

Chapter 1: Trends & Tattoos

While tattoos have been around almost as long as man has walked on two feet, it's important to understand the modern health implications, the social statement some tattoos make, and the natural course (fading, blurring, etc.) of tattoos throughout the rest of your life.

Body art, and the right to get body art, is a personal decision to be made by a sober consenting adult. Why? Because tattoos



are permanent (or at least should be considered permanent) and the final outcome, good or bad, smart or dumb, sexy or not, will be with you the rest of your life. You will be buried with your tattoo. Given the seriousness, and permanence, of the decision, a considerable amount of personal research should go into the process.

The history of human kind is filled with dermatography (permanent makings on the body). Tattoos, as we know them, have been found on mummies (and daddy's) and other ancient beings for thousands of years. These permanent markings have been used to identify and track slaves, show military rank, display marital status, and so on. Tattoos have adorned tribal priestesses and labeled escaped prisoners.

In the medical world, tattoos have been used to cover unsightly scars, fill in skin pigment in people with vitiligo (patches of lost skin color), and add normal appearing pigment after

reconstructive surgery. These thoughtful applications would not be available without the widespread use

and experimentation of our tattooed ancestors.

The idea of getting a tattoo is quite common, and for all the people who have taken the plunge and gotten one, there are millions more who are in the learning and thinking phase. Some estimate that over half the U.S. population between 18 and 50 years has considered getting body art. The percentage of individuals below the poverty level (under age 40) with tattoos probably does exceed 50%, and in some urban areas the percentage is much higher.

Of the ones who consider getting a tattoo, and then talk themselves out it, usually do so for understandable reasons.

- They realize that they change their mind too frequently to make a decision that they can't reverse.
- They frequently get bored with hair styles, clothing styles, so a permanent design on their body would be hated in a few months.
- Their future career choices (or employers) makes getting an obvious tattoo a bad idea, and they want to keep their career options open.
- They aren't impulsive, and data shows most first tattoos were done on an impulse, dare, or with alcohol/drugs involved.

Tattoo (Tat-too):

Tahitian term for "the result of tapping."

The act or practice of marking the skin with indelible patterns, pictures, legends, etc., by making punctures in it and inserting pigments.

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- They don't want to be (wrongfully) 'judged' as wild, cheapened, and less intelligent. (I know it's not fair, but some people simply feel that way).
- They don't like how aged tattoos look on older people (with tattoos).

The people that went ahead and got the tattoo are an interesting bunch as well. The early adopters, the ones who've had tattoos all along, were an independent, strong-minded, and decisive bunch. They made a decision, didn't look back, and most never regretted it. This first group of body art fans were the bikers, fraternity brothers, soldiers, and prisoners . . . all macho, decisive, and without regret! They were the trend-setters to today's very commonplace tattoo. But back then, the tattoo came with status, membership, or just pure rebellion. The tattoo made a statement, and generally, the person wearing it, was proud of that statement.



Other people admired the rebellion, or strength of conviction required to get a tattoo, and idly thought to themselves, "I want to be strong, and self-assured like them." So others, slowly 'got the nerve' to get inked. Sailors, admiring the strength of their captains (and their colorful forearm with a sinking ship), would show their rite of passage by getting a tattoo. Some fraternities (both college and lodge brothers) across the country began to demand a small tattoo as a sign of brotherhood and loyalty.

In the western world, until the late 20th Century, the tattoo was almost exclusively a 'man thing,' and only a 'manly woman' would even think of getting one. With the 1960's, the rebellion of

youths of the conservative authoritarian system brought a wave of opposites. If a conformed trend said one thing, the youths in the sixties HAD to do the opposite. Men began growing long hair, while woman would shave their hair off. Sex, which had conventionally been saved for after marriage, became 'free' and non-committal. And tattoos, which stayed among only the macho men, became a sign of a woman's independent spirit.

In the west, women's adoption of tattoos started small and slowly grew over time. Like a pendulum swinging, younger woman (by some accounts) have recently passed men in getting tattoos, and the small flower or bird is being displaced with larger more elaborate designs that cover much more of the body. In contrast, the Orient where tattooing still remains a fine art with centuries of history and tradition, women have always been the centerpiece of its usage, and they enjoy widespread acceptance.

