

What Being Tall Means to Me - Inderveer Kaur Bains

There is a particular feeling that comes with walking into a room and knowing you will be noticed before you say a single word. For me, that feeling has followed me since seventh grade, when a sudden growth spurt during quarantine transformed me from average height to someone labelled “tall.” Almost overnight, I went from blending in with classmates to standing above many, feeling like a giant in spaces I once felt normal.

At first, the attention felt heavy. In gym class, when we were asked to line up from tallest to shortest, I would instinctively prepare myself for the familiar discomfort. Even when a boy was shorter than me, he would hesitate to stand behind me and not acknowledge that I was taller than him. It sometimes felt unfair that most of the boys around me were my height, as though my femininity was being measured against something I could not control.

People often tried to reassure me with “You have the height of a model,” or “It gives you personality.” These comments were meant to be compliments, yet they often felt dismissive. While others saw confidence and uniqueness, I felt abnormal. What seemed like a blessing to others sometimes felt like a curse to me. I would shrug my shoulders, trying to take up less space than I naturally did. I simply wanted the lingering eyes in hallways and public spaces to move past me. Being tall taught me early what it means to be visible. I could not disappear into the background, even when I wished I could. Over time, I began to understand that visibility is not inherently negative. If I were going to be seen, I could decide what people saw in me beyond my height.

This realization deepened through leadership and service. Since sixth grade, I have volunteered every Sunday at the Gurdwara for eight hours. What began as an obligation became a responsibility I embraced, teaching me that leadership is not about physical presence but about consistency, character, and care. I also volunteer at a senior center, where I have learned the value of patience and attentive listening. In high school, I participated in leadership initiatives and helped raise funds for the Brown Bags Association, an organization dedicated to providing food to those in need. In these spaces, I was not defined by my height but by my actions and character.

Ironically, being tall prepared me for leadership in ways I did not expect. Since I am often the first person noticed, I have learned to stand with intention. Some days I feel self-conscious, other days I stand with pride. I have learned posture reflects mindset; straightening my shoulders affirms I deserve to occupy space. I no longer view my height as something that makes me “too much.” Instead, it has become a reminder that presence is an opportunity. I can use my visibility to model confidence, compassion, and integrity for others who may feel different or out of place.

Being tall still carries moments of insecurity. Growth has not meant eliminating discomfort, but rather responding to it differently. I have learned that shrinking myself physically

or emotionally does not make me more acceptable. It only makes me smaller than I am meant to be.

What being tall means to me is not simply standing a few inches above average. It means standing fully in who I am by transforming visibility into responsibility, insecurity into self-awareness, and presence into purpose. My height once felt like something happening to me. Now, it feels like a quiet responsibility to stand upright in stature and character. My journey reflects TCI's mission of empowering tall individuals, turning visibility into opportunity and using presence to positively impact others. As I enter post-secondary education, I carry the understanding that presence is not about size but substance.