

"This book will show you how easy it is to have the healthy and glowing skin you deserve — for life."
—from the foreword by Vanessa Williams



UNBLEMISHED

KATIE RODAN, M.D., AND KATHY FIELDS, M.D.

The Creators of Proactiv® Solution, America's #1 Acne-Care System, and Rodan & Fields CALM®

*Stop Breakouts! Fight Acne!
Transform Your Life!*

*Reclaim Your Self-esteem with
the Proven 3-Step Program Using
Over-the-Counter Medications*

chapter three

acne's psychological aftermath

"I think the most hurtful thing that I experienced while I suffered with acne was that people automatically assumed I had acne because my diet and hygiene were poor. Instead of asking, they automatically offered me their 'solution' to my acne -- which of course wasn't any solution at all. The hurt just didn't go away"

-- Hilary, age twenty-nine

"Only people who have acne know the pain I go through -- emotionally and physically."

-- Brendan, age seventeen

No matter how splendid your personality or how nice your clothes, an automatic assessment is made about anyone with blemishes. You will be judged simply because your skin is not clear. "There is no single disease that causes more psychic trauma, more maladjustment between parents and children, more general insecurity and feelings of inferiority, and greater sums of psychic suffering than does acne vulgaris." This observation was made in an article by Dr. M. Sulzberger and Dr. S. Zaidems that is well-known to dermatologists, "Psychogenic Factors in Dermatological Disorders." It was published in The Medical Clinician of North America in 1948, and it is more true than ever nearly sixty years later.

Acne sufferers have every right to be upset. Acne is not a life-threatening disease in itself, but it's definitely life-diminishing. We firmly believe that the emotional quality of your life is as important as the physical quality; the two are inextricably intertwined. Yet because the root causes of acne are usually

misunderstood, the lingering pain of its emotional fallout is even more likely to be misunderstood as well. After all, many people still believe that somehow acne is *their* fault, which usually exacerbates their worries and suffering.

Nor is anyone helped by the stigma surrounding acne. Stigma from the disease itself and stigma from not being able to confront it and discuss it. Stigma causes shame and self-consciousness, which causes further retreat from life. No matter where you go or what you do to conceal it, every time you look in the mirror, acne is there to remind you of just how dreadful it makes you feel.

"Acne teaches us to look for flaws," said Dr. Gayle Robinson, former president of the American Counseling Association. "It so focuses you on what's wrong that you develop a perspective of yourself as looking for flaws. That becomes habitual, a way of viewing yourself"

Acne's psychological effects are too often dismissed or discounted. We believe that acknowledging the pain caused by acne is one of the first steps in effective treatment. This can't happen without effective communication. 'Acne's impact on the psyche is underestimated by parents, the general public, and sometimes even by physicians," according to Dr. John Koo, a dermatologist, psychiatrist, and the director of the psychodermatology clinic at the University of California at San Francisco Medical Center. "There is a tendency to trivialize all skin concerns in general. This ties in with the general myth that skin diseases are only skin deep. So the comment becomes, Aren't you glad you *only* have a skin disease? It would be *much* more horrible if you had diabetes, or arthritis, or asthma, or epilepsy.' But for those with acne, it is *not* more horrible. People with acne suffer as much as people with other diseases," he says.

In fact, some acne sufferers can be as upset and depressed by mild cases of acne, with only one pimple occurring once a month, as they can be by severe acne with the potential to scar. "We found that the cosmetic impact of even mild acne can cause a profound emotional burden for some young people," reported Dr. Madhulika Gupta, a professor in the department of psychiatry at the University of Western Ontario, Canada, when she conducted a study for the *British Journal of Dermatology* in 1998. This was confirmed by another survey sponsored by the American Medical Association, which showed that teens with acne are likely to have lowered self-confidence and poor self-image and to refrain from participating in social activities. Sixty-seven per-

cent of those surveyed said their acne was mild; 30 percent said it was moderate; and only 3 percent said it was severe. No matter how many pimples appeared, all those who were surveyed suffered.

Many with acne also become anxious. Several controlled studies have shown that, justifiably, the worse the acne, the greater the anxiety. One study, which included a survey of 2,000 members of the Acne Support Group in Britain, found that 75 percent felt depressed, 40 percent felt anxious, and 15 percent felt suicidal.

These are feelings that must be acknowledged, not discounted. If a new patient drives across town, goes through the hassle of parking, and waits in our offices for her appointment, even if she has only a few pimples, we know she's upset. This is not an issue of vanity; it's an issue of self-respect. It's about treating a disease. Any condition that obstructs a person's relationship to the outside world, even if it's only a few blemishes, matters a lot. We're determined to take that person's need and disease seriously, assess the situation, and together devise the best treatment plan to fix it.

The desperate need for an acne patient's psychological pain to be acknowledged was emphasized when a new patient came to us in 1998. She told us that she'd begged her regular doctor, a general practitioner, for a referral to a dermatologist when her acne raged out of control. "You're married," he told her with a shrug. "What do you care what your skin looks like?" No acne sufferer should have his or her pain disregarded this way.

WHAT PEOPLE WITH ACNE HEAR ALL THE TIME

"She's really beautiful. . . except for her skin."

"Oh, do you have a rash?"

"Are you going to go out of the house without anything on your face?"

"How come your skin's so bumpy, Mommy?"

"What's that red thing on your face?"

"Are you eating junk food?"

"Don't you ever wash your face?"

"Why do you wear so much makeup?"

"Mommy, you look like a clown."

acne's emotional effects

Dr. Koo has helped us categorize acne's interrelated emotional effects. For teens the effects can be crippling, causing changes in their social life, academic achievement, and emotional development. For adults, social lives and job status can suffer greatly.

Our patients have no shortage of stories about the toll acne has taken on their lives, and we're quoting them verbatim here. Remember that you are not alone in your struggle with acne.

Psychological Factors

Impaired Self-image, Self-esteem, and Self-confidence

The first thing that nearly all the people we've ever talked to about acne have told us is that their self-esteem and self-confidence plummeted as soon as the pimples arrived. The more pimples, the lower the self-confidence.

"My exterior affects my interior. Acne has kept me from being *me*, basically. I consider myself to be very attractive, and I take good care of myself, but acne lowers my self-esteem and leaves me with no self-confidence."

"When you feel ugly because your skin looks ugly and infected, it puts a damper on a lot of the choices you make in your life."

"Modeling agencies told me the only thing I had to do was clear up my skin, that I had what it takes to be a model but I had to 'take care of myself.' They didn't know how much it hurt me to hear this. They didn't understand that it wasn't my fault, it was genetic. Yet I still thought there was something wrong with me inside, that I would never make it. I used to cry every single night."

"My acne got so bad that nothing would cover it, not even makeup. I was so ashamed of my complexion that I hid it all the time, either with my hands over my face or my hair down. I couldn't face the world."

