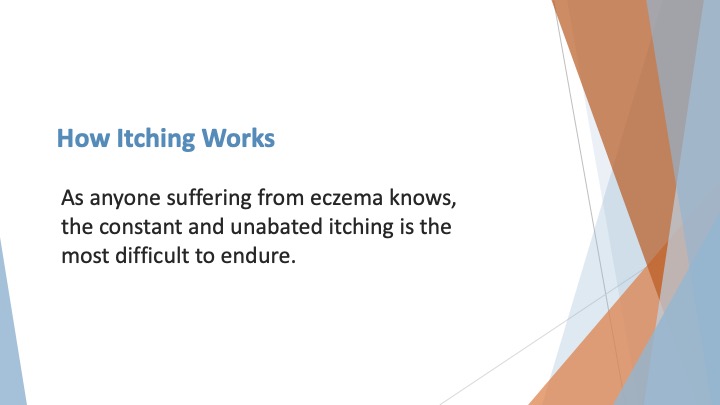
**Chapter 2: The Eczema Itch**

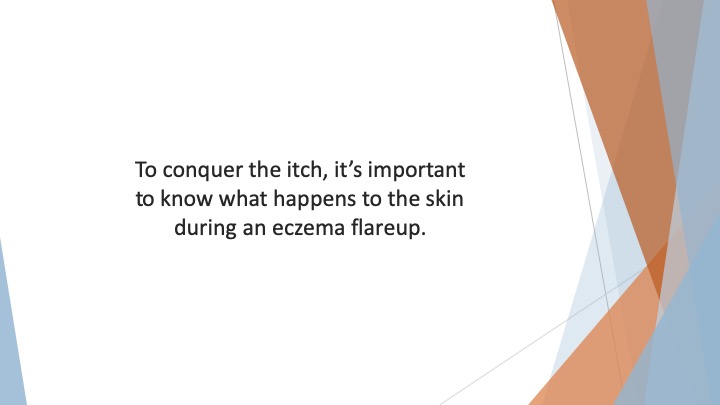
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**S1** : In this video, we’ll learn about “The Eczema Itch”

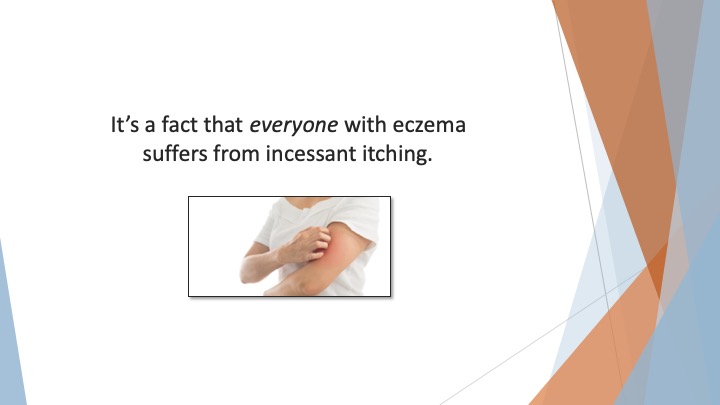


**S2 : How Itching Works**

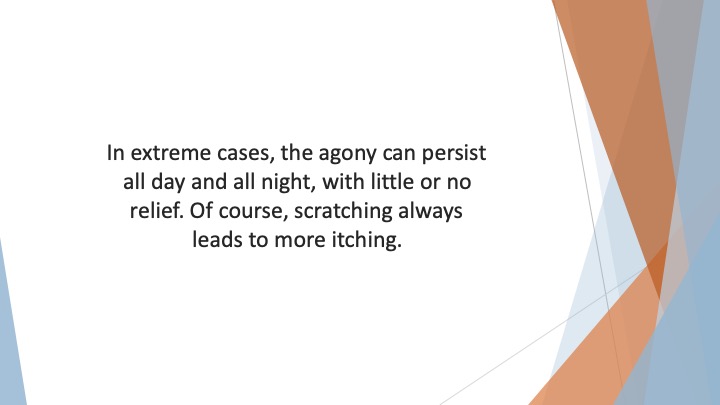
As anyone suffering from eczema knows, the constant and unabated itching is the most difficult to endure. While the dry patches may appear unsightly, the itching can become unbearable.



