

CHANGING FACES
REDEFINING BEAUTY AND SKIN
CARE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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Introduction

Women are liberating themselves from oppressive situations in the workplace and in relationships these days. However, when it comes to personal appearances, especially our faces, much insecurity remains.

The multi-billion dollar cosmetics industry attests to the fact that so much money is spent in the pursuit of regaining something, or covering up changes that take place as we mature. Unlike men, who seem to gain attractiveness with graying hair and wrinkles, women fall short and are told the opposite. One should think this kind of conditioning would be easily eliminated with our newly attained assertiveness. But it is such a deeply rooted subconscious feeling and affects even the most liberated woman among us.

It is perfectly evident that the *younger looking* woman has a different vitality, or perhaps is a very skilled makeup artist who will respond to compliments with a knowing smile. Women are more or less stuck in a world of make-believe, feeling pressured to trust yet another cream advertised as “*it will repair your skin while you sleep*”, as a bailout. The face in the magazine ad is that of a beautiful young model who does not need the cream in the first place, rather than one of a mature face. The advertising is another betrayal – an insult to our intelligence, and yet the suggestion works beyond common sense.

Who is it that sets the standards of what a woman should look like at a certain age? What gauge are we allying to ourselves, or is it imposed by society to measure the beauty of a face? Who really does the judging?

As a professional in the beauty business, giving facials and educating on the care of the skin for several decades, I have observed the women who seek my counsel, often at a profound place of discouragement and disappointment. In our conversations, an interest in cosmetic ingredients surfaced. Animal testing and other abuse of animals have gotten their attention, and this has opened the door to a new approach in what is good and essential to use. Knowledge is empowerment and helps us overcome our conditioning. Just as consumers reading food labels changed things in the processed food industry for the better, an opportunity for us to decide what we put on our faces lay ahead.

Effective skin care starts with caring, compared to indifference or indulgence. We can assist our skin with proper elimination and protection, including makeup, just for the fun of it. If you love yourself and want your skin to reflect caring, read labels and ask questions. You may not only educate yourself, but also the salesperson having to do the research for you. By making informed choices, you will be choosing cosmetics that are produced in an ethical manner.

CHANGING FACES

Redefining Beauty & Skin Care for the 21st Century

There are many books out there on beauty and skin care that are written by some “expert” telling you what you should or should not do with your skin. Books like that are hardly read with excitement and enthusiasm, as it tends to remind you of your mother or other early role model. Could it be that most women today take little interest in properly caring for their skin, only to cover up with makeup, as an unconscious rebellion against the early authorities on skin care?

My book raises this issue and others, asking important questions so that everyone can look at this subject with renewed interest. Read on with an open mind and let go of what you think you know about beauty and skin care.

What we really know about beauty and skin care has been shaped by generations of women and some men, and the “experts” they heavily relied on, that had a commercial interest. Their beliefs have centered on a fear of what our faces should look like, and the maturing/aging process in particular. This has resulted in a multi-billion dollar industry for cosmetics and repair/rejuvenation products. We look to outside help to make what happens to our faces and bodies disappear, and that created what we now call the “cosmetics empire” all over the world.

This kind of approach will no longer work for future generations. However, our approach to beauty and skin care will only shift if we observe and make changes now, and not carry or teach old practices that no longer benefit us to future generations. By adopting a new way of thinking, it requires that we examine carefully the issues at hand: how do the methods of skin care that we were taught and still practice, really work, especially in the long run and for many years to come? Let’s first observe, and then form questions from that observation and seek answers from such understanding.

How many of us question the effectiveness of what we are doing to our skin, and the truthfulness of what we are told? Are we perhaps afraid to find out? Are we fully aware that the cosmetics industry, which took on “skin care” in the more recent decades, is an industry of make-believe, and that all the money spent on skin care is preying on our ignorance and insecurities?

Even though there is education in the form of how to use a certain cream or lotion, we tend to believe it will literally do what the manufacturer suggests it will do. We buy product after product, often whole lines at once – promoted as a unit – and much of it ends up in the trash when another, newer product advertised promises to do better. Our acceptance of the multi-billion dollar cosmetic industry is a sad testimonial to a poorly understood fact: all that money spent on our skin does not come from satisfaction and success, but rather from failure and disappointment. For instance, have you ever heard a friend tell you that she has used x-brand for many years and is totally satisfied with how her skin always looks alive and glowing? How many women do you know that have taken products back to the store for a refund when the product did not perform beyond the first impression? Do you take the blame by saying, “it must be my skin’s fault,” when it does not respond accordingly? Many of us fear the intimidation from the glamorous salesperson and end up buying more products, hoping to achieve her look.

