's always the same questions. You can't rely on this continued education to be a better barber. That's just a requirement you have to do. It's an excuse to get money from us.

The continued education that I'm talking about is taking seminars, watching YouTube videos, and looking at some images of trends so that, if customers ask me if I know what a "Blowout" or "Quiff" is, I know what to do. The problem is that sometimes these seminars are not cheap, and also they don't offer them everywhere. You may have to travel to take them.

It's also essential to understand that a good or bad haircut depends on your expectations. People who are not paying enough for a haircut or choose a cheap barber must understand that your expectations can't be high, because you're not paying enough to get a good service. If your expectations are not high, then you can go to any barber and get a decent haircut. But people with high expectations can't just sit in any barber's chair, because everybody cuts differently, and you probably can't ask for a low skin fade with a hard part to a 65-year-old lady because she likely won't be able to do it. You can't have high expectations asking for a very elaborate haircut like that to a person who probably wasn't raised when those kinds of haircuts were a trend.

I'm not saying that you will end up with a good haircut every time you pay extra, because I have worked with barbers who charge the same as I do, but they are not as good. That might be because, around the city, they didn't have enough barbers, so they had to hire whomever they could find.

One of the most difficult things that I encountered when I opened my barbershop is hiring barbers. At first, I wanted to hire excellent and

professional barbers, but I noticed that there weren't enough barbers in that city. I had to lower my expectations to fill those chairs. Now, if somebody asks for a job at my barbershop, I would probably listen to them even if they don't have enough experience because, after COVID, the lack of workers was significant. That explains what I was telling you. I'm an excellent barber, but if I hire somebody with limited experience, we will work in the same place. The customer will get different outcomes depending on whom he chooses to cut his hair.

Another reason that a haircut may be expensive is the shop's location. Let's say the barbershop is in the downtown area. The haircuts will probably be more expensive because the shop owner is paying a high monthly lease for the shop's location. He has to increase the prices to pay the lease. It is the same situation with shops located inside a mall.

On the other hand, some barbershops can charge less because the place that they are located has a good deal on the lease, or maybe it's a small location. They can afford to charge less for a haircut. If you go to one of these chains, you will probably pay less for a haircut, but the leases in these places are very high. That explains why the barber who gets paid by hour working in one of these chains is not well paid.

The best way you can get a good barber is by referral, from word of mouth, and people sending their friends to the barbershop. We get many customers that way. Sometimes they see a good haircut, and they ask that person where they got the haircut. That person sends the customer to the shop. That's why I don't pay a cent to advertise in newspapers, magazines, or flyers. That's a waste of money, in my opinion.

This chapter concludes that barbers need to charge for their services according to their:

- ❖ **Experience**
- ❖ **Time**
- ❖ **Location**

- ❖ **Accessibility**
- ❖ **Tools they use**
- ❖ **The difficulty of the service**
- ❖ **Continued education and seminars they attend**

If you don't like the price a barber is charging for his services, you are more than welcome to go to another barber who charges less. Then, let's see what happens to you. If you have low expectations, you are probably going to be okay, but if you have high expectations, you will probably be very disappointed with the outcome.

Chapter 9

"Blessings"



he most important responsibility of being blessed is to share your blessings with others. You have to guide others and teach them the shortcuts even if you didn't get them in the first place. That's the way your blessings will continue to happen. It's crucial to understand the reason why these blessings have been given to you.

I was lucky to meet the only person I could tell is a real friend. My friend Albert (Betico) was the person who helped me to immigrate to the United States. Now that I look back, he did a lot for me. He allowed a stranger near his wife and let him stay in their home for almost three weeks. That's something that very few people would do in their lifetime. For that reason, I will always be grateful. He was blessed with a beautiful family, and he put everything on the line to help me. I'm sure he brought some trouble at home, and I maybe didn't even know it. You always need a friend who enables you to heal and not open wounds.

I have much admiration for my brother, my first client. He gave married life another chance, and he married for the second time. They were together for many years. This lady was the love of his life. My brother was never alone; every time I visited him or he visited me, he was always with her. He became part of her family like another member. They enjoyed doing the same things like cooking and going to the beach, and they also love to go camping. Every weekend, they went out doing something. My brother was contemplating moving to Florida, and

he traveled from Puerto Rico to Miami because he was finishing his doctorate degree at a university there. He liked the area, and with his education, he could do a lot better in Florida than he was doing back in Puerto Rico.

I don't think his wife liked that idea, though. I did understand her because immigrating to another country is not easy. It's very hard, especially if you didn't know the language and had to adapt to a new city outside of your comfort zone. They returned after he finished his classes for the doctorate degree in Florida. A couple of years passed, and I learned that she was diagnosed with breast cancer. It was a very difficult process for her and my brother, and her cancer was terminal. There wasn't much to be done for her at that point. My brother stayed with her all the time and helped her go through the cancer process the best he could. He never abandoned her. During that process, he never put his eyes on any other woman other than his wife. All the people going through that process probably will leave and abandon the person. That's why it's very important that you know how to choose the person you want to spend the rest of your life with.

One of the five Miss Universe Puerto Rico, Dayanara Torres, Miss Universe 1993, was diagnosed with skin cancer in 2019. The previous year she got engaged to a businessman and film producer. After many years alone and dedicated to her children, she was excited to meet someone she felt was the right person, someone she could introduce to her children. Little did she know, that he would abandon her when he knew she was diagnosed with skin cancer. He told her it was a lot for him. This, of course, broke her heart, because he abandoned her when she needed him the most. Puerto Rican women are warriors, and I knew she would recover from this, but this should give you an example of what can happen if you don't know how to choose the right person to spend the rest of your life together.

Keep in mind that she is one of the most beautiful women in the world. If this happened to her, it could happen to anybody. Eventually, she recovered her health, and now she's doing fine. Her skin cancer was cured. These are the times in life that have the ultimate test. Unfortunately, you have to go through it to know what will happen with your partner. The priest or pastor should include a new question when marrying people. They should ask each other if they are willing to wipe each other's butts if they are in a bad health situation. There's no pretty way to say this, and you had to picture it in your head. You can tell who is willing to do it by the facial expression. At first, everything smells like roses, and it's all about puppy love. In difficult situations, you can tell who is a real man and who is a real woman. My brother is a real man, his wife and Dayanara are real women. Dayanara's fiancé? Hmmm... fill the blank_____.

In life, there are many ways that you can be blessed. You can be blessed by having a beautiful family. You can also be blessed by having an excellent job. You can be blessed by having good health. You can be blessed by having peace. I was blessed early in life by knowing my talent and what I was good at. I knew that, and I took advantage of my talent, trying to take it to another level to make it as far as I could. It didn't end there; I also wanted to share my talent and blessings with others worldwide. I received an email from a viewer in Mexico that made my eyes water. I will share this letter with you.

