



Emotional AGEING

*Negative emotions can affect the skin
– here's how to put on a happy face*

Think back to when your skin looked its absolute best. Chances are it wasn't post-breakup or during a particularly sleepless, stress-filled week at work. That elusive holiday glow? It's not just vitamin D or finding the mental capacity to grapple with a face mask, it's your fascia unfurling and your body releasing the year's built-up stress.

As neurocosmetics move from niche to mainstream, research is confirming what we've long suspected: our emotions are etched into our skin. Trend forecasting agency WGSN predicts that, by 2026, skin will be seen as an outer reflection of our inner emotional state, ushering in a new era of "emotional beauty". From oxytocin-boosting skincare to functional fragrances, the beauty industry is already racing to support the skin-brain connection. But beyond the stress spots and redness flare-ups lies a deeper question:

can emotions actually influence how we age?

'Skin damage sets in with long-term or chronic stress'

FACE FACTS

"Most people don't realise the impact that our psychological health can have on our skin," says Dr Alia Ahmed (aka @the_psychodermatologist). "Emotional

distress triggers cortisol, which weakens the immune system leaving skin less able to defend itself, as well as disrupting the skin barrier."

Dr Alia notes that, although short-term stress (such as feeling anxious before a presentation) can cause temporary issues such as flushing, the damage really sets in with long-term or chronic stress, with ongoing inflammation showing up as conditions such as psoriasis, eczema and even premature ageing, thanks to collagen breakdown and DNA damage.

THE AGE OF EMOTION

"Emotional skin ageing" describes how negative emotions accelerate the ageing process, quite literally adding years to our faces. Stress-driven habits (such as drinking or biscuit-bingeing), as well as restricted sleep, offer a double whammy of "inflamm-ageing" and can affect the aesthetic facial appearance, says Elise Letang, head of marketing at the French neurocosmetics brand Neuraé.

"Unlike genetic ageing, it's shaped by life experiences and how we manage our emotions, positive or negative. Because the skin and nervous system share the same embryonic origin, they've been wired to 'speak' to each other since birth. That's why neurotransmitters and facial muscles play such a powerful role in how emotions leave their imprint over time."

PUT ON A HAPPY FACE

Quite literally. According to Dr Alia, low mood and depression are often associated with sad facial expressions such as deep vertical frown lines. Repeated over long periods, these expressions etch themselves into the skin. "Sadness recruits muscles called 'depressors', which pull the face downwards, while joy activates 'elevators' that lift it," Elise says.

"The way we feel doesn't just shape our mood, it actively shapes how we age," adds Lisa Franchi, GM of pioneering Swiss longevity brand Loya. "Even when positivity feels forced, research shows that optimism boosts resilience, lowers stress and promotes longevity. Protecting emotional wellbeing isn't just good for mental health, it's a cornerstone of healthy skin."

Cue the new wave of mood-boosting, skin-strengthening formulas, from Loya's neuroscience-backed Happyfeelboost tech to Neuraé's dual-action ingredients designed to counteract emotional skin ageing. The future of skincare is something to smile about.



Dermalogica NeuroTouch Symmetry Serum (£139, dermalogica.co.uk)

Facial massage, but make it cerebral. This neuroscience-powered facial oil works with a signature sculpting technique to quite literally turn that frown upside down.



This Works Deep Sleep Beauty Oil (£45, thisworks.com)

A smart fusion of potent actives with the brand's cult Deep Sleep scent, this overnight face and body oil soothes the senses, boosts rest and leaves skin visibly rejuvenated by the morning.



Self Glow by James Read Dusk To Dawn Overnight Tan Facial (£44, spacenk.com)

We know that a golden glow can lift the skin, but this self-tan elevates your mood, too, thanks to the functional fragrance, while the microalgae-based ingredient protects against stress signals.

YOUR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEM



Loya SuperReverse Serum (£210, johnbellcroyden.co.uk)

Combining feel-good fragrance technology with skin-boosting bioactive compounds, this seriously hydrating serum transforms both the skin and your mood.



Olverum Pro Cellular Night Cream (£80, harveynichols.com)

Beauty sleep in a bottle, thanks to a soporific blend of lavender, chamomile and ylang-ylang, which promote alpha and theta brainwaves to induce calm and assuage any anxiety.



Neuraé The Harmonie Sleeping Mask (£98, neurae.com)

Even if your worries are keeping you up for half the night, this restorative mask contains a neuro-ingredient that mimics the effect of melatonin to shield skin from stress-induced inflammation.