

# Caring for both hair and mind

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Taking care of your appearance can make you cheerful and positive, and you should especially keep this in mind when going through hardships.

This belief is held by Yukiko Koike, 38, who runs a beauty parlor in Tokyo focusing on providing hair treatments for people in their homes.

Under this service, which is for women who cannot visit a beauty parlor due to illness or advanced age, beauticians visit people's houses or other places and offer various hair treatments such as shampooing, cutting and dyeing.

Koike started the business on her own five years ago but now employs several staff members. Each team member carries portable shampoo dispensers and other equipment when they visit customers.

Koike and her colleagues visit dozens of places a month and accept bookings seven days a week. She asks customers to show her photographs of them when they were well. She also gives advice about hairstyles.

She often observes customers with initially blank expressions eventually smiling after a long interval when they look in the mirror after having their hair cut. They became more positive, saying things like, "I'll try to have my hair permed next time," or "I'd like to go out."

Koike has received letters expressing gratitude from her customers' family members. "My mom is healed herself again," some of them say.

Koike herself was also saved by beauty care. At 28, she spent half a year using a wheelchair at her parents' house in



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Yukiko Koike cuts hair at her beauty parlor in Toshima Ward, Tokyo.

Gunma Prefecture after a tumor was found in her knee. She was in the prime of her career, after being assigned to work as the manager of a beauty parlor in Tokyo. She isolated herself in the house, wondering why she had to go through this kind of challenge.

Koike was able to return to her career thanks to the help of a junior beautician who trimmed Koike's disheveled fringe by five centimeters when she visited. The haircut helped Koike feel like she had returned to the person she used to be, and she eventually felt willing to undergo rehabilitation.

This experience prompted Koike to launch the mobile hair treatment service, hoping to share the joy she felt with many people.

Two years ago she opened her own beauty parlor in the Sugamo district in Toshima Ward, Tokyo. It was designed to allow wheelchair users to receive treatments without getting out of their chairs. Her customers include those who have regained the desire to go out after receiving her home service.

"I hope I can help more and more people smile with the power of beauty treatment," Koike said.

## Knowledge of nursing care helpful

To provide a home hair treatment service, you should first and foremost acquire a beautician's license. Detailed rules are stipulated by ordinances based on the laws regulating beautician practice.

To become a beautician, you should attend a vocational school designated for the profession by prefectural governors and pass the state examination. After that, people usually develop their skills while working at beauty parlors.

It is difficult to earn income from the home hair treatment service unless you develop not only beauty techniques, but also hospitality skills.

Customers for home hair treatment service include those who find it difficult to move their body, so it is useful for beauticians to also have knowledge of nursing care, in addition to beauty treatments.

At Koike's beauty parlor, all staff members have undergone training programs to work as beginner-level home helpers, or have passed the national qualification exams for certified nursing care workers. Amid an aging society, demand for these kind of services will increase.



Some of Koike's staff members, who she describes as "more important treasures than anything," because they share her passion