

ADWEEK

Young Influentials

Jay Shetty Went From Monk to New Media Mogul With His Message of Mindfulness

The Young Influentials cover star is changing people's perspectives, but remaining humble

By [Ko Im](#) | November 17, 2019

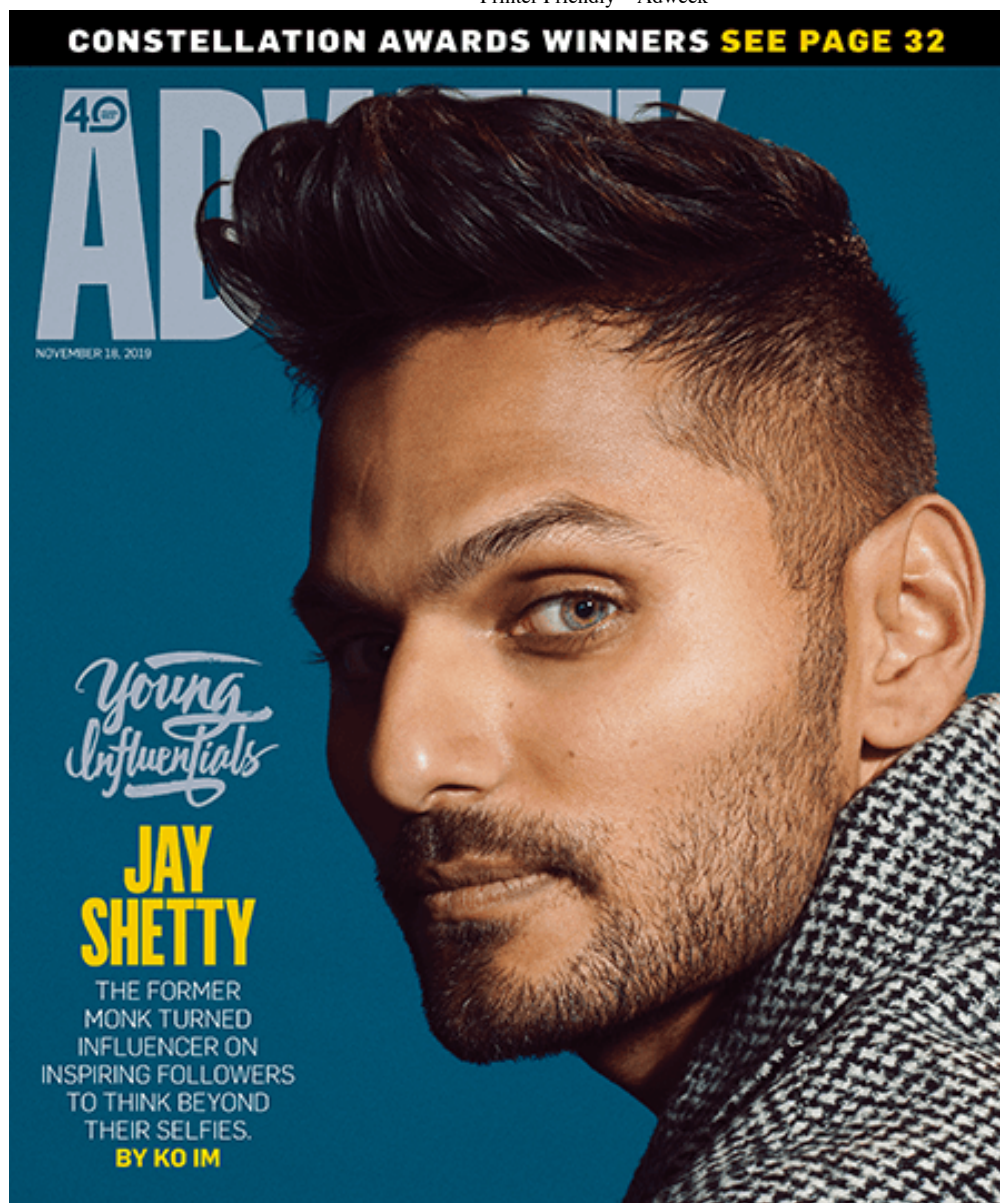


'I really believe that if you come across something in life that could improve the life of someone else, you should pass it on,' Shetty says.