"Hello, friend: I have relatively little time following your work, and I want you to know that it is impressive. The way of explaining things so simply and illustratively merely is the best I've seen on all of YouTube. But I want you to know that you've given me back the confidence to continue on the path that I'm passionate about, and that is barbering. A short time ago, I suffered an incident in which I lost vision in the left eye. And well... It plunged me into one deep depression, on how you have no idea. I thought my world was over. Consequently, I

thought it was over; I've always liked being a barber because of X circumstances I could not complete.

I know a little about trimming and doing the beard. Then one day, I looked on YouTube for a tutorial that would help me grow my little knowledge. I found countless of them, and instead of helping me, more doubts arose. But thank heaven I found your channel where you teach the art of barbering, and Wow... it was incredible! It is a way to understand everything step by step. I know you got to have hundreds of congratulations every day from people who like me and value your work, but I just wanted to say that to you. That you knew that you helped someone when they needed it. I see life differently, and I know that I can soon reach my goal. The one that I want to achieve so much. Thank you a thousand for your easy way of understanding. God bless you, brother and I encourage you to keep going."

I love to read letters like this because it gives me the fuel to keep going. Sometimes it's hard for me to make videos, especially when I was opening my shop and I didn't have much time to continue the tutorials. I'm just trying to share the knowledge that I learned through all these years with people that need help learning how to work this beautiful profession. I did it in memory of my brother. That's also how I pay back the teacher that I have at the Institute, one of my inspirations when I was learning.

I share all my knowledge with students just like someone shared their knowledge with me. Some of these countries in Central and South America, including Mexico, don't have the resources to go to a barber school and learn updated techniques for cutting hair. All they can do is go to YouTube and look for tutorials online, and that's how they learn. I know by teaching them that I am helping them to sustain a family so they can bring whatever they need at home to be happy. Some of these towns where these people are located are very isolated from anywhere.

Some of these countries don't require a barber license, so it is very productive for them to learn this way.

I love to share my knowledge with them. I sometimes wish that it could be in person so I could teach them all I learned through all these years working as a barber. I feel proud of what I have done with some of the students worldwide. When I see their profile pictures, sometimes they are next to their family, sons or daughters. I automatically think that I help them be sustainable and support their family with this knowledge. If you are a good person, you know that you have to share your knowledge with people. You can't be greedy. Some people don't like to share what they know, fearing that people will get better than them and pass them. I don't care about that. After all, when we die, we won't take anything with us.

When I was teaching at the barber institute in Puerto Rico, I realized one of my better accomplishments as a human being. I was able to help one of my students win first place in an overall hairstylist competition in Puerto Rico. She was an excellent hairstylist student. She was attending classes with the other cosmetologist teacher. She wasn't sure about herself being able to compete. The institute director wanted to have a good reputation for the school, and he thought it was a very good idea to sign up for a hairstyling competition. They hired two of the most successful hairstyling trainers in Puerto Rico to train her. They won multiple hairstyling competitions in Puerto Rico. They trained her, but she didn't feel like she could do what they wanted her to do. They were training her using a doll and the hairstyle selected was ahead of its time. The hairstyle also included complicated color techniques. They wanted to use lowlights, which are the opposite of highlights. At that time, lowlights were not a trend.

She was a single mother, and I wanted to help her. She tried to quit and didn't want to compete anymore. After the afternoon training, she used to go to my classroom to tell me what she learned and tell me

her frustrations. I started to train her, too. She was terrific, but she needed to believe in herself. She doubted a lot about her capabilities to do it. One day I told her, looking right into her eyes, "You're going to compete; you will win 1st place, and I will help you do it." Her eyes filled with tears.

I knew she wanted to do it, but she wasn't sure if she was capable. She had some issues with the placement of the hand while cutting with a razor. Cutting hair with a razor is not easy, and very few people know how to do it the right way. If you went to a barbershop in Miami, where I was working at the time I was writing this, I'd give you a 90% likelihood that you'd waste your time asking in a barbershop if anyone could cut hair with a straight razor.

I explained to her how the razor works and what it does so she had a better understanding of what she was doing other than just chopping hair and seeing it fall. There was a hairstyle she was trying to do that was way ahead of its time. Around 2016, we started to see undercuts, and it was a strong trend. I was training her ten years previous to this. She began to take pictures of how I was teaching her to place her hands while razor-cutting the doll's hair she was using. Every day, she got better and better. Her self-esteem went to the roof. She was a single mother, so her daughter was also a motivation.

After months of training, the day of the competition came. We were ready. All the students drove in a caravan from the institute to the location of the competition, about a 40-minute drive; it wasn't close. We finally got there, and all the students from different cities in Puerto Rico were mounting their stations and tools at the competition's desk. Everything happens for a reason, so her tag number was #1. The match started and the clock started ticking. She looked at me and gave me a thumbs up; I gave her one as well. I had her daughter on my mind for some reason, even though I had never met her. I knew she wanted to do it for her. All the students from different schools created the styles for

about one hour. They ran out of time. At the end of the competition, the judges from the barber and hairstyling associations were ready to see the students' work. Occasionally she looked at me and the students around. I could tell she was nervous, but her body language was like a determined person sure about her work. She had her right arm straight down while her left was at a 90-degree angle, grabbing the right from behind her body, almost like an at-ease military position.

After one hour of judging, the judges came to a final decision. Like in a beauty competition, they were calling from third to first place. They start calling the third and second place. When they announced the competition's winner, they called her name! It was an incredible feeling of joy for all of us at the hairstyling institute. It was one of the happiest days of my life. I accomplished something good and positive for the world, and money wasn't involved. I helped somebody who would forever remember this, and she will tell the story to many people just like I am right now. I haven't seen her since I left the institute, but I know she is doing well, wherever she is, regardless of whether she's working as a hairstylist or not. People who have a strong will to do something are always successful. I will forever be grateful to God for allowing me to help a person in this way.

I like to be helpful. If I'm not useful, I feel disoriented. Every time I can help someone, I help in any way if they allow me to. Some people have a barrier and don't want help from anyone. Don't be that person, although I admit I'm one of them. I'm working on it since I already know it isn't a good habit. Sometimes, you have to take that load off your shoulders. It's good to get help from others who offer it in an honest way. Now that I'm getting older, I feel the need to accept help from people who want to. I never liked the feeling of bothering people, but sometimes, it's all in my head. I know there are people who want and desire to help like me. Now, I let them get the blessings they get when they do this.

