

What Being Tall Means to Me - Ella Hammond

In every class photo, I learned the same lesson: stand in the back, straighten your shoulders, and try not to look different. Being tall has been a defining trait for as long as I can remember. I was always the tallest among my peers—taller than the boys in my class, taller than students in older grades—and although I had been raised to appreciate it, I began to feel insecure in elementary school. I worried my height made me look too masculine or that it would make me unlikable. As I grew older and became more aware of the expectations placed on girls to look a certain way, that insecurity deepened into something closer to resentment. While there were small conveniences to being tall, I struggled to see my height as anything other than a flaw.

That perspective did not begin to change until high school, when maturity and experience slowly reshaped the way I saw myself. I started to realize that being tall was not something negative to overcome, but something meaningful to understand. My height became more than a measurement; it became a story. It represents a long history of tall people who loved one another, including a six-foot-five man and a five-foot-nine woman whose love eventually made me possible. What once felt like an awkward difference began to feel like a connection to my family and the generations before me. Every physical feature I carry is evidence of relationships built on care and commitment. Recognizing this transformed my height from a source of embarrassment into a reminder that I come from love, and that nothing rooted in love can truly be something to hate.

Beyond symbolism, being tall has also shown me how difference can become useful. I can reach what others cannot, assist when help is needed, and quite literally support the people around me. In horseback riding, one of my greatest passions, long legs allow for clearer communication and steadier guidance, turning what I once viewed as awkward into something purposeful. Even in small everyday moments, like retrieving items at work that others cannot reach, I am reminded that standing out can mean showing up for others. My height taught me that the traits that separate us are often the very traits that allow us to contribute.

Most importantly, being tall has given me the chance to practice confidence with intention. In a country where the average woman is much shorter than I am, I rarely disappear into a crowd. I still notice when I tower over others in photographs or stand out in public spaces. The difference now is that I no longer interpret visibility as vulnerability. Instead, I see it as an invitation to accept myself fully and to extend that acceptance to others who feel different in their own ways. Learning to appreciate my height required patience, self-reflection, and the willingness to challenge my own assumptions about beauty and belonging. Through that process, I discovered that confidence is not the absence of difference, but comfort within it.

I still stand in the back of every photo. I still rise above the crowd. But I no longer try to make myself smaller. Being tall is not just a physical characteristic, it is a reminder of where I come from, how I can help others, and who I am choosing to become. Now, instead of shrinking from the space I take up in the world, I stand tall within it.