



Wherein Board-Certified Dermatologist and Licensed Psychologist Richard G. Fried, MD, PhD considers the intersections of psychology and aesthetics.



## “TEXT MESSAGING”

The verbalizations, facial expressions, and physical gestures of the physician, PA, NP, RN/LPN, and medical assistant constitute the “text messages” sent to patients during the performance of a medical, surgical, or laser procedure. These text messages can be a powerful factor in determining a patient’s overall comfort during the procedure and satisfaction thereafter. Whether you are injecting botulinum toxin or filler, performing a laser procedure, or doing sclerotherapy, the patient is avidly absorbing and registering the ongoing stream of messages relayed at both a conscious and subconscious level. The texts can encompass remarks to your assistant about the product, the procedure, the patient, even unrelated, off-the-cuff comments about yourself and how you are feeling. In fact, even the most ostensibly insignificant of statements such as, “the damn needle clogged again,” can send a distressing message that the patient may internalize and ultimately affect their own appraisal of their clinical outcome. This is why the clinicians’ verbalizations and gestures during procedures—which I like to call “text messaging”—are powerful yet subtle tools that can dramatically enhance or diminish a patient’s satisfaction.

Specifically, utterances during injection such as “very nice,” “beautiful,” or “excellent,” while nodding your head convey a welcome and reassuring text message suggesting that the procedure is progressing in an expected, normal, and flawless fashion. Making reference during the procedure to important areas of correction is essential. If it is an upper face procedure, for example, the ideal result should capture the highness or perkiness of the

cheeks that literally enhances reflective illumination of the eyes. Honest and sincere statements include, “Look how bright the cheeks are now” or “Wow, your eyes look much brighter,” or “Those cheeks are beautiful!” or “Look at those eyes.” Directing attention to the lower face: “Look how much softer those nasolabial lines are,” or “Look how the corners of the mouth are lifted and so much more youthful you look.”

These texts help patients to direct their attention and gaze to the areas of improvement. Thus, when they stare hopefully into that mirror in their hands after the procedure, they can maximally appreciate their benefit. There is an old saying, “You can’t find it if you don’t know where to look!” Your text messaging creates an excitement and focus that allows the patient to carry forward the positive experience of the procedure and emotionally “run with it.” In essence, you are giving them a vision of correction before they can even see it.

Psychiatrist David Spiegel profoundly states, “It’s not just *mind over matter*; it’s that *the mind really matters*.” Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. We deliver brighter, more uniform, smoother, more symmetric, more volume-proportioned faces and bodies. Delivery should be free of negative words and inferences while text is rich in positive words and inference.

The notion that “Mind Matters” will serve as a backdrop for this new recurring feature in *Modern Aesthetics*, in which I will explore various other ways in which the mind plays a significant role in the delivery of patient satisfaction and beauty. ■