You can be blessed even by being born in a specific country. When I traveled to Cuba, I hired one of the taxi drivers that took me from the airport to the hotel room I was staying in El Malecón. I spent the entire day with him. He picked me up at the hotel at 7:30 in the morning. I mainly wanted to go to the tobacco plantations close to Viñales. That area of the country on the west side of Cuba is beautiful. It is pure country. According to the taxi driver, that area in Viñales used to be underwater millions of years ago. You can even imagine dinosaurs walking around the enormous mountains, which were massive rocks. There was some vegetation on the mountain rocks. He told me those plants grew there because birds transported the seeds and planted them in the mountains. Eventually, vegetation grew in the hills. All you see in that area of Cuba is nature at its best.

While he was driving, he gave me a party by playing a huge playlist for customers. He probably played during that road trip about 300 songs. During my conversation with him, suddenly Michael Jackson was playing on his radio. He told me something that got me thinking for the rest of the trip. He said, “Look at Michael Jackson... if Michael Jackson were born in Cuba, you would never see him being famous and the icon he is in modern times. But by being born in the United States, the land of opportunity, he got the blessing of being born in this country, and by that, he met promoters, and people discovered his music, talent, and voice. In Cuba, there are probably people as talented or even more than Michael Jackson, and they can't be discovered because we are isolated from the world.” He was right.

That trip in Cuba from Havana to Viñales was one of the best road trips I had in my life. We stopped as requested in one of the tobacco plantations, and the farmer knew I was coming because the taxi driver called him to tell them that I was going there. It was off-season, so the only one there was me. He showed me how they roll cigars and how they pack them. Back in those days, you were allowed to take up to 80

cigars out of Cuba without being in trouble with customs. He also showed me Che Guevara's favorite way to smoke a cigar. After he rolled his cigar, he applied honey to the tip of the cigar, and according to him, that was the way Che used to love to smoke cigars. Whether this is true or not, I don't know. I'm just telling you what he told me, and I tried it that way and I loved it. Also, he had Cuban rum, so while we were smoking the cigar, we took rum shots. For me, it was an amazing experience just saying that I was smoking Cuban cigars in Cuba and drinking rum as well on a tobacco farm with locals. After that, we went to La Cueva del Indio. This is a very impressive cave that you could get to on a boat, and while you are sailing, you have a tour guide narrating the wonders of that part of Cuba.

Recognizing that we don't need much to be happy is a blessing. Material belongings are not so necessary to be happy. As I get older, the less I have, the happier I am; less trouble, drama, and complications. Having a simple life is a blessing. Sometimes we move far away from family to be able to make more money. I don't regret coming to the United States and working here to get what I always dreamed of. But being away from family for many years makes me think about what matters. Time goes by very quickly. We don't realize it until it's gone.

In all my travels around the world, I can tell you that the lesson I learned the most was simple living. Experience a random village that you have never been to before and see how people do things and behave. In some parts of these countries, people grab sticks from the land, and they can make a beautiful fence with them. Some people will spend a fortune building a fence in the United States when sometimes you have the materials to do it on your land and we don't use them. In those countries, some people build gutters with half of a PVC pipe, and they make it work perfectly. But here we are, worried about aesthetics, and we want it to look good, and sometimes we spend thousands of dollars just to build that. Recognizing all of that is truly a blessing.

I wish I knew all that when I was a boy growing up, having somebody older than me revealing all the shortcuts of life. Unfortunately, all my grandfathers died young when I was a boy. Although I appreciate the knowledge my parents gave me, I admit that I would love to have the opinion of older people as I was growing up revealing all the secrets to me: the life hacks. God blessed me with my talent. Since I was a boy, I was lucky enough to know what I was going to do and what I was good at as a kid. God blessed me with my hands. Sometimes you can be blessed by losing. Bad experiences in life can teach you a lot, even if it hurts and you are not comfortable with the experience.

Having my barbershop wasn't easy. It was a struggle. After I got it, I went through many difficult things to keep it running. I don't see it as a bad thing that happened to me, but I see it as something that I needed to learn to be stronger and wiser. I was blessed by being allowed to stay in business with my barbershop. Many customers were very generous to me, and I have to give them credit for that. Without them, I would probably be out of business. God always sends you the right people to help you so you don't struggle, especially if you don't deserve it and you have been a good person.

It's easy to lose the enjoyment of life if you are not focusing on what you want. You have to remind yourself that you need to take a break and enjoy the fruits of your effort once in a while. There's no point in working all the time and not having time for yourself to enjoy. Don't skip it. Always remind yourself to have fun and do whatever you do to enjoy life.

I wish that greed was one less ingredient in our pursuit of happiness. Without it, we would have more time for our neighbors and the people around us. Sometimes, we will have somebody who needs our help, maybe because they are depressed or perhaps because they are going through a bad situation in their life. But we have so much going

on in our lives that sometimes it is very hard to take the time to listen and help people around us. I have seen many gurus advising on how to be successful. But what does success mean? We probably think it means material stuff that we forget over time. A very good customer once told me that, every time you have a goal and reach it, you will want to create another one. You will always be dissatisfied. When are we going to be satisfied and enjoy the fruits of our efforts? After all, we won't bring any of the material stuff with us when we die. Some people are thinking about being successful by having luxury cars in massive houses. But on the other hand, some people will think about happiness just by having good health and having family close to them, which is what really matters.

When I worked at one of the upscale barber shops in Miami, it was sad to see people coming and going out of the dialysis center with oxygen tanks and being held by nurses to have the procedure. Meanwhile, luxury car owners parking their cars didn't have a clue what those people at the dialysis center were going through. You may have all the education in the world and you can be as successful as you want, but if you don't have good health, that means nothing. I will never understand why justice and health prices are so high. Those are necessities human beings have.

Why is it that a pill worth thousands of dollars and that some people might need just to live is so inaccessible? People should be able to access their medicines without breaking the bank. It all comes back to greed. Greed is not as good after all, greed is a pole vault: the tool people use to jump over others, the instrument they use to pass over everybody by only thinking about themselves. Greed is something that you will only see in a city. You will know very few people like that in the countryside. That's why I prefer in my older days to live in the country, far from the city.

You can see who will be greedy even when they are children. Some kids want their candy all for themselves, but you will always find a kid who will share all they have with someone. I'm guessing that we are born with it. We just have to learn how to control it. Some barbers move to another barbershop, and the shop owners won't tell the customers where they are. That's a very greedy thing to do. After all, if you are talented, you won't need that barber's customers because you will make your own clientele. You can cut the entire neighborhood yourself at some point. There are so many people you can take in one day, but very few people will control that animal instinct that we all have as humans. I can guarantee you that, if you send that barber's customer to them, God will replace that person with another one that might even be a better customer just because the thing you did was a good thing. Maybe that's how I got one of my best customers and friend. He brings me huge and tasty cupcakes, the size of a Fabergé egg from one of the best bakeries in town. I share them with the barbers and clients; they enjoy them a lot.

