

Tattoo Regret

From relationship tattoos to spontaneous nights at a tattoo shop, regretting a tattoo can be a terrifying realization.

By: Maya Harris

Regretting a tattoo is probably the No. 1 fear of those who get one. From names of people you're no longer dating to the musings of a regretful college night, removing a tattoo can become more expensive, and more painful, than getting the ink in the first place. So how do you know the tattoo you get is one you won't regret?

Take some time. According to a study done by Advanced Dermatology, a dermatologist office based in Chicago, three out of four people who regret their tattoos did not think about their tattoo for more than a couple weeks ahead of time. Taking the time to think about what you want-- and where you want it-- can be essential. This means avoiding so-called flash events marketed by tattoo shops, where people can pick a tattoo out of a book, and get it at a discounted price. "I got one of my tattoos at a flash sale and felt pressured to pick one quickly," Lillie Walstrom, a 20 year-old student in Chicago said. "I ended up getting sparkly handcuffs, which are huge. I have 57 more tattoos and that is the one I wish I could erase."

Avoid peer pressure. It is important to know if the tattoo is actually for you or if you are jumping on the bandwagon. Gina Carter, 21, studied abroad in Nepal when she was 20 and got a tattoo simply because all of her friends were getting one too. "Tattoos are really cheap in Nepal," Carter said. "I barely thought about it and mostly just regretted where I put it, which is on my sternum. I also wish I would have had the tattoo artist realign it because it is a little crooked."

Take care with relationship tattoos. Everybody knows the story of a person getting a matching tattoo with someone or getting the name of their significant other tattooed-- only to break up at some point later. Lots of people warn against it, to no avail. "I heard everyone's warnings about getting a matching tattoo with someone but I thought my cousin and I would be a different story," Taylor Zucco-Kimball, 23, said. "I have a planet and rocket ship on my ankle because we said we would follow each other to outer space and back. Now it is just a constant reminder that we don't talk anymore."

Consider your career. While tattoos and other body modifications are becoming more accepted, visible tattoos are still taboo in some professions, including healthcare, law enforcement, and financial institutions. So consider putting your body art in places that are easy to hide, such as your rib cage, back of your neck, and ankles.

“I see a lot of people who don’t necessarily regret their tattoo, but regret where they put it,” Erin Nicole, a tattoo artist at St. Sabrina’s in Uptown Minneapolis, said. “Body parts become more obvious when something is on it, people genuinely notice parts of their body more when there is a tattoo on it and hate it.”

Try a test run. Companies are now creating semi-permanent temporary tattoos that you can order online. All you have to do is send in a picture of the tattoo that you want and they will print a temporary tattoo that will last for around two weeks. “I think these tattoos are a great option for trying out the placement of tattoos,” Nicole said. “It won’t look exactly the same as a tattoo from a gun but will give you the feeling of having something there.”

Tattoos are a permanent piece of art going onto your body, so it is important to consider everything when thinking about getting a tattoo. “If you take your time, you can come out with a tattoo that you will really love for the rest of your life,” Nicole says.