More importantly, do you ever ask the *obvious* question? Why is my skin oily or dry...why is it breaking out...why is it aging prematurely? We look for the promised solution to stop, reverse, or repair the damage done to our skin *overnight while we sleep* – could it be that the greater the cost, the greater the penance? Each skin type has its own customized line – oily, dry, combination, and normal. Has it ever

occurred to us that our skin's type really never changes, even if the products don't make it worse? Could it be that we are treating it to maintain what is wrong with it in the first place?

It is time to look at our skin from a new perspective – one that comes from your own understanding? We may inherit good skin, but we ought not to take it for granted. When others in our family have problematic skin, we may feel like victims and resign ourselves to the same fate. We do carry the characteristics of our genetic heritage, but we often continue lifestyle habits that contribute to unhealthy skin.

The cosmetics industry has kept both women and men hostage for many decades – in order to be socially accepted and liked, we have to look a “certain” way. We have to try to fit that image at a high cost to ourselves, both emotionally and financially.

It's time to change to a more contemporary way of thinking, don't you think?

We are all beautiful the way we are, and if not personally satisfied, we will make necessary changes. Why should we be part of a trend or fad, although that might only come with maturity?

Personal grooming has become much like the home decorating services: we hire someone to set up our house the way it should look like, to impress and bring us the right kind of friends or business. It is a legitimate service that we pay for. When it comes to our personal appearance, we are first groomed by our elders and siblings, and then the cosmetics industry, peer pressure, and ambitious advertising that promises “*what you really want to look like*” for a price. It all started with the supermodels and actresses who had come into our living rooms, gracing themselves on fashion magazine covers and televisions. We wanted to imitate them, although we knew about the heavy makeup they wore. Good looks and no signs of aging of the face could all be had by making plenty of money, and having a gorgeous husband and children were the fantasy ideal.

However, know there is another way!

It deals with having a different, realistic look at our appearance, and as much as it concerns us deeply, it is the last liberation that women in particular, must conquer. I have a unique face and body, somewhat like my ancestral family. Accepting myself in every way, sets the tone for my own self-esteem. I know several women who were criticized about what they could do and who they were, myself included. We were made to believe that our parents “creation” must be perfect, and well, we are not! We may have attributes and talents that do not conform to societies' standards, such as being left-handed or gay, and there is pressure to be corrected to the “right” way. Children are like clay, for they can be molded easily. Sometimes an innate frustration or anger may cause outward signs, such as impure skin, body weight issues, poor attention span or cooperation at home and in school. Even though we are manipulated early on, we do have an inborn self-esteem that gets bruised and has a tendency to manifest in a negative way for which children are medicated. An early assertion around food that we like or dislike is either encouraged or denied. As children, we mimic our surroundings for better or worse. Proper nutrition is not always available when money is tight.

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall

We scrutinize and criticize every flaw we see and become self-abusive with that pimple, the new wrinkle, the discoloration because of the early conditioning brought upon us. Treating skin problems with abuse is the way we deal with it. A new product line makes us diligent and regular for a while, giving us temporary satisfaction.

I have observed more abuse by my clients with problematic skin. Someone whose skin is all right or unproblematic usually stays with a type of care or products for a long time. It does not hurt them and it does not make a difference, but when their skin's appearance changes, they panic, "how dare this happen to me now!" Every product advertised with promise is tried, for the more costly it is, the better it must be. See that cycle of abuse again? Only this time, it is financial. It is no wonder the medical profession, who used to distance itself from anything cosmetic, have now become the "experts", selling these new products. That is a useful and legitimate conspiracy. We now have a new player as the authority to our issues with self-esteem. We are told that all our problems can be fixed if we only trust what the doctors can do for us: cut into the skin, burn and peel our façade to look like new. We usually end up hiding our radical beautification under layers of makeup, and for sure, use chemical sunscreens for the rest of our lives. The latter is just another persuasive trend that is extremely lucrative for the manufacturers, downplaying the severe damage we literally face with sun exposure in the southern parts of the country.