Having good friends can also be a blessing. It's very important that you know how to choose your friends. They will affect every part of your soul. You have to be able to recognize who are your best friends and get rid of the bad ones. Bad friends will put you down when you need the complete opposite. When you get older, you will see that you don't need many friends. You may be counting the good ones with your hands, and the rest you have to make them disappear. If they need you, of course, you will be there, but it's crucial that you get rid of all negativity in your life.

Like many people, at some point, I was bullied. I have always been an overweight person. I know that very clearly, and I don't need a friend reminding me that's one of my weaknesses all the time. After all, nobody is perfect. If it is not being overweight, it probably would be something else. I wish you could see all the stupid comments I get on

my YouTube channel from trolls, and I'm just doing something good. People always will find a way to express hate. Most of these people don't even do any good for society, and they are criticizing something that they can't even do. That doesn't discourage me because I get more good comments than hateful ones.

Most of the beautiful girls I know are daughters of a difficult to look at man. Some of the most beautiful ladies I have seen are walking next to an ugly man. Like poles repel, unlike poles attract, right? This guy's pockets are usually deep, but their partner's are empty. I dedicate Frankie Ruiz's song "Ironía," written by Jankarlos Núñez, to both.

I have a few clients in this situation and trust me, they know it is an arrangement. They don't care, though, and I can't blame them, especially since I'm getting older, and it's harder to find a partner. Some ladies look for stability more than looks. You have to find happiness, and if they're happy this way, God bless them. Forget about what people have to say, no matter what. They will talk crap anyways. You can't please everybody; it is impossible. People hate what they can't understand. Even if you have a perfect marriage with an ideal family, they will always try to hate what they can't have.

When I worked at one of the upscale barber shops in Miami, one day, one of my clients went to the shop with his wife. She stayed for the first half of the haircut. Later on, she left because she had to pick up their daughter from school. She wanted to go with him to pick her up, but he was in the chair with a couple of minutes left of his haircut. She told him that their daughter would be very happy if she saw them together at school to pick her up. They agreed to meet in a yogurt place close to the shop.

Sometimes I can't tell if the client's companion is their daughter or his wife. I would never ask this from a person unless they told me before. She was significantly younger. He told me it was his wife later when she left. He was 58 years old, and he met her when she was 28, so

it was a 30-year difference between them. He started to tell me that he had met her in a restaurant and that she was the one who took the initiative to approach him. They began to talk, and from that day, they started to date and eventually got married. He told me this type of woman is just looking for money, and it is obvious, right? No model-looking girl wants to hang out with a grandpa-looking husband unless there's something arranged. But at the same time, she was a wonderful companion for him and an excellent mother.

He was very open about it with me, and I appreciated that. Some clients just ask questions, but he wanted to get a little counseling session with his barber. I like to be helpful. I told him, "Listen, she has been with you for close to 8 years, you have a daughter with her, and I can tell she cares about you. What else do you want? Some people are couples of the same age, and they fight all the time, and they don't respect each other. Even if any guy loses his job or gets very sick, there will be very few women who will stay. So even if you're married, there's some kind of arrangement also. Don't care about what people have to say about your age difference. At the end of the day, it is just going to be you, her, and your daughter that matter. Consider yourself a very fortunate man. It doesn't matter how you're happy but that you're happy."

Florida is packed with gold diggers. It is not a secret that there is much wealth in this state. Rich older people love to come here to South Florida, especially Miami and retire. I haven't heard the word "retire" so many times in my life other than in this city. They all gather here. Plus, we also have celebrities all over South Beach, so you'll see many gold diggers. Just be careful with the Russian B-girls. They will pump the bill at the bar up, and you'll never see them again, hopefully, not feeling epididymal hypertension. Men form a line to talk and meet beautiful women. You can't blame beautiful women for trying to get the best out of their looks.

Why be with a beautiful loser if you can be with an ugly winner? Some of them will think that life will be easier, more enjoyable, and less complicated. In this case, it is not a question of who loves more than whom. You'll save this drama every couple has. And if you get tired of your current one, you can always get another. Anyway, it is a blessing to have someone to share your thoughts with at the end of the day: share life together, travel, and enjoy. After years of trial and error in partner relationships, we all want to settle down. If someone thinks differently, it is just because they aren't mature enough to understand the cycles of life: a Peter Pan, if I can call it that.

Being single also has its advantages. You don't have to worry about a lot of problems that you would have if you were in a relationship. You can keep the AC as low as you want without anyone complaining about it. You can fart your butt off if you want. You can wake up at noon on your day off if you wish to, without anyone telling you you're wasting time. You can be at home all day binge-watching TV series and movies without anyone waking you up at eight in the morning to put miles on a car around town doing errands and going to places you don't want to go, like going to a baby shower, or walking at the mall, buying something you don't need, or a wedding of a distant friend of your partner that you don't know, wasting money on clothes you probably will wear only one day.

Single, you can travel whenever you want to, wherever you want, without asking permission from anyone. You can put your favorite cookies in your shopping cart at the supermarket, no questions asked whatsoever. But don't get me wrong, at the end of those adventures, it is better if you can share them with someone... except for the farting! Having conversations about those memories with someone. If you get sick from the cookies you bought, you have someone to care for you.

It is hard to find somebody with the same taste and similar thoughts about life. We're programmed to be unsatisfied. We think that

our partner isn't good enough, so we start to look towards other places we shouldn't. No matter what, we need to find somebody who can tolerate us and not look for perfection, because it doesn't exist.

When I was younger, I was dating a girl I met close to where I used to live in North Miami. She was a nice girl, but she was a party girl and I always had been a chill type of guy, almost in a hipster way. She told me something brilliant. She told me that every couple goes through a cheating season or period, which is part of a marriage. By that time, I didn't understand that, and I got freaked out. In my head, I thought that she was saying that she was eventually, no matter what, going to cheat on me. Now that I'm older, I understand what she meant.

We're all humans. We make mistakes, and if there was a reason to cheat, that would happen. It is hard to be faithful even if your love for your wife is solid; for a man or a woman to resist this in a moment of anger or when we lose faith in a relationship is challenging, when problems occur or when people just can't agree on something. But at the end of the problem, if there's love, even if the cheating occurred, there may be a chance to forget what happened.

