

What Does Nudism and Nude Recreation Mean to Me?

By Sofie Camp, Age 17

July 2019

I got to experience nude recreation very differently than that of my parents, because I got to grow up in that environment and in that lifestyle. My parents first became members when I was around eight years old, and my sister and I got to experience nude recreation from that age perspective, and while growing up.

Being a teenager is one of the most difficult times in a person's life, especially a girl, because it is where struggles with body positivity, self-esteem, and comfort in one's own body really begins. In middle school and high school, body positivity and comfortability are very difficult to come to peace with. Bullying comes from the way one's body looks. Other kids judge because of one's clothing. When I met kids around my age at Mountain Air Ranch, I didn't have to deal with this kind of judgement and it really helped me through some of my adolescent years with the way I viewed my body and how clothes aren't for impressing or judging others.

For example, I was a part of the Mountain Air Ranch community when puberty really occurred for me. That is a difficult period of life, because your body is going through so many different changes at different rates than your friends and others around you. Also, this is the time of one's life when a lot of your self-esteem comes from people of the opposite gender; dating really begins so a lot of girls dress and present themselves the way they do to catch the attention of the opposite gender.

It is usual to hear the words, "I'm fat" and "my clothes are ugly" from girls around the school. When I was also growing up in a place where no one is judged by their clothes and bodies are not judged or hidden, it helped me a lot as a teenage girl going through this journey. I learned that my body is unique. I learned how to not judge others based on their clothes and their body types. Everyone is unique, and their bodies are unique, that is something to be proud of and something to respect.

I still struggled some with my body image in high school, most girls do. But this experience helped me out tremendously with my body positivity and changed the way I saw other people. It impacted me during this time, and has stayed with me through many years, it will continue to impact me for the rest of my life.

As a college student now, looking back on my experience in high school, I see now how much status and popularity came to girls with nicer, more expensive clothes. The people who live in Highlands Ranch tend to be more upper-middle to upper status instead of average middle-class. Kids at my school drove more expensive cars and wore more expensive clothes.

One of the very big trends that emerged during my high school years was Lululemon. If you are unfamiliar with the company, they mainly produce athletic wear for women. Their clothes also tend to be incredibly overpriced. Leggings, which were and still are a big trend for teenage girls, averaged to about \$80 a pair. The majority of girls at my school wore Lululemon leggings and athletic shorts. They contributed more to their popularity and status than they consciously realized.

The thing with teenage girls' clothes is that those who have the nicer, more expensive ones don't realize how that affects those who don't. Girls who weren't "popular" or couldn't afford expensive clothes like those from Lululemon took that to heart, and it happened to me too. Though it sounds incredibly stupid, my self-esteem lowered because I wore leggings I got on sale through Amazon. I didn't want people to look at me.

My experience with nude recreation growing up helped this struggle I had though. Clothes were not as important to me as they were to other people. Don't get me wrong, I love wearing clothes that make me feel cute, but they weren't as materialistic to me. I think this is because I noticed how materialized they were, and the power they had over other girls and myself lowered.

So, my last couple years in high school, the clothes I wore didn't affect me as much. The second semester of my senior year, I took Broadway Dance since I still needed a half-credit of physical education to graduate. The class was about 75% freshmen girls, some actual dancers, the other 25% were upperclassmen like me just there to get the credit.

I remember during attendance and warm-up we had to sit in alphabetical order. The girl next to me was a very slim freshman whom I sometimes talked with before class. I remember one day, the two of us and some of the other girls were talking about clothes. The freshman stated that her favorite leggings were from Lululemon, and that's all she buys now.

As a response, I looked at her and I said, "Oh, I just can't afford stuff like that, I got mine on Amazon. They all look the same to me," and she didn't know how to respond. Her parent's money bought her those leggings and many more, but it seemed like she never thought about other people who might not have as much money or pay for their clothes themselves.

I think at that moment, she also realized how clothes and the brand name were just materialistic possessions, and that there really wasn't that big of a difference. Throughout that semester, I was in a class filled with freshmen girls wearing expensive athletic wear, but I didn't even care. A couple of years ago, that would have really bothered me. But it didn't anymore.

Clothes are just possessions; they can reflect our personalities but not us as individuals. I feel lucky to be one of the few girls that came to this realization this early in my life. Some find it later in life, and some don't find it at all. I feel extremely lucky to be one of the ones who did. Meeting people at my local club without the factor of clothes reflecting status was easier. They were just people, and I could see them for who they were instead of the clothes they wore.

A lot of students will apply for any scholarship and accept any scholarship regardless of what company or organization the money comes from. I think it's very important to respect personal beliefs and principals, and not just seek out money for the sake of receiving money. AANR stands for something important, and something that I believe in as a person. I think it's important to give back to the organizations that give back to you, and AANR has given so much to me during some of the hardest years of my life.