

I Was Naked In Front Of Strangers For 4 Days & Here's What Happened



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an hour ago LIFESTYLE



When I was invited to attend a “Naughty Girls Getaway” at a [clothing optional resort called Hedonism II in Negril, Jamaica](#), I considered admitting that there is, indeed, a God. My answer was obviously, “Um, yes!” — but as I counted down the days until my trip, I was surprised that my colleagues thought that what I was about to embark on was an impressive feat rather than, say, a vacation.

More than one woman said to me, “You’re so brave. I could *never* do that. I’m too self-conscious about my [insert body part of theirs I had actively envied] to be naked in front of other people.” Their response baffled me; here I thought I was pulling off the coup of a lifetime by getting to have a free vacation actually count as “work” — and the women around me were treating me like a loose Joan of Arc. Apparently, [being naked](#) is still a radical act.

Though I considered myself pretty damn comfortable with being naked (you’ll find me naked at home on my couch as I write this, laptop balanced atop my bush), what I found out [at Hedonism](#) is that I had an entire other layer of shame around my nakedness and body, just waiting to be shed. To my own surprise, my four days at a nudist resort profoundly changed my life. I left feeling, with a nearly evangelical surety, that being naked in “public” is something every woman should get to experience at least once in her life.

I was naked for the better part of four days, and here’s what happened.

1. I Learned That Nakedness Makes Me Feel Less Competitive With Other Women



My first moment of public nakedness came on Day 1 aboard a sailboat, when I was going snorkeling with the other journalists invited on the trip. In an attempt to be naked as much as possible, I hadn't even packed a swimsuit, so I knew I was going in topless. I was on the last day of my period, so I stripped down to [my THINX underwear](#), and was the first to stand up on the boat, tits out. Like that scene in *Spartacus*, slowly, one by one, other women started taking off their tops too. I saw all their breasts; brown, pale, saggy, impossibly perky. Mine were definitely the smallest. In that moment, though, it didn't matter. We jumped into the ocean, and swam. By the time we climbed out, it felt like we'd all become close friends. Nakedness, I found, forges female friendship quickly.

As the day progressed, I went with one of the other writers to sunbathe naked. We talked and bonded easily, nude. It was awesome, like this whole level of competition or reserve had been stripped away, right along with our clothes. Everyone was flawed and lovely, and everyone had something to offer.

2. I Realized That Walking Naked Is Harder Than Laying Down Naked



When I was laying there sunbathing with my new friend, I realized I had to pee. My impulse was to pull on my dress along with my sandals, but seeing all the nudists clustered over by the bar, I realized putting clothing on was actually totally unnecessary.

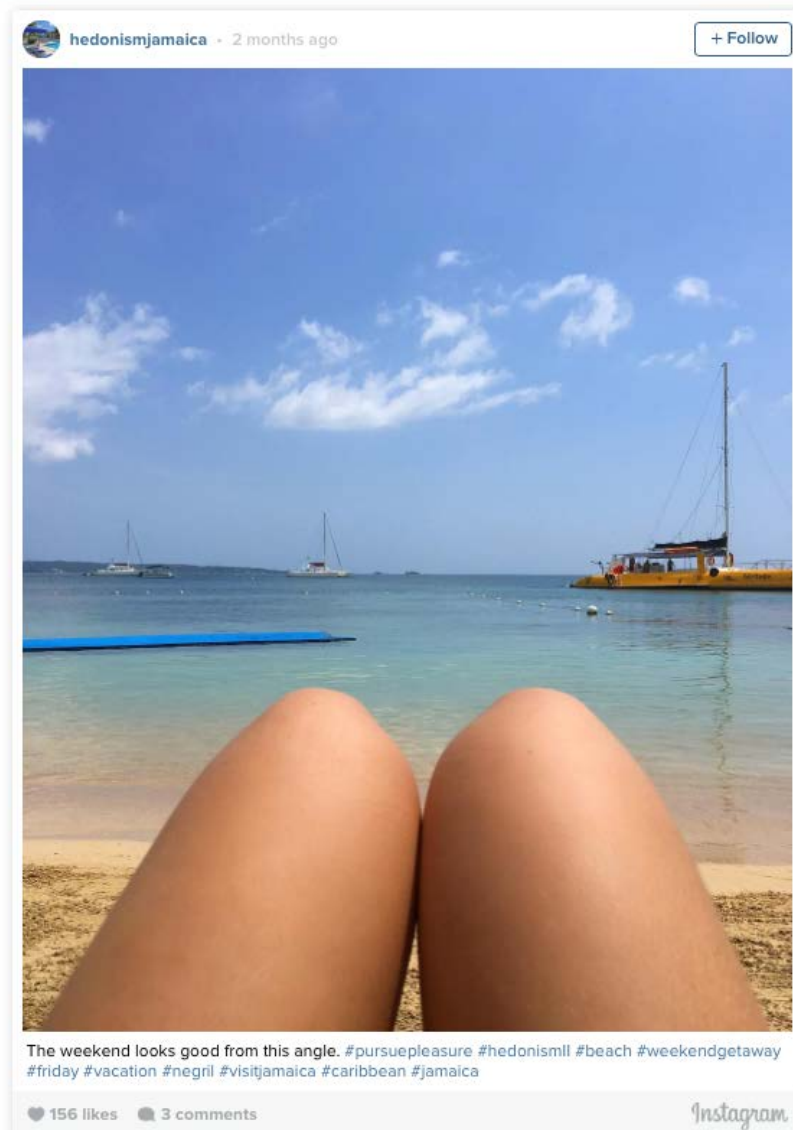
"I think I'm going to get up, but I'm kind of scared!" I told my new friend.
"Walking and standing up feels different than laying down."