What I am asking you, my reader, is this: why are we thinning our skin surface with peelings and abrasive cleansers at a time in the history of the Earth, when the ozone layer is diminishing? Would it not serve us better to ask for a second layer added, instead of removing skin for the sake of erasing wrinkles? Besides our vulnerability to follow trends, need we not think about the long-term consequences of both old and new experimental procedures on our facial skin?

I remember many gimmicks in my long career in the facial treatment business. Some of those gimmicks are coming back as new inventions:

- Services such as paraffin-wax baths for hands and feet are recommended to be moisturizing. By forcing the skin to sweat, it depletes our natural moisture instead.
- Globes are warmed or iced and applied to the face to diminish wrinkles, even the old steam iron that was once used has made a comeback as a gimmick.
- Masks are promoted to wash away blackheads. If you understand that a blackhead is the surface manifestation of a clogged, congested pore opening, which has been blackened from oxidation by air rather than dirt, washing them away is absurd. You can bleach a stain on a shirt, and that is exactly what those masks do, without addressing the real problem. Just as our sweat glands produce smells and eliminate toxic skin waste, the oil glands try to eliminate toxins via the pore openings. If our pores are congested, the skin surface becomes dry, and those toxins can turn into pimples. Extreme hygiene is advised, rather than picking on them.

Diet plays an important part in excessive clogging inside the skin, and making changes in what you eat can improve the condition beyond what cosmetics or medication can do. Skin health and diet are interrelated as we are with each other. To think that we can passively manipulate the skin surface with cosmetics to prevent wrinkles, age spots, or other more serious skin disorders, is the make-believe of the 'yester-years' that will no longer satisfy the questions asked by a younger generation. Hopefully, they will be less impressed by an instant fix, asking, *"how will my skin be in the years to come if I use this product*

or do this procedure?" Will they be as obsessed with having flawless skin, using heavy makeup to cover up any imperfections?

A confident woman or man will always try to look her/his best, but no longer be intimidated and made to feel insecure by advertising that defies our intelligence.

Speaking of Age, how is the skin of a 40- or 50-year old woman supposed to look? What is the gauge to apply when measuring two people with totally different lifestyles and genetic backgrounds?

We are all individuals and the chronological clock maybe arbitrary to how we develop regards to what we do with our faces and bodies. There is such widespread belief that our genetic makeup is inevitable and there is no way to change this. Believing such hearsay may predispose us to these factors and in disbelieving that, we free ourselves from supposedly inherited weaknesses.

Regarding health matters, there are options for those who choose to pursue them. We often follow the habits leading to the family ailments rather than having inherited actual deficiencies. The mind-body healing connection is here to stay and on this subject, we also have choices with our "inherited" face problems. The question to look at is: are we willing to change that?

The way we currently take care of our faces is not working, and it never has. I have been giving facials and educated about caring for the skin for over 46 years. I have worked with products from all over the world. I love giving facials and my intention for skin care has always been about effectiveness and long-term improvements. I have done much research about the products I chose to use and sell, and I asked questions and became sensitive to the answers.

The cosmetics representative was a young European man who liked to flirt with the pretty aestheticians at this huge skin care convention. I had been observing him from a distance as he was charming the Americans, whom were unused to such charms. As he tried to sell me his skincare line, I asked questions that frustrated him. He tried to make me feel uneducated and then asked if I was spying for another company? Finally, he took me by the shoulder, saying in a sort of conspiracy tone: "do you believe cosmetics are supposed to do more than just smell good and feel nice? Isn't that what all your customers want anyway? Look around here, everyone wears layers of makeup. That is what makes them look beautiful – the make-believe way!"

I was profoundly affected by his insolence. He never noticed since he was busy waiting on someone else, who was not asking questions. It disturbed me deeply at the time. Even if this was an isolated incident, and I am not suggesting that all manufacturers have this kind of attitude, it just made me weary of an industry that advertises its products by telling women what is wrong with their skin and how to reverse, remove or cover it up. We all have not yet learned to see through the slick suggestions that promise to be the solution to our negligence and ignorance.