Credit: Mackenzie Stroh for Adweek

Jay Shetty is not your typical celebrity. Sure, he looks like a laid-back model with his crystalline green eyes and perfectly coiffed hair. He shifts effortlessly in his seat as he locks in with the camera lens.

“Somehow I knew you’d be easy to shoot,” our cover photographer says. To prepare for the shoot, she’s watched Shetty’s snackable, wisdom-laden content, as have millions captivated by his presence and purposeful message.



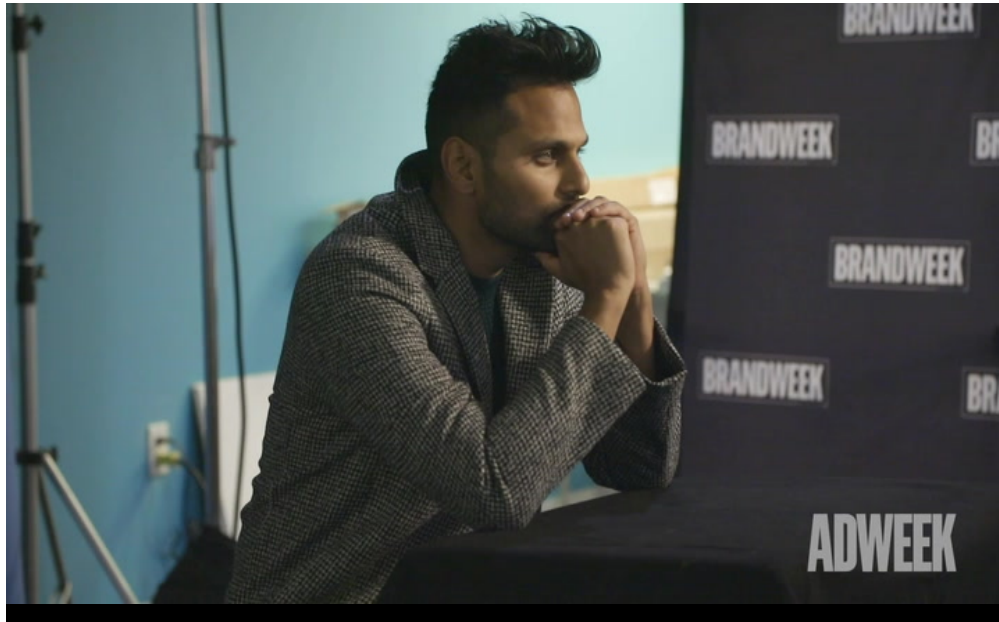
Mackenzie Stroh for Adweek

Shetty's a storyteller, life coach and friendly face all wrapped up in one—a younger, hipper, more mainstream Deepak Chopra. He signs off on his emails “with gratitude.” He relates to people like an average Joe—if Joe were a 32-year-old highly purpose-driven British Indian who is the dictionary definition of influence—“an emanation of spiritual or moral force”—and of influencer. But Shetty doesn't inspire people to buy some material thing; he inspires them to buy into a happier, more fulfilling, less stressful life through small, actionable steps. He wants to be a catalyst for people to influence themselves. In his own words: “We all have things we need to work on.”

After finishing university in London, the self-described introvert went to India to be with monks, shaving his head and meditating for several hours a day, every day. After three years, the monks encouraged Shetty to leave and spread mindfulness. And spread it he did—via YouTube. He started making videos on the platform and getting immediate feedback, like “fascinating and yet so simple. It's what I needed to hear at exactly the right time.” A few years in, and still not making money off his YouTube videos, a well-connected friend introduced Shetty to [Arianna Huffington](https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/how-arianna-huffington-s-idea-blog-changed-media-industry-forever-167464/) <https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/how-arianna-huffington-s-idea-blog-changed-media-industry-forever-167464/>), who gave him a daily show on HuffPost Live in 2016. And earlier this year, [Ellen DeGeneres](https://www.adweek.com/tv-video/how-adweek-media-visionary-ellen-degeneres-built-a-media-empire/) <https://www.adweek.com/tv-video/how-adweek-media-visionary-ellen-degeneres-built-a-media-empire/>) offered him a platform on [Ellentube](https://www.adweek.com/tv-video/how-ellen-) <https://www.adweek.com/tv-video/how-ellen->

[conquered-digital/](#)) to help amplify his message after having him as a guest on her show. “I want to do more with you—all the time,” DeGeneres said. On the new platform, Shetty helps people “press pause” on negative thoughts and emotions and reframe them.

