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# The Psychology of Skincare

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Dr Eleanor Chatburn  
Clinical psychologist & mental health educator

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# About me



## **Dr Eleanor Chatburn**

BA, BSc, MA, DClinPsy, CPsychol.

Mental health lecturer and researcher, University of East Anglia & University of Cambridge

Psychodermatology clinic, Self London, Harley Street, London.

Instagram: @dreleanorchatburn

X: @eleanorchats

Ambassador for The British Skin Foundation

# A whistle-stop introduction to...

- Skin and mind (spoiler: it's complicated)
- Our stressed-out skin
- Skin conditions: stigma and shame
- Nutrition and skin
- How healthy is your relationship with skincare?





# Joining the dots

## On a bi-directional relationship





# Stressed-out skin

## PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS

Release of stress  
hormones (cortisol &  
adrenaline)

Inflammatory  
response

## SKIN FLARE UP

- Disrupted epidermal barrier
- Overproduction of sebum
- Delayed wound healing
- Inhibited hair growth

Dermatologist rated skin disease severity



Patient perceptions of their skin  
The impact on their quality of life  
How it makes them feel

i.e. It's all about what skin **means** to each individual

“

I've finally realised that having "bad" skin  
doesn't make me a "bad" person.

And that being distressed about my skin is not  
me being "weak" or "vain".

”



# Stigma of skin conditions

*Can manifest as:*

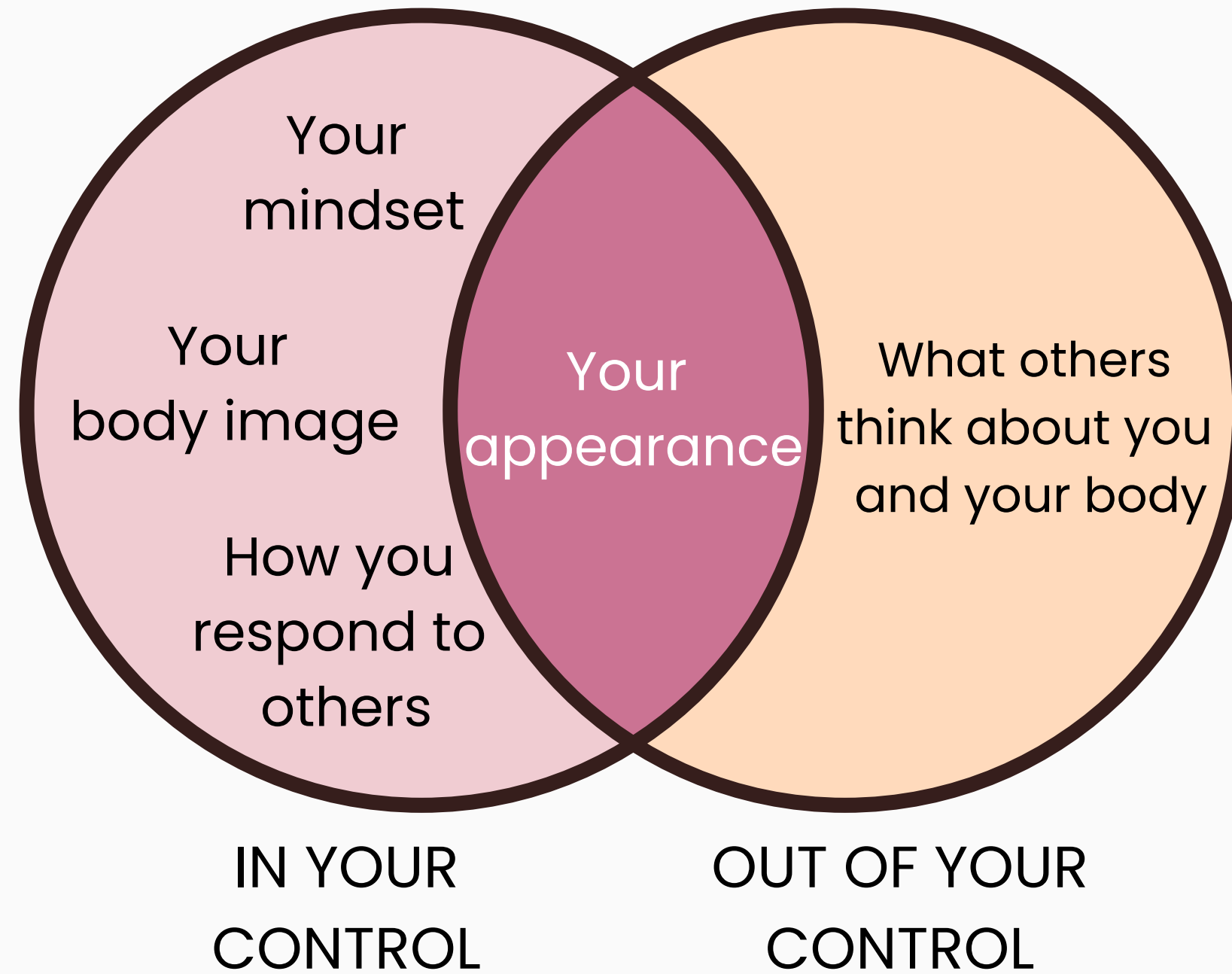
Direct abuse, unsolicited comments  
Indirect social messages  
Discrimination  
Lack of representation