Problems with Body Image

People with acne often see themselves as damaged goods and grow to loathe their bodies. We've noticed that our patients tend to consistently rate their

acne as more severe than it is, in part because these patients have to deal with the devastation they feel whenever they leave the house.

"Each and every morning I would wake up and have 'fear of the mirror syndrome.' I'd expect to feel and see these rock-hard marbles on my face and be reminded once again of the pain and leprosy I've felt for so many years. How could I expect others to look at me?"

"People tend to talk at me instead of to me. Like they're talking to my pimples, not me. I always felt like it was my fault that people looked at me like that. Their stares seemed to say, 'What's wrong with you? Don't you know you have this on your face? Can't you take care of it? Can't you get rid of it?' "

"I grew my hair really long to hide my face behind my hair, and that made it worse, because if you hide your face a lot, you're more prone to picking your acne and creating scars."

"I used to cover it all up with makeup, which would make it look worse. I remember hiding in the bathroom stalls at school and just not wanting to go to class until the bell rang. Once in class, I had a mirror in my pocket to make sure I looked all right. I used to stay home when I had really bad breakouts because I didn't want to go out and have everyone stare at me."

Embarrassment Leading to Social Withdrawal

Parents of teenagers are often as devastated by their teens' acne as their teens are when they see their kids become shells of their former joyous selves. Teens with acne who had been outgoing and social can turn into withdrawn and reclusive loners who refuse to participate in activities they once loved. Adults also hide the shame acne causes them through social withdrawal.

"I wouldn't even go out of the house without having makeup on. I used to joke with my friends and say that I wouldn't even take the garbage out without having makeup on because my face was that bad."

"My thirteen-year-old daughter would get bellyaches when she got upset about her acne. She would be really sick, and she missed a lot of school last year as a result. Also, she wouldn't want to go anywhere with me, not out in public at all."

"I didn't get to experience all the things I should have experienced as a youth because of my skin problems. I had bumps. I had pimples everywhere. I didn't go to my prom. At graduation, I was trying to hide in the corner. It was horrible. I was scared to talk to people, to go to work. I didn't want anybody to see me. I was never in any photographs."

"My son was so introverted that he didn't want to look at anybody, talk to anybody, or go out to the store or anywhere where he'd see people. He'd just stay in his room."

"I missed a lot in life by having acne. You feel like you're not worthy of going to events that could have major impact on your life."

"I would sit on the train, and I was afraid to look up because I'd be thinking that people were staring at the way I looked. Sometimes I would just wish I could tear my whole face away. I used to pray every morning when I got up, 'God, what am I doing wrong to my face? Help me!' "

"The turning point for me was earlier this month when I went to pump gas. It was just a quick errand so I ran out with no makeup on-usually I always cover my face with makeup even though you can still see the redness and lumpiness underneath. The gas station attendant is used to seeing me with makeup. He looked at me and covered his mouth like he was surprised and asked, 'What happened to your face? Do you have a rash?' I couldn't bring myself to admit to him that I had acne, and I told him, 'Yeah, I have an allergic rash.' I was so embarrassed. I drove home in tears."

Depression

Professor Bill Cunliffe, a leading authority on acne and coauthor of a report published in the British Journal of Dermatology in 1986, did one of the first studies on severe depression from acne and facial scarring, which he and his colleagues claimed could lead to suicide. "Our message is that acne causes a lot of psychological and social effects, with low self-esteem, job discrimination, employment problems, and interpersonal problems, and that there are people who will take their own lives as a consequence," Dr. Cunliffe reported. The average age of the acne suicide victims was twenty.

The overwhelming majority of people with acne never have depression so

severe that it leads to suicidal thoughts, but their feelings of sadness and loneliness nevertheless need to be addressed and treated.

"I guess it really hit when I turned sixteen. It even got so bad that when I had my senior pictures taken and I saw the proofs, I got sick. Everybody else was looking at theirs going, 'Oh, man, look how good they are: and showing them to everybody. I left school, sat in my car, and cried. I would not let anyone see them, not even my family. It wasn't until I had them retouched that I ended up showing them to anybody, and a friend of my little brother said, 'You have clear skin in this picture. How did that happen 'cause you look like a pizza face?' Of course that hurt my feelings even worse. I thought I would grow out of acne, but I never did. I was so depressed I could barely function."

"I suffered from adult acne for seven years and it was devastating. I never suffered from acne as a teenager, and it truly disturbed my life. I'm around a lot of professional people every day, and having acne made it really tough to go into work and face the people that I had to face."

Anger

Acne patients often turn their anger inward, beating themselves up for something that is, as we know, not their fault. Sometimes this anger gets directed at others, too.

"I would get so mad about my face that I lashed out at anybody who tried to help."

"My brother turned to alcohol for solace because he was so angry and upset about his acne. That only made him angrier. He was like a lost soul."

"I was furious that I was wasting so much money on products that didn't work."

Preoccupation

Becoming obsessed with acne is hard to avoid, especially since we live in a society that places such a premium on appearance.

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"Acne used to be the last thing on my mind before I went to bed, and it was in my thoughts all throughout the day. It consumed me and controlled me in a lot of ways."

"I used to lie awake at night worrying that my husband wouldn't find me attractive anymore."

"I looked like a monster and was so surprised my husband even married me. That's the honest truth, because I felt like a monster!"

Confusion/Frustration

Often acne sufferers are confused and frustrated after trying countless over-the-counter products, none of which deliver the intended results. This is exacerbated when they don't know where to go for advice.

"I became very frustrated because I was clean and sober for eleven years, but my skin still looked horrible, with a great deal of scarring from years of me just trying to scratch those things right out of my face."

"First I went to the drugstore, and saw this wall of acne products: dozens of cleansers, masks, and leave-on products. Then I went to the department store, and the salesperson recommended a three-step cleansing program along with makeup and concealers. I tried tons of different products and nothing worked. Everything just dried out my skin. I had no idea who to listen to for advice or where to turn next."

"I learned to live with the embarrassment."

Limitations on Lifestyle

Because acne makes people ashamed to be seen, they often arrange their daily schedules and even make career choices to avoid any exposure that might embarrass them. They also spend countless hours in the bathroom, carefully applying camouflage makeup to hide the blemishes. This is time they wish they could spend on more enjoyable activities.

"Years of having to live with 'the curse' kept me from outdoor activities when I was younger and a modeling career which I was close to having. Be

cause I couldn't bear having to wear thick cover-up makeup and feeling self-conscious, I didn't pursue modeling."

"I am an avid swimmer and surfer, and my acne made it a real problem to go to the beach and into the water. I was always mortified when the makeup washed off and everyone could see what my face really looked like."

Difficulty with Family Members

It's bad enough to be judged by strangers. Those with acne are especially devastated when family members are not sympathetic. We'll discuss this problem in depth on page 78.

"One day my skin was fine, and then in a matter of weeks it was red, bumpy, dry, flaky, and I had these weird surface whiteheads. I was almost twenty-six -- too old to get acne, right? Of course I was wrong. My family would make comments like, 'Oh, no more peaches-and-cream complexion.' That was incredibly painful to hear and completely insensitive."

