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# What Being Tall Means to Me

For some, confidence comes naturally, in their personality, smile, or demeanor. For others, it develops as they get older, through everyday experiences. For me, it came through a lot of growth spurts, awkward phases, and encouragement.

As an elementary student, I was your average scrawny schoolgirl, the same height as all the other kids. I was "normal" and didn't stand out, and I liked it that way. Then, just like all the other kids, I reached junior high, and my concept of "normal" was turned completely upside-down. Unlike many of my friends, I experienced growth spurt after growth spurt, until I was the tallest girl in my grade. Whenever I would meet someone new one of their first comments would be "Wow, you're tall." As a young teenager who was already struggling with natural insecurities, this made me feel extremely uncomfortable and on-the-spot, especially when I became a dancer. For several years, the second tallest girl in my entire studio was six inches shorter than me, and when you're dancing and wearing fitted clothing all the time, it is almost impossible not to compare yourself to others. Frustrated and anxious, I withdrew into a tight shell and tried my best to keep my head down. I started wearing dark, baggy clothes, slouching, and avoiding group settings whenever I could, since I knew I would be the tallest person around.

By the time I reached high school, however, I realized I would make my own self miserable if I kept living like this. After many conversations with my mom, who is also tall, I began to understand that while I could not control what others thought or said about me, I could control how I handled it and how I carried myself. Gradually, I started standing up straighter, looking out at the world when I was in public, and ignoring the fear that I might draw unwanted attention. It was around that time that one of my current closest friends joined my dance studio. She was an inch taller than me, and she was one of the most confident, beautiful dancers I have

ever met. Through her, I gained a new perspective on my height. Being tall is not a label or identity; it is actually a special opportunity to communicate the confidence I carry inside of me. Rather than worrying whether people will comment on my height, I chose to walk into settings with my head held high and my posture strong, and funnily enough, I actually felt like I stood out less that way. I was no longer focused on my outward appearance, but instead chose to embrace my height as a unique reflection of my inward character and poise. In dance, the more I leaned into my long limbs, the prettier my lines were, and I found myself being placed in more advanced classes. Rather than the negative attention I so despised and feared, people began telling me I looked graceful, and that they wished they could be as tall as me.

The reality is, however, that my height is not what defines me. While being tall is a beautiful, powerful gift, what really matters is who I am on the inside: a strong, graceful, determined young woman who has grown magnificently both in body and in mind. I am proud of my height, and today when someone walks up and tells me "You're tall," I simply look them in the eye and say, "Yes, I know. And I like it." After all, I can reach heights most people could never even dream to climb.