*Becomes internalised as:*

"There must be something wrong with me"  
"I'm bad/dirty/freakish/weak/unloveable"  
"I'm not worthy"

**Shame & low self-esteem**

# Problems of overcontrol



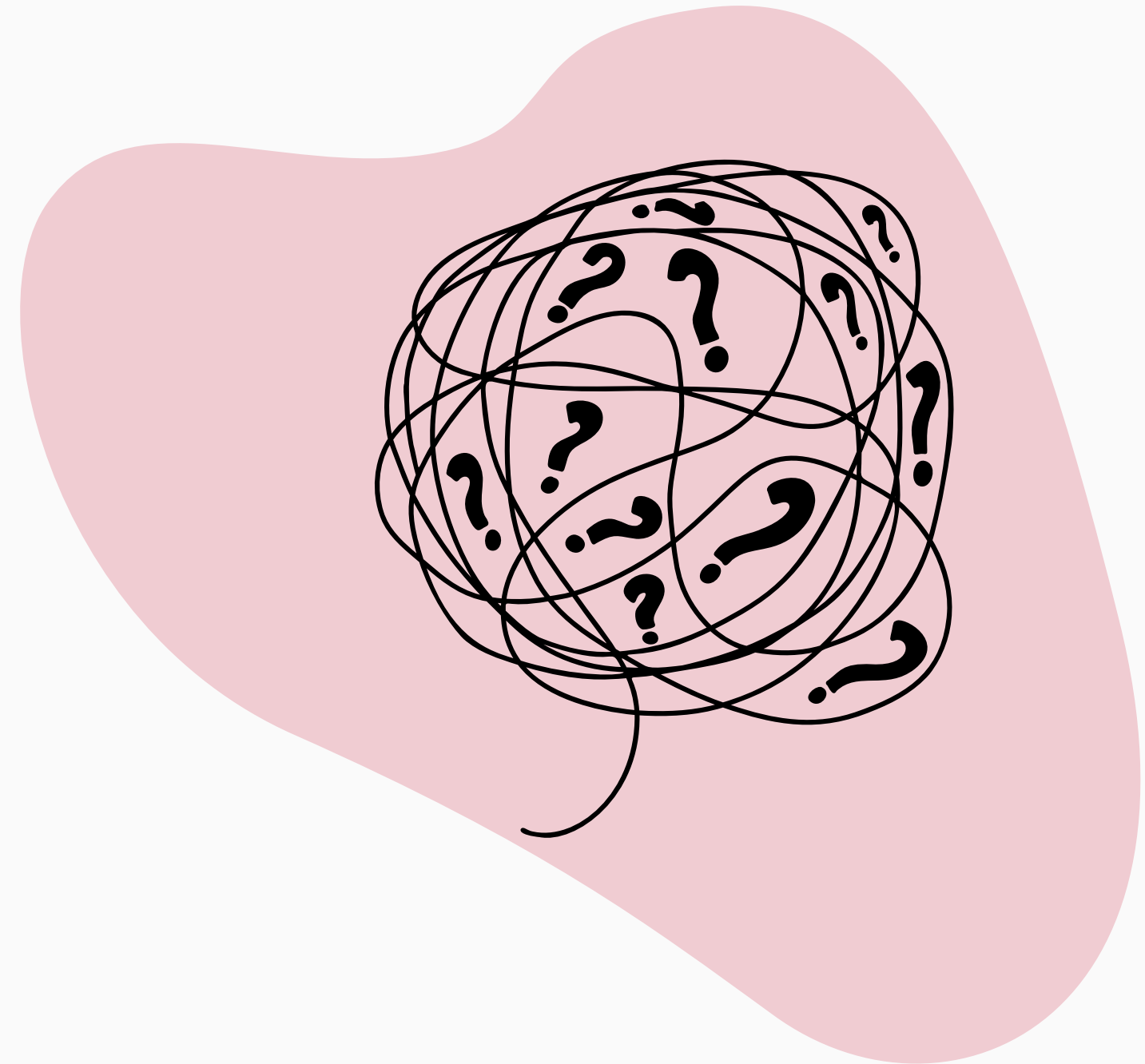
# ‘Eating our way to better skin?’

Complex science = ripe for exploitation by wellness influencers

Vast amount of online misinformation

Risky advice around restriction

Risk of developing disordered eating  
(Orthorexia, obsession with eating ‘pure’  
foods)



# What is your relationship...

- Flexible
- Playful
- Reasonable expectations
- Balanced with rest of life



- Rigid
- Obsessive
- Impact on daily life
- 'Still not good enough'

with your skincare?

# Toxic traits of (some) skincare marketing

01 Overinflates control over skin  
▼  
Shame and anxiety

02 Progression, progression, progression  
▼  
Impossible goals

03 Excess choice  
▼  
Worry

04 Lack of representation  
▼  
Shame, disengagement

05 Before and afters  
▼  
Unrealistic expectations

06 Skincare as self-care  
▼  
Very much up for debate

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# Final takeaways

1

Our use of skincare is a surprisingly complex behaviour with many psychological elements

2

The appearance and health of our skin is intricately linked with our psychological, social and wider wellbeing.

3

We all have a role to play in challenging perceptions of what 'normal' skin is.