"Even my family, who had seen me without makeup before, would ask me what was wrong with my face and if something had happened to me. They thought something was wrong because of the blemishes. What saddened me the most was my kids saying, 'Do something with those pimples. They didn't want to be seen with me.'"

"My brother used to call me all sorts of names."

"I used to take a shower and wear an oversized towel on my head afterward so I could pull down the sides to hide my face. My family called me 'Towel Head' because I insisted on keeping the towel on until I could get my makeup on and cover the blemishes."

Reduced Dating

Acne sufferers often do not want to be seen, much less touched. People who feel unlovable often do not wish to risk any further rejection.

"It's something huge when you can't live a normal life because of your skin. My dating life was completely dead."

"When I was in college I was out on a date with this guy who said, 'You know, you'd be really attractive if you didn't have such bad acne.' I banned the word 'acne' from my house after I got married. My husband couldn't say 'acne' or 'zit: the only thing he could say was 'blemish' if he had to say anything at all, because it brought up such terrible memories."

"I had moved away from my small hometown to a big city, got a divorce, and was really upset about a lot of things in life. One of the things I faced being newly single was the humiliation of adult acne. I was just so afraid to even meet anybody because I wouldn't know what my face was going to look like or how much makeup I was going to have to put on. I didn't smile very much because it hurt to. I was sitting by myself around New Year's Eve, and I figured, 'I'm making a New Year's resolution that I'm finally going to get some clear skin so I can stop being embarrassed when I meet people.' "

Reduced Participation in Social Activities

If self-esteem is suffering, it's hard to muster the energy and confidence to have a normal, successful, and fun social life.

"I was a complete loner in high school. I was too embarrassed to want to be part of any group. Besides, who would want to be seen with me?"

"The only good thing about my acne is I'm getting great grades, because when my skin is broken out I just sit in my apartment and study. It's so sad, but that's the way I feel. I just don't go out."

"I never wanted to go out because I had to wear makeup, which I hated. Putting on makeup would take so much time away from my kids and the little spare time I had. Even as an adult, I was really ashamed to go on campouts or swimming because everybody would see what my face looked like without makeup. I was so ashamed of how ugly it was-how pimply and red and scarred-and I didn't want to gross others out!"

"As I got older the option of going out with my friends depended on how bad my skin looked. If it was a dark place, I was more comfortable."

Impaired Academic Performance

Many teens with acne are so upset when their acne flares up that they stay home from school, missing valuable classroom time and social activities. Teasing by their peers also leads to anxiety and depression, which makes studying even more difficult.

"I couldn't concentrate on studying because I was always worrying about how bad my acne was."

"If your acne makes you feel worthless, why should you bother studying?"

"My daughter had acne from the time she was eleven. She has attention deficit disorder so her self-esteem was already pretty low. And when the hormones kicked in, that was an issue in itself. But with the acne, she really felt she was ugly and was afraid to go out in public. She became phobic about it, and I had to home school her for her seventh grade year."

Increased Unemployment and Career Problems

Studies have shown that acne patients face problems at work, especially in jobs where public contact is a must. "There are all kinds of discrimination against people with acne," Dr. Cunliffe stated. In one of his studies in the United Kingdom, written up in the British Journal of Dermatology in 1986, he concluded that unemployment was 45 percent higher among people with acne.

"At work I was promoted to a new position with a lot of responsibilities, including meeting with corporate officers from different companies. About a year later my bosses started taking me out of the field a little bit, saying things like, 'Why don't you stay in the office and catch up on stuff? You can go to the next meeting.' I was no longer just breaking out during my monthly cycle, I was breaking out all the time. Acne truly affected my career."

"Working in the beauty business for twenty years, I always had to look my best, and it took me hours to get ready for work. If my skin looked bad, be-

lieve me, my attitude was less than confident. And the person that hurt the most was me."

"People didn't give me as much respect as they could have because they thought I was much younger due to my acne."

"My son had acne so bad that the air force basically told him he couldn't be there."

"I really need clear skin because I've been working as a marine biologist so I get really dirty and wet out on the water. I can't wear makeup all the time to try and cover up my face. It's really horrible."

"Through college I worked with children, and it was very embarrassing. You know, kids don't keep in what they're thinking, and they were asking, 'Why does that lady have lumps all over her face? What's wrong with that lady?' "

"I turned down a promotion because it would have meant more dealing with the public, and I was so self-conscious about my acne that I didn't want to have to talk to strangers."

"My skin was so red and dry that flakes would literally fall off onto my desk. An inconsiderate coworker kept asking why I was doing nothing about it and kept drawing attention to my problem."

acne's emotional toll on teens

Few people survive adolescence unscarred or unscathed. Hormones are raging out of control, bodies are changing, cliques are forming at school, and once-trusted friends are becoming critical overnight. Taunting and teasing about skin-which, in fact, is usually worse than taunting and teasing about weight-go with the territory and have painful consequences. That Britney Spears was at one time called Zitney is no consolation to any young woman with pimples. Teenagers who want nothing more than to be like everyone else can be extremely sensitive to issues of peer acceptance and tend to be overly self-conscious regarding their appearance. It's especially critical to help all teens improve their self-esteem and self-confidence at this stage, because how they feel about themselves now often colors the rest of their lives. Teens

tend to be victims of myths and misinformation about acne, so reassuring them that treatment is not only possible but should be highly successful can go a long way toward alleviating emotional upsets.

"Adolescents are at the highest risk for mental disturbances from acne," Dr. Hilary Baldwin, a professor at the State University of New York in Brooklyn, claimed in an article entitled "The Interaction Between Acne Vulgaris and the Psyche," published in *Cutis* magazine in August 2002. "Physical and emotional upheavals, which naturally occur at this time of life, can magnify the consequences of acne lesions. Hormonal volatility, issues relating to body image, sexuality, and dating can blowout of proportion even with relatively minor acne lesions, resulting in long-term emotional and functional consequences. Studies have shown that 30 to 50 percent of adolescents have psychiatric disturbances related to their acne."

"Adolescence is such a tough, sensitive time anyway, and it's especially difficult for teens when the signs of puberty are so starkly evident on their faces," says Dr. Yvonne Thomas, a psychologist in Los Angeles specializing in treating issues related to body image. "It's like having a neon sign flashing 'Look what's wrong with me!'

"To make things worse, kids who are already self-conscious to begin with find themselves at the mercy of their peers, who can be incredibly critical, mean, and uncensored during those teen years," she adds. "How a person looks can permeate into how a person is treated. After all, these kids decide, 'Who wants to be seen with someone who's thought of as a loser, or whose skin is an embarrassment?'

