

“What Being Tall Means to Me”

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“Your head’s going to hit the doorframe!” warned my friend’s mom. I looked up toward the ceiling. Since I’d walked through those doors many times in the past, I knew I’d have no trouble getting through. But she wasn’t entirely wrong: there was virtually no gap between my head and the doorframe. The conversation continued as we joked about my height. I’d previously gathered from my friend that the family had been going through a difficult time, so I hoped that a conversation as simple as this one might be a source of cheer and fellowship.

I’ve had countless equally unique interactions with a wide range of people—from strangers to friends—all stemming from comments about my height. Admittedly, this could be uncomfortable or even annoying. When I was younger, I often loathed the attention I received from my height. But not anymore. I’ve embraced the reality that my height creates a natural talking point. In fact, when I’m in a crowded room, I instantly notice other tall people. This creates an element of cohesion. Even though I may not know their names, personalities, or values, encountering others of similar height creates a sense of shared identity.

I’ve also enjoyed similar camaraderie with my basketball teammates. Our starting center stands out in particular. I greatly admire how he uses his height to benefit the team, fearlessly blocking shots and rebounding aggressively. His hustle and determination have been key to the team’s success. Even though I’m just as tall as he is, my role on the team is different. I don’t get as much playing time as he does, so my job is to be ready whenever my name is called. While staying prepared to enter the game, I relish the opportunity to cheer my teammates on. Our team’s cohesion even propelled us all the way to the championship. Even though we didn’t win the game, I’ve developed lasting friendships with teammates of all different heights.

Furthermore, I see my height as an opportunity to serve others, similar to my role on the team. I volunteer at a local homeschool gathering on Tuesdays. One morning, after our weekly meeting had ended, I was about to head outside, having already finished helping the teachers transport their classroom supplies. As I approached the door, I heard a voice calling my name. It was my mom telling me she needed help with something. I followed her into a room where the teaching director and her young daughter were pointing toward the ceiling. I looked up and saw a red balloon. They had been unable to reach it, and the child desperately wanted the balloon. I leapt into the air, grabbed the balloon, and handed it to her with a smile on my face. Whether it be retrieving balloons or reaching for items on the top shelf of the grocery store, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to serve others.

It’s always a pleasant surprise when I encounter someone taller than me. The other week, I visited a campus community at the University of Maryland. As the leader welcomed me to the group, he joked that it was nice to finally meet another tall person.

I see this as a harbinger of things to come. I will continue to embrace my height as I grow in a variety of ways over the next four years.