Let me explain myself before someone snaps reading this. We live in a concrete jungle and evil people do exist. Some people are cowards, enough to take advantage of failing marriages, especially co-workers who know the conjugal situation. These scumbags are all over, and they usually win because people going through this challenging situation want to be happy and it is like a ray of light in a dark storm. We fail to see that this quick moment of joy isn't going to fix the hole in a broken heart. It may be a bandage that becomes loose with very little water.

Like the TV series, Ray Donovan, Ray's wife, Abby's character, cheated on Ray's character, just because they had problems, and he wasn't around because he was busy at work. Eventually, she knew and recognized that what she did was wrong. The affair wasn't worth it. She

begged him to forgive her, and he did. It took forever, but he did. He knew he was wrong at some point, so he can't blame her entirely for what happened. He knew it was also his fault.

I admire couples who overcome this because it isn't an easy situation. All the strongest marriages I know, at some point, came across this. I respect all my clients' wives and girlfriends. It is very low in the manhood scale to do this to a friend or a client. Karma is a prominent revengeful judge, and you don't want to be in its courtroom. If you do this to a friend or a customer, you'll pay the consequences, not with the easy score you got at a club or a bar, but with the girl you really like and would die for. It is when you're deep in love that your payment will be required by karma. Be a good boy or girl and don't do this to a friend or customer. Don't be a coward. Save the blessings of doing the right thing with the girl you like. Don't let her go away because of your stupidity.

One of my client's sons recently came to the shop with his mom to get a haircut. It is vacation season, so he was going away with his dad to visit family, but his mom was going to stay in the state for a reason I didn't know. She asked me for my phone number just in case I quit or got fired from the shop so they had a number they could find me. A couple of days passed, and she texted me, asking if I could come to her house and cut her hair. I agreed without any malice in my head, but then I remembered she was married, so I didn't know how to say no now that I decided to do it. In my younger years, I would probably go there and cut her hair, and maybe if she flirts a little bit, the haircut would turn into something else. But I know better now, and even if it's not me and another guy who will do it, it isn't going to be on my conscience that I mess with another guy's wife. I don't need that curse in my life. I paid all my dues for my past errors, so I don't want any other debt.

All my career, at some point, I had situations like this. It is not uncommon to be in this situation. It's funny, but kids know if you like their mom or their mom likes you. They know if you're checking out her

butt or anything else. The look they give me is pretty awkward, and you can tell they don't like me. But their mom is bringing them to me, so what can they do? Having this type of relationship isn't good. It is almost as if you're flirting with the possibility of being their father-barber. I don't like any relationships at work with the moms of my clients or co-workers. I have enough drama in my life to deal with that kind of issue.

I don't like even bringing my girlfriend to the shop. It saves me a lot of drama and conversations about my privacy. I'd rather them think I'm single or make them think about an avatar of whatever they think is my girlfriend.

Keep your personal life out of work; be a ghost. People hate to see anyone happy. Don't give them the satisfaction. I worked with a barber who was always inviting people to his house, sometimes customers that he barely knew from maybe one or two haircuts. I consider this to be very stupid regardless of the work you do. You should separate business from your personal life. I know some people are too friendly. This can bring you trouble in the future. This person you invited to your house, whom you barely even know, can tell somebody else you don't know what articles of value you have in your home, or what times you're away, and you will be an easy target for a robbery. Or maybe worse, you might be going through a difficult situation in your marriage, and one of these people can flirt with your wife, and hopefully, she doesn't engage. I know many marriages end this way. Unless you're in the swinger subculture, don't do this to yourself. Keep your personal life private.

Many people will say, if you trust your wife, you shouldn't have any issues. And that's probably right, but not everybody is the same, and you will never know anyone completely. People always keep some secrets, even if it's your wife. Sometimes, looking through the barbershop window, I have seen men and women park their cars and

then leave in the car where somebody else was waiting. I wonder if they were cheating. If they are in different cars and then one of them parks the vehicle, for example, in front of a gym or any business, and they leave in one car, there are many chances they are cheating and hiding from their partner. I know, because I did this many times when I was younger. Either way, I was cheating, or the girl I was dating was cheating.

You are not safe even if your woman or man is fat and ugly. I used to work with a barber who had an affair with a female client. We used to work in a salon, and there were female customers getting services from the hairstylists. I know that the lady went to the female restroom, and he followed her, and she opened the door for him. This lady was married. I know she was because she always talked about her husband and the things they were planning. And she was pretty ugly, so don't think that this won't happen to you if you have an ugly wife, because that's wrong.

Sometimes, people cheat to get excitement in their lives and get out of monotony and routine. If you are cheating with a coworker, it's probably good to know that you will get caught. People at work will find out. People will notice the love pattern around them, and they will see the difference between the treatment of a coworker and a loved one. This is the worst situation you can put yourself into. It will cost you your job. There's a stage when everything smells like roses, everything is very nice, but there's going to be a time that there's going to be fights and differences. Everybody at work will notice that you are not talking to that person, and hopefully, your coworkers don't like gossip, and they end up telling your partner. I don't like to date coworkers because it brings many issues to the workplace.

I used to work with a very beautiful receptionist in Miami. I was single, but the difference between ages was probably ten years. Since I knew she was single, I invited her a couple of times to different

restaurants to date her. I didn't realize back then that she liked the other barber working at the barbershop, but this guy was married. It never crossed my mind that they would be interested in each other since he was married. I assume he was out of the competition, but he wasn't. I wanted to keep my invitations secret because I didn't want the other coworkers to know about me inviting her to go out. Little did I know, she told this guy all the moves I was making behind my back. This created a very uncomfortable situation at work. I was wise enough to know back then that maybe dating a coworker would bring me trouble, but I still wanted to make an effort because I liked the lady. That was my last try ever dating a coworker.

That's why some companies and corporations make you sign a contract stating that you can't date a coworker, or otherwise you will be fired. These owners of corporations know that this will bring trouble and affect the company's efficiency. It's crazy to think that there are dating apps and websites dedicated to helping people cheat on their partners like Ashley Madison in these modern days, using catchy phrases like "I feel wanted again," and "Find something more exciting today." Even the Ashley Madison CEO quit after allegedly some emails were leaked in 2015 by hackers, exposing that he may have also engaged in affairs. When I heard this news back in 2015 was funny to me to know that people and affiliates to this website were on fire because hackers had their possession names of users using it. I can't even imagine what they felt when they knew that hackers were going to expose their names on the website, so spouses and husbands now can see if they were cheating on them through this website.

I say it is funny because of what we talked about before about karma. It always passes you the check, and you will have to pay. I don't like to cheat if I'm in a relationship. I shut down and try to stay in one relationship. I never understood why people cheat. If you don't want to

be with a person, just leave them. It's already hard enough to have one relationship, why do they want to have more than one?