"Oh my God, it's *totally* different than laying down!" she exclaimed.

"I'm doing it."

I walked to the bathroom, and, lo and behold, nobody catcalled me, or made me feel weird in the slightest. I was just a person, going to the bathroom naked. When I did it again an hour later, I was so confident I even swiveled my hips a little. Still, walking remained more challenging than swimming or sunbathing naked, in many ways because it reminded me more of my experiences as a woman feeling vulnerable on the street; I realized I'd [internalized the male gaze](#) to the extent that I had come to view walking as a vulnerable act. As scary as it was at first, walking naked at Hedonism still felt safer than walking home in a bad neighborhood alone at night, fully clothed. It was nice to feel myself unlearn certain fears, when each time, my boundaries were completely respected.

3. I Was LITERALLY The Only One With Pubic Hair



Seriously, the. Only. One. Apparently, I missed the memo that nudists go bare. And I mean *totally* bare. Even all the men had nothing below their paunches besides, well, you know. I've written before about why I choose to [rock a full bush](#), but at Hedonism, I was really tested to embrace my decision fully. Literally being the only person in sight with a bush, I realized, made me different. But it also made me remember what my other recent experiences dating have taught me: being different also makes me sexier.

The differences I saw on all the people's bodies made them unique, yes; but it was really the degree to which they owned those differences that made them sexy. It's a cliché you hear all the time, but when you're naked around a bunch of other naked people, you really realize it's true: sexiness is about embracing what makes you different, with pride.