Many dermatologists are engaged in research to quantitatively prove just how much acne affects teens. A report by the American Academy of Dermatology in March 2001 said that one out of ten teens surveyed nationwide believes that acne is one of the worst things about being a teen-and it makes them like themselves less. An American Medical Association telephone survey across America polled 1,000 acne sufferers, aged twelve to eighteen, about acne's effect on their quality of life. Nearly all of the teens worried about their complexion, with one-third or more indicating that they have felt anxious, embarrassed, or frustrated by their acne. Almost half felt that their complexion affected people's reactions toward them. They also thought that their complexion created an unattractive first impression, either socially or

during job interviews, leading to many missed opportunities. Still others claimed that they had few dates either because they were afraid of rejection or because they knew no one would want to ask them out.

Yet there is no need to suffer. Once the acne is treated and controlled, the negative feelings it has engendered no longer have reason to exist. For an example, see Helene's Story -- As Told by Her Mother.

family dynamics-Hit's all your fault, mom and dad"

Because there is such a stigma about acne, talking about it can be next to impossible. Teenagers suffering through the usual pains and confusion of adolescence are often not communicative about many issues with their parents,

HELENE'S STORY -- AS TOLD BY HER MOTHER

"My sixteen-year-old daughter is a beautiful person, but the acne became so bad she always wore turtlenecks, long-sleeved tops, and wore her long hair so it covered as much of her face and neck as possible. The acne was so bad on the sides of her neck, her back, her shoulders, and around the edge of her face that it left scarring, and the scarring on her neck was large, red, and pock-marked. We avoided dermatologists because of all the side effects of the drugs. We tried diet changes, vitamins, a Chinese herbalist, acupuncture, and special exercise programs. Finally, my husband and I decided we would take a loan out and send Helene to a plastic surgeon to laser the scars away. It was the most devastating doctor's visit of our lives. The surgeon was very kind and compassionate, and I saw how difficult it was for him to tell Helene that he would not have any success using lasers on her neck, as the damage would be greater than the scars that were already there. Laser surgery was her last hope, and the cry that came up from the depths of her soul cut into both the doctor and me. She felt she had nowhere left to go. We felt especially guilty because my husband and I both had acne as kids and felt responsible for passing it on to her, and now we didn't know what else to do for her.

"Luckily, we next decided to try Proactiv Solution. Three days later, Helene ran into the kitchen in tears, yelling and showing everyone the difference it made. Two months later, she told me she went swimming in a bathing suit and bought a tank top. I cried. It's so hard as a parent to see acne devastate your child's self-esteem and the ability to function completely in the opportunities life gives them.

"Helene has gotten back her life, and we're all ecstatic for her."

and parents in response often don't know how to talk to their teens. If parents sound even remotely critical, the result is frequently withdrawal by the teen.

Parents are the best judges of their children's emotional state. Yet because parents sometimes succumb to the same myths about acne that teens do, they can erroneously assume that acne is merely a normal part of being a teen. They think that their kids will simply grow out of it and that their kids should therefore stop complaining. We've had angry parents bring their teens to see us, and we understand that their anger comes from misinformation. We hear things like "He's not washing his face, I can tell." Or "He's not eating right, I'm sure." Or "She's not taking her medicine, just look at her face!" There's a lot of blame, which is unproductive. .

"The most important thing for parents to remember is that their kids are not feeling bad for nothing," Dr. Thomas explains. "Acne is happening to them. It's their reality. So it must be acknowledged."

The truth is, as you know, acne is a normal part of being a teen, but treatment should not be delayed or avoided in the hopes that someone will grow out of it. While waiting for acne to go away teens can feel tremendously lonely and embarrassed. Worse, they can scar irrevocably.

Parents need to find a manner in which to take charge of the situation without succumbing to anger or blame. (We'll talk about coping and communication between parents and teens beginning on page 87 in chapter 4.) Most parents who watch their kids suffer do so with an innate sense of helplessness that their beloved offspring is in pain. They blame themselves, feeling like bad parents. When their child is no longer making eye contact and holding his head down because he's suffering from a visible disfigurement, it's impossible not to feel responsible. So parents worry that they may be at fault, simply through an accident of genetics or because they don't know about successful acne treatments like ours, and this blame can deepen into shame, then rage. Part of the problem stems from this feeling that they have somehow failed their child.

Moreover, parents are often judged as harshly about their children's acne as their children are. It's a scenario familiar to any parent who has watched his child play team sports-there will always be the hockey dads and soccer moms who take these group activities much too seriously. A little boy is trying his best to hit a home run but strikes out. Instead of shouting encourage-

ment, parents look at the little boy's dad, as if thinking, "Why haven't you spent the time throwing balls to your kid so he's a better player? If you were a *better parent*, your kid would be better. Better at sports. And better at having clear skin."

Feeling such peer pressure can be as upsetting for adults as it is for their kids. Much of this is a projected fear-based reaction. As in, "If sixteen-year-old Jenny's skin is so bad, my sixteen-year-old's skin can suddenly become that bad, too."

High-achieving parents sometimes set unrealistic goals for their children as well. "Perfectionist parents can't stand any flaws in either themselves or their children, whom they perceive to be extensions of themselves," explains Dr. Thomas. "They need to make an effort to separate their children's lives from their own, so that instead of focusing on 'Susie's acne makes me look bad' they can instead deal with 'What is this doing to my child?'"

Once treatment begins, they must accept that acne didn't happen overnight, so successful treatment is not going to happen overnight, either. Nagging won't help. Compliance is a common issue between parents and teens, especially with boys. Although parents recognize that treatment has to be a priority for the teen, sometimes it becomes a power play between the parent and the teen, who wants to assert his or her independence. It is often quite difficult to force teens to do anything, even when it's clearly intended to help the situation. Parents then respond with anger and frustration. When this happens, teens usually feel more ashamed and isolated than ever.

Acne can also create tensions within the entire family. When parents are embarrassed and angry, they tend to lash out. Siblings are usually fond of teasing and name-calling. In addition, younger siblings who see an older sibling suffer understandably worry that the same situation is going to happen to them. Unless the teen's acne is addressed compassionately and without blame, these tensions will continue to escalate, causing hurt to all involved.

acne's emotional toll on adults

Not even movie stars are exempt from the ravages of acne. It was widely reported that the lovely actress Cameron Diaz did not attend the London premiere of *Gangs of New York*, the film in which she starred, because her

acne had flared up. "I have a serious pimple problem," she told *Vanity Fair* magazine.

Those with adult-onset acne are dealing with a condition they've never experienced before. Although adults may be more adept at camouflaging the pimples, they often feel stigmatized with what is erroneously perceived as a teenage disease. This is reinforced when they go to the drugstore for over-the-counter help, only to discover that nearly all the products are specifically geared to teen acne. Because adults often don't know where to turn for advice and are too mortified to talk about it with their friends or family, acne can leave them deeply ashamed. They withdraw, often making dramatic changes in every aspect of their lives. Professionally, their job performance can be hindered; personally, their relationships can suffer. We've had female patients who've admitted having problems establishing long-term relationships with men because of acne. They avoided putting themselves into intimate situations because they were terrified that a man might see them without makeup covering up their blemishes.

