

## Chapter ONE — What Is Skin”CARE”?

What truly is skincare?

It's a question I've been living into for more than 26 years. Over that time, the word *skincare* has worn many different faces: cosmetic, clinical, indulgent, healing, spiritual. I've worked in every corner of this field, from spas and medical offices to conferences and wellness centers and what I've learned is that skincare cannot be defined by one thing alone.

Most people think of it as facials, exfoliation, extractions, masques, deeper peels, fillers, or injectables. And yes, I've done and taught those. They have their place, and there's real science and artistry behind them, but that's just the beginning.

For me, skincare became a lifelong classroom. I'm a natural-born teacher; knowledge is my favorite form of self-expression. I've trained estheticians, certified students in laser therapies, microneedling, and microblading, a semi-permanent art of the eyebrows that restores hair loss on eyebrows through delicate detail of blading the skin and implementing pigment. I've worked with top chemists who create products and learned deeply about ingredients and what ingredients cancel each other out. I've taught the science of cryotherapy and the art of energy work through yoga and Reiki- the flow of healing energy through intention and touch.

Gathering all of these practices together opened my eyes to something profound: true skincare is not only topical, it's total. Read that again.

It's the food you eat, the water you drink, the words you speak to yourself, and the energy you hold in your heart. It's how you manage stress, how you rest, how you move. It's your environment, your hormones, your mindset. Every one of these layers shows up on the surface of your skin.

Think of your skin as your body's communicator, the translator between your inner world and the world outside. It reflects balance and imbalance alike. When the spirit is heavy, the skin dulls; when the heart is joyful and nourished, the skin radiates light.

So in this chapter, we'll explore skincare on every level:

- For those new to skincare - the foundational daily rituals that protect and nourish.
- For those intermediate or curious - how to refine your routine with purpose.
- And for my fellow professionals- my sisters and brothers in esthetics who share my love of teaching, learning, being open to being a forever student, and transforming lives through touch.

You'll learn how to blend the wisdom of science with the softness of spirituality; how to treat the skin while feeding the soul.

Maintaining youth has little to do with fighting time. It's about *flow*. It's about aligning body, mind, and energy so completely that the skin simply responds with vitality.

I believe I've maintained my own youth by combining everything I've practiced: discipline, curiosity, movement, meditation, and energy work. Into every service, every ritual, every breath, I take with intention. Intention is EVERYTHING.

And that's what I want to share with you here:  
how to remain vital, glowing, and deeply alive, no matter your age.  
Not through the chase of perfection, but through the practice of self love.

## **Psychodermatology: When the Mind Meets the Skin**

In recent years, a fascinating field has gained attention in both medicine and holistic wellness: psychodermatology.

The term describes the study of how the mind, emotions, and behavior influence skin health, and how skin disorders, in turn, affect a person's mental and emotional wellbeing.

While the connection between stress and skin has been observed for centuries, Hippocrates wrote about emotional states influencing disease. It wasn't until the late 20th century that the concept was formally named and studied.

The word *psychodermatology* began appearing in medical literature in the 1970s and 1980s, largely through researchers exploring the overlap between psychiatry and dermatology. By the early 2000s it had become an acknowledged subspecialty.

Modern experts such as Dr. Doris Day, a well-known dermatologist and educator, have helped bring this concept to a wider audience. In her talks and publications, Dr. Day explains that skin and brain share an embryologic origin, both develop from the ectoderm in the earliest stages of life. That means our skin and our nervous system are biologically intertwined from the very beginning. Emotional stress releases hormones and neuropeptides that can directly trigger skin inflammation, sensitivity, or conditions such as acne, eczema, psoriasis, and rosacea.

In more clinical language, psychodermatology involves:

- Psychophysiologic disorders, where stress or emotion exacerbates existing skin conditions (for example, breakouts before a big event).
- Primary psychiatric disorders with dermatologic symptoms, such as compulsive skin-picking or body dysmorphic tendencies.
- Secondary psychiatric impacts that follow visible skin disease, anxiety, depression, or self-esteem loss caused by chronic skin changes and/or hair loss,.

