

Manley Underwear aims to 'stop the Pee Spot' and start a conversation



Peter Neal has worn many hats over his career, including entrepreneur and business owner. But, now that he's got a few new pairs of underwear under his belt, he has a new title on his resume: 'Director of Pee-Spot Research.'

It's not a technical term, but it's indicative of the tongue-in-cheek approach Peter, his brother Chris, and Paul Manley are taking with the launch of Manley Underwear, a new line of boxer-briefs that purports to eliminate the 'pee-spot' for men who can't get a handle on that pesky last dribble leftover from a trip to the bathroom.

It's also indicative of how humour helped both Peter and Paul on this unlikely journey that resulted in a novel, but most importantly useful, stocking stuffer.

'I guess it was in the fall of 2019 when I was out walking with Paul,' says Peter Neal, co-founder of Neal Brothers Foods. 'His wife six months previous to that had succumbed to mental illness and, as you can imagine, he was in a semi-depressed mood. That September I got hit with some mental illness and, as we walked and talked, we felt the support from one another. We just started using humour and one thing led to another and I remembered a skit I once wanted to submit to Saturday Night Live about men's underwear that would ensure you didn't have a pee spot.'

'We both looked to each other and said, 'Has this ever happened to you?' We both agreed, but nobody ever talks about it. Men don't talk about this stuff. They (also) don't talk about their mental health, so why don't we help? We thought this underwear would serve not only as an essential pair of underwear that stops the pee spot, a really functional pair of underwear, but it's also a conversation starter for some of the conversations men don't like to have.'

And, thus, Manley Barrier Apparel was born.

'We wanted incredibly comfortable underwear: the fabric mattered, as well as the material to be put in place. We tried three or four different iterations.'

The technology, they say, is "an invisible barrier two years in the making, that is impenetrable to drops, drips and dribbles. It acts as a shield and a safeguard from the dreaded post-shake pee spot so you can walk into any room, as proud and confident as a peacock. (See what we did there?)"

Well, it's hard to miss what they did there " and that's just the point.

As jokey as the brand is, it's also frank and upfront, just as they feel important conversations about mental health should be.

"The overarching theme is vulnerability and not to be afraid to say, 'I'm unwell.' It's an illness, not a weakness," says Peter. "[This journey] has taught me a lot since I went through my depression and since I have been advocating my girls have all been affected."

When a family member received mental health treatment at the Pine River Institute near Shelburne, where the family has committed to building a new dining hall under the Neal family name, Peter says he "got a better understanding of what mental health can look like."

"It doesn't need to be your badge," he says. "I think some people are afraid that by talking about it they will be identified with that. It doesn't need to be that. I didn't want attention or help from the medical side of things. My family could only do so much. It is very difficult to understand it. I would say it is wonderful to get support, first and foremost. Communicate your feelings and where you're at. I would encourage the caregivers or yourself to reach out and make a phone call. I was fortunate to get proper diagnosis from one or two different psychiatrists and here I am.

"One of the things we want to do is create a support platform. Other platforms are out there, but one for us that will be for people to interact with circles and be a forum. This project has been a wonderful outlet for us. We all said that if this doesn't go anywhere, it's already gone far enough in terms of building friendship and support."

That being said, however, there are already plans afoot for what Peter describes as "Manley 2.0" " no, despite the use of the word "afoot" socks aren't in the works (at least not yet) but rather t-shirts using the same technology that will combat pit sweat and stains. Who said variety isn't the Old Spice of life?

For more information on Manley Underwear, visit www.manleyunderwear.com.

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