Adults whose teen acne has cleared up may suffer from residual emotional effects, which they often find too painful to acknowledge. "I've had adult patients who still see themselves as acne sufferers. The torment they endured as teens persists for years, if not decades," Dr. Thomas told us. "They simply can't let go of either the pain or the gnawing insecurities that they are still somehow unlikeable or unlovable because they once had acne. Sometimes these people are very successful professionally and have a happy family life, but inside their confidence is still lacking. Others thwart themselves because they are unable to find the self-confidence that had been shattered due to acne.

"I refer to this as the 'head/heart split,' where a person's thoughts are not congruent with their emotions," Dr. Thomas adds. "People who once had acne may logically know that their pimples are gone and their skin is now flawless, but they constantly berate themselves as still being losers."

This can be particularly difficult for those adults with permanent scarring, as well as for those adults who then watch their children grow and develop acne. With scars, the pimples are gone, but the past is still written on your face. This is a daily reminder of acne pain and can instill a lack of confidence as permanent as the scars themselves. If you have children, you can sometimes

unwittingly project your own unforgotten shame onto your children by becoming unreasonably angry at them when their acne worsens. Should that happen, counseling may help defuse some of the rage.

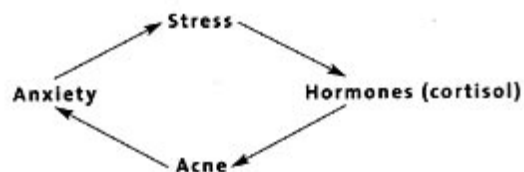
No one should have his or her goals diminished by the shame and embarrassment engendered by acne. And with education and effective treatment, such as the Rodan and Fields Approach, no one has to.

acne and stress

Stress in life is unavoidable; it's part of the human condition. All of us suffer from varying degrees of emotional stress throughout our lives and find that our ability to manage it varies with each new situation. Sometimes stress can actually be a positive force in helping to effect much-needed changes. But for those with acne, stress is one of the cofactors that can exacerbate an already tough situation. On its own, stress cannot cause acne, but it can certainly make it worse. And if you're already feeling overwhelmed, the last thing you need is more pimples!

Why do pimples form when you're stressed? Most likely because of the higher blood levels of androgens and hormones called glucocorticoids secreted by the adrenal glands during periods of psychological stress. Androgens and hormones cause pimples by overstimulating the sebaceous glands.

the vicious cycle of stress



"Disorders characterized by demonstrable physical pathology that can be worsened by emotional stress are termed psychophysiological disorders," Dr. Koo says. This category can include such conditions as peptic ulcer disease, migraine headaches, and Crohn's disease. According to Dr. Koo, "It is generally accepted that acne probably falls into this category as well since patients fre-

quently complain of acne flares when they experience frustration, stress, or anxiety. For example, college students often report exacerbation of their acne during exam periods. From interviews with 4,576 patients with various dermatological problems, 55.3 percent of those with acne reported a close chronological association between exacerbation of their condition and episodes of emotional stress." Dr. Koo also found that it took only two days after the onset of emotional stress for acne to worsen.

Most studies linking acne flares to stress have been anecdotal, meaning they were not based on controlled scientific studies. However, a study by the department of dermatology at the Stanford University School of Medicine published in the *Archives of Dermatology* in 2003 was undertaken to further prove a link between worsening acne and stress. Their findings were the same as Dr. Koo's. In this study, students with acne were tracked as they studied for exams, and it was found that the subjects who had the greatest increases in stress during exam periods also had the greatest exacerbations of acne severity. "Changes in acne severity correlate highly with increasing stress, suggesting emotional stress from external sources may have a significant influence on acne," the authors claim. Ironically, during this high-stress period, students were so busy worrying about their studies that they were less concerned with their appearance.

We also know that stress slows down wound healing, sometimes by up to 40 percent. Which means that stress can not only worsen acne but can also cause acne to persist longer on your face or body. Just what you need!

"I work full time and am also toward the end of getting my master's degree," Lucy, one of our patients, told us. "On the nights I have class I wear my makeup all day, and I know I'm constantly touching my face while sitting there during class. Plus, I am always stressed. I find I always break out the next day without fail! It's so predictable I actually have to laugh."

Lucy is savvy enough to be able to laugh. And she knows that stress *can* be managed and diminished. For our unique system of stress-busting and therefore acne-busting techniques, see page 98 in the next chapter.

when picking becomes compulsive

Picking goes hand in hand with acne. (For photographic examples, go to www.unblemished.com.) There's a bump on your face, and you want to make

it go away. This is a perfectly natural response. Those patients with an innate perfectionist streak can sometimes be the worst pickers, because they find themselves being driven crazy by blemishes.

"I counted the pimples on my face one day and had twenty-four huge cysts that were bulging and full of pus, so I picked and squeezed them," Wendy, age twenty-five, told us. "My family was totally grossed out. I always had a problem with picking. Now that my acne's being treated, I don't have anything to pick, which is amazing! I was sure that the picking would never stop. Now I don't have to worry about it anymore."

Another patient ruled by her need to pick was Samantha, a stunning woman of thirty-five. For her, what started as a little pimple turned into a monster-sized crater leaving untreatable scars. "I had to change a million restaurant reservations because of lighting and change seating arrangements at dinner parties when my skin was bad," she told us. "And I was accused of being completely crazy for picking nonstop in the desperate hope that I could somehow battle this problem. But I kept saying that I wasn't crazy! That if I didn't get pimples I wouldn't pick! People kept looking at me, because I kept picking and digging, hiding in front of the magnifying mirror in the bathroom first thing in the morning, which was a consuming nightmare. I went to every famous facialist in the world and countless dermatologists, and it was interfering with my life to such an extent that it was a primary obsessive-compulsive fixation. But I maintained all along that if there was something that would never allow a blemish to appear, there would be no issue at hand and nothing to battle."

Samantha was suffering from what is called *acne excoriée des jeunes filles*. *Jeune filles* means young girls in French, but we've found that most who have this condition are adult women. "*Acne excoriée* is an example of a more serious interplay between a primary psychiatric disorder and acne," Dr. Koo says. "The frequent end result is severe disfigurement from scarring. It is important to recognize that the diagnosis of *acne excoriée* refers only to the behavioral manifestation of picking acne lesions."

When people can't stop themselves from picking, *acne excoriée* can become an obsessive-compulsive disorder. "Obsessive-compulsive patients are usually aware that they should avoid their picking and that their behavior will cause damage to their skin," Dr. Koo adds. "However, in trying to inhibit their

destructive behavior, they instead experience a steady increase in a 'compulsive urge,' which typically makes them restless and ill at ease the longer they resist picking. Eventually, their motivation to stop their behavior is overwhelmed by the intensity of their urge to pick."

Because scarring from *acne excoriée* can be severe, anyone suffering from it should see a therapist for appropriate treatment. Medications, such as certain antidepressants, can help. Dr. Koo has found that hypnosis can help, too. In one study, whenever a patient wanted to pick her face, she was instructed to remember the word "scar" and refrain from picking by saying "scar" instead. She was then able to stop picking.