One of the most incredible stories a customer ever told me was the story about a lady who died in mysterious circumstances. My customer was a forensic pathologist. Before sitting in my chair, this customer was participating in a trial of a person who was in jail for ten years. He was accused of murdering his wife. My customer was telling me how this lady died and to me, it was an amazing story worthy of a Hollywood film. He was telling me that this lady was allegedly drunk in the backyard enjoying her swimming pool, but she fell by accident. Her head hit the ground making her pass out. The lady was on the floor for a long period of time, unconscious.

Apparently, there was blood on the floor and a hawk that was resting on a tree branch close to the house saw the lady laying on the floor with a bloody head and attacked her. This attack was enough for the lady to die. Her husband was accused of murdering his wife. My customer, the forensic pathologist was at the trial explaining to the jurors that the lady didn't die of a violent attack, nor was she murdered by a human. He was on the trial to explain that the lady was attacked by a hawk. The lacerations that the hawk caused on this lady were recognizable from previous hawk attacks. When he was telling me the story, it was hard for me to believe it was true. He wasn't lying; I can tell when somebody is lying. The barbers work close to people every day and we know if somebody is lying or making things up. After he told me this story, I did a Google search and saw a few videos of hawks attacking dogs, cats, and iguanas. I saw how they can lift heavy animals with their strong grip and attack them with their beak. After I saw these videos, I knew he wasn't lying. Maybe the accused was having domestic problems previous to this incident and someone told this to the police. That was enough to convict the guy. Eventually, after the trial, this guy was able to get out of jail. I won't say he was unfaithful to his wife

because I don't know. But this is an example of how complicated and extreme your life can become if you are dishonest.

Chapter 10

"Colleagues"



This book wasn't written specifically for barber colleagues, but in this chapter, I want to advise the new colleagues trying to make a living out of this beautiful profession. Non-barbers will also enjoy the inside information. Contrary to what people think, cutting hair isn't easy. It is a hard craft to master. Playing an instrument or creating a painting is not for everybody. You will need hundreds of hours to learn how to master those art forms as well.

The first thing that you should consider is whether you like working with people. It's good to remember that working with people is not easy. You will work directly with people, and you need to have patience. You always have a positive attitude no matter what the customer asks you to do. Some customers will ask for a strange haircut, and you have to work it around to please the customer. I often had customers in my chair who asked me for a haircut that is not symmetric, or a haircut that is not the style I am used to. I try to avoid any arguing with the customer and not create a hostile environment while you are doing the haircut. Over time, I learned that it is easier to just follow the customer's orders, assuming the customer already knows what he wants. If the customer, on the other hand, wants your opinion about a specific style, then you can give your opinion because you won't hurt the customer. After all, he is asking for your opinion in the first place.

Cutting hair is a form of art. If you like art and like to be creative, you will have an advantage. That's something you have in your favor. Don't be shy about expressing your creativity by making moves that some people might find strange. By “move,” I'm referring to your body language: the way you speak with your body. If you have to make a particular move to give a good cut, just do it. Don't think about what others are thinking.

Always clean your tools. Before and after each client, you must sanitize your tools and station. This not only protects the customer, but it also protects you. Remove the blade from the straight razor after each use and spray it with virucidal. Also, can you dip it inside the barbicide bottle. This is a good practice because some clients don't trust the barber and they ask if you change the blade on the straight razor. If there's no blade inside, then there's nothing to be changed; they will see you placing the new blade on the straight razor. If it is a new client, always turn the chair facing the mirror so the client can see the process while you're doing it. If is a regular customer he will trust you.

If you are not sure about something related to the haircut you are about to do, it's always good to ask the customer before you do something they don't like. Some customers can be very upset about errors being made at the barber's chair. Some of them can be comprehensive, but others will not. If you make a mistake while doing a haircut and the customer doesn't like it, you can always give them a discount. In the worst-case scenario, you can give them a complementary haircut. I rarely give free haircuts. I always try to please the customer before leaving the barbershop. That's why it's very important to ask the customer before each step of the haircut to avoid any misunderstandings.

You must know the history of your profession. It is surprising to me that customers know the barber's history. Before doctors, barbers used to do surgeries, counseling, small amputations, and teeth pulling.

Barbers were the village's doctors. It is an amazing story and you should be able to tell your customers about it. Customers, especially children, are curious to know about the barber's pole colors. Back in the day, we used to use only two colors: white and red. The reason is that in medieval Europe, they didn't have big windows in front of buildings and that's the way they used to tell people that inside there was a barber. Using a bloody bandage, they'd wrap them around a stick and place them outside the building. The barbershop was usually inside a basement. That way, people knew there was a barber at the building. Later on, when barbering was brought to America, we included the blue color, which symbolizes the veins and that was in addition to the white representing the bandages and the red representing the blood.

Don't be afraid of the mirror. The mirror will always be there, and you have to learn how to ignore it. While you are being creative, you have to ignore what the customer is thinking about their haircut. Usually, when a customer is not pleased with the haircut, they will get their hands out of the cape and touch the area they are not happy with. In that case, you stop and ask the customer if he's OK. If there's something wrong with the cut, the customer will tell you to fix some areas, so you listen to him and fix them. When I was starting to cut hair, I was afraid of the mirror. You will see some barbers that, the first thing they do when the customer sits on the chair is to turn the chair away from the mirror. Sometimes, they don't want the customer to see what they are doing while doing the haircut, so they can let their creativity loose without worrying about what the customer is thinking. Now that I'm older, when the customer sits in my chair, I usually turn the chair away from the mirror. I don't do it to hide anything from the customer. If I do, it is because that way, I don't have to be walking around the chair all day. I step next to the station, close to my tools, to easily grab them and exchange them as much as I want while doing the haircut.

Especially in modern times, with all the new haircuts that require much work and are very elaborate, you will have to change guards a million times in just one haircut. Never forget that you have to look for your convenience because the customer in your chair will be there for just 30 to 45 minutes. You, on the other hand, will be there the entire day, cutting sometimes 15 to 18 people a day. That's why I don't care that much anymore if the customer doesn't feel comfortable with me having the chair away from the mirror.

If you're just starting to cut hair, I highly recommend gathering different techniques from different barbers and creating your own. There's no perfect technique. Some barbers will grab the clippers with their right hand. Some barbers will grab them with the left. I recommend that if you are a righty like I am, once in a while, you use your left hand and train it to cut as well, or vice versa. One of the teachers I had, when I was studying at the barber institute, recommended using both hands because you will never know if you will need them at some point in life. You might be injured by some accident, and that way, if you train both hands to cut hair, you will be able to use it if you need it.

