

## Career Code: How Jeannie Bourke Became Sydney's Most Trusted Healer



by LISA PATULNY

*In honour of Hillary Kerr and Katherine Power's book, [The Career Code: Must-Know Rules for a Strategic, Stylish, and Self-Made Career](#) (\$17), we're kicking off an interview series featuring 17 questions (in honour of the book's 17 chapters) about the work lives of the most inspirational female leaders in the beauty industry.*

First things first: Jeannie Bourke is not your average skin therapist or salon owner. At Byrdie Australia HQ we often refer to her as our healer, and we're not the only ones. Aside from offering a multitude of luxurious treatments at her beauty and body lab Venustus in Sydney's Paddington, Bourke infuses every interaction with a palpable sense of understanding and love. All Venustus treatments use organic, vegan and cruelty-free products which are made in house by Bourke herself. If you haven't had the pleasure of visiting, it's difficult to explain the love and nurturing it's possible to feel inside those four walls. Incredibly intuitive and an amazing listener, prior to any face or body treatment Bourke determines not just the condition of your skin or muscles but your overall energy. Whether you're happy, sad, flat or overwhelmed, she'll prescribe exactly what you need at that moment. Suffice to say, Venustus is a very special place. And Bourke is an exceptional woman.

What's most special about this salon owner is the way she allows her personal beliefs on organics and animal testing to inform her business in such an honest and transparent way. This is obvious in Bourke's approach to creating beauty products, where anything non-organic or animal-derived is completely out—even if that means using ingredients that cost more and take longer to source. Peep her Instagram, and you'll find philosophical quotes on life and love, and images of her beloved (and mega-talented) staff. It's clear Bourke's business is one built on genuine love and healing, and that's what makes it a place of solace and nurturing for so many. So in a city where face and body salons are a dime a dozen, how can one woman make such a serious impact?

**Keep reading to find out.**



PHOTO: @venustus\_australia

### 1 In civilian terms, how would you describe your job?

"In a sentence: I can't believe I get paid to do it—it's the best job in the world. In detail: I consult with clients, design treatments for them, choose a facialist/massage therapist to perform their treatment and prescribe home care products. I also create the skincare, bodycare, essential oil blends, perfumes and atmospheric room mists we stock at Venustus."

### 2 What part of your job would people find most surprising?

"People find it surprising that I will make something custom and personal for them. This can be anything from their very own perfume to a range of skincare, complete with bespoke labelling. This is possible because of the connection I make with each client and how that impacts their day/week/year. I've made products for my staff also."

### 3 What did you wear to your first job interview?

"I've been working since I was 8-years-old—I grew up in our family businesses. In the beauty industry I would have worn a dress, stockings and high heels; completely impractical in our industry."



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### 4 Who would you like to have a 30-minute meeting with?

"I would love to go and work with Dr. Jane Goodall one holiday."

### 5 What are your go-to resources for keeping up to date on your industry?

"Because Venustus is all about Australian owned and made, cruelty-free, organic aromatherapy, our resources are wide and varied. For aromatherapy: Robert Tisserand and Salvatore Battaglia. Louise Hay for alternative therapies, melody and crystals. Thomas W. Myers is a good resource for anatomy and information on treating people according to their occupations (i.e. violinists, golfers.) I take courses at Nature Care College and the Australasian College of Natural Therapies and have studied; Lithos therapy, aromatherapy, shiatsu, reiki, reflexology, Hawaiian massage, poultice, Ayurveda, shirodhara, remedial, Indian head massage and facial reflexology. I often visit websites for the Environmental Working Group, Food Matters and Dr. Eric L. Zielinski. Movie time at Venustus is all about Cowsspiracy, Racing Extinction, The Cove, The True Cost, The Truth About Cancer and Jamie's Food Revolution."

### 6 What is one thing in your career that you've regretted?

"I don't have any regrets. I see everything as a learning experience."

## 7 What are the five top qualities you look for when hiring?

“Passion, loyalty, a strong moral code, evolved energy, and someone who fits into a family environment. Everything else we can train.”

### THE TOP 5 QUALITIES TO GET YOU HIRED

#CAREERCODE

- Passion
- Loyalty
- A strong moral code
- Evolved energy
- A sense of family

## 8 What do you wear to work to feel powerful?

“It’s not about feeling powerful for me. It’s all about being approachable, compassionate and connected.”

## 9 How would your assistant describe you?

“I don’t have one but my staff say, ‘She never gives up on anyone, is always ready to help, is passionate and a great listener.’”

## 10 What do you do when you’re feeling uninspired?

“I’ll have a massage or read a BBE (that’s Best Book Ever—something inspiring). My latest go-to is Soulfulness: Deepening the Mindful Life (\$21). My staff tell each other: ‘Have a massage somewhere else and realise how great you are...’”

## 11 What’s the best way to quit a job?

“Don’t quit, just ask for help.”

## 12 What is your go-to lunch?

“Sadhana in Bondi Beach and Earth To Table. My staff and I are all vegan.”

## 13 What are the most common mistakes entry-level employees make?

“Believing they are already as skilled as us (my staff and I have over 75 years worth of collective experience), which means they are then not as open to training.”

## 14 Who do you love to follow on Instagram?

“@byrdiebeauty.au and @whowhatwear.au “@natgeo  
“@paulhiltonphoto and @paulnicklen “@thegoodquote  
“@goldirocks.co “@christopherboots  
“@racingextinction and @foodmatters “@elle\_ferguson  
“@australianmadecampaign.”

## 15 What are your morning and evening rituals?

“I wake up between 3 and 4a.m., drink a chai almond latte, meditate, pat the puppies, check my emails and social media, give my husband Gary a kiss, then take my son Zac to school on the way to work. I arrive home around 7p.m., kiss the boys, have a bath and dinner, and go to bed between 8 and 9p.m.”

## 16 What’s the best advice you’ve ever received?

“Never, ever give up.”



**You can’t change others,  
but you can change yourself.**



“Keep an open heart.”

## 17 What are you working on right now that you’re most excited about?

“We’re working on a treatment we perform on our celebrity clients when they are in town—stay tuned. Also, new products and stocking fresh local produce.”



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