Acne affects us all psychologically, whether we are among the 10 percent of people who suffer with it at some point in our lives or have loved ones who do. The stories from patients as well as the insights from the experts remind us that we are not alone with our hurt. Recognition of the emotional toll acne takes on our lives is the first step that propels us to take action, and by being proactive and taking action we can fix the visible manifestations of acne in order to heal the more insidious psychological devastation acne can wreak.

adults helping themselves cope with acne

Acne's effects can linger long into adulthood. Or acne can begin after the teen years are long gone. The key point is to learn to become proactive and create a balanced life to help you cope with what you perceive as flaws. Whatever takes the focus away from acne and its effects will serve to strengthen you -- body, mind, and soul.

Treat Your Acne Proactively

If your self-esteem is at an all-time low because of acne, the mere thought of trying a new treatment after so many other treatments may have failed can be difficult, and we certainly understand why. People who have suffered with acne for years have often seen their lives diminish in every respect. When you feel that you are always being judged and when you are not allowed to be yourself because of the state of your skin, it's almost impossible not to feel victimized.

No matter how old you are or how long you have had acne, as soon as blemishes begin to go away, self-esteem is immeasurably improved. "I feel that after a year of using Proactiv Solution, it's the first time in my sixty years that I really feel confident that my skin is going to be okay from week to week, and month to month," a lovely woman named Laura told us. "I never had a serious acne problem, but it was enough to make me uncomfortable. When you're not happy within yourself because you don't feel that you look your best, it just does something to you. I think it's particularly nice for more mature women to realize that we have skin problems and something can be done about them."

Emotional Support Is Key for Adults, Too

Adults need a safe haven to talk about acne as much as teenagers do. But even adults who have a built-in support system from spouses, family members, and sympathetic friends and colleagues can still be devastated by acne. "I used to ask my husband 'How can you love me with this face of mine, with all this terrible looking stuff?' And he didn't have much to say other than 'I just love you.' But I could never understand how he could love me," admits forty-year-old Lori.

Often adults, particularly women, are so embarrassed by their skin that

LISTEN TO TEENS

Ironically, acne is one disease where adults can get valuable advice from teenagers, as our patient Carl realized. "I'm a youth pastor," Carl told us. "I work with kids full time, and I've also suffered with adult cystic acne for the last ten years, starting when I was thirty. All of a sudden, I had terrible trouble with my skin. I went through Accutane and several other pretty heavy-duty medications to control it, and it went away for a while but then always came back.

"Then I noticed a couple of kids in my youth group with really bad skin suddenly make a dramatic turnaround-their skin was soft and clear. I asked them what they were using, and they said the Rodan and Fields Approach. I thought, 'What have I got to lose? I might as well give it a shot.' I started the program, and my face completely cleared in ten days. I mean not a zit, not a mark, and even some of the old stuff, which had been discolored and hadn't gone away, disappeared. I'm elated!"

they spend countless hours trying to cover up their blemishes and avoiding situations that might highlight their skin. Counseling and online support groups can be as helpful for these adults as they are for teens. Arming yourself with knowledge is equally beneficial. "I'd been ashamed for a really long time about something that I didn't feel I had any control over," a thirty-five-year-old patient explained. "Once I understood what was going on and was able to take charge of it, I could move forward with a treatment plan."

Successive Approximation

For those who have given up, as many do-especially adults who have resigned themselves to a lifetime of acne-it may be difficult to start a new treatment program. Dr. Yvonne Thomas, a Los Angeles psychologist specializing in body-image issues, suggests a strategy we like to call Successive Approximation, which is in essence a series of small steps toward the complete healing of your acne.

- Don't feel overwhelmed. This problem is not insurmountable. You can conquer it;
- Give yourself rewards every small step of the way;
- Carve out time each day to work on healing your acne.

Taking Time for Yourself

Many adults are so busy juggling work and home responsibilities that they simply don't find the time to take care of themselves. They ignore their acne and tell themselves it can't be helped. Yet a skin-care regimen should quickly become a regular component of your daily routine, as important as eating well, sleeping well, and managing all the hectic aspects of your life. Without it, your skin will suffer-and you will suffer. Looking after your skin is not a luxury. It's a necessity.

We hope that the Rodan and Fields Stress-Busting Program, beginning on page 98, can provide useful tips on how you can find the time to make your life happier, healthier, and more productive. As one patient told us, "My life is still full of stress, but thanks to your tips, I feel so much better about dealing with my life that acne just doesn't faze me anymore."

when professional counseling can help

The overwhelming majority of our patients suffering from decreased self-esteem, anxiety, and depression find that their worries and pain go away when their acne is treated properly. Some patients, though, need to be able to talk about these worries. Finding a sympathetic therapist or support group can be tremendously helpful. Counseling can also help educate patients and dispel the myths about acne that cause endless self-blame, encourage compliance with a treatment program to maximize its effectiveness, and set realistic expectations for immediate and future goals.

"It is a fallacy that therapy is only for the 'weak' or the 'crazy,' " Dr. Thomas told us. "I've found that the most healthy and emotionally stable people are the ones with a sense of self-esteem strong enough to admit that they have issues, and they know they can do the work necessary to bring them more happiness and peace within themselves."

Therapy for Teen Acne Sufferers

It may be difficult to convince a teen that counseling can be a good idea, but many teens secretly are relieved once they find a safe haven in which to discuss distress about their acne and other issues. For parents new to the thera-

peutic process, it may be helpful to interview therapists first to find one sympathetic and encouraging about getting their teen to open up about acne issues. Parents should also acknowledge to their teen that they know these sessions are private.

Therapy for the Parents of Teen Acne Sufferers

Therapy is very useful for parents who have trouble talking to their teens about acne and grow increasingly angry and resentful about acne's presence in their lives. They need to explore where their anger is coming from and, potentially, their sense of shame. It is only natural for the millions of parents who suffered from acne themselves to once again get those terrible feelings of inadequacy and mortification they themselves may not have resolved.

"Parents who are angry at their kids for having acne are often projecting their own defensive subconscious," Dr. Thomas says. "I'd suggest counseling for any parent with an out-of-proportion, angry response to acne. They can learn how to separate their own needs and instinctive responses to criticism from their teen's needs. Parents can replace their teen's fears of being judged with the proper empathetic response. Instead of shouting, 'Why can't you do something about your face?' a parent can calmly say, 'I know you are suffering. What can we do together to fix it?' "

Therapy for Adult Acne Sufferers

For adults who are devastated by pimples, especially those with adult-onset acne, therapy can help diffuse anger and confusion. It can also aid those who no longer have acne but still perceive themselves as losers because they were teased and tormented as teens. Acne sufferers often grow up to be intensely self-critical. "They fear that if someone gets close enough to know 'the real me'--in essence, 'to see me'--they'll 'see' the person they used to be," Dr. Thomas says. "The 'ugly one' or whatever label was pinned on the person with acne."