I personally never liked the clipper-over-comb technique, so I don't use it. That doesn't mean that it's not a good technique to cut hair. I just happen to think that there are better ways to accomplish the same outcome with a different technique. I saw that technique a long time ago, and I did try it, but I didn't like it, so I didn't include it in my technique.

One of the problems that I used to have when I was starting to cut hair was that the clipper got too hot. The reason is that people who are beginning to cut hair don't have experience and will sometimes spend more than an hour with one customer trying to make it look good. When I was starting to cut hair, I could only afford one clipper. What I used to do was to wear a sock as a glove to protect my hands from the heat of the clipper. You can also use a glove similar to the ones that people use at the gym. Another inexpensive way to cool the clippers

down is to use a cooling spray for clippers. The price runs about six dollars per can. If you can afford to have at least two clippers, that will be perfect. When one of your clippers is too hot, you can turn on the other one and use it.

Set a goal for the time that you will be doing the haircut. It is good to keep track of time while doing a haircut. That way, you can see how long the haircut it's taking. Some customers don't like to be in the chair for too long. Other people, on the other hand, enjoy treating themselves and being in the chair for an extended period. I don't like to spend too much time with the customer, because that extra time that I'm using to polish one customer, I can use it with another who will pay an extra amount of money that you won't get if you spend too much time with only one customer. If the customer is going to be satisfied with your haircut, he will be happy whether you spend one hour or thirty minutes on them. If the customer is not going to like the haircut, you can spend an hour and a half on him, and he just won't like the haircut. In my opinion, it's not worth it to polish the customer too much. If you spoil the customer too much, they will get used to that, and every time they visit you at the barbershop, they will expect the same job. If you develop a clientele of spoiled customers, you will have less time for others who may want to cut their hair also. After all, it's just a haircut. It's not a sculpture that will last centuries. After three days, it won't look the same as when it came out of the barbershop. Remember, time is money.

You have to be grateful that you have a job where you can make more money if you want. You can "play with time" and "hustle" to increase your income. Some people work by the hour, and those are the ones that can have the luxury of being slow because, no matter how hard they work, they will get paid the same. That is not your case. Why cut one person in one hour when you can cut three? Take advantage of this. It is one of the beauties of being a barber.

I recommend you always dress professionally. You don't need to wear a long-sleeved shirt or a tie to look professional, but it's very easy to look unprofessional as a barber. Never wear shorts; that's disrespectful to the customer. Also, it's disrespectful for you as a worker because people will judge you based on what they see. If they see you wearing shorts, maybe the tip they will give you is going to be less, because what the customer reads by looking at you is that you don't care much about your job. You are "just a barber." On the other hand, if you are dressed professionally, the customer will like that because remember, you are going to touch him and you are going to be in contact with the customer directly. If you are clean and look professional, the customer will like that, so when he gets out of the chair, he will appreciate that and tip you even better.

Professionalism is something that you can use as a weapon in your favor to get better financial outcomes. Before starting the haircut, it's good that the customer sees you cleaning the tools before cutting their hair. That's something that the customer also appreciates, and that adds up to the treatment he will give you at the end of the haircut. When I'm getting a service that requires me to give a tip, I observe the effort being made, and that makes me want to reduce or increase the tip that I will provide. If you give minimal effort, don't expect good tips. The customer notices everything.

Don't be a cheap barber. Use the tools and products required to give good service. If you want to save products or tools, you can ask the customer if they want what you are offering. These, for example, can be the use of a straight razor. Some people will like it, but some people don't, and you can ask them if they want that service. If they don't, then you can save the blade for another customer. The same thing you can do with products like gel, pomades, and aftershave. At the end of the service, you can ask the customer if they want this product on their hair. If they don't, then you save that product for another client. Please don't

use toilet paper to wrap your customer's neck. That's a very cheap thing to do and very unprofessional, and professional barbers don't do this. You're cutting hair, not wiping butts. In beauty supplies online, you can buy inexpensive boxes of barber paper towels.

Always clean the hair on the floor that you cut after each customer. That is another way to disrespect your customer by telling them to sit on a chair with a bunch of hair of different colors and textures on the floor. In the eye of the customer, that's very disgusting. For you as a barber, it might not be because you have been cutting hair for a long time, and you are used to looking at the hair on the floor, but for them, it is.

Sometimes it's hard, but you have to try to agree with whatever the customer is talking about. Sometimes, if you refute what the customer is saying, you will have problems. Remember, the customer will only be in your chair for 30-45 minutes. Why ruin the relationship with a customer for a lifetime if the time of the haircut is such a small one? Some topics can bring trouble to the shop, for example, sports, politics, and religion. You can talk about sports. It is a common topic in barbershops, but don't disagree too much with the client, and don't ruin the relationship; it's just a stupid game that probably was rigged anyway!

Charge the customer according to what you think you are worth. In my experience over the years, I noticed that the customer will pay whatever you ask them to pay. Don't be afraid to ask what price you think your service is worth, and don't lowball yourself. There will always be one or two customers with whom you may have to make an arrangement. Some customers are going through difficult situations. A discount on a haircut would be a good thing for them. Some examples can be a sick person, somebody with disabilities, or a veteran in need.

You have to build your clientele based on people whom you know won't mind paying you what you're asking. If you build a clientele of cheap customers, that's not going to be in your favor in the long run.

When you are starting to develop a clientele, you may think that your work has to be cheaper, but that's not necessarily the case. The problem with creating a clientele this way is that you may encounter issues when you want to increase your prices.

When I got my barbershop, the previous owner charged very little for haircuts. I went along with it for a while, but later on, I increased the prices. The customers I charged less had to understand that the price was outdated. The service that I was providing was different, and eventually, they noticed that. You have to learn how to separate friendship from business. We as barbers sometimes are friends with our customers, but that shouldn't dictate what you charge for your service because this is your job at the end of the day.

Learn how to cut all kinds of hair. That says a lot about the barber's skills. Hair is hair, and if you cut it always the same way, maybe with different techniques, the texture of the hair shouldn't be an obstacle for you. I was lucky to be born in Puerto Rico, where we have different ethnicities, and I always cut different types of hair. Also, I wanted to learn, and I was always interested in cutting all kinds of hair. That way, I could learn how to make my clientele bigger. If you think that you don't have the ability or experience in a specific type of haircut, you can always tell the customer that you will not be able to do it. The customer will understand, and he won't mind going somewhere else or cutting it with a different barber at the same shop.

Never be apologetic for your talent, and what you are capable of doing. If a customer doesn't like your service, it is better if they go to someone else. Don't feel bad if you lose that customer because that's the space available for somebody else who will appreciate your work.

