



By Judi Perkins

Elayne Angel Author *The Piercing Bible*—The Definitive Guide to Safe Body Piercing President, Association of Professional Piercers

*Allow us to present **Elayne Angel***

Thirteenth century Persian poet, Rumi, said, "Let the beauty of what you love be what you do," but that could also have been said by Elayne Angel, author of *The Piercing Bible*. Whether body piercing defines Angel or vice versa, there's little differentiation. Her influence ranges from conservative medical speaking engagements and influencing state regulations to developing and naming new piercings within her specialization of genital and nipple piercing.

"Piercing is an extremely interpersonal act. It's penetration of the body. It's a metaphor for sex itself," said Angel. "Piercers need to realize they're in charge, and they have the right to refuse service." She's heard "the client made me do it" too many times. Her response? "What weapon were they holding over you?"

Angel's passion fuels her ethics and desire to infuse that same passion and understanding to other piercers, some of whom may have lost it, some of whom may never have had it. "Practitioners have the power and possibility of doing things to people that are very serious, and sometimes irreversible or permanent," she said. "It's not a haircut. It won't necessarily grow back or be like it used to be, so this is really big stuff."

She frequently says no more than yes. "Turning down business is good for your reputation. It garners respect and trust from the client," said Angel. "Your job is to educate." She counsels that it's perfectly reasonable to suggest alternatives. "But if they go down the street and get their bad idea piercing done by some other less ethical piercer, that's not your fault, and it's not your problem."

As Angel says, when your dire predictions come true, it's you the client comes back to. Her clients hear it in terms they can understand: "I'm in business to pierce. That I'm refusing your money and telling you I'm not going to do this piercing should be an indication of what a really bad idea it is."

Angel believes part of the problem is that piercing is still a young industry, and many piercers aren't educated enough to know what's a poor idea. "Good apprenticeships are rare. People who don't have much to share and want to make money are turning out poorly trained apprentices who then join the industry with little knowledge." It's the blind leading the blind.

"If you haven't had a lot of training and someone wants a piercing in an odd spot on their body - their elbow or knee, ankle, top of their head - if it's a place you haven't seen a piercing in before, chances are it's a bad idea." And other than a navel or eyebrow, "if it's a surface piercing and you don't have specific training in surface piercings and you don't have specific jewelry used for surface piercings, just say no. They're not going to do well."

Get some balance. Get some passion. Get a grip. Eliminate the disconnect between you and the client, you and the piercing, you and piercing responsibility. Angel's been piercing since the 70s and is anything but jaded. "Every piercing I do I strive to make it my quickest, my gentlest, my smoothest most painless piercing yet."

She notes that if someone had a poor mentor, they may not even know what a good piercing looks like. She has online videos of her piercing to show people. "I've seen videos on YouTube where people take 5, 10, 20, 30 seconds to do a piercing. I do it in a part of a second. It's instantaneous and very smooth," Angel said.

Improving her skills remains a priority. She wants to delight her clients and leave them thrilled to have been pierced by her. "If you feel like you have done it all and you know it all, it's not true. You can still keep working to advance yourself and better yourself as a professional."

"Natural Alternative Aftercare"
EMU OIL
 For Piercing, Tattoos and Permanent cosmetics

Desert Palms Emu Ranch, LLC
 "Our clients are healing faster and more comfortably with an easier aftercare regimen: emu oil is GREAT. Desert Palms Emu Ranch is the only Emu Oil I use and trust."
 -Elayne Angel
 Current President and Past Medical Liaison of APP
 Author of *The Piercing Bible*
"The Definitive Guide to Safe Body Piercing"

Desert Palms Emu Ranch, LLC
 623-877-EMUS (3687)

WWW.DESERTPALMSEMU.COM

Angel notes people may be undereducated because they don't know where to gain information. In addition to her book, she suggests Jim Ward's *Running the Gauntlet*, as well as the Association for Professional Piercers (APP) procedure manual for which she spearheaded the recent rewrite, and also attending an APP conference.

"You will be blown away by the quantity of information that's available, the community, the support, networking and friendship," said Angel. "A lot of piercers work in isolation, and it's an incredible opportunity to come together with like-minded people who are kind, friendly, warm, and loving." If your piercing passion is dim, all the more reason to go. "Seeing the skills of the instructors and the knowledge, passion, and dedication will inspire you to elevate yourself to a true professional."

Influencing the direction of the industry is another reason. "There are still only a couple hundred members out of the thousands of piercers in the world. We need to recognize that our industry is new, rather than waiting for regulation to catch up with us, telling us what to do and how to do it."

As she pointed out, doctors join the AMA and dentists join the ADA. "Professionals join their industry's professional organization, and piercers need to work toward professionalism and safety, doing it ourselves even if there's no law to tell us."

A piercer who believes they're exempt from this has good cause to think again. Lack of good piercing ethics stem as much from over ego as from lack of ego. Wanting to break new ground or be a client's savior can be as detrimental to both the client and the piercing profession as the inability to say no for loss of business.

Angel sees balance as key. "Pride in your work is not the same thing as having an ego problem. This is a service industry and a piercer's job is to provide good, safe service," she said. "Industry wide I see people become ego focused rather than service focused, and the work suffers. I don't know what there is to get uppity about."

Being a passionate piercer results in what she calls "good piercing energy," said Angel. "Who wouldn't want to feel passionate about what they do every day? When you have that passion, you infuse the client with it. Piercing is – and should be – an energy exchange between the piercer and piercee, and the better you get at that, because you have good piercing energy the more it changes lives!" ★

Elayne Angel; Mérida, Mexico in the Yucatán!

Have questions about piercing? Have Photos? Need info? E-mail her at: elayneangel@piercingbible.com, www.piercingbible.com. Subject Pain Mag. or editor@painmag.com