The desire and interest to beautify our faces is centuries old. Early on, beautification meant painting the face for a festive occasion to accompany the special costume and to be noticed by the opposite sex. I remember my experiments with makeup while studying for my profession in Germany, and later working as an apprentice in the big city salons. We were instructed that makeup was something so skillfully applied, that no one else was able to see it. Visible makeup jobs were only for certain women, who walked the streets, using it as their calling card. Likewise, certain dress codes were strictly observed as an unspoken agreement between the women of the night and everyone else. Coming to America in the late 60s was a bit of a shock. When I first worked in the Los Angeles area, there were different rules to the game and who was I to criticize something that was totally normal there?

I was sitting in the bus, riding to the airport. At the last stop, a mature woman had entered the bus after a long, passionate goodbye from her companion. She looked flushed and radiant. Her eyes and the skin of

her face glistened, as it can look after lovemaking. She seated herself across from me and spent the next 25 minutes it took for the bus to reach the airport, putting on her makeup. She creamed, powdered, and painted like an expert. As we stepped off the bus, I looked at her and saw an entirely different face, glamorous, yet cold and mask-like.

Reflecting on my observation of the woman on the bus, I realize that every morning, millions of women start their day with painting their faces, changing into someone else. As a result, we pretend to have perfectly flawless skin, pink cheeks, and dark rimmed, alluring eyes. If we attract someone with that look, do we not perpetuate insecurity, wondering if we would have the same chances au naturel? We no longer face each other as equals, especially women to men. We are not liberated enough in the deepest sense of our being until we stop this pretense. In our most intimate relationships, we become victims of deception. If our lover accepts us without the glamorous façade, he/she may insist that we always wear it outside the sphere of intimacy.

I had cleaned the young woman's skin professionally since she was ten years old. Her mother, who envisioned a musical career for her gifted daughter, was concerned with how she would look later on in life. As the young woman's education progressed, she eventually lived on her own, but continued her regular facial treatments with me. Her skin began to break out more and she was using heavy makeup to conceal it. Was her diet the issue here? You bet it was contributing to it. We talked about her cooking, compared with her mother's cooking at home. She did not believe me at first, but took nutritional classes, learned to eat differently, and gradually, her skin began to improve. She became a role model for her friends who asked what she was doing differently. This reinforced her realization that with her own understanding, she had effected the change.

Many of us have actually been taught not to care for ourselves. We have been told from an early age to wash and scrub our "dirty" faces. Girls then got a double message that implied that looks had a direct effect on how successful we would be in life, like getting a good husband or job. Many cultures are guilty of this, even to this day. Taking care of our faces has become a chore, or a preoccupation, and that has been tainted as vanity or indifference. In some social circles, indifference is the prevailing mode. Skin care is considered a cosmetic vanity, although cover-up is accepted as the inevitable.

She was well dressed and elegant. Her bearing was reassured and at ease with what was expected of her in the corporate world. She was an attractive woman, an owner of a large company. She was angry that her face did not look "right" anymore and nothing she had tried helped bring that look back. Applying makeup took much more time, and she was afraid of losing the "mask" during long meetings that made her look overtired. After I took off all her makeup, I could not see the huge problem she was covering up. But her emotions were raw, making her act like a princess, stomping her foot at something that would not go her way. What she wanted from me was a quick fix, and some secure cover-up. Somewhere she remarked that men never had to go through this. I agreed with her, but why is a blemish, a wrinkle or a discoloration such a disaster? Why have we women bought into the advertising, suggesting that with the right cream or lotion, we would never have to deal with any of this?

The term, "who is the fairest of them all?" popular from a well-known fairytale, is a deep psychological wound and may have influenced competition among women. The expectation of the prince awaiting his princess, whether for a personal relationship, or as a symbol of ultimate success in the business world, is an unconscious desire. Being born and raised as a princess happens to very few women in real life. We forget that in the story, the princess, who was more beautiful than the other women with a mask, was a natural beauty.

Take a seat in front of a mirror and have a conversation with your face, with or without makeup. Look at yourself for a long time and see what the image reflects in all reality. What do you say to yourself? How

do you like yourself? Do you hear “other voices” commenting on your looks from long ago? If you were your best friend, what would you say to her?

Please do this exercise frequently, as it will reflect back to you and help you to get in touch with what you mean to yourself. We mostly see ourselves through the eyes and comments of others and what they say may be useful, but in some instances, it can distort our perception of ourselves. May it teach you that beauty comes to us in different ways, and that you are unique and not a fabricated beauty ideal. I see no problem with makeup being used to create a make-believe façade. It has its place and will always be around. I am concerned with the insecurities it can cause in the young person, as it sets the stage for wanting to look like someone else. This early innocent deception can haunt us for the rest of our lives. It makes us fearful instead of confident. Fear is a lack of trust in the innate beauty we all are born with. In seeing our differences as our uniqueness, we stop competing! Competition is self-denial.

