

The Handbook — Voice-Note Riffs

Coaching with Krista · Jenn · The standards you'll live and hire by · July 2026

The handbook is the tone, the vibe, and the standards of your space. It's what she signs before day one — the culture she's buying into. Not the "what we do" (that's the SOP). This is the "what we don't tolerate, and how we show up."

How to use these: Open voice memos. Talk it through — one or two per sitting. Don't try to write the handbook. Just riff on the questions. When you're done, upload them into your Claude project and say "draft the handbook from these." Claude writes the doc, you edit for voice, then it goes to your NC lawyer for review before any assistant signs it.

SECTION 1

The dress code.

1. What did you HATE seeing people wear at work?

Krista's Hoka story is your template — say the specific shoes, outfits, styles that made you look at a coworker and think "why is she dressed like that here?" Name them by name. Athletic wear. Chunky sneakers. Ripped denim. Whatever it is. Be specific — the handbook writes itself off your specificity.

2. What do you love seeing at work?

Flip it. What does the right person walk in wearing? Describe her outfit. Her shoes. Her hair. Her nails. Not "professional" — SPECIFIC. Whatever "put-together" looks like in your studio.

3. What are the hard nos?

Three specific things she cannot wear here. Ever. Say them plainly. This is the non-negotiable list.

SECTION 2

The culture.

4. What did you HATE about places you've worked?

Krista's line: "What did I never want to be around again?" Riff on it. Gossip, drama, complaining, phones out constantly, whatever it was. The things you promised yourself you'd never build.

5. What do you want the room to feel like?

Describe the energy of the studio when the day is going right. What's the music? The pace? The way people talk to each other? What makes it feel like YOUR space vs a corporate salon floor?

6. How do we show up when we're not okay?

Bad day at home, animal dying, breakup, hangover, whatever it is. What's the standard? Krista's take: communicate it, take a minute, then show up. What's yours? What can you make room for, and what can't you?

SECTION 3

The standards you actually enforce.

7. The trash.

When is the trash "full"? When it's three-quarters, or when it's overflowing? Whose job is it — hers, yours, rotating? Say it out loud.

8. The sink.

What's an "empty sink" mean to you? Nothing at all — no dishes, no lunch forks, no coffee mugs? Or something else? What's the standard at open, at close, mid-day?

9. The station.

Krista's rule: always 200 foils on her station. What's yours? What's the standard for how the station looks between clients? Between services? At close?

10. The floor and back bar.

Sweeping — into the ivac, not around it. Hair off the back bar between clients. What are the invisible things that would drive you insane if she didn't do them? Name them.

11. The chairs, the tools, the space itself.

Pumping the hydraulic chair down at night (they break otherwise). Where every tool lives. Candles, incense, whatever the studio's ambient standard is. What's the "the space is ready" checklist for open and close?

SECTION 4

How we treat clients.

12. The greeting.

When a client walks in, what happens? Who greets them? What do they say? What are they offered? What are they never offered? Talk through the ideal first 60 seconds.

13. The communication standard.

Do clients get texts, DMs, emails? Who responds and how fast? What's the standard for the tone of that communication? Warm? Formal? Casual? What's off-limits?

14. The service experience.

What makes a Hair by Jen service feel like a Hair by Jen service — from the moment she sits down to the moment she leaves? What's the standard she should never break, even if she's tired?

SECTION 5

The relationship — you and her.

15. Content and self-promotion.

Krista's take: you can't make anyone create content. But you CAN set an expectation. What's yours? Minimum posts a week? A month? None at all — up to her? Whatever the standard is, name it.

16. What she brings vs what you provide.

You provide color, foils, back bar. What does she need to bring for her OWN clients (later, when she has them)? Her own scissors, curling iron, tripod, combs? Where's the line? Name it now so you don't build resentment later.

17. The last thing.

What's the ONE thing you'd want her to know before she signs the handbook — the thing that if she can't buy into, she shouldn't sign? The core promise between the two of you. Say it plainly.

Next steps after you record:

1. Upload the voice memos into your Claude project (which already has the anti-spiral instructions + hiring voice guide loaded).
2. Say: *"Draft my handbook from these voice memos. Use my voice. Keep it warm but firm. Break it into sections with clear standards under each."*
3. Read the draft. Edit for anything Claude softened that you'd say harder.
4. Send the finished draft to a North Carolina employment attorney to review — check what's legally binding, what needs adjusting to be enforceable, what you can and can't hold her to under NC law.
5. Then, and only then, the handbook is ready for the assistant to sign on day one.

Standards aren't rules for the sake of rules. They're the invisible architecture that makes your space feel like your space when you're not the only one in it. Riff hard on these — the specificity is what makes the handbook actually work.