

"Hello there!" - The *hello* HAIR story.

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN...

The hairdressing industry is in my blood! Some of my earliest memories include visits to my granny, also a hairstylist, and adventuring off to one of my great uncle's beautiful salons, both in the Orange Free State. Both have passed away now but his salon chain 'Maison Costa' still exists today and is run by my cousin Mark Trisos. What will continue to be etched in my mind is how stylish his salons were; with the smell of quality hair products in the air, the images of sophisticated stylists, and the smiles of happy customers...**the energy was electric, and I fell in love with the glamour of it all!**



My aunt, Wendy Malpage and I as a young stylist

My aunt, Wendy Malpage, trained under Maison Costa before moving to JHB. I started working in her salon in Bromhof (near Randburg) in my teens, assisting with basic salon duties and reception. This was my first step into the world of hairdressing.

When I was 17 years old my family decided to move to the States. I chose to stay behind in South Africa as I had the opportunity to learn the art of hairdressing from my aunt, who I greatly admired and still do. Her passion and skills not only for the hairdressing industry, but in everything she decides to put her mind to, resonates in everything she does, and it can be felt and seen by all.

One of the 'pearls of wisdom' I gained over the years working under Wendy, was being able to see her build a successful salon business whilst still balancing her family life.

Another key learning that I took away from my experience was how people always walked out of her salons feeling better than when they walked in. Not just on a physical level, on a deeper level too. This inspired me to want to create and to do the same.

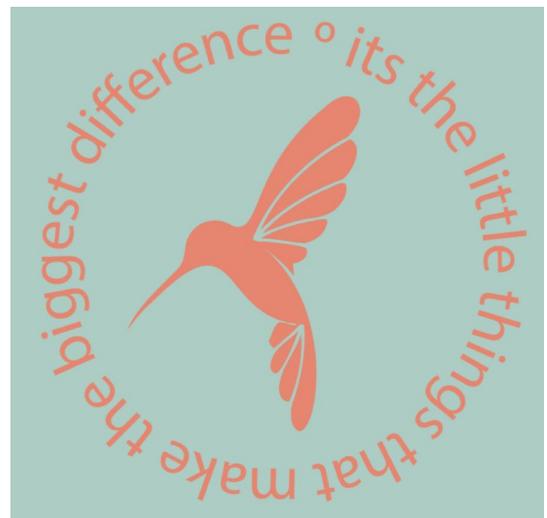


Team at Balookas Hair | 1999

I feel very blessed to have been taught this beautiful skill of being able to create and transform. It has been a platform on which I have been given the opportunity to develop many other skills and which has enabled me to work in many different situations, throughout the different phases of my life.

Prompted by the make over I am giving hello hair in Fourways and as I now celebrate 22 years in the industry, I have been inspired to reflect on how it all began and in turn, to write the story of hello HAIR.

(This makeover now includes little hummingbirds which is symbolic of my grandmother and in essence, of how it all began)



So here are some of the "finer" details.

As I mentioned, **I began formally working with Wendy in her salon at the age of 17**, and at 21 I decided to take over (the then called Balookas) along with one of the other stylists, Gail. Wendy had decided to sell the shop and build a smaller salon on her beautiful property in Bryanston to be closer to her then, 3 young children.

Gail and I changed the name to **T&G Stylists** and converted the salon ever so slightly, placing two bright green chairs in the waiting area -for a little fun and a lot of impact. The salon was home to an eclectic mix of stylists and staff, and some long-standing salon assistants too. It was a busy little salon; it was a fun little salon and let me tell you, it always had a good vibe.

After 7 long and sometimes very lonely years, at the age of 24, my visa to the States was finally approved and I was able to fly over to reconnect with my family (who I had not seen much of since the day they had left). This adventure helped me to realize that there was a whole new world out there for me, I still had so much to explore and experience and so I came back and sold my share of the salon, my property, my car etc. and decided to go back to the US to be young and free...just for a little while at least.

