

What Being Tall Means to Me

I have never felt that being tall is an achievement, however, it has always meant more to me than a number. I did not have to put in any effort to earn it, it just happened. Initially, I was only slightly taller than my classmates, and then I outgrew my brother-in-law, a basketball player and the tallest guy I know. This attribute shapes how people perceive me and informs my understanding of purpose and responsibility.

Growing up as the tall one, I had to stand in the back of every class photo and help people reach for things up high. As a child, I felt self-conscious because my height was the first thing people noticed. It made me stand out, preventing me from blending in with the crowd. Over the years, I began to realize that my height is a gift I can use in many ways. Being tall means I am always seen, which encourages me to be recognized for the right reasons, such as leadership, kindness, and integrity.

With height comes the assumption that tall individuals are confident and natural leaders. Initially, that wasn't true for me, but it pushed me to work hard to develop these qualities. For instance, in school group projects, people naturally looked to me for direction, expecting me to take the lead role. This experience helped me develop active listening and empathy, ensuring everyone felt heard and treated equitably. Being approachable and easygoing, qualities people appreciated in a leader, also contributed to my growth. I learned to view conflicts or challenges metaphorically, using my height to gain perspective and utilize teamwork and openness to overcome them. While there is always room for growth, I believe my height has influenced my development as a leader through these experiences.

However, my height also came with numerous expectations, such as being physically strong or pursuing sports. While I was proud to achieve a black belt in karate, I never truly enjoyed other sports. After trying soccer and tennis, I realized I didn't have to follow a path dictated by my height if it didn't fulfill me. I let go of the idea that my stature should dictate my pursuits and began to explore activities that brought me joy, like creating a woodworking studio in my parents' garage. This allowed my imagination to blossom, teaching me that I don't need to conform to societal expectations if they don't benefit me or others.

Being tall underscored my sense of responsibility to others. People often asked for help carrying heavy objects or walking friends home in the dark. This sense of responsibility, combined with empathy and kindness, motivated me to volunteer and set an example for others. For instance, I collaborated with a local homeless shelter to build several high-quality benches for residents. I pitched the idea after noticing many people standing due to a lack of outdoor seating. Sourcing reclaimed wood and following the shelter's specifications, I built the benches. I even participated in the My Blueprint Skilled Career Exploration Challenge, showcasing my work and being one of 20 Canadians awarded a monetary prize, which I donated to the shelter. This is just one way I demonstrate my responsibility to others.

In summary, being tall has not just been a number for me; it has represented standing for something greater than myself. While I did not earn my height, I have learned to earn the meaning behind it, which has instilled humility in me. It has taught me to rise above

expectations, to lead with empathy, and to use my visibility to set an example and care for others. Whether through mentoring, volunteering, or building, I strive to ensure my presence leaves a positive impact. If I am meant to stand tall physically, I choose to stand tall in character, responsibility, and service, using what I was given to build a stronger, more supportive world around me.