



Health | January 25, 2018 | By Korin Miller

This College Student Is Using Selfies to Help Normalize Acne

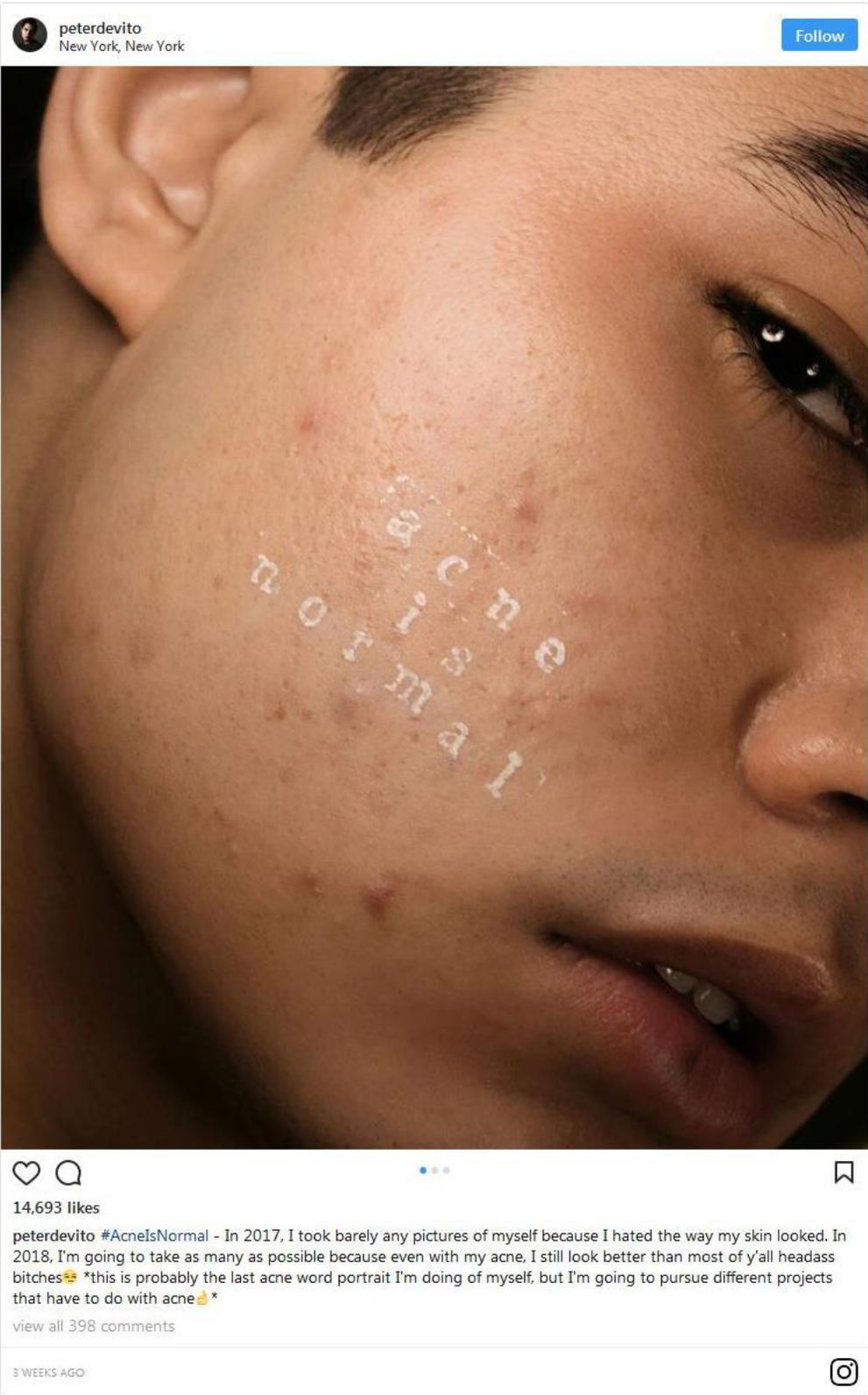
The universal language of pimples.



It's normal to feel annoyed and frustrated when you're battling acne. But the one thing you shouldn't feel about this very common skin condition is shame. That's why one college student's photos (including selfies) normalizing acne are gaining a huge following on Instagram.

Peter DeVito is an artist and student at the Fashion Institute of Technology who regularly posts photos that point out what should be an obvious fact: Acne is common and shouldn't be covered up. In one photo series, DeVito features several closeups of his face overlaid with messages like "acne is normal," "retouch retouch retouch retouch," and "I'm so fucking sick and tired of the Photoshop."

He captioned the series saying, "In 2017, I took barely any pictures of myself because I hated the way my skin looked," he captioned the series. "In 2018, I'm going to take as many as possible because even with my acne, I still look better than most of y'all headass bitches."



DeVito, 20, tells SELF that he was inspired to create his photos by the wave of body-positive posts that have shown up on social media lately. “People are beginning to appreciate their bodies for what they are and it is inspiring,” he says. “Seeing these posts made me want to create something that would help people with acne feel empowered.”

He says he's had acne since he was in 8th grade—and he's hoping his photos will help other people learn to accept their own appearance. “Not everyone can have ‘perfect’ skin and it's about time that society starts to accept that,” he says.

Basically everyone gets acne at some point—it's the most common skin condition in the U.S., affecting up to 50 million people at any one time.

“Acne is extremely common,” Gary Goldenberg, M.D., assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City, tells SELF. “In fact, almost every teenager experiences acne to some extent.” However, he points out, adults can and do struggle with acne, too.

On the surface level, acne happens when a pore in your skin clogs, according to the American Academy of Dermatology. The clog starts with dead skin cells that get trapped together inside a pore by sebum, oil that keeps your skin from drying out. Sometimes bacteria that lives on your skin, called *p. acnes*, can also get trapped in your pore, creating a red, swollen bump. And if the inflammation caused by the bacteria goes deep into the skin, it can create an acne cyst.

There are several things that can cause acne and there are several different types of the condition, Dr. Goldenberg says. First, there are your hormones. As a teenager, the rise in the sex hormone androgen during puberty often causes acne, dermatologist Cynthia Bailey, M.D., founder of Dr. Bailey Skin Care, tells SELF. But adults can get hormonal acne, too, as it may be linked the hormonal fluctuations of your menstrual cycle and the "stress hormone" cortisol.

In addition, your diet, environment, genetics, skincare, and hygiene routine can all play a role, with some factors being more crucial for some than others. Plus, because acne is an inflammatory condition, any other inflammation on your face can cause it or make it worse, he says.

If you have acne (and wish you didn't), check in with a dermatologist for help.

First, you can try to tackle it at home on your own. Just know that may take some experimentation to see what works best for you. That includes looking for products that have ingredients such as benzoyl peroxide, which kills bacteria, and salicylic acid, which can help unclog pores, Dr. Goldenberg says.

However, some people find that adjusting their diet and other lifestyle habits (such as remembering to take your makeup off before heading to the gym after work) help, too. If you're not having much luck treating acne on your own, a dermatologist can help with topical creams, antibiotics, and possibly prescription drugs, Dr. Goldenberg says. There are also in-office procedures available to reduce the appearance acne scars, such as laser treatments, chemical peels, and micro-needling, he says. It's also possible that you're dealing with a lookalike condition, such as rosacea, instead of acne. So if you're unsure or could use some backup, check in with a dermatologist.

Of course, acne can be a stubborn opponent and some people end up dealing with it their entire lives. So, wherever you're at with your acne, it's important to realize that you're not alone