For me personally, when I struggled with my own deep cysts, I could not stop feeling the bumps. Every stop light, I would pull down the rear view mirror and look, touch and pick. I was obsessed with seeing if I could get any puss out any time of day. It was a sad and

uncomfortable part of having acne and it was compulsive. Which was not only spreading bacteria, but it was spreading anxiety and negativity into my skin.

For healers and estheticians, understanding psychodermatology validates what many of us have witnessed intuitively for years: the skin is an extension of our emotional landscape. A calm mind translates to calm skin.

This is why skin care can't start and end with products. The relationship we have with our thoughts, stress, and self-talk is just as important as the cleansers and serums we use. Through the years, I have had clients who have shared how many products they have purchased and the same language I hear from them is "Nothing works" or "I tried that and it didn't work for me." Do you think "nothing" worked or maybe they are not doing the inside work to make that product work for them?

Psychodermatology gives scientific backing to what sacred skincare already teaches: Your skin listens to everything you feel, think, and believe.

## Psychodermatology in Numbers

- Up to 30–40 percent of patients seen in dermatology clinics show significant psychological or emotional components to their skin condition.  
(*Source – British Journal of Dermatology, 2020; American Academy of Dermatology reviews.*)
- Stress is one of the most frequently reported triggers of flare-ups: About 70 percent of people with eczema and 60 percent of those with psoriasis say stress worsens their symptoms.  
(*Journal of Clinical Medicine, 2019.*)
- The mind-skin connection is biochemically visible. Studies show that stress causes a cascade of cortisol and neuropeptide release (substance P, CGRP, and others) that leads to inflammation, disrupted barrier function, and slower wound healing.  
(*Harvard Medical School, Department of Dermatology; J Invest Dermatol 2017.*)
- Chronic psychological stress can delay skin repair by nearly 40 percent compared to relaxed states in controlled studies.  
(*Psychoneuroendocrinology Journal, 2016.*)
- Addressing emotional wellbeing improves outcomes. In trials where dermatology patients received mindfulness, relaxation, or cognitive-behavioral therapy alongside medical treatment, visible improvement in acne, psoriasis, and chronic itching was significantly greater than with medication alone.  
(*British Journal of Dermatology, 2018; Frontiers in Psychiatry, 2020.*)

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## Dr. Doris Day's Perspective

Dermatologist Dr. Doris Day, author of *Beyond Beautiful* and host of the “Dermatology Times” podcast series, often explains this overlap simply:

*“Your skin and brain are literally wired together from birth. They speak the same language of hormones and neurotransmitters. That’s why what you think and feel shows on your skin, and why improving emotional wellbeing is in fact good skincare.”*

She highlights that the skin contains its own peripheral nervous system and neuroendocrine network, meaning emotional stress can directly fuel conditions such as acne, rosacea, and premature aging via increased inflammation and oxidative stress. Conversely, positive emotion and relaxation support higher collagen synthesis and barrier repair.

*“Modern science validates what healers have always known: nearly one-third of skin concerns are intertwined with the mind. Cortisol, sleep, and stress chemistry are just as important as vitamin C or hyaluronic acid. When you calm your mind, you calm your inflammation.”*

## **The Four Dimensions of Skincare**

After more than twenty-six years of studying, practicing, teaching, and evolving in this field, I’ve come to see skincare not as a system of products, but as a philosophy of living, one that operates in four dimensions.

These four dimensions - Topical, Internal, Emotional, and Energetic will work together like layers of the same luminous field. When one is out of balance, the others compensate. When they all flow together, your natural radiance becomes effortless.

Let’s explore each one.

### **1 · The Topical Dimension — Touch, Ritual, and Care**

This is the most familiar layer, the skincare most people think of: cleansers, serums, masks, treatments. But it’s more than product; it’s presence.

Every step you take with your skin, cleansing, toning, moisturizing, is an opportunity to connect. Instead of rushing through your routine, slow down. Let each movement be deliberate.

When you cleanse, imagine washing away not only makeup and dirt but the residue of the day but also the words, worries, energies that aren’t yours to keep.

When you apply serum, breathe deeply, and visualize nourishment soaking into every cell.