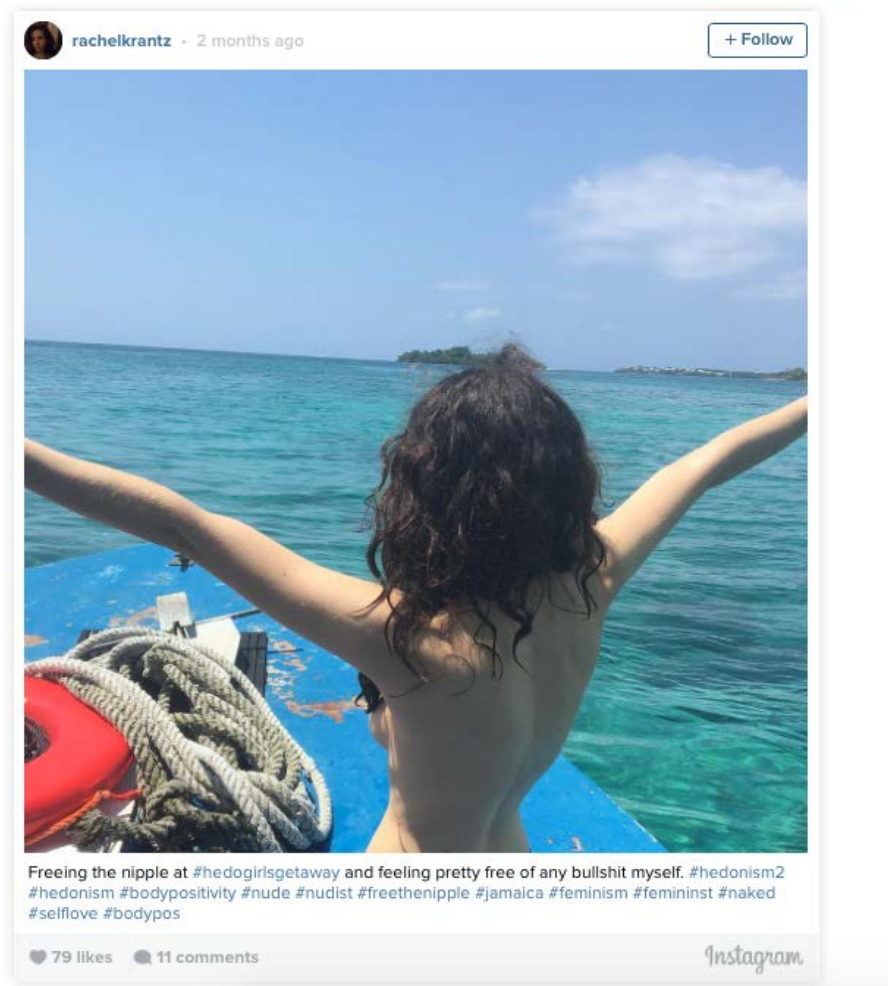
4. I Started Really Feelin' Myself



Once I was naked all the time, I started feeling sexier and prettier, almost immediately. I was taking tons of naked selfies, which I almost never do, and I was even feeling body parts I'd normally been self-conscious about. My little boobs, which I'd carefully accentuated for years with lightly-lined bras, were now out and bare. And I began to realize, in a new, profound way, that they are beautiful. Before, I thought they were nice, but in need of public normalizing. Naked, I refused to confine or alter them again. When I was wearing a shirt or dress to dinner (a rule for the cafeteria, for hygienic reasons), I let them be pressed flat, and even found it kind of sexy. They were mine, and there was no need to conform them to other people's ideals. I was comfortable with my body, because I'd been looking at it all day.

Without clothes on, it's like I began to see my body for what it was: a beautiful, functioning mechanism that allowed me to swim, pump blood to my heart, eat delicious fruit, and flirt with good-looking people. There was no reason to get down on it for anything, certainly not when it was serving me so well and fabulously.

5. I Began To Understand What Hedonism Actually Means



In our puritanical society, the word "hedonism" has gotten a bad rap. Its connotations are of being selfish, amoral, or crazy. But here's the [actual definition of the word](#): "the ethical theory that pleasure (in the sense of the satisfaction of desires) is the highest good and proper aim of human life."

In that spirit, I decided to follow all my hedonistic desires while [at Hedonism](#). Interestingly, I found that didn't always mean taking things to a gluttonous place, at all. I had thought that as a chronic pleasure-seeker, only following my desires might lead to pure mayhem. In reality, it actually made it much easier to exercise moderation — because there was no premise of depriving myself in the first place.

Because I was in the sun, swimming, and doing just about everything but eating in the cafeteria naked, I found it became much, much easier to feel connected to my body. I could hear exactly when it was hungry, and feed it just what it wanted, whether that was a giant salad, or Oreos slathered in peanut butter. I could feel when it wanted to move; rather than telling myself I "should" work out, I simply wanted to feel my naked form stretch and swim in the sun. I could even feel with more accuracy when I wanted to make out with the cute guy I was hanging out with, and when I didn't want to go any further. With my judgement and self-restraint stripped down and the only rule to follow my desires, my body and I were able to communicate in a whole new way. It was like it finally said, *Thanks for the freedom! Now here's what I'd like to do next*. True hedonism simply meant following my desires, without judgement. Hedonism, in other words, was empowerment.