When you have a big life-long decision like getting a tattoo, in addition to the usual tattoo questions. . .What design should I get and where should it go?. . .are some more important questions.

What are the possible side effects of tattoos?

What health risks exist and how real are they?

What am I giving up by getting a tattoo?

How hard is it to remove if I don't like it?

This book was not written to persuade you not to get a tattoo, but instead to give you all the information you need to make a thoughtful and educated decision.

The fact is a lot of famous and popular people have tattoos, and as a culture, some of us like to be like them in dress, talk, and action. Almost universally fashion and trends are set by famous and prominent people. But these same famous people have trouble with permanent decisions as well. Angelina Jolie had her first husband's name "Billy Bob" tattooed on her upper arm, when they broke up, the name had to be removed. One actress may have long hair, and hair salons across the



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country show an increase in that particular style. A year later, the same actress can be replaced by a more popular (and younger) actress who bears short hair; now short styles are all the rage. This example is useful for at least two reasons:

1. *Styles come and go.* . How are you going to choose a tattoo that will stay in style the rest of your life?
2. *Five to ten years from now*, how are you going to explain an outdated tattoo that, by definition, is permanent?

In a Pew Research survey of people age 50 and over, the majority of the respondents felt the increased prevalence of tattoos was a change for the worse. In the adult groups under 50, the majority felt tattoos had no effect on society, but 22 to 32% still felt the change was for the worse. Overall, 40% of people felt tattoos were not a positive influence on society. When getting a tattoo, those 40% have to be considered if you intend to apply for a job, look for a promotion, hope for admission, or pick a spouse.

➤ *5% (one in twenty) of people with a tattoo will at some point attempt to cover it with another tattoo.*

Imagine trying to choose a tattoo that can also be covered successfully by another, more trendy one. You can't, and why would you?

People's need to remove, alter, or re-do tattoos have built a huge industry of tattoo removal by



Skirts continue to rise and fall, and rise and fall again. . .

laser, cream, acid, surgery, and so on. Chemists are developing a tattoo ink that is more easily 'removable', but only time will tell if it will be safe and effective.

Change, and changing times, means changing culture. In the sixties and seventies, no one wore athletic shoes unless they were in a school gym, now people wear athletic shoes to formal events. In the 1970's, bell bottom pants were everywhere, now you would be a laughing stock in most settings.

Woman's skirts, and for that matter, men's shorts, rise and fall with the changing trends. One year mini-skirts are 'in' and the next they are 'out'. The following year, long shorts go past the knee, and the next its even lower. Look at basketball shorts; what if we still had the short-shorts of the 1980's? Everyone felt completely normal and appropriate back then, but now we smile at how stupid it looked. How can you choose a permanent decoration for your body that will not go out of style?



Not only is a design a problem, you are also limited in your choice of colors in a pattern or picture. Each color complicates the process, and increases the risk for allergic reaction, infection, and outcome. The colors available are growing by the day as different mixtures are developed. The most vivid colors traditionally contained what is called 'heavy metals' which made the tattoo darker and deeper, but it also made getting medical investigation (like a MRI) more complicated. If you got a medical condition that required repeated MRI's as a



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way to tract the disease, and your heavy metal tattoo disrupts the images (and begins to burn), the decision to get a tattoo could literally affect your life!

Suppose you decide to become a minister or deacon at church, and you just happen to also have a tattoo. Just read Leviticus 19:28: "You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor *print any marks on you*: I am the LORD." More progressive churches probably won't mind the tattoo, but other more stringent institutions might.

If you know the health risks, the social implications, the changing trends, the possible employment ramifications, and still decide to get a tattoo, that's great! You will have made an informed decision, and you will most likely be happy with the outcome, and be at peace with your decision the rest of your life! If you impulsively dive into getting one on a dare, or a drink, or a death, or while madly in love, you will most likely live to regret it.

The health and social ramifications of getting a tattoo are many, and the wise consumer will thoughtfully and carefully consider each aspect ranging from infection, to scarring, to changing trends. Read this book cover to cover, it was purposely made to read in one or two sittings. Consider its information, and remember it is not designed to talk you out of getting a tattoo, but it is designed to give you all of the information you need to make a decision with which you can live.

Your life will absolutely include regrets, this book is designed to make getting a tattoo not one of them.