We have to take charge!

When you are in charge of *caring* for your facial and body skin using common sense and intuition, your choices will reward you. Someone pays you a compliment on how nice your skin looks, and you respond with a knowing smile, *I am glad you notice that I love my skin* instead of *do you really think so?* You come from a place of knowing, as an expression of your self-confidence.

You have very few cosmetics around, only those you use daily, and they are replaced when finished. You save lots of money and can afford to buy the best value for your money. You know why you use them and waste little money on buying “promises” since you learned to read labels and know what they contain. You never buy anything without instructions to follow and ask the salesperson lots of questions. You ask if she uses the products personally, and if she is honest, she will tell you. If she cannot answer your questions about ingredients, she will offer to find out and get back to you. Building a relationship with her makes her feel appreciated and you both gain an education.

You never think it’s too late to learn something new about your face’s response and take full responsibility for it. Your best education, hopefully, comes by consulting a professional aesthetician.

I have always regarded myself as an educator and have re-educated myself when something I was taught did not feel right. Education needs constant revision. What was taught long ago may only meet a fraction of what we experience now, although there are golden nuggets of wisdom not to be disregarded.

In my profession, there is very little practitioner-to-practitioner informational exchange. We work with different products, dictated by the manufacturer of the preparations or equipment. However, there is plenty advice on how to sell a service or product. If the product is good, it sells and will resell itself eventually. If not, no matter what claims are made, if you don’t see results, your skin can be the judge. Your commitment and responsibility is to support the care of your skin with more than just lotions and creams.

Active vs. Passive Skincare

How do you clean your face? Do you notice that it does not seem to feel clean no matter what product you use? It could be that the methods we use do not work.

Washing with a cleanser or soap may free the skin surface of dirt, cream and makeup, but it does not remove used-up surface skin cells. When your skin feels dry all the time, it may be due to a build-up of dead skin cells, rather than insufficient natural oil and moisture.

How do you remove such surface skin cells without damaging the underlying tissue? Certainly not by scrubbing with abrasive materials! Think of the effect that has on the elasticity of the delicate facial skin and how it can accelerate the development of wrinkles.

After you remove makeup from your face with the appropriate product, you simply use water and a soft washcloth and soak or bathe the face before actually washing it. Think of this like if you would want to remove stains on a blouse, how it would respond by just wetting and rubbing it, while by soaking it, the stain usually dissolves and requires little additional manipulation.

By soaking your facial skin prior to cleaning, it dissolves what you want to remove with the best results. Our entire facial area is covered with lymphatic vessels and drainage points. The lymph carries important fluids to and from the cells and tissues, providing both nutrients and removing toxic materials. Helping our facial skin stay healthy means activating the lymph function every day. After soaking, which is best done at the washbasin and not in the shower due to wasting precious water, we then use a textured cleansing agent by pressing it into the skin with lots of warm water, ending up with a cold compress. Do not rub when washing the facial skin, which can push the skin waste back into the pores. By giving our skin this daily workout, we support its natural function as the skin is partly an organ of elimination. The result is not only clean skin, but also tighter, firmer skin and better circulation. After you do this daily for a while, you may no longer need that blusher to make your skin look rosy. General fluid retention, like puffiness, lessens and the facial skin is strengthened in its own processes. An oily complexion benefits from releasing excess oil during soaking and washing by leaning over the sink in order not to have the water splash all over. Dry skin may experience self-lubrication; problematic skin is never irritated but generally soothed and can release toxins internally as well; blackheads tend to soften and can be removed much more easily with regular “facial hygiene” as I would call my treatments. Educating yourself or consulting with a nutritional or holistic practitioner can compliment your skin care at home.

What I have described here is totally effective facial skin care. The problems with your skin are not separated from what you eat and how you eliminate the toxins. They all play a part in healthy looking skin. In redefining “beauty”, we address how beauty is achieved and maintained, and that is synonymous with good health. Gone is the old assumption that the skin takes care of itself, regardless of abuse.