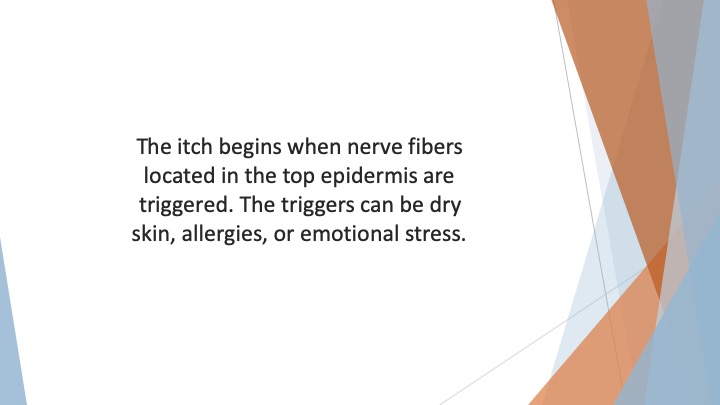
**S3** : To conquer the itch, it’s important to know what happens to the skin during an eczema flareup.



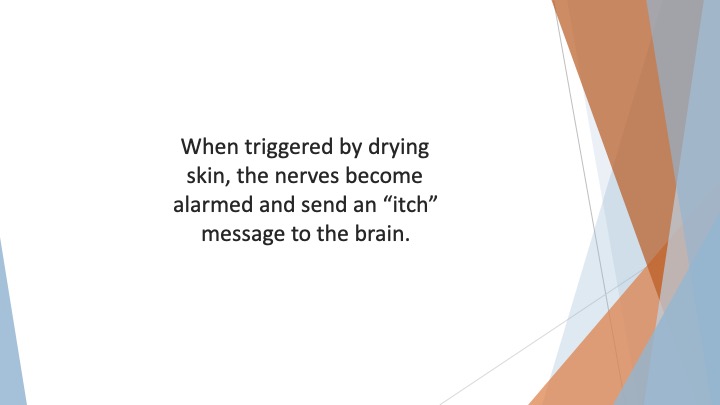
**S4** : It’s a fact that everyone with eczema suffers from incessant itching. There is no eczema without itching.



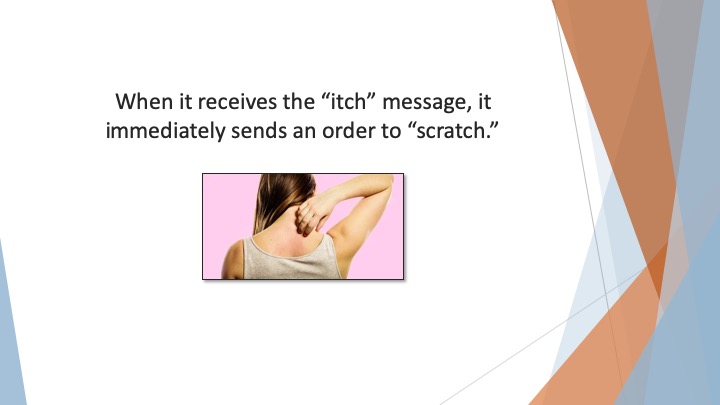
**S5 :** In extreme cases, the agony can persist all day and all night, with little or no relief. Of course, scratching always leads to more itching.



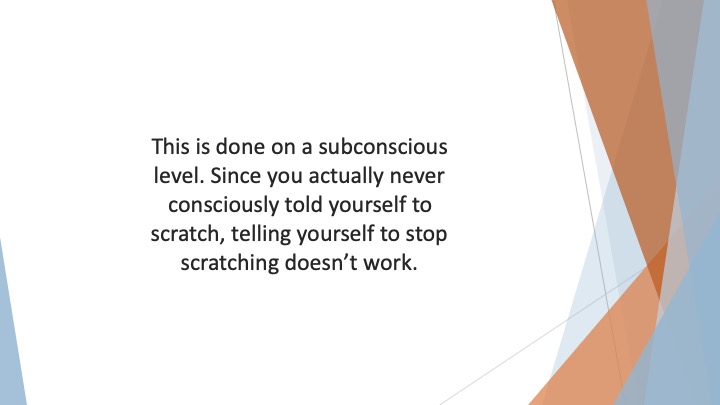
**S6 :** The itch begins when nerve fibers located in the top epidermis are triggered. The triggers can be dry skin, allergies, or emotional stress.