Having good tools is important, but it's not vital. You can have the best tools in the world, but if you don't know how to cut hair, they won't do it for you. If you're happy with having 15 clippers and can afford it, that's fine. But at the end of the day, you are the master, and

your tools are your puppet. I can do a fade with just one scissor, a comb, and a straight razor. The tools are helpful for you and make work easier. When you master your craft, you will notice that you don't need many tools to do a good service.

I also suggest that once in a while, you take continuing education. If you cannot attend any seminar, that's not a problem. You can always find continued education on YouTube by following videos of new trends, tools, and ways to do things. I will admit that sometimes customers tell me about the name of a haircut that I don't recognize, maybe because, at that time, I wasn't taking any continued education. Sometimes a customer can tell you the name of a haircut, but it's not what he is looking for. A customer can ask for a blowout, but what he means is that he wants a low fade. Also, they can ask for a taper, which can mean different styles in different cities. When you notice that the haircut conversation is taking too long, just tell them to show you a picture. That's the easiest way to get the customer on the same page.

Always have your documents in order. Every two years, you'll have to renew your barber or cosmetology license. It is not a big deal and it is inexpensive. It is good to learn about transmittable diseases to avoid infecting a customer or infecting yourself. By law, you will be required to take HIV/AIDS continuing education, which is about two hours long. You can take this course online for \$15-18 dollars, and you will get your certification right away through your email. It's also important to learn about hepatitis and its different types. This transmittable disease sometimes is stronger and will survive on a surface for a more extended period than in the air. Always protect yourself and protect the customer by spraying antivirus spray on your blades and the straight razor.

I guarantee you that you will have bad days. There will be days when your muse is not at the top. Don't let these days discourage you. Remember, we are humans and humans make errors. One time, a

colleague told me that the comb I was using was inappropriate for the haircut that I was doing. You use the tools you think are appropriate and not what others think are. Some tools that may feel comfortable in my hands do not necessarily have to be the same for another person. I use whatever is comfortable for me because I am the one doing the haircut. I never pay attention to stupid comments like this, and I don't let that discourage me from being a good barber. Usually, barbers who make comments like this are followers and not leaders. They are following what others are doing, but they don't have the ability to think for themselves. You have to think outside of the box. If one tool is good for you and you think that it will help to do a good job, then use it. Remember, you don't have to please everybody, you just have to satisfy the customer in the chair.

Another piece of advice that I can give you is that you should create a routine. Cut the hair the same way every time, using the same steps with every customer. By doing this, you will master your craft, and you will know what to do after each step. You won't have to overthink what to do after each step. You can do this with pretty much all your customers. Once in a while, you will have a customer who will make you do things differently. This will be in different situations like having long hair, or when they come with wet hair. As you probably know, magnetic motor clippers don't cut damp hair, so you may have to dry the hair first and then start the cut. Rotary motor clippers can cut damp hair.

Always smells good while working. There's nothing worse than having a barber smelling like an armpit. That's another way to show professionalism to your customer. Have some mints or gum next to your stations if you feel your breath isn't good.

Don't give too much information about your private life to customers. This creates a very uncomfortable situation when the customer is back for the haircut. Maybe you don't want to talk about that topic after a few weeks, but the first thing they ask you when they sit in

the chair is about that personal situation you talked about with them. Don't talk about your girlfriend or your wife's issues at home. Keep those topics out of the barber chair. Something that you might be talking about with a customer might get back to somebody else or a friend and tell them that specific problem you were going through in your private life.

Once in a while, it is good to take a break when you think you are losing interest in cutting hair. Just don't make the error some barbers make by disappearing too much and not working steadily. If your customers are OK with that, which isn't usually the case, then you can do it. But when a customer decides to cut their hair with you, they expect that you will be there when they are going to cut their hair. If I take some time off, I usually announce it at least a month before so the customer can prepare and visit me ahead of my trip or vacation.

I know sometimes it's hard not to answer your phone because some emergency or something can happen where somebody might need you. But I think it's very unprofessional to answer your phone and have a complete conversation with somebody else who isn't your customer sitting at the chair at the moment. I have seen barbers even FaceTiming with buddies and making jokes about things not related to what is happening at the time at the chair. I don't think there's a customer that can not look uncomfortable after one minute. Your mouth is usually 12 inches away from the customer's ear and trust me, they don't want to listen to your conversation if they are not included. They'll cross their fingers, so you don't mess up their hair while being distracted.

When you're cutting children's hair, try to cut it as fast as you can. Kids don't have patience, so you should be able to cut their hair in fifteen to twenty minutes. After that time, they get impatient and move too much. That's the secret to cutting children's hair. Play cartoons for them, and you can use your phone screen. They don't care how big the screen is as long as they're distracted. Don't use the straight razor when

the kid is younger than thirteen years old. You can make an exception once in a while if you see they are steady and don't move.

If you can, on your first job as a barber, try to work by commission. You need to find a well-located barbershop with foot traffic. It's not worth starting a barber career in a salon chain or franchise. In the long run, when you receive your paycheck, you'll be disappointed by the little money you'll make. You will leave that job soon unless you don't have another option, then you can work in those places. After you make a clientele, then you can move and rent a chair. I receive compensation from pretty much all the methods available. The commission is not a bad one if you have a decent cut, but you have to remember that the owner will make money from all your cuts at some point. If you rent a chair, you will just give them a flat fee and keep the rest. Be confident in yourself. After all, you are not doing anything different from what another person can do. Don't be afraid to ask questions to senior barbers. They usually like to help new barbers.

At the end of the day, you can do whatever you please, and you can behave however you like. I'm just giving you some advice to be successful in this profession. This is what worked for me, but it's not necessarily what will work for you. What I wrote above is usually common sense. I guarantee you that if you follow them, you will be successful. Good luck!

Afterword



I want to thank you if you made it this far reading this book. It took me several years to write it. I wanted to write about my experiences, stories, legacy, and contribution to the industry. I hope you enjoyed reading about my journey through all the stages to become an excellent barber. I wrote this book having in mind the regular customer. People who enjoy going to the barbershop and love the history. If you noticed, on occasions I wanted to make the book content to be funny and easy to read. I was very careful not to offend anyone. I thought it was a good idea to write about all my experiences of all those years working as a barber. I gather questions that customers asked me and they are curious about. Dealing directly with people is not easy. We need to have the patience to work day by day with customers. This book will help you understand the barber's side. It is a pleasure for me to give you insight information about what's going on in the barber's world. Barbering is a form of art. I learned these skills through practice and interest to be the best in what I do. I want to thank my parents and my friend Albert without them I wouldn't be able to write this literature. I encourage everyone that is thinking about getting into the barbering world to do it. I love what I do and I don't feel I'm working. It's a beautiful profession and if you really like it, you will enjoy it until your last day. Thank you so much, you have been blessed, by the:

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