6. I Learned To Wield My Body's Power In A New Way

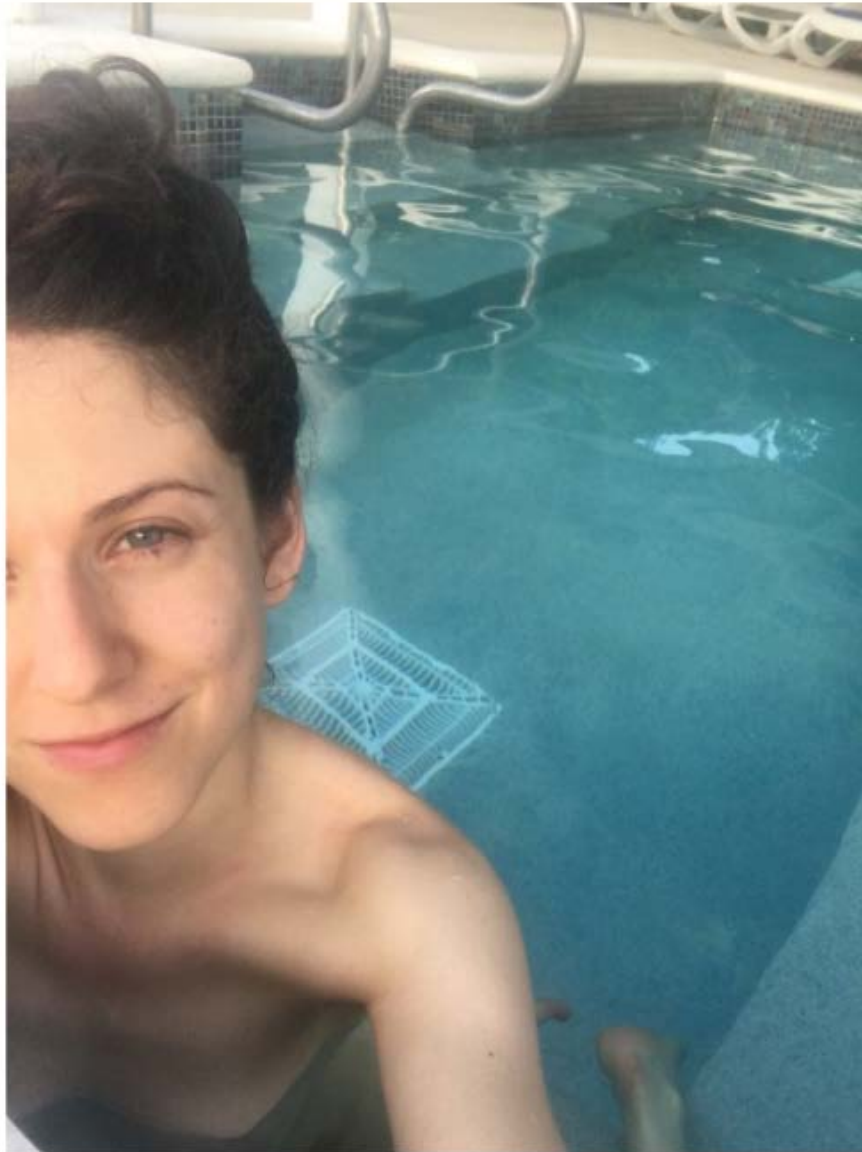


A funny thing happened when I was naked in front of so many people: I got better at asserting my right not be harassed. It only happened a couple times that I was hit on past the point of normal friendliness — for the most part, my fellow nudists were extremely respectful of my space, and it seemed like there were almost more boundaries than there would be otherwise, perhaps out of respect for the fact that you're in a more "vulnerable" position. The couple times I was hit on, at first, I was friendly. It was a habit; entertain the conversation, and try to make it clear you're not interested. But when that welcome was overstayed, or eyes lingered too long, I found it was much easier for me to assert my space, saying "OK, I don't want to talk anymore. Bye." Once, I even said, "I don't want you looking at me like that." I've never been so direct.

On the flip-side, I found I was also more comfortable than usual having my body looked at. I could feel how powerful my form was, and how looking at it could be something I dished out or retracted consent for. By the second day, I enjoyed stripping down by the pool and allowing certain people to look; I also enjoyed the power of being left alone, and asserting that desire.

As women, we're raised to believe that we'll be more "vulnerable" if we're naked, or even dress provocatively. I found it was quite the opposite; in an atmosphere that emphasizes bodily autonomy, safety, and respect, being naked can only empower women further. It's [rape culture](#) that's attempted to constrain that very potential. If women realized it fully, we'd be unstoppable — and those who fear the feminine know if. It's why we're told to cover up; it's why we're told our bodies as they are aren't "beach ready." When you're naked, you feel on a whole new level what profound bullshit that is, what an attempt it is to control the most beautiful and unstoppable force there is: female sexuality.

7. I Came To Believe Every Woman Should Experience This



Before I [went to Hedonism](#), I thought I was relatively body positive, confident, and open-minded. It wasn't until I literally shed all my layers that I realized just how far I still have to go. I have never, ever felt healthier, more beautiful, or powerful than I did in these four days. By the end of the trip, to my own surprise, I was profoundly changed. I had a hard time returning to civilization, and find I still think about when I can