



Pro Talk: Facialist Susan Ciminelli

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“I started doing my skin when I was really little because I was prone to rashes and irritations at a very young age so I was obsessed with my skin. This started at about 5 years old. I was very active, very outdoorsy, a tomboy so I was always affected by the elements and my skin would get raw. Growing up, it was my job to do the dishes and I would feel how food touching my skin would change the texture and this got me thinking. One time I remember seeing a cousin of mine get stung by a bee and my grandmother dug deep into the ground to get to the clay level and she put it on him. At the time, it freaked me out but it took the swelling down and he stopped crying. I made that connection again. Around the same age, my feet would ache, really hurt me badly. I would dig into my foot to do reflexology, not knowing that I was actually doing reflexology on myself.

By the time I was 15, I could spot problems in people’s skin and just know how to help them and encourage them with food and lifestyle changes: how to clean their skin, how to give themselves facials at home. All because I was obsessed with learning how to take care of my own problems. It taught me so, so much. When I would go to the mall with my friends as a teenager, I would duck out and go to the health food store and sit on the floor and read all of the books. I was like a sponge for all of the information. My nickname growing up was Florence Nightingale. If you had a boo-boo, I was all over you. I would put my hands on people and they liked my energy. It would feel good to them and it was soothing. So, between teaching people how to take care of themselves and then soothing people with my touch, I had that golden combo.

At 15, my parents sent me to live in Italy. I lived with a Florentine doctor who was an acupuncturist on the side. He was able to tell me why when I touch my foot in a certain place, I would feel energy coming up my body and it would make my stomach ache go away, etc. So, he confirmed what I knew instinctively. It started me on this trajectory. This has really been my career my entire life, I was born into it.

I got my esthetician’s license when I was 19. I was living in Buffalo, New York and I started working locally. I started attracting a crowd. I’ve always been into all natural. Back then, for my massage cream, I would pick off a big, juicy aloe plant, open it up, scoop it out and use it. People would stop me on the street and touch my skin because they didn’t believe that it was real. I’ve always used essential oils, aloe, seaweed — basically, my same obsessions as now.

In 1980 I moved to New York City. When I first started doing facials, I would make my creams in the kitchen while my clients were sitting on the couch. I would go in and make stuff with my blender, melt beeswax and add stuff to it. I started on [my line of products](#) in 1983. I’m never done, I always add one or two products a year. My line is a wellness brand; it’s a natural, organic, holistic approach to aging.

Because I turned around so many people’s skin in the fashion industry, and hairdressers, who were working with the supermodels of the 90s, my clients were people like Cindy Crawford, Stephanie Seymour, Naomi Campbell, Linda Evangelista, Karen Mulder. I was doing Jerry Hall at Mick Jagger’s house, Giorgio Armani, Iman.

I do shiatsu, reflexology, lymphatic drainage massage, reiki, crystal healing, and facials. I don’t only help my clients get to the root of the problem with energy flow and increasing circulation and balancing hormones naturally, I try to create homeostasis, which is a balancing in the body. When you have a problem with your skin, your skin is telling you to look inside. My approach to facials is a holistic one – mind, body, spirit balancing. It’s not only important what you eat, it’s important what time of day you eat – for example, breakfast to jump start your metabolism, and you shouldn’t eat after 8 o’clock at night because your digestive organs are on their own clock and they shut down. When you mess with the balance, you get skin problems, cellulite, water retention, low metabolism.

When I’m with a client and I’m touching them, I see how they respond to each product in my line that I’m using on them for their skin type. Every facial I do is custom because the skin is an ever-changing organ. It’s always influenced by what you do internally, even how you think and on an emotional level, which is why I use crystals. If you’re somebody who can’t take in love or can’t take a compliment, you build walls around your heart, and this actually effects circulation and makes it harder to absorb nutrients from your food and moisture from the creams that you are using. This is why I bring guided meditations into the treatment – to clear out the emotional stuff. It doesn’t really matter whose products you use or what foods you eat if you don’t have the root of the problem under control.”

– *Celebrity facialist Susan Ciminelli*