

What's Behind the Surge in Tattoos?

By now, you may have heard of the New Zealand man, Mark Cropp, who made a desperate plea for a job on Facebook. His lack of employment was not due to his lack of muscle, nor his will to work, nor even his past criminal record. It was due to a tattoo.

As Cropp's [picture shows](#), the tattoo graces his face in the shape of a beard. In this faux beard, however, are carved letters which read "DEVAST8."

According to [The Telegraph](#):

"Mark Cropp got the tattoo – done by his brother – a few months ago when he was drunk on contraband homebrew in prison, but admits he now regrets the decision.

The 19-year-old told [the New Zealand Herald](#) that he has struggled to find work since his release from prison after contacting several recruitment agencies.

In a desperate attempt to find work, he posted a selfie on the Auckland Jobs Facebook group appealing for someone to give him a job.

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He [told the New Zealand Herald](#): "One employment place said to me 'I wouldn't employ you with that on your face, I wouldn't even take a second look at you.' I've had other people that just shrugged and laughed at me."

Fortunately for Cropp, things seem to be looking up, for his Facebook plea and the subsequent attention appears to have landed him several job options via the compassion and pity of

a few construction companies.

But his predicament got me thinking.

The fact is, Cropp's regrettable tattoo isn't all that unusual today. It's a popular social trend across various demographics: rich and poor; young and old; black and white; and religious and nonreligious. In fact, a recent [Harris Poll](#) found that tattoo use surged from 21 to 29 percent in only four years.

What I find odd about the surging popularity of tattoos, however, is the fact that they have risen in a culture which places self-esteem and self-acceptance above all other virtues. The selfie-culture alone is a testament to the self-love which prevails in society.

The problem is, tattoos are not a part of the natural human body. They are an addition. A mode of "self-expression." A cheap – well, [not so cheap](#), actually – attempt to cover up the natural framework with ink as if the original was not good enough.

If this is so, then does not the tattoo culture run directly contrary to the message of self-acceptance which has been preached to us? If we say that we accept and love ourselves just as we are, but then turn around and "express ourselves" by adding various colors and artwork to our bodies, does not this signify a state of cognitive dissonance?

It's a question worth pondering.