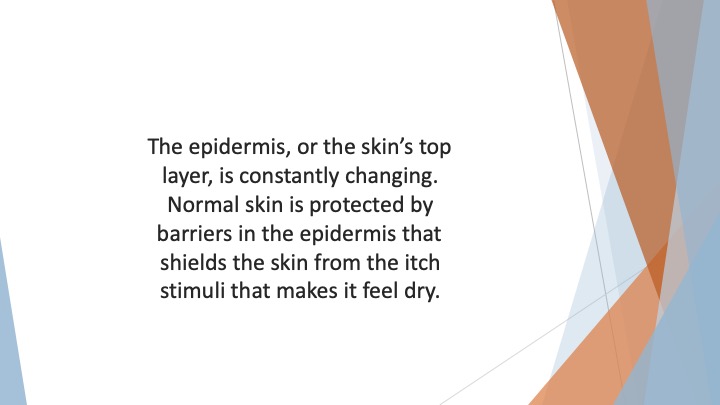
**S7 :** When triggered by drying skin, the nerves become alarmed and send an “itch” message to the brain. The brain is always ready and eager to respond to a cry for help.



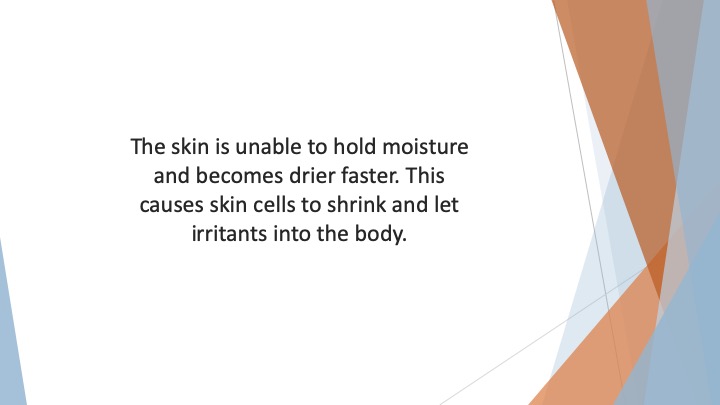
**S8 :** When it receives the “itch” message, it immediately sends an order to “scratch.”



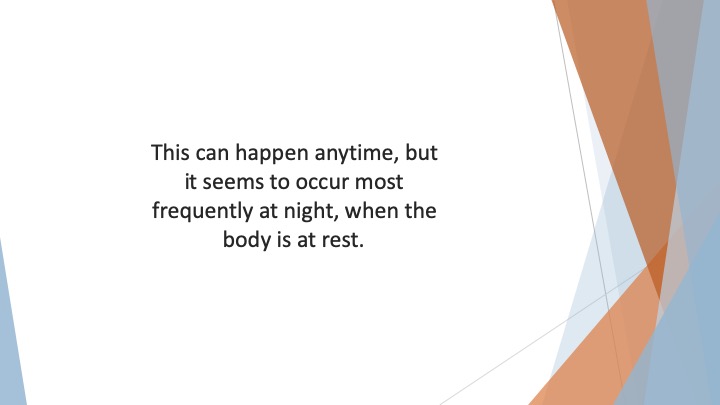
**S9 :** This is done on a subconscious level. Since you actually never consciously told yourself to scratch, telling yourself to stop scratching doesn’t work.



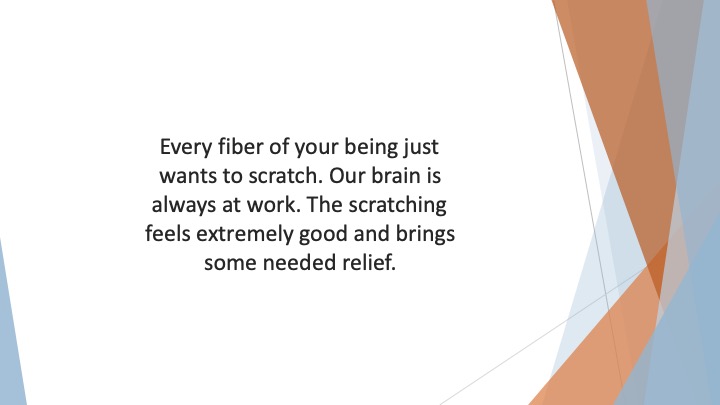
**S10 :** The epidermis, or the skin’s top layer, is constantly changing. New skin cells are always being produced. Normal skin is protected by barriers in the epidermis that shields the skin from the itch stimuli that makes it feel dry. Or, put another way, these barriers help the skin retain natural moisture. Skin suffering from eczema lacks that protection.

