

What Being Tall Means to Me

By: Cohen Brinkley

Being 6'5" means you are seen even when you do not want to be. You walk into a room, and people notice you before you say a word. Over time I have learned that height itself does not create opportunity but does give you a chance too create the opportunity yourself. Being tall has taught me about influence, responsibility, and how small choices can impact others.

The playground was the first area of my life where my tallness helped me. As the tallest kid, I usually decided the game we were going to play during recess. If I said we were playing kickball, we played kickball. If I said teams were switching, teams switched. My friends listened simply because I was tall. But what mattered more was how I used that influence. If I included the kids who were usually picked last or left out, suddenly everyone did. If I showed kindness, other people would be kind too.

Even at a young age, being tall made me more watched than others, and I learned that leadership is less about control and being loud and is more about encouraging and setting examples. Of course, being tall also comes with plenty of funny moments. When I was 4, I joined my first soccer team. My parents heard the other team's coach joking about needing to see my birth certificate. Now that I've almost reached my full height, I must duck down to enter into the main doors at my high school. Buying pants has never been simple, 31x36 is not exactly a common size, and team jogger pants never seem to fit. It's a good thing shorter pants came back in style! These experiences have taught me being tall is not a bad thing but is a gift. Humor is another way to connect with people, and I have had to learn how to use it.

As I've grown older, being tall has continued to shape how others see me. Teachers, coaches, and peers expect confidence and leadership from me before they even get to know me. At first, that pressure weighed on me. Over time, I realized it was also a gift. Height gave me a platform, but my character decided whether people respected me. I learned to listen more and speak less, and act intentionally, knowing my actions were more visible than most. Being tall has also helped me feel what others feel. Standing out physically made me more aware of how others feel when they do not fit in. Whether someone feels overlooked, underestimated, or out of place, I understand that feeling of being different. That awareness pushes me to be inclusive and intentional about making space for others, just like I learned on the playground.

I have learned being tall comes with responsibility. It has taught me to lead from the back and not always be the loudest. It taught me to be kind when it is easier to blend in or stay silent. Height may open doors, but what I do with those doors is more important. I can't control how tall I am, but I can control how I show up, how I treat people, how I lead, and how I use the attention I receive. To me being tall is not about inches, jokes, or even always being asked if I play basketball all the time. It is about understanding that being tall is a gift and an opportunity to achieve more and make a difference in the lives of others.