Shetty’s influence continues to grow—nowadays, he also gives talks for corporations like Accenture, Coca-Cola and Google—and there’s no shortage of strategy behind his relevance. His team reads the comments on all of his various platforms in real time to extract universal themes—stress, relationships, purpose, failure—that are important to his global audience and can become fodder for the next conversation. His social media posts, sometimes simple reminders to love like a child, for example, easily rack up hundreds of thousands of likes. And all of the responses are written personally by Shetty.



Video: Jay Shetty Behind the Scenes

Shetty scripts and records his video content a month or two in advance in a process he calls “block creating.” Perhaps it is this intentional and thoughtful creation process that helps the Shorty Awards winner develop and distribute real, everyday conversations everywhere: on Ellentube, his YouTube channel, a highly rated podcast called On Purpose with guests that have included Kobe Bryant and Eva Longoria, and a forthcoming book.

We sat down with Shetty to discuss how he found success and how he stays grounded through it all.

Adweek: Why wisdom?

Jay Shetty: I really believe that if you come across something in life that could improve the life of someone else, you should pass it on. ... I just happen to have fallen in love with wisdom, and I want to tell all my friends about it. So it’s this beautiful feeling of seeing something transform your life, seeing it transform the life of others. Why would you not want to give it to everyone? And, at the same time, the more I give it, the more I get a chance to grow and realize how much work I need to do.

Do you feel like you’re working hard?

When it comes to creating content, I try and give myself space. I actually have a clock on my desk that I write all my scripts on, and the clock doesn’t work. And I have that because I want to remind myself that creativity doesn’t have any time.



**Shetty became interested in spirituality when he was 18.
Mackenzie Stroh for Adweek**

What you do or you try to do is simplify mindfulness concepts and bring them to a mainstream audience. How were you able to achieve such a meteoric rise?

It's happened quickly online, but I've been doing this for years offline and so, a lot of people don't know that. I got fascinated with all of this work in terms of spirituality, philosophy, behavioral science when I was around 18 years old. I've been doing this for 14 years, and I've been doing it online for three years. The three years online seem really fast, but it's the offline that has really fueled the online. I was doing this when I had no followers, no subscribers, when I didn't make a penny. ... I think it's about the message, and I think we're just in a time right now where the message is so needed. And I'm grateful that I get to be an instrument and a conduit in that plan and process.

How do you approach your brand and maintain it as you grow?

I'm really fortunate that I get to work with amazing partners that thankfully want to work with me

because of what I stand for. I think it's different when you're starting out. You feel like, "Oh, my god, if I'm saying no to something, then I may miss out on something huge." But what I would honestly say is that there are totally bigger things coming. ... And I think we have to have that faith. We have to have that confidence that if we're truly standing for something, it will get its moment to shine.

BY THE MINDFUL NUMBERS

4.7M

Instagram followers

3.1M

Youtube subscribers and over 119 million total views

25M

Facebook fans and 399 members of the Jay Shetty Neck Tattoo Group

5.0

Average of 9,000 ratings for On Purpose podcast

21 Days

Shetty takes off every year to meditate with the monks.

#1

Amazon new release in Buddhist Rituals and Practice based on

Rituals and Practice based on preorders of his forthcoming book

Is there anything else you want to share?

[Pauses, eyes searching] I'd genuinely say that if everyone could just take out more time for deep human connection with the people they love and the people that love them—that's been a big thing for me. For the last two years, you could say I've hustled. I've worked very hard and been very focused. And this year, I made my biggest priority to spend more time with my wife. ... I'm going to say do something with someone you love where you can grow together. Go to a class together. Go on an activity together. Read a book together. Grow with people you love. ... Don't just spend time with them, grow with them, and you'll see your relationship grows at the same time.

You can hear more from Jay's interview on our podcast. <https://www.adweek.com/category/adweek-podcasts/>

Read Adweek's full list of [2019 Young Influentials](https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/29-savvy-stars-changing-the-way-we-think-about-branding/#/). <https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/29-savvy-stars-changing-the-way-we-think-about-branding/#/>



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