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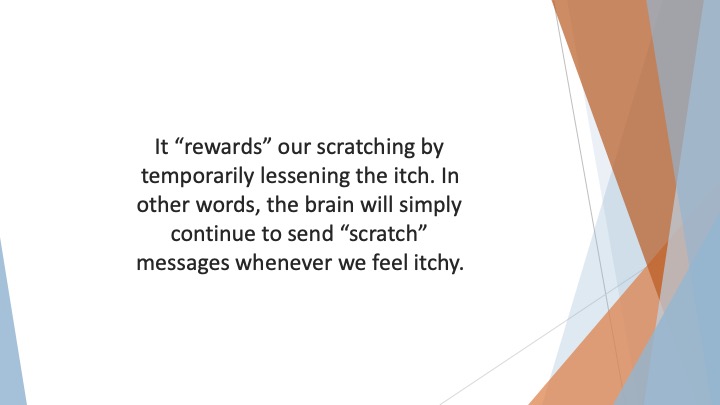
**S11 :** The skin is unable to hold moisture and becomes drier faster. This causes skin cells to shrink and let irritants into the body



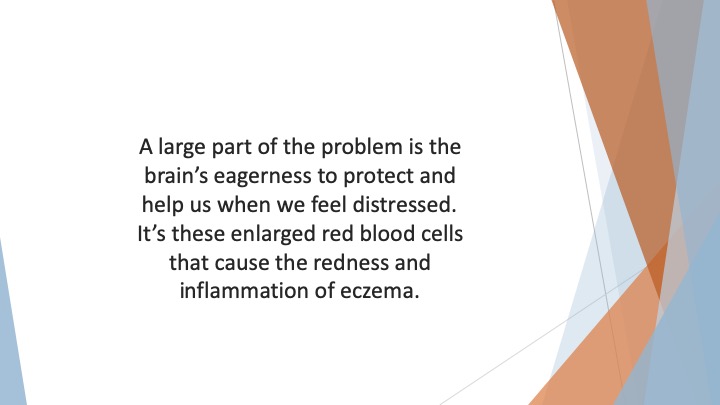
**S12 :** . This can happen anytime, but it seems to occur most frequently at night, when the body is at rest. This accounts for why much of the itching becomes intensified at night.



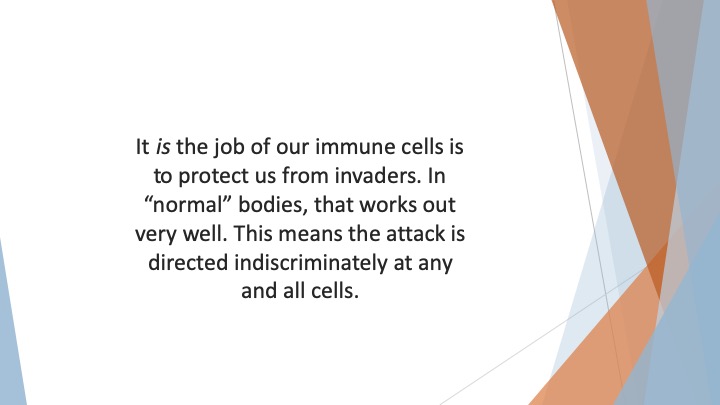
**S13 :** Every fiber of your being just wants to scratch. Our brain is always at work. It can waken us from a deep sleep with its order to scratch. The scratching feels extremely good and brings some needed relief.