En-route to the States, I stopped over in London and met up with my now ex-husband (someone I had known from school), we spent the few days of my stop over getting to know one another whilst he showed me some of the sites. I then flew on to America and after 6 months of living out my interpretation of "the American dream" (another fun story for another day), I then returned to London to see whether what we had shared in those few days was worth investigating further, and after a few weeks I returned to South Africa to get my work permit and made the bold move of moving to London to pursue a new relationship in a new country with the idea of traveling, a great incentive.



Upon arrival, I was fortunate enough to get a stylist position in an exclusive gents hair salon in Regents Park **called AIR (under Don Lefteri; a well-known stylist to the Royals and local celebrities)**. This was a huge learning opportunity for me and a game changer in my career as I started to appreciate the intimate art of service and the exquisite attention to detail that is required in order to grow and maintain a successful business. In conjunction with me working in-salon, I started to establish my own freelance client base where I specialised in colour, servicing private individuals in central London and surrounds. Business started to boom! **My only form of marketing? The best kind...word of mouth.**



My salon at home after moving back from the UK.
The Sanctuary.

A surprising turn of events took place in 2005, a little girl had been conceived. My now 15-year-old Gia Lee was on the way and before we knew it, we were packing up and moving out of the bustling city and into a beautiful, historic village - Stratford upon Avon (Shakespeare's birthplace).

Not wanting to lose my hairdressing skills, nor my independence, I decided to create a mobile hair salon in Stratford. With a bump-in-front, a cover-letter and price list in-hand, I knocked on many-a-door, introducing myself and my services to the local neighbourhood. This at-home service was well received, and I built up a substantial client base in a very short amount of time. I continued to travel to London every 6 weeks for the weekend to service my loyal customer base.

It was at these home appointments that I truly learnt the art of building REAL and lasting relationships with my clients, who invited me not only into their homes but into their personal lives too. It is from these experiences, that I am able to infuse my passion into my service ethic and into my team. My goal is to make clients feel at home, knowing that we have their hair and hearts safely in our hands, and where just for a moment, they are held in a space where they can be exactly who they need to be, at that time on that day with no judgement.

Moving on with the Hello Hair story...many years later, I returned to Johannesburg, South Africa with my now two daughters and a third preggy-belly in tow. We were starting from scratch and so I decided to convert the flat let on our property into a salon. We were based in a wonderful gated community in the heart of Fourways, and having already done this before, I started quickly building a client base again by reaching out to the local community, while both mommying to two young girls and a tiny baby boy.

Life didn't quite work out as expected, and after 8 years of marriage my husband and I decided to go our separate ways. I had to let go of my salon but continued to service my clients in the comfort of their homes.

I have to admit, I did try going the "safer route" and went to work in two different salons in the area, but felt very restricted by the rules and hours imposed on the staff. To top it off, I was told by one of the owners that I was 'too service orientated' and needed to 'keep a layer between my clients and my personal life'.

I of course left that environment immediately. I feel that for me, **hairdressing is all about service**, and that those hours spent with clients can be so much **more than "just a haircut"**. I see it as a very intimate, healing, connecting experience between two people. There's a whole lot of trust that goes into styling someone's hair from both sides.

After my divorce, I entered an intense period of self-discovery, not wanting to be tied to anything (with the goal of moving to Cape Town in mind). I knew I definitely wanted to open a salon again, but didn't want to invest in something that could not be moved. **And that is when my 'aha moment' happened**, and I realised that I needed to create a salon that I could take with me wherever it is that I wanted to go.

Blessed was the day when I came across my container online. It was a mere shell, but it had been tagged in the hair salon category for a possible alternative use. I drove to a vacant lot in Boksburg and met with the seller who was an ex-policeman.

There's no other way of saying this but it was literally love at first sight! I knew straight away that it would be the new home for Hello Hair. I negotiated a price and then went about finding the right location for it. As they say 'location, location, location!' – Yes it is very important!

