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A CONSIDERED approach

As beauty industry professionals your clients look to you for advice and treatments that deliver on the promise of desired improvements over time. Cosmetic dermatologist, **Dr Adam Sheridan**, MBBS FACD FACMS FAAFPS, shares his approach.



New Year's Resolutions

Esteemed reader, your eyes do not deceive you. A New Year is indeed upon us. Fret not over past and recent indiscretions, for there is no better time than now to establish new habits to deliver positive change over the year to come. A disciplined approach will ensure that the face which greets you in the mirror this time next year – in but the blink of an eye. Contact will be even healthier and happier, despite the passage of a further 12 months.

In considering this, we like to structure our approach as follows: 'recovery', 'mindful rehabilitation' and 'enlightened living'.

'Recovery'

The festive season is a favourite time of year for most people, and understandably so. An exciting blur of family, friends, travel and new experiences, it is a time to revel in rewards hard won from the year past; rich and varied foods, alcohol, travel, sunshine and other guilty but pleasurable 'regrets'. Add to the mix a determination to make the most of every glorious minute, even after midnight (aka sleep deprivation), and the spice of excitement (aka hormonal and oxidative stress) – and it is a wonder we don't emerge blinking in the January light a tad more battle-scarred and depleted.

Skin-wise, the immediate past evils that need addressing are usually dehydration from excess alcohol and air travel, sunburn, and irritation from inevitable lapses in one's usual skin care regime, such as leaving make-up on overnight and excessive exfoliation and cosmetic treatments to achieve that extra pop for the 10th night out in a row...

In the short term it is good to return one's external focus to gentle cleansing, light but regular moisturising (especially after showering), daily broad spectrum sun protection (even when indoors) and nightly 'skin breaks' – i.e. time spent make-up free in the evenings, and avoidance of harsh and overly- frequent exfoliation and related treatments. Toners are a perennial no-no in the author's opinion.

Well-selected facials with an emphasis on rescuing antioxidants and soothing ingredients such as green tea, safflower oil, oatmeal and aloe are helpful. Heavy oils are to be avoided, especially in the heat of summer, given their tendency to congest the skin.

Remember to provide your skin with the essential building blocks for recovery through an inward refocus on a healthy balanced diet, adequate clear fluid intake, and avoidance of alcohol, processed meats and sugary foods.

Recognise too, the impact that your mental state has upon your skin and general health. Diving straight back into chaotic work and social lives, with no time spent in skin and spiritual 'ICU' is a recipe for longer term pain. You can only go to the well so many times, and the January to February period is an excellent time to plan for an a gentle easing back into life. Plus you will thank yourself for your healthy glow on Valentine's Day!

Top tips for skin recovery:

1. Carry a water bottle with the mls marked on the side so you can accurately record your daily intake
2. Store moisturiser, hand cream and lip balm at work or in the car to allow for re-application as needed
3. Remove your make-up and moisturise as soon as you get home from work, rather than waiting for just before bed time when it is tempting to leave it on 'just this once'.

'Mindful rehabilitation'

This is where the hard work is done and the groundwork laid for the success to follow. This is also where most of us come unstuck. It can all seem so boring and repetitive. Besides, haven't we all heard this advice before? Familiarity breeds contempt.

Lao Tzu (600BC) probably didn't expect he would eventually feature in a beauty magazine, but his saying that 'even the longest journey begins with a single step' rings as true in skin clinics today as it did in Ancient China. Change arises from action, and even the smallest initial step, as long as it is made with positive intent, then repeated once more, and again, is powerful.

Don't get overly caught up and paralysed for fear of not doing everything correctly each day. Focus simply on doing most things right on most days, and you will soon appreciate the positive compounding effect this will have on your skin and health.

Sleep early and well, continue to eat a varied and balanced diet and drink pure water and teas. Minimise daily exposure to known ubiquitous evils such as alcohol, cigarettes, excessive ultraviolet light and stress. Remember that sunlight can penetrate cloud cover and window glass, and there is increasing evidence of the negative effect of UV emanating from the various computer and 'smart' screens that surround us for most of our daily life. Wear broad spectrum UVA/UVB 50+ sunscreen even if indoors in Hobart and Melbourne; not just out on the beach at Glenelg and Bondi.

Top tips for skin rehab:

1. An hour of sleep before midnight is worth two hours after Cinderella has left the ball.
2. Eliminate one bad habit a month. Focussing on one at a time increases your chance of success.
3. Consider shielding your car and office windows with UVA/UVB protective film, especially if you enjoy climate control, which can be deceptive as to how harsh the elements truly are.

'Enlightened living'

The start of a new year is the time to give thanks for being alive and possessing the freedom to make positive choices for one's health and the year ahead.

Make an active commitment to increase your positive actions and to reduce the ongoing negatives. Enact these commitments repeatedly and ASAP to lock in the new habit. Have long-term goals in mind and write them down. Tell someone else so you remain accountable.

Consider supplements high in antioxidants, vitamins A, C and E, Omega 3, and consider anti-methylation agents. These choices will protect your DNA – literally your life code.

Topical retinoids, DNA repair and stem cell creams are all helpful when properly selected. Prescription-strength agents deliver the best results. As these constituents are not safe during pregnancy, they are therefore not available in sufficient potency within cosmetic products.

Investment in a body length mirror is helpful, given the tendency to over-focus upon the face, at the expense of our body habitus. At the same time, discard that magnified facial mirror which makes mountains of mole hills.

Be honest with yourself when you strip down to assess your weight and posture; in both animation and repose. The politically correct nature of the world may shield our feelings but means that often only an honest and caring doctor, practitioner or close family and friends will give you straight feedback if you don't yourself. Now is the time to chart your ideal weight and develop a mental image of where your wish to end up at the end of the year. Set yourself healthy

targets for each season of the year and monitor your progress honestly throughout.

Your local doctor, dermatologist (dermcoll.edu.au) and Integrative medicine specialist (www.a5m.net) can help you determine further skin and general health targets and chart a course for you to arrive there before the tinsel shines and the champagne pops again!

Top tips for enlightened living:

1. Plan your main meal for the day well in advance, when you are not rushed or hungry. You are less likely to give in to food that prioritises instant gratification over your health.
2. Exercise early in the day so that this essential lifetime activity is not an afterthought that 'falls off' the end of your list when life gets busy.
3. Wash your hands regularly and avoid excessive touching of your face – this reduces transfer of environmental toxins and infective agents.
4. Call to book your health maintenance GP appointments and specialist dermatologist skin checks etc., three months or more in advance. You will usually get the doctor and appointment time you wish, and you can block the time off in your diary well in advance, allowing you to move other commitments around this. Turning up for your health is where it all starts. ■

Dr Sheridan is a Fellow of the Australasian Academy of Facial Plastic Surgery (AAFPS). For more information visit aafps.com.au or sdsl.com.au



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