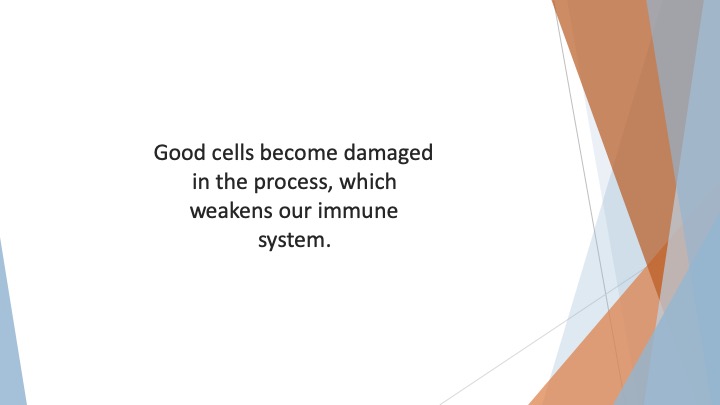
**S14 :** As a result, the brain thinks it has done its job in looking out for our general welfare. It “rewards” our scratching by temporarily lessening the itch. As most everyone knows, when behavior is rewarded, it becomes intensified and continues. In other words, the brain will simply continue to send “scratch” messages whenever we feel itchy.



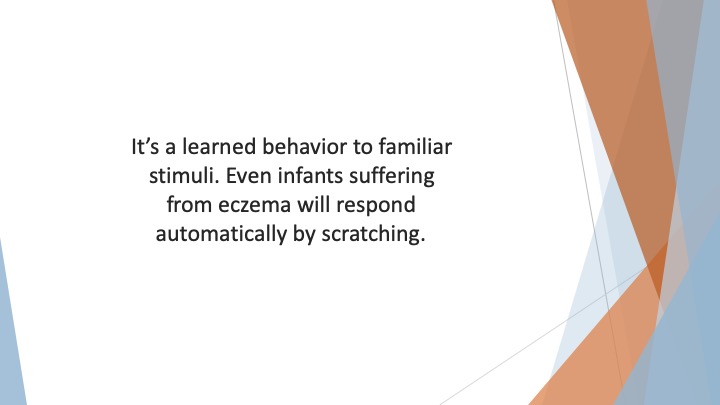
**S15 :** A large part of the problem is the brain’s eagerness to protect and help us when we feel distressed. When it senses that something is wrong with the skin, it expands the red blood cells to allow immune cells to enter the fray and protect the skin from invaders. It’s these enlarged red blood cells that cause the redness and inflammation of eczema.



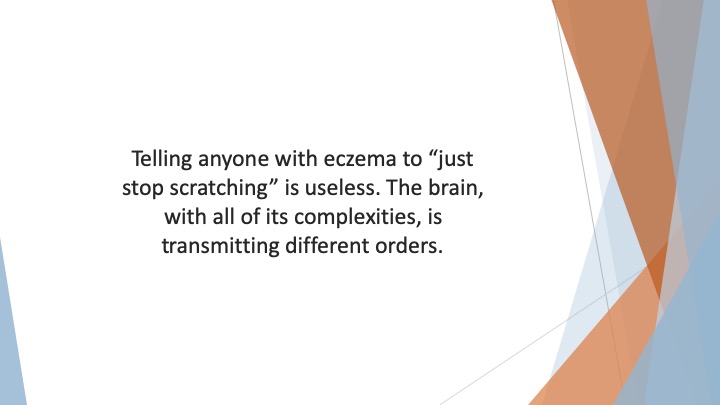
**S16 :**  It is the job of our immune cells is to protect us from invaders. In “normal” bodies, that works out very well. When we suffer from eczema, however, the immune cells are unable to distinguish between “good” and “bad” cells. This means the attack is directed indiscriminately at any and all cells.



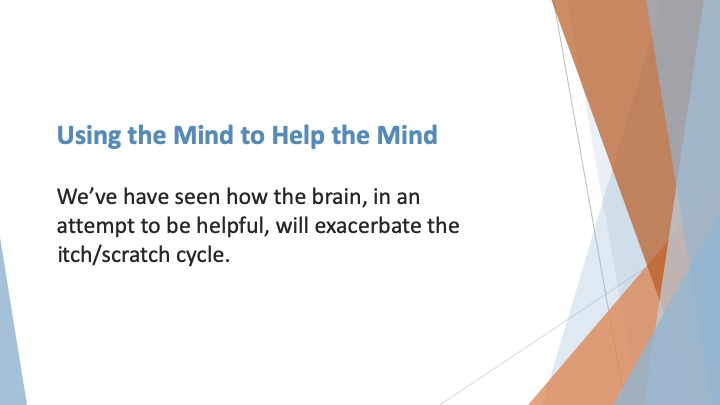
**S17 :** Good cells become damaged in the process, which weakens our immune system. When the skin is being attacked, the itching spirals out of control and its defense mechanisms are being destroyed from within. The “itch/scratch” cycle becomes automatized.