In addition, we've also found that a very small minority of both teen and adult acne sufferers fall into the category of self-saboteurs. They may be sabotaging their treatment, by noncompliance or sporadic compliance, because they are afraid of success, or because they are depressed and feel hopeless, or because they are used to the negative attention they receive with their acne.

WARNING SIGNS OF DEPRESSION AND SOCIAL PHOBIA

If depression and social phobia in acne sufferers persist, professional counseling should be sought. It should also be considered for cases of severe, compulsive picking, as this can lead to permanent, disfiguring scarring.

Parents should pay careful attention and seek professional advice if there are any marked changes in their teen's behavior. Adults should be able to recognize these warnings in themselves. These changes may include:

- abnormal sleep patterns, either insomnia or hypersomnia (too much sleeping)
 - delinquent behavior, such as drinking or drug use
 - deterioration in academic or job performance
 - eating disorders
 - lethargy
 - loss of concentration
 - mood swings
 - spontaneous crying spells
 - truancy
 - wanting to be left alone
 - withdrawal from usual social or work activities
-

We believe that the greatest success in life sometimes comes from taking the greatest risk--not a dangerous risk but a risk akin to attaining far-reaching goals. Some people just need a little more encouragement to be able to achieve those goals and dreams. Others may suffer from emotional trauma and need professional help to overcome it.

the rodan and fields stress-busting program

If you get up in the morning, look in the mirror, and see a mess on your face, you feel stressed. Your heart rate goes up, and you feel discouraged because you've got something unpleasant to deal with before you've even had your coffee. Acne robs you of the simple pleasure of facing each day without worrying about your appearance.

Stress and acne can become a vicious cycle. Mental picking is like zit picking: Once you start, it can be very difficult to stop, especially when you know

that stress triggers flare-ups of blemishes. Then when your acne worsens you're even more stressed out. The key is to be able to break the cycle. And it can be done.

The best way to manage the stress created by acne is to start an effective treatment program. Your sense of control over a previously uncontrollable situation and your sense of relief will be wonderfully palpable. Life can and will change. The next step is to manage the stress in your life that can aggravate your acne by following our stress-busting program!

First, Treat Stress Systematically

We were once given some great advice by a colleague about dealing with life's complicated situations in a systematic manner. This colleague was a surgeon. Early in his surgical career, during a routine operation, he saw his patient bleeding profusely as soon as he put scalpel to skin.

"My first reaction was to think, 'Aargh! Call a doctor!' " he told us with a laugh. "And then I realized, hey, wait a minute, I *am* the doctor! Oh, no, the nurse is looking at me. I better do something and do it right now.

"And then my training kicked in. Instead of panicking, I approached the situation systematically. First, I applied pressure over one area, then I asked my nurse to put the gauze in another place to get it dry. I started in one spot, controlled the bleeding there, then moved on to the next spot. I kept going until the situation was under control. Step by step, until the bleeding stopped."

SIGNS YOU'RE UNDER STRESS

- **avoidance of problems or people**
 - **binge eating**
 - **biting your nails**
 - **drinking more alcohol**
 - **getting upset by things that normally don't bother you**
 - **losing your appetite**
 - **losing your temper more easily**
 - **picking at your skin**
 - **pulling at your hair**
 - **sleep disturbances**
-

This same approach works effectively for stress. You can learn to manage your stress one step at a time, as proactively as you will learn to manage your acne.

Learning to Let Go

No one can fix all the stress in life. However, people who have a tendency to be either caretakers or ultra responsible often think they are the only ones who can fix things. Learning to let go of what isn't your responsibility can be a huge relief and an automatic stress-buster.

If you have stressors that are out of your control, such as your commute to work, your mother-in-law's temper, your husband's increased workload, or your boss's bad breath, try to let them go. Easier said than done, we know! But if you learn to let go of what you can't control, you can take charge of what you can control. What can you realistically change? Certainly not your mother-in-law's temper, but if your job is untenable, you can take action by beginning in earnest the search for a new job.

Once you identify which stressors trigger your acne, paradoxically you can then relax about them. If you have an important exam coming up and you're nervous that your acne is going to flare, well, guess what? The acne is going to subside when the exam is over. At this moment in time, studying is more important than worrying about pimples. Try squeezing a small rubber ball instead of picking your face!

Changing Gears

If you're doing something to fix a problem and it's not working, don't give up. Change gears and try another approach. When we were in the development stage of Proactiv Solution, we often felt like rats in a maze, but every time we came up against another wall, we said, "Fine, okay. Let's try something else. We're not going to give up." No matter how much criticism we heard, we were persistent. We believed in what we were doing, and we weren't going to let naysayers tell us that our idea wasn't worthwhile. If we'd listened to them, we never would have achieved the end results we were after. We would have quit a long time ago!

Treating Stress Proactively

Treating stress proactively means that you develop a strategy to relieve the tough times *before* they happen or *while* they're happening. This will give you a measure of control and comfort, even when your knees are knocking! For example, when you know you're going to be facing a particularly difficult week--let's say you have to give a presentation at work before a roomful of strangers--and you're worried about your acne, use a treatment mask for the five days leading up to that week. Or, if you're taking antibiotics prescribed by your dermatologist, see if you can temporarily increase the dose.

Instant Stress-Busters

We like the idea of having an acne-buddy, someone with whom you can always talk about your skin's appearance, in confidence when you feel down. Other instant stress-busters include:

- setting aside time to relax in a calm, dark, quiet room;
- stretching for a few minutes;
- practicing deep breathing (see How to Breathe Deeply);
- planning a reward for yourself--a massage, a bouquet of flowers, or a luxurious piece of chocolate--once the stressful time is over;
- planning a vacation, even if that vacation may be a year away;
- cutting back on caffeine or other stimulants if they hype you up too much;
- exercising even just a few minutes every day;
- completing a task that provides instant satisfaction, such as cleaning out a desk or kitchen drawer (having your work or kitchen area free of clutter automatically lessens the feelings of being overwhelmed by your surroundings);
- scheduling a pep talk with someone who loves you;
- turning off the TV, especially the late-night news, which can be distressing.

Get Enough Sleep--The Pre sleep Purge

Adequate, refreshing sleep is crucial to everyone's overall well-being, yet the overwhelming majority of Americans of all ages are chronically sleep-deprived. A recent study showed that getting inadequate sleep can be as

HOW TO BREATHE DEEPLY

Most people breathe improperly, taking shallow breaths through their noses into the top of their lungs. Deep breathing comes from the diaphragm, which is located just above your stomach. If you watch a baby breathe, you'll see how he breathes in naturally from the diaphragm. You can find your diaphragm by placing your hands on your belly, then breathing in deeply. You should feel and see your hands move as the diaphragm expands as you inhale.

To take effective deep breaths:

- inhale through your nose for a count of three
- hold this breath for a count of three
- exhale slowly through your nose for a count of three

Deep breathing usually has an instant calming effect. If you're about to lose your cool, try placing your hands on your belly and consciously deep breathing for several minutes.

