



**Brain Injury
Alliance**
ARIZONA

Daith Piercing Q&A with Natalie Feinauer, Professional Body Piercer

Q When did you first become interested in the art of tattooing and piercing?

A I've long-loved tattoos and piercings; however, I never thought I would find myself in the industry. I lived the corporate life and worked in various office and managerial positions for 15 years. In 2011, I lost my job due to the economy. My husband Paul (who goes by "Squablo"), a tattoo artist of 21 years, had encouraged me to give piercing a shot for a long time, but I consistently refused. Eventually, I caved in 2013. If you would have asked me five years ago what direction I saw my life going, I never would have dreamed I would one day be able to say "a professional piercer, and I'm in love with my craft!"

Q When did you and your husband open your tattoo/piercing shop and why did you decide to do it?

A Paul and I have wanted our own studio for at least five years. Originally, the plan was for him to tattoo and I would run the business side of things. That all changed when I realized if I wanted to be in the industry as an owner, I had to be IN it—not just own it. In late July 2017, we bought the shop we had been working at for nearly three-and-a-half years. Currently, we are transitioning into a high-end tattoo and piercing studio,



Natalie Feinauer, professional body piercer

and we decided to name our new business Virtue Studios.

Q What do you like best about working in the tattoo and piercing industry?

A The best part of my job is making people happy, sparkle, and shine. People get piercings for all kinds of reasons, whether they are celebrating an occasion, having a fun girls' night out, going through some sort of tough time in their life, or dealing with body image issues, to name a few. I get to help someone who is unhappy become someone who can't stop smiling at their new reflection once they've seen their new piercing. How

could I feel anything less than amazing after seeing that kind of transformation? We, as piercers, have the power to create an amazing experience for a client, as well as long-lasting positive effects. I'm not trying to say we are changing the world here, but it's a beautiful thing to take part in, this process of helping someone achieve a positive self-view.

Q What is a daith piercing? In your experience, are there particular reasons that draw people to this particular piercing?

A A daith piercing is a piercing that goes through the crus of the helix, which is the fold of cartilage that extends from the inner bowl (conch) of the ear, and continues into the frontal helix behind the tragus. This piercing has garnered a lot of attention and is being dubbed the "migraine piercing". Many, and by many, I mean about 99% of the daith piercings I perform, are on clients who are trying to heal their ailment. I do not take this job lightly, and I make sure to explain to each client



ent that I am NOT a medical professional. Outside of stating to clients that there are no studies that have either proven or disproven that this piercing is able to get rid of migraines and headaches,

I don't discuss any other medical topics other than what is noted on their consent forms. I find it imperative as a professional to draw the line between what my profession does and does not do. Any piercer who encourages this type of piercing as a cure, implies, or outright states that it will help in any way, should be avoided. Misrepresentation of our profession is blatant at that point, and the



Paul and Natalie are busier than ever

person cannot be trusted. We are piercers, not medical practitioners!

Q What should someone wanting a daith piercing expect at a piercing appointment?

A At the appointment, and at any professional piercing appointment for that matter, examination of the anatomy should be the first thing that happens. Not everybody is suited for each piercing. I have turned down my fair share of daith requests. Anyone willing to accept your money without examining you first should be avoided. If your anatomy will work well with the piercing, the next step is jewelry sizing. At this point, you will decide what jewelry you want depending on what is available in your size. It's important to note that jewelry used in any initial piercing should only be made of implant-grade materials such as: titanium (ASTM-F136) and steel (ASTM-F138), niobium, or solid 14k or 18k gold. The jewelry should also be ethically-made in North America because the quality standards are high here. There is much more to the jewelry than just the material; the finish is also extremely important, as it must be perfectly smooth to ensure an easier healing process. Any scratches on the surface of the jewelry will scratch at the



inside of the freshly-pierced wound. It is also important to consult with your piercer about any metal allergies you may have.

Next, you will be asked to fill out a consent form, so make sure you bring a photo I.D., like a driver's license. As far as the actual procedure goes, it will vary from piercer-to-piercer. Some may use tools, and some will not. However, there are certain things that every piercer should ALWAYS do. First, your jewelry and any tools the piercer uses should be sterilized. Don't be afraid to ask the studio to see their last spore test on their autoclave (it is recommended that these tests be done on a monthly basis), or ask about their sterilization procedures. Some piercers will work out of sterile pouches where the tools are bagged, pre-sterilized, and stored. Others will work out of what's called a Statim Autoclave, the method I use, where cleaned tools, jewelry, and needles are loaded into a cassette and sterilized separately for each client. All tools are decontaminated after procedures and before being sterilized. The piercer should be wearing gloves throughout the procedure, and use sterile gloves during the actual piercing process. In the state of Florida, where our studio is located, all piercing procedures must be done with sterile gloves, but this law varies from state-to-state. It is important to note there is a difference between sterile gloves and ones that come out of a box all mixed together. Sterile gloves are packaged individually, or as a pair in their own sterile pouches. After or before the procedure, you should be given thorough verbal and written instructions on how to take care of your new piercing and where to buy the proper aftercare products (such as Sterile Saline Wound Wash) if it is not offered by the studio or business on-site. It's important to know that cartilage piercings like the daith can take nine months or longer to fully heal. A commitment to taking care of the piercing through the entirety of the healing process is important. Should you have any questions prior to or after the procedure, contact your piercer and they will take the time to answer them. Sometimes, studios have counter help who can also answer questions.

Q How would a person go about finding a reputable parlor to get a daith piercing?

A The best advice I can give is DO YOUR RESEARCH! Ask friends with well-healed and good-looking piercings where they got theirs done. Look at the reviews of the places you are considering, and visit a couple of them until you feel 100% comfortable with the studio and the piercer who is going to be modifying your body. One great source of information is the Association of Professional Piercers website, www.safepiercing.org, where you can try to find an APP Member close to your city. Disclaimer: not all great piercers are members, and not all members are great piercers. APP membership is for piercers who are following a higher standard in their piercing practices as far as materials, sterilization, and safety go. This is why doing your own research in general is important!

Q Do you have any additional thoughts or comments you would like to share?

A I want to add that as a person who has suffered with migraines since I was 12, I understand the desperate feeling of people who are truly suffering. I was first put on meds at that age before even being tested. I have undergone multiple MRIs, EKGs, EEGs, blood tests, you name it, since I was 14. I feel it's highly important to say that piercers are not able to offer medical relief. If you are seeking a piercing for that reason, that's fine; however, please do not go to anyone who is claiming daith piercings are a cure or any kind of medical treatment. For piercers to insinuate or advertise this piercing helps cure migraines is very close to attempting to practice medicine without a license. I tell my clients this: I get it. I hope you get the relief you want out of this piercing, but worst case scenario, you end up with a rad piercing that has many incredible pieces of jewelry options to choose from.