**S18 :** It’s a learned behavior to familiar stimuli. Even infants suffering from eczema will respond automatically by scratching.



**S19 :** Telling anyone with eczema to “just stop scratching” is useless. The brain, with all of its complexities, is transmitting different orders.

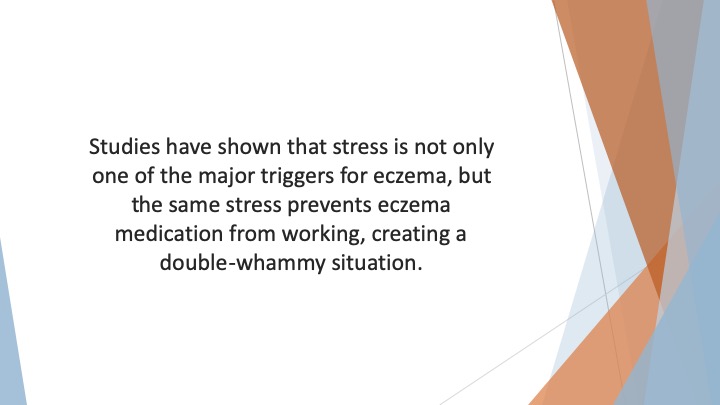


**S20 : Using the Mind to Help the Mind**

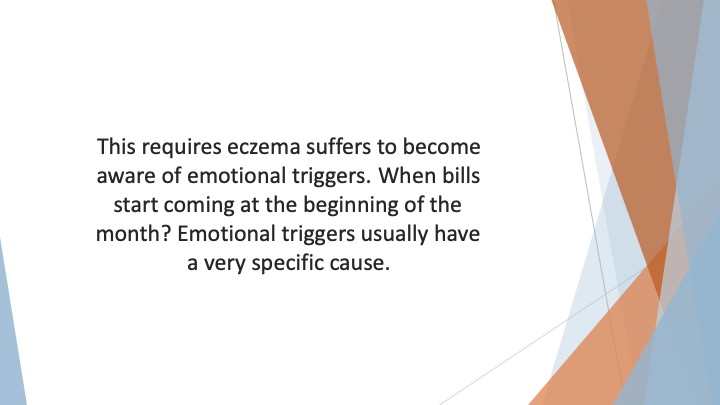
We’ve have seen how the brain, in an attempt to be helpful, will exacerbate the itch/scratch cycle. Scratching becomes a subconscious defense that we do without being totally aware. We simply respond automatically by scratching.

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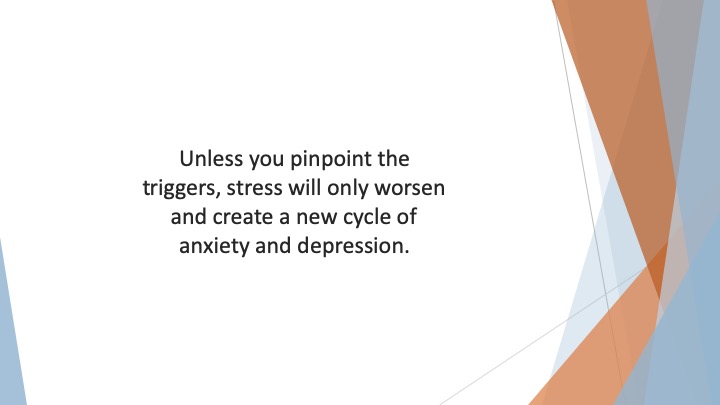
**S21 :** The good news is that the brain will always be eager to help us. We just need to send it the correct messages.



