# Twitter Thread by Nik



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**I struggled with intense acne for 3 long years in high school.**

**During that time, Western pimple commercials eroded my self-worth in 30-second increments.**

**Here is the story and what it means for practicing self-improvement without judging yourself.**

**Time for a thread! ■■■**

The arc of the pimple commercials was always the same:

1. Guy with pimples hides from his crush

2. Someone tells him he's ugly

3. There's a party

4. Someone recommends some skincare product

5. Guy uses product, goes to party, kisses the girl

Ex: https://t.co/c2aFPCUYTv

The message this reinforced to people for whom the product didn't work (aka me) was also always the same:

As long as you have acne, the other sex won't be interested in you, so don't bother.

It's a pattern deeply embedded in Western culture:

Find a flaw, worry about it, try a quick fix. If it doesn't work, go back to worrying.

Repeat this cycle until you find an even bigger inadequacy.

This may lead to some improvement, but it inevitably leads to self-loathing.

Now, let me present to you: Japanese skincare ads. They don't target teenagers.

Pimples aren't a flaw to be overcome, just a part of life.

"If you take care of your skin, acne might happen but won't ruin your day."

That's the message.

Ex: https://t.co/hePxDYyPku

The Japanese perceive problems differently.

They don't view them as stumbling blocks to be eliminated. Instead, they see them as stepping stones on a never-ending journey.

They EMPATHIZE with problems.

When a UCLA psychology professor observed a bunch of Japanese 4th-graders, he saw the teacher call the worst student to the board. The task was to draw a three-dimensional cube.

Quote:

"Every few minutes, the teacher would ask the rest of the class whether the kid had gotten it right, and the class would look up from their work and shake their heads no. At the end of the class, he did make his cube look right!

And the teacher said, 'How does that look, class?' And they all said, 'He did it!' And they broke into applause. The kid smiled a huge smile and sat down, clearly proud of himself."

In a Western classroom, if a student is called out and doesn't get it right instantly, they are branded as stupid - if not by the teacher, then at least by the other students.

In Japan, mistakes are seen as valuable.

There's not just something to learn, there's something to learn FOR EVERYONE.

Solving the problem becomes a joint effort, and if the student succeeds, everyone wins.

Kintsugi is an old Japanese art. It is the craft of repairing broken pottery using seams of gold.

Instead of trying to hide the object's cracks, it accentuates them.

The message is simple but meaningful: Our trials and flaws are not scars on our character - they are the very fabric that makes us human.

Each obstacle, each mistake becomes a building block of a better tomorrow, thus making us a little more unique and beautiful.

In the West, we throw things away when they break.

To some extent, we do the same with people. If you struggle in even the slightest, you're not good enough.

You can buy some Spanx, muscle supplements, or an online course to fix it, but until you have, don't bother.

There's a difference between fixing and integrating: One is done to compensate, the other to move forward.

When we obsess over correcting our flaws, we may succeed, but we'll never feel content.

When we appreciate life's transience, we can focus on learning and seeing beauty in our little imperfections.

The Japanese call this appreciation "mono no aware" - an empathy toward things, a sense of impermanence.

Mono no aware is the difference between a laid-back, joyful pursuit of growth and a never-ending spiral of self-flagellation.

https://t.co/j33DnpDM9C

A desire to improve your life is a wonderful thing. It's less wonderful if that desire leaves a constant taste of "I'm not good enough" in your mouth.

Mistakes are a valuable source of learning for everyone, and our flaws are not just not so bad, they make us unique and beautiful.

The next time you spot a pimple or give the wrong answer, remember the art of kintsugi:

Don't fix. Integrate.

As long as you make them steps to something bigger, not a single one of your obstacles will go to waste.

Hey there! ■

If you liked this thread, try You, my daily email.

It's full of inspiration, smart ideas, and emotional support for the most important person in your life - you.

https://t.co/riErAsPSEa