Things unfolded quickly after that. I had lunch at **Rustic Timber in Fourways** (Hello Hair's home since 2015) and immediately connected with the outdoor feel of the space. There was however already another salon in the centre and so I had to build up some courage to go and explain to the salon owner what my plans were, and to humbly ask if she would be happy for me to open another salon in close proximity. She was so gracious and replied with: "I've been here for a long time my dear and have already established my client base, I have absolutely no problem". I was beyond excited!!

But then it dawned on me, I hadn't even spoken to the owners of the centre to find out if they had any space to rent.

Courage seemed to be the lesson of the day, so I put on my 'big girl panties' and walked straight into the owner's office. Before anyone could say anything, I let them know that I had just approached the other hairdresser and that she was absolutely fine for another salon to move in. I then proceeded to ask if they would consider finding a space for me to bring in a container, which I would then convert into the salon. Although they had a waiting list of tenants on their books, they found my concept unique and called me back the next day to say we could have a look around the property to see where we could put it. We walked around the centre numerous times and finally settled on the perfect spot where it sits today; under a beautiful tree with plenty of light and air!

salon

1.0



In another synchronistic turn of events, my daughters had befriended two little girls in the new complex that we had just moved into. The mom popped in one day to introduce herself and we got chatting about life in general and a little about ourselves. I told her about my new concept and explained that I had already found a container but that I now needed to find someone who would take on the venture with me of converting it into an actual hair salon. I still find what happened next to be quite surreal...she said, "How crazy, my husband converts containers for a living".

And there it was, literally the next day his designers met me in Boksburg to take all the measurements and that same week we transported "her" to the centre to begin with the conversions and shop fitting. The shop design was such a fun process and I absolutely loved creating the Hello Hair brand and all its little add ons.





On **22nd of May 2015 Hello Hair opened to the public**. Five years later, thousands of people have sat in her chairs, many staff members have come and gone through her doors, but what has remained consistent, are her loyal customers; the love and care that my team and I put into them, and the intention to create that safe space, that home-away-from-home.



Hello Hair's 1st Birthday



Tequila Time!



Hello Hair's 1st Client



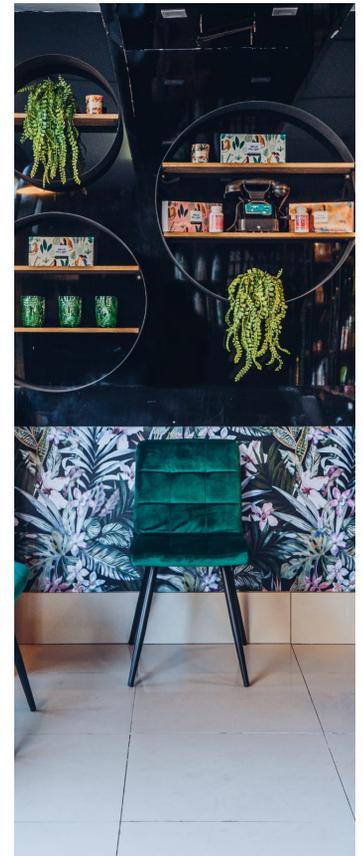
In addition to building hello HAIR, I have also been privileged to create two brand extensions to date and have focused on developing products in alignment with my belief which is: "It's the little things that make the biggest differences, and that if done consistently, are better than a once-off miracle anything". This can be seen in the simple yet undeniable benefits of my satin pillow slips, launched under the **Hello Pill-oh!** brand and also in the way a unique set of new earrings from **XOXO** can make you feel which I sell in store. I have two new very exciting products that are currently in development.. Watch this space!



salon 2.0



My recent revamp



It has been quite the journey to get to this point and I am so excited that with this makeover I get to infuse even more authenticity into the salon, to continue to create a space that is a reflection of myself, my journey and my intention in the hope that you continue to get all the feels from your experience, a place for you to come and 'get away from it all'. A place where we make the magic.

I am grateful for this journey as it has not only led me back to me, but also to my wonderful client base.

Tamsyn