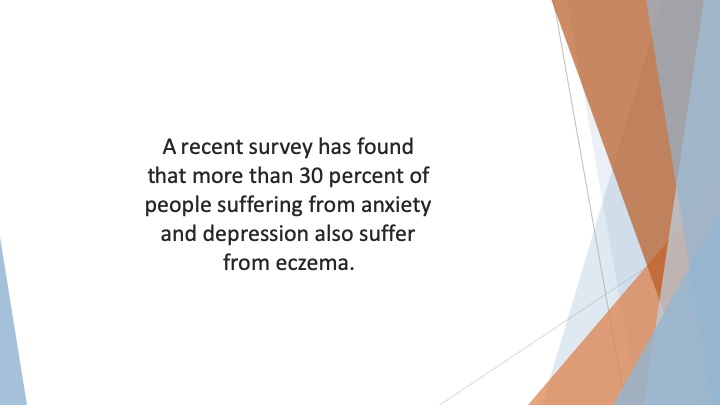
**S22 :** Studies have shown that stress is not only one of the major triggers for eczema, but the same stress prevents eczema medication from working, creating a double-whammy situation.



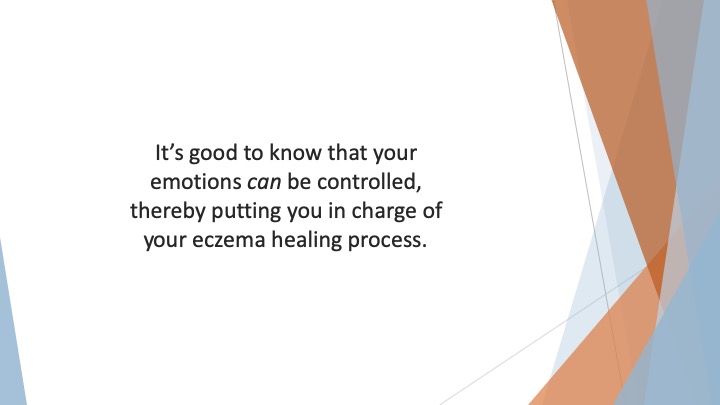
**S23 :** This requires eczema suffers to become aware of emotional triggers. Does it get worse at work? At home with one’s spouse? When bills start coming at the beginning of the month? Emotional triggers usually have a very specific cause.

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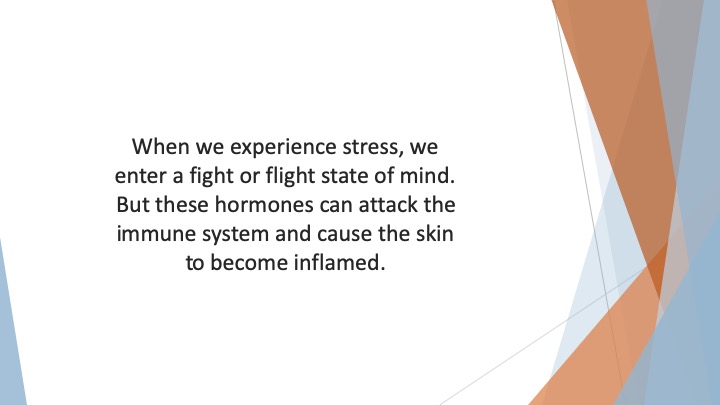
**S24 :** Unless you pinpoint the triggers, stress will only worsen and create a new cycle of anxiety and depression. Anxiety will lead to even greater anxiety.

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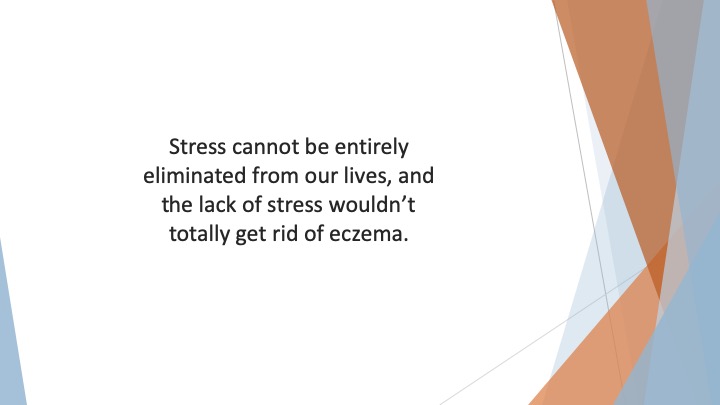
**S25 :** A recent survey has found that more than 30 percent of people suffering from anxiety and depression also suffer from eczema.

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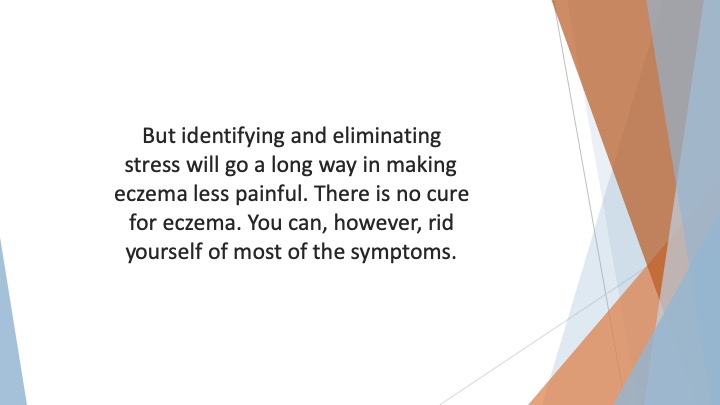
**S26 :** It’s good to know that your emotions can be controlled, thereby putting you in charge of your eczema healing process.

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**S27 :** When we experience stress, we enter a fight or flight state of mind. This causes the body to crease stress hormones. But these hormones can attack the immune system and cause the skin to become inflamed.

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**S28 :** Stress cannot be entirely eliminated from our lives, and the lack of stress wouldn’t totally get rid of eczema.

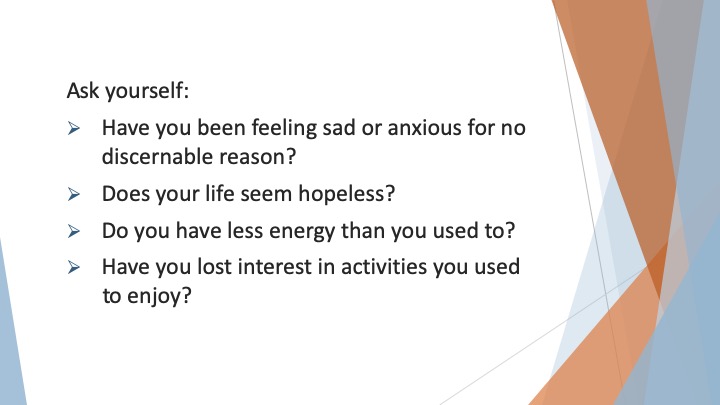
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**S29 :** But identifying and eliminating stress will go a long way in making eczema less painful. There is no cure for eczema. You can, however, rid yourself of most of the symptoms.

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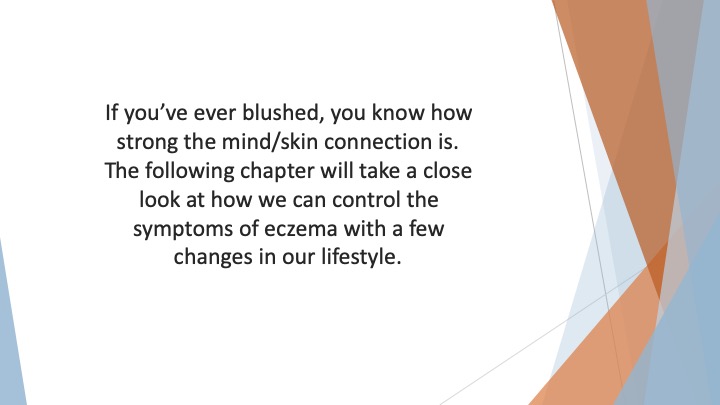
**S30 : Becoming Proactive**

Being proactive begins when you pay attention to your emotions.

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**S31 :** Ask yourself:

* Have you been feeling sad or anxious for no discernable reason?
* Does your life seem hopeless?
* Do you have less energy than you used to?
* Have you lost interest in activities you used to enjoy?

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**S32 :** If you’ve ever blushed, you know how strong the mind/skin connection is. The following chapter will take a close look at how we can control the symptoms of eczema with a few changes in our lifestyle.