When you moisturize, move upward with gentle strokes, affirming: *I lift my energy, I restore my light. I hydrate my soul.*

Topical care is an outer action mixed with inner intention. Even the smallest ritual, when done mindfully, becomes sacred.

### **Find Your Skin Ally**

If skincare is new to you or you've never had your skin professionally analyzed, finding an esthetician you trust is one of the best investments you can make. A qualified, intuitive esthetician can see your skin in ways you can't, from its hydration levels, oil balance, sensitivity, and underlying conditions that may not be visible to the untrained eye.

They will also guide you through seasonal changes, hormonal shifts, and treatments that evolve with your needs.

If you are an esthetician or trained professional yourself, remember: even healers need healing. Receiving treatments from others keeps you grounded, inspired, and cared for. We are always learning and I love going to different estheticians in my area or when I travel abroad. I know many of you are very loyal and that is amazing. The skin also likes change, so going out of the routine once in a while is a good thing.

### **Understand the Core Products**

You don't need a 12-step ritual to have healthy, radiant skin. What matters is using high-quality, active, and *intentional* products. Your skin will go through so many changes over time; weather and climate, hormones, and skin sensitivities will arise through the years.

Here are the essentials I recommend for almost everyone are the foundational five or six products that create the base for any ritual:

#### **\*A Cleanser — the first sacred step**

A truly effective cleanser removes buildup without stripping the skin. I believe grocery-store and drug store cleansers rarely contain enough active or nourishing ingredients.

Look for formulations with antioxidants and natural oils that balance rather than dry.

Oil-based cleansers are lovely because oil pulls oil; they help pull impurities and bacteria from pores while maintaining your skin's natural barrier.

Some of my favorites over the years have included botanical oils such as *castor oil* for deep purification, *evening primrose* for hormonal balance, and *seabuckthorn oil* for calming inflammation and supporting rosacea and acne-prone skin.

#### **\*Vitamin C — the brightener and protector**

Vitamin C has been studied since the 1980s for its ability to firm the skin and fight free radicals caused by pollution and sun exposure.

It helps tone, reduces pigmentation, encourages collagen production, and gives skin that unmistakable "glow from within."

#### **\*Vitamin B — the calmer and hydrator**

Often overlooked, Vitamin B-complex (especially B3, niacinamide) helps soothe redness, strengthen the barrier, and increase elasticity.

This is beautiful for anyone whose skin flushes easily or feels tight and over-cleansed.

### **\* Vitamin A (Retinol) — the renewer**

Vitamin A, in lower doses, is a wonderful cell-turnover support. It refines texture, stimulates regeneration, and improves tone.

Some skin types love it immediately; others require patience and adaptation. Remember: one size never fits all. Start low and slow, always respecting how your individual skin responds.

### **\* Moisturizer or Hydrating Oil — the seal of nourishment**

Choose formulations that feel silky and supportive rather than heavy. Ingredients such as jojoba, argan, primrose, or seabuckthorn wrap the skin in lipid nutrition that keeps moisture where it belongs — inside.

As you apply, press the product gently into the skin, taking slow breaths. Let this be a moment of peace, not just skincare.

### **\* Sun Protection — the balance between safety and sunlight**

Nearly every esthetician will remind you to wear SPF daily, and I agree, with discernment.

There are thousands of sunscreens on the market; many contain harsh chemicals that can heat and irritate the skin when exposed to high sunlight. Choose the highest-quality, most natural sun protection you can find, mineral-based formulas with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide that reflect light rather than absorb heat.

At the same time, *don't fear the sun.*

Your body needs natural sunlight to create Vitamin D, one of the most essential hormones for immunity, mood, bone strength, and skin health.

As with everything, the key is balance: protect when exposure is long or harsh, but also give your skin moments to breathe in real sunlight.

Pair that with magnesium — another nutrient that is chronically depleted and works hand-in-hand with Vitamin D to support cellular renewal.