Aging is a State of Mind

See yourself healthy and strong as the result of taking charge of your lifestyle, your personal appearance and your relationships. Draw on your hunches, your inner wisdom and your dreams. Ensure your emotional health by being attentive to legitimate needs you have, rather than the expectation of others. Don't force your body into a shape you once had, but give it lots of caring attention and pampering. Acknowledge its limits instead of stressing it to the point of breakdown. Watch what you nourish yourself with, like the food you ingest, as well as the food for your eyes and ears. It is all nourishment, for better or worse. Spend quiet time each day. Quiet time brings amazing insights worthy of attention. Go deeper into things you already know, instead of accumulating more knowledge. Watch nature, animals, and inanimate things with attention and awe as you take a solitary walk.

As our life is evolving, rather than the popular ‘downhill’ idea, I see it as ascending the highest mountain we can climb, as a metaphor. When we become weary of the climb, it just reminds us to get rid of things that are a burden. We can do the outrageous and follow our bliss, one day at a time.

But what is time, anyway? It helps us to keep appointments we made. Beyond that, time is imprinted in our natural bodies that know when the time is right for us. Use it wisely and don’t be driven by it. What we have beyond time is our spiritual fulfillment.

When we are young, we think little about turning 50 and beyond. Life seems forever, and we live for its promise of fulfillment. Those frown lines on the forehead or between your eyes have not yet established its permanent imprint. But they are there. One morning, after a restless night under a full moon, we awake and see our wrinkles like never before. We panic, and don’t realize that those close to us have always seen the wrinkles we make and like us anyway. Our own discovery makes us insecure and obsessive as they remind us that our faces are changing and with it, our very being.

Still, those advertisements on TV and in the magazines tell us we don’t have to have wrinkles. We can peel them, treat them with a laser, or cut them away. We fear we are losing our most precious possession – our good looks. Most men are not as affected as women are, since their wrinkles and grey hair are considered attractive and distinguished. But that is changing as youthful looks become a challenge in an increasingly competitive business world.

However, there is a different gauge used on women that separates us from men in an unfair manner, as we approach the end of our reproductive capacity. We are no longer desirable sex objects, we have to deal with the physical discomfort of the “change” and are not free to speak of it. Is it because we women always pretended who we really are?

In listening to my clients, it became obvious to me that those who were early beauties, greatly admired and envied by others, are the ones who have the hardest time with their changing bodies and faces. Somehow the envy they once received became the mirror with which they reflect on others now. Can we wake up to another reality, one that has to do with preparing us for the most important years of our lives?

In today’s world, an older woman’s life is not over as it was in earlier generations with many babies to raise and other harsh physical conditions that put wear and tear on the body. We can shift gears and give birth to all the other creative projects inside of us. Today’s older woman can think of herself in a new way and realize some dreams and adventures that she put away in her childhood or early adulthood. She has experience and wisdom from the many years of service to others, her spouse, her children, her parents, and her career. She may have a vocation beyond her career, and she has a life ahead, richer than she could ever imagine. But she is going through an introspective time and much uncertainty in order to gain insight. No college course or study will give her all the answers, although she may want to increase her intellectual capabilities, to catch up on long-lost opportunities. It will not entirely satisfy her as a means to an end, if that end is another way to prove herself. But does she really have to prove herself to anyone? Does she still have to compete? Can we change the old ways of thinking, and free ourselves of the images of what the second half of life is all about?

As we create our later years with vision, intention, and excitement, we can become the best role models for those we care about.

Sun Consciousness

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The sun is a blessing, the energy source for all living beings. Yet, animals withdraw to the shade on sunny days – watch cattle and horses in the pasture crowd around the only tree, or observe your pets crawl into places away from the sun. Plants that like direct sunlight are usually the hardy and fibrous ones. Their color is different when compared to that of shade-loving plants. What can we learn from these living beings in nature?

In order to work and be out in the sun all day, chemists developed sunscreens/sunblocks made from inorganic chemicals. We complain when a sunscreen does not protect our skin for a longer time in the sun and demand higher SPFs (Sun Protection Factors), which, in turn, mean more chemicals absorbed into our skin. While the sunscreens may prevent sunburn for a period of time, they are not adequate to stop cumulative damage to our skin.

