

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!

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