

## What Being Tall Means to Me

Rebecca Ryall

For me my height is like the famous chicken or the egg scenario. Which came first? My height or my personality? I have never been able to separate the two. From a young age I stood out in rooms simply by standing up. Over time I began to realize that my presence in a room carried weight before I even spoke. I often feel as though my height and personality have a symbiotic relationship. My height and personality are intertwined, connected in ways far beyond the scope of my imagination. They rely on each other, without one you can't have the other. They have developed and grown side by side affecting each other and consequently shaping me. My above average stature and my leadership-driven personality have come to shape how I see myself and how I move through the world.

Being tall is a huge part of who I am, both figuratively and literally. My tall stature is a core aspect of my character. My height is a predominant source of self-worth, and confidence that determines how I conduct myself and how I am perceived by others in life. I've always been an assertive person who naturally gravitates toward leadership, and that shows in everything I do.

I love swimming and hiking with my family, I play both basketball and softball, sports where my height is impossible to ignore. In Softball I am also an umpire and mentor to younger players and officials. Umpiring requires confidence, clarity and fairness, especially in high-pressure situations. I have learned how to use my height and assertiveness to communicate clearly and confidently with players, coaches, and other officials. As a player, my coaches taught me early on to embrace my height and utilize the power that came with it, not just physical power but mental strength and presence. Those lessons have extended beyond sports and into how I conduct myself in everyday life.

When you're tall, just like any other identifying feature, people often make assumptions. They assume you must play basketball or volleyball or that you row. They often assume you're older than you actually are, or more mature than your peers. In the same way, even if only subconsciously, they expect you to be a leader, someone who should take charge, speak up, or stand at the front. So, I find myself circling back to that question: what came first? The chicken or the egg? Have I always been a leader who just happened to be above-average height? Or did the world decide I was a leader because I was tall, gently nudging me into that role until it became a part of who I am?

To me, being tall means more than simply living up to the expectations others place on you; it means rising far above them. It means not just stepping into leadership roles because others think you should, but instead because you are qualified and you genuinely want to. Being tall means leading with kindness, empathy, and intention. It means playing sports and being more than just "the tall one" on the court. It means embracing the visibility that comes with height and using it to set an example for others. It means always standing up straight and wearing heels to every event even if I can't walk in them, simply because it makes me feel confident. Most importantly, being tall means taking every height-related comment no matter how cliché, predictable, or overused as a compliment. Because yes, the weather *is* much nicer up here!