The cosmetics industry promotes the use of chemicals and natural acids added to moisturizers to erase skin damage. Be wise and use your common sense about these claims. Was our skin made to be peeled (exfoliated) constantly, thereby forcing new tissue to grow, leaving the surface even more sensitive to chemical sunscreens? Should we not be more concerned with making our skin healthier and more resistant to an ever-increasing harsh environment?

Nature is challenging us now more than ever before as to how to deal with sun exposure and we are not winning this time! As long as we think we can outsmart nature with chemical applications or total ignorance, we will have no chance of surviving in the future with a thinning ozone layer. What we need is to develop a respectful relationship with the sun and to use our intelligence to befriend this life-giving energy to our advantage.

That can be done by building up our bodies nutritionally, using skin-friendly “weatherproofing” products and wearing protective clothing. We also need to take a look at how our ancestors honored the hottest time of the days with a siesta, respecting nature, and sensibly dividing work and play hours with rest periods.

Can We Overcome the Confusion of the Cosmetics Marketplace?

Over the past decade I observed a sincere desire in women to forego competition, wear less makeup, and to learn about skin care improvements. Regrets about neglect often play a negative part in this sincere effort. We once again are confronted with conditioning that says, “*you have to pay for your sins,*” and this is where expensive products and aggressive, medical procedures come into play.

We all have to question what we put on our skin, from soap and water to the kind of cosmetics that we choose. The cosmetics industry has done a great job of confusing the consumer. All the manufacturers claim their product will give you the best results, and there are endless claims and

counter claims. Add this to the general ignorance of the cosmetic user and you have the perfect formula for a very profitable industry that is hardly challenged, which is exactly what is happening now.

The industry will not change unless the consumer forces it by making informed choices. I am realistic and know these changes take time. By starting small and individually, I can only change the choices I make, but by doing so, it shows that I care about myself and encourage others to do so. The next time that you feel intimidated by a cosmetics salesperson, test her or his knowledge about the ingredients contained in their product line. They may not know them, but if more of us ask, we may motivate them to educate themselves. Just like any one of us can ask for information, or refuse to buy when it's not available, we can choose to work on not patronizing companies that withhold information on its own ingredients.

Next, we ought to know the origin of the ingredients in the cosmetics we buy. We have the choice to refuse products containing animal organ substances, which makes the use of certain chemical preservatives necessary and creates a double whammy for the product's influence on our entire body. Just as animal flesh that contains added hormones, steroids and other drugs causing problems when ingested, the influence of a cream applied to the skin may cause comparable difficulties. Furthermore, do we want the suffering of animals to continue for the presumed safety of cosmetics? Given the fact that there is more promise than actual performance, why do we support the too-often cruel experimentation for the sake of facial rejuvenation? Can we stop this dependency by making more conscious choices? Sadly, there are manufacturers of so-called natural cosmetics who add animal ingredients in order to stay believable to today's consumer.

Why do we have such a dependency on cosmetics in the first place? Could it be that we need to look at skin care with more attention to the prevention of problems? We might also do well to consider possible "cures" from other sources such as diet and lifestyle, and consider the connection between our health and radiant skin. If we do not want temporary improvement at the cost of long-term damage, we need to look for a cosmetic product that is food, medicine, and enhancement all in one, unlike those products that warn us to "keep away from children" as it can cause harm if ingested.

I am interested in herbs, and especially their processing. There are many different ways in which this is done for today's natural products, just like how cooks prepare the same recipe with totally different outcomes. Fresh food from the garden gives us more vitality than the store-bought variety. I like my "skin food" to contain life-giving energies, as quality is always much more noticeable. As a professional skin care therapist, I look to products for optimal performance with different skin conditions. In regard to allergic reactions, which are possible even with the best herbal preparation, processing and preserving may play a role in how a natural cosmetic product can affect our skin.

Here is some advice if you are buying a completely natural skin care product: ask for a complete ingredient disclosure, and if refused, do not trust a company who may have something to hide.

- Study the ingredients listed on product labels; if unpronounceable, they may not be from Mother Nature. Ask the salesperson who is willing to inform and educate honestly.
- "Fragrance" on the label may mean chemicals, rather than naturally fragrant oils.
- Ask what preservatives are contained; are plant, vegetable or animal derived ingredients as emulsifiers and thickeners included?
- Are anti-oxidants, such as Vitamin E and others, naturally or chemically derived?
- What are the sources of the listed herbs and extracts? Are they grown organically? How have they been treated? Which solvents were used for extraction?

