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What Being Tall Means to Me

Being tall means always being visible, even when I am naturally shy and would rather blend into the background. It means hearing “Tall people in the back!” whenever a group photo is taken. It means strangers asking if I play basketball or volleyball before they ask my name. And sometimes, it means quietly wondering if the person behind me can actually see the screen.

My height has been noticeable for as long as I can remember. When I was five years old, I was already tall enough to ride roller coasters, which quickly became my favorite rides. While many kids had to wait years before they met the height requirement, I could walk right through the gate. At that age, being tall felt like a superpower.

As I grew older, however, I began to realize that standing out was not always comfortable.

Growing up, I was almost always taller than my peers and often even taller than many of the boys in my class, especially during middle school. At that age when everyone is trying to fit in, my difference felt especially noticeable. My reserved nature sometimes made that visibility feel overwhelming. Without realizing it, I began to slouch, trying to make myself appear smaller.

But being tall felt so conflicting. On one hand, people would say things like, “Wow, you could be a model,” because tallness has become a beauty standard. On the other hand, I had yet to grow into myself, and I often just wanted to fit into a world where tall women were not the norm.

Height shapes how people perceive me. Tall people are often assumed to be confident, assertive, or even intimidating. Meanwhile, some of my shorter friends are described as “cute” or “petite.” Those labels made me aware of how quickly society assigns personality traits based on appearance.

As I have grown into my height and self, being tall has also given me an early sense of self-awareness. At first, that awareness felt more like self-consciousness. I worried about standing out too much or taking up too much space. Over time, however, I began to understand the difference between the two. Self-consciousness made me want to shrink myself.

Self-awareness helped me understand how I move through spaces and how others experience them. Yes, shopping for jeans will still mean trying on pair after pair, only to find that they fit my waist but stop awkwardly above my ankles. And yes, sitting at a desk at school may still mean bumping my knees against the underside of the table. And yes, at the movie theater, I sometimes wonder if the person behind me can see the screen. But it has taught me to be more observant. I notice when someone is struggling to reach something or when a small act of help could make a difference. Sometimes that help is simple, like grabbing a jar from the top shelf for someone who cannot reach it.

My height also felt like part of a larger pattern of standing out. I am left-handed, and I have big, natural hair. For a while, it felt like many parts of me made me different. Over time, though, I began to see those differences not as things to manage but as parts of myself to respect.

Most importantly, being tall taught me confidence.

For someone who is naturally quiet, learning to be comfortable being seen did not happen overnight. Confidence grew in a moment when I stopped slouching in photos and realized that taking up space is not something I need to apologize for.

Now, when someone says, “Wow, you’re tall,” I smile. It represents the journey of learning to stand fully in who I am with confidence, empathy, and respect for the space I occupy in the world.