We also suggest taking yoga classes or using yoga videos to help you learn new ways to breathe for stress relief.

stressful as not getting any. It's hard to respond properly to any difficult situation when you're too tired to think straight!

Creating sleep rituals can help promote a healthy night's rest. Dr. Thomas has created a unique ritual called the pre sleep purge. Being able to break the worry cycle can relieve anxiety and break the cycle of obsessive mental picking. And for those who have no trouble falling asleep but find themselves waking up in the middle of the night, practicing the purge then is just as effective.

1. Put a piece of paper and a pen right near your bed. Lie down with the lights off and no distracting noises. Close your eyes. Begin your deep breathing. Continue deep breathing for five minutes to clear your head.

2. Keep deep breathing with your eyes closed. Go over what you're feeling and why. Are you devastated because of your acne? Why? Do you wish you could get rid of it? How? This is your time to acknowledge whatever is bothering you.

3. Open your eyes. Turn the lights on. Immediately write down all the thoughts that just ran through your head. Then take the paper *out* of the bed

room. Put it somewhere else. Or you can shred it, burn it, or throw it in the trash, if you like.

This purging, combined with the deep breathing, helps you dissociate your troubling thoughts from yourself. By taking them away from where you sleep, you will stop those thoughts from disrupting your much-needed rest.

(For more tips to ensure a healthy night's rest, see page 339 in chapter 16.)

Make a Stress List

A stress list is a terrific way to prioritize what's going on in your life. At a time when no one is going to interrupt you, sit down with several pieces of paper or a nice new notebook or at your computer, and draw up a list of *all* the things that bother you and trigger your stress. Nothing is too small or trivial. Organize this list however you like. Once it's done, rearrange it on a scale ranging from small stressors to supersize stressors. Figure out which are the stressors you can control and which you can't. Then ask yourself "Which of the stressors I can control will I address first?" Some people like to start with the small stressors, then work up to the supersize stressors. Others like to start at the top and work their way down.

Every month reexamine your stress list. See what's changed. Then cross it off the list. Now you can tackle something else more crucial to your life.

Whether you start small or tackle a supersize stressor first, you will quickly realize that ridding yourself of any kind of stress is absolutely empowering.

Keep a Stress Journal

In addition to making a stress list, we've found that the act of regularly writing things down often mitigates stress. Keeping a stress journal gives you a safe place to purge that volcano of stress building up inside you before it has a chance to blow. It gets stress out of your system so you don't keep rehashing it. Your stress collected in journal form can provide a wonderful resource when you are ready to evaluate the stressors in your life.

Your stress journal is intensely personal and private. It is completely uncensored and not for sharing. You can write in your stress journal every day, once a month, or as often as you like. Certainly don't create more stress for yourself by trying to write in it every day if you know you won't write in it consistently. Some people like to jot things down all the time, and some people are just as

happy writing sporadically. Having your stress journal available to you when you need it most is what's important. That way, if someone upsets you with a callous remark about your acne, you can pull out your journal and write that person a letter. You're not going to send it, of course. Instead, reread it the next day. Then decide whether you'll keep it, delete it, shred it, or burn it in the sink. If you choose to shred or burn it, enjoy watching your anger dissipate.

Find Time to Exercise

Regular exercise is crucial for everyone's health and well-being. (We'll discuss this more in chapter 16.) It strengthens your cardiovascular system, improves sleep, gives you more energy, and stimulates the chemicals in your brain that give you a sense of contentment. Just be sure to clean your skin completely afterwards, however, as sitting around in sweaty clothing can exacerbate acne.

If your life truly is overfull with responsibilities at the moment, don't create more stress by worrying about finding a consistent time to exercise. Instead, sneak exercise into your schedule. Park your car farther away from the office or the supermarket. Use the stairs instead of the elevator. Attack the weeds in the garden with a vengeance! Remember that every activity that raises your heart rate can improve your health and well-being.

the healing power of successful treatment

We want to end this chapter with comments from people whose lives were transformed once they started using the Rodan and Fields Approach. So many of these comments have a similar theme: "You've given me my life back!" If you or someone you love has acne, we hope you will soon rejoice in a similar transformation. Once you begin to be proactive, you should never have to suffer from acne again.

"Within five days of starting the program, my husband told me that I looked more beautiful than ever. And it almost made me cry because he never even once told me I was beautiful. It was a miracle to hear something like that. I feel happier than ever."

"I'm more focused at school. I've cut twelve inches off my hair, and I've lost a lot of weight. I don't have to hide anymore."

"Now I can finally go out with my teenage daughter and know that she feels good about herself. She's made lots of friends. Her confidence level has been tremendous. I can't even tell you how much that is worth to me. When I consider what the Rodan and Fields Approach has done not only for her face but for her emotionally, I'm just so happy. It's like I got my child back."

"At thirty-seven, I have three children. My kids, not to mention my customers and coworkers, have noticed a difference in my skin and my attitude. I'm so much more productive at work. I look people in the eye now instead of looking at the ground. I know my teenage daughters won't have to go through the anguish and pain I went through. I can't believe I found something that works!"

"I wasn't able to get a modeling contract as a teen because the acne on my face was so bad that they'd have to airbrush every picture ever taken of me, and it just wasn't worth it to my agency. I had the height, the looks, and the rest of the skin on my body was gorgeous. I was devastated and had really given up until I spent the night at the house of a friend who used Proactiv Solution. She had never seen me before without the makeup I wore, which was thick enough to cover the texture of the acne. She said, 'Just try it.' I did, and the next day most of the little bumps were gone. I couldn't believe it."

"After a year and a half I have a modeling contract, and I'm doing very well. When my agent describes me to a potential client, the first thing he says is, 'Her skin is absolutely gorgeous.' Nothing makes me happier than to hear that."

"For the first time in my life since I was a little girl, I am able to wake up and not have to look at my face in the mirror and wonder, 'What kind of strategy do I have to use today with my makeup to hide that spot?' My husband is looking at me differently. He's actually touching my face, which before I always used to wince about because I was afraid he would feel one of my

bumps. Now my whole attitude has changed. You've given me my life back at age thirty-four."

"My twenty-nine-year-old brother would never admit to using what he called a 'feminine product: but after I convinced him to try my Rodan and Fields Approach-which was hard, by the way-the change in his skin was very visible. After two weeks, the marks on his back and shoulders disappeared, and he was just so happy and much more self-confident. Now I can't get him to keep his shirt on!"

"When I was twenty I started getting acne. Worse, I was in school for skin care to get my aesthetician license, and there I was with this horrible face. I would go to class, and everybody would try to talk to me about what I should do and use and this and that, and I would get very upset and defensive.

"After I started using the Rodan and Fields Approach, my acne went away. Now that I'm starting my career, I realize that my acne was a blessing in disguise-because now I can empathize with people who have the same problem. Both the acne and your method for controlling it have helped me very much."