- If claims of biodegradability are made, ask how it is defined and what the breakdown products are.
- Try to avoid products that contain ingredients from killed animals or any that were tested on animals. Let's end the suffering of animals for cosmetics. There are laws for testing that manufacturers have to follow and efforts are made to use other approved methods.

My Recommendations for daily home care for all skin types, all ages

1. Remove make-up with a recommended cleansing product. It is especially important to remove mascara, eyeliner and eye-shadows with that company's cleansing product as it has been specifically tested for these dyes to be dissolved quickly and gently. Follow the instructions given for the sake of the delicate eye area.
2. If there is no make-up to remove, proceed to step 2.
3. Fill your sink, or put a plastic dish inside, with very warm water. Each of us has a different feel for what is the proper temperature for our face. You can add a pure essential oil to the water, but remember that it needs a fatty medium to dissolve in; some oils already come with a solvent. Immerse your washcloth in the warm water and press several wet compresses into the face and neck area. Do this as many times as you like, it feels good. A longer soaking will be more effective for what follows next. Wash your face with an exfoliating cream or lotion, but do not rub your face. Rather, press the product into your skin with both hands and plenty of water. This press-release motion is beneficial on the skin surface and beneath, as it encourage skin debris to be removed inside and out. Doing this in the shower is not nearly as effective and a waste of water. I also want to point out that your washcloth may contain laundry soap residue from the washing machine. It is best to rinse it thoroughly before soaking the face with it.
4. After rinsing the product off with warm water, compress with cold water as the final step. The sudden change of temperature acts as the best toner. Remember, if you simply splash water on your face, you don't get the same results. The pores of the skin actually contract, instead of receiving the moisture.
After the cold compress has removed most of the water, spray/mist your face with a nutritional, herbal or rose water, and press it into the skin of your face and neck with your hands. Doing this is similar to misting a houseplant which absorbs water through its leaves, not just from the soil.
5. Greasy night creams are less recommended, if they leave a film on the skin surface. If you notice the film in the morning, it tells you that there was little absorbency, no matter what the product claims. Nutritional gels or liquid type products may do a better job. While we sleep, the skin is actively replenishing and repairing itself, and greasy creams applied to the skin surface may interfere with this.
For the daytime apply what I call a weather-proofing cream that may include a sunscreen (SPF), depending on the climate you live in. The cream seals in the extra moisture from the misting of the face and neck in Step 3.
6. Extremely dry skin will not be helped by smothering it with creams and oils, even if this is what we feel we must do to make it better. The gentle soaking and press-release routine, done twice a

day, will have a positive effect on the dryness over time, so be patient with this process. It will also positively reduce facial puffiness.

7. The very oily skin surface has an uneven oil/moisture ratio. Drying the oils up with soap or medicated lotions may stimulate more oil to be produced instead. Activating the skin by the soaking method will also provide better results over time. Acne prone skin benefits from the gentle process, with proper hygiene measures observed, like using a fresh, clean washcloth each time. Follow with an herbal ointment or whatever your physician prescribes.
8. The body skin benefits from regular baths, rather than just showers. You will notice after soaking the body in warm water, the layer of scum built-up on the tub walls consisting of dead skin cells, unless a detergent bubble bath was used. Stay away from detergent soaps as it strips away precious skin oils, just like your hands get dry from using most dishwashing detergents. No cream or lotions can adequately replace the natural skin oils. Showers remove sweat, which is water and salt, but it does not effectively soak off the dry skin cells like a leisurely bath can.

Conclusion

Think of your overall skin surface as the ultimate protective layer against environmental influences. You can make all the difference in keeping the skin clean and the build-up of used-up surface cells to a minimum with the few steps outlined above, twice a day. Make taking care of your skin fun, as it will be with you all your life.

About the Author

Gabrielle Wagner, Aesthetician and Skin Care Specialist, studied and worked in Frankfurt in her native Germany, and is the recipient of the prestigious diploma for advanced practice and theory by the International Committee of Esthetics and Cosmetics (CIDESCO) since 1958.

Gabrielle worked in salons across Europe and Australia before coming to the United States in 1969. She owned her own salons in California and Santa Fe, New Mexico until her retirement in 2009. Besides publishing newsletters and other educational articles, she participated in various radio talk shows dedicated to educating about natural skin care.