## **2 · Your Daily Rhythm**

Morning:

- Begin with gratitude. Look in the mirror, smile, and affirm something loving about your reflection. “I am beautiful” “I love myself”
- Cleanse gently. “I remove any bacteria and reduce pore size”
- Apply Vitamin C and/or B serum. “I am protecting my skin,” “My skin is brighter and plumper”
- Moisturize. “My skin is Hydrated.” “I love the feeling of my skin”
- Apply mindful sun protection. “I am protected”
- Breathe deeply and thank your skin for its service.

Evening:

- Cleanse *twice* if you've worn sunscreen or makeup — first with an oil cleanser, then a gentle wash. “I cleanse the day's toxins off of my skin. I remove the dirt and debris away”
- Treat with restorative serums (Vitamin A or nourishing oil). “I firm and tighten and lift my skin” The wrinkles are softening as I speak”
- Massage your face lightly to stimulate circulation; As it's healing for your nervous system and your skin. A great time for Guasha techniques which I will dive into later.
- Moisturize and finish with five slow breaths and look into your own eyes in the mirror and whisper “I am beautiful, I am thankful, I am Love”

Think of every touch as communication. You are telling your skin, “*You are safe, you are loved, you can rest.*”

Your professional skincare routine isn't about vanity; it's devotion, education, and consistency. Paired with the deeper dimensions, what you eat, drink, think, and believe....these daily rituals become the visible expression of your inner alignment.

### **3 · The Internal Dimension — Nutrition, Hydration, and Breath**

Everything we consume becomes part of our skin's story. Food, hydration, air, and thoughts all feed the body differently.

Radiance begins in the gut, in the blood, in the deep breathing.

Whole foods such as fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, omega-rich fats, nourish cellular repair.

Hydration keeps tissues plump, vibrant, and alive. Gentle movement circulates oxygen.

Consistent sleep allows the body to detoxify and rebuild.

When you eat, ask yourself: *Is this feeding my glow or feeding my fatigue?* The answer is honest. Your body always knows.

Even your oxygen intake and your breathing is part of this dimension. Deep, mindful breathing daily oxygenates the skin more effectively than any serum can.

Internal skincare is nourishment, attention, and respect for the systems that support your glow.

We will touch more specifically on Water, Nutrition and supplements later.

### **4· The Emotional Dimension — Self-Talk and Emotional Flow**

Your thoughts have chemistry. The stories you repeat about yourself; your age, your looks, your worth....directly influence your hormones and cellular function. The cortisol released during chronic stress or self-criticism literally breaks down collagen and accelerates aging.

So emotional wellness *is* skincare. Learning to regulate stress; forgive, laugh, and loving yourself changes your entire complexion, not metaphorically, but biologically.

When you look in the mirror, speak to yourself like someone you cherish. If your heart feels heavy, let tears flow and fall to the earth as they are part of cleansing, too. Let your tears hit the floor if you can....dont wipe them away. Let them flow.

When you release emotion, you make space for calm, for softness, for light.

The emotional dimension is where your inner language turns into visible life on your skin.

#### **4 · The Energetic Dimension — Spirit and Frequency**

This is the most subtle- yet most powerful dimension. It's the vibration that moves through everything you are. Your skin, being the boundary between inner and outer worlds, is a highly sensitive conductor of energy. Touch is so important.

Practices like Reiki, meditation, grounding, movement, and breathwork help harmonize that energy.

When your frequency is bright and balanced, your electromagnetic field supports healthy circulation, cell regeneration, and the feeling of being “in your body.”

The energetic dimension also includes how your environment interacts with you, the light, colors, sounds, and people that surround you.

Energy is contagious. So hold yourself in spaces and relationships that remind you of peace and possibility.

This is why you can meet someone and sense their radiance before they ever speak. True glow isn't something seen first, it's *felt*. It's *energy*.

### **The Philosophy of Sacred Skin**

When you weave together all four dimensions, topical, internal, emotional, and energetic, skincare becomes a living philosophy rather than a routine.

It's an act of alignment.

A conversation with the self.

A daily reminder that beauty is wholeness made visible.

When you tend to one dimension, you nurture them all. That's the essence of sacred skincare.

If you have enjoyed this as much as I have enjoyed sharing this with you, please pre order my book.

Peace and Love

Heather Lu