The Breakout *Backtrack*

A 7-day skin detective log that figures out whether your breakout is even a skincare problem, before you buy another serum.

DAYS

7

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THE 60-SECOND VERSION

Fix the input first.

1. **For 7 days, jot down** sleep, stress, food, your cycle, products and your skin (page 2).
2. **On day 7, look for patterns** with the detective page (page 3).
3. **Change one thing at a time.** Change five and you'll never know which one worked.

THE USUAL SUSPECTS

Sleep + stress

Short nights and stressful weeks can show up on your face.

Your cycle

Breakouts that land at the same point every month, often along the jaw and chin.

Food

Some studies link dairy (especially milk) and high-sugar diets to breakouts for some people.

New products

Anything you started in the last few weeks is suspect number one.

Friction

Your phone, your pillowcase, your hands, a mask. Check which side it's on.

Doing too much

Too many actives at once can irritate skin into breaking out.

Food is personal. My DNA report says my body's ability to process lactose drops over time, so dairy is a no for me. Cheese and I are devastatingly on a break. Yours might be sugar, alcohol, or nothing at all. That's what the log is for.

Seven days, *two minutes a night.*

Print it, or copy the rows into your notes app. Quick words are fine.

TRACK	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7
Sleep hours + how it felt, 1 to 5							
Stress 1 to 10, + what happened							
Food flags dairy, sugar, alcohol, anything new							
Water roughly how much							
Cycle day of your cycle, if it applies							
Products anything new, or skipped							
Friction phone, pillowcase, mask, hands							
Skin today new spots? where? redness?							

Hot tip: take a quick photo in the same spot, same light, every morning. Your memory is a terrible skin tracker.

Day 7: *what lines up?*

Check every box that matches your week, then read what it points to.

☐ I started a new product in the last few weeks.	**Suspect it first.** Stop it for two weeks and see. Breaking out where you normally don't, or with burning and itching? That's more likely irritation than "purging."
☐ Spots showed up at the same point in my cycle.	**Can point to hormones,** especially along the jaw and chin. No serum out-works your cycle. If it happens every month, bring it to your doctor.
☐ Short sleep or a stressful stretch came first.	**Fix the input.** No product fixes a bad week. I'll tell you that before I'd ever sell you something.
☐ Breakouts followed my food flags.	**Test one thing.** Cut one food for a few weeks, not five at once, and see if your skin notices.
☐ They're on my phone side or pillow side.	**Friction.** Wipe your phone, change your pillowcase a couple of times a week, and keep your hands off.
☐ Nothing lines up.	**Look at the whole routine,** or rule things out with a provider. That's not a failure. It's information.

SEE A DOCTOR OR DERMATOLOGIST IF

Breakouts are deep and painful, they're leaving scars, they started suddenly as an adult alongside irregular periods or new hair growth, or nothing has helped after about three months. That's above a worksheet's pay grade.

Root cause, *not another serum.*

That's the lens in my free newsletter, The Unbothered Edit: skin, gut, sleep, and the wellness trends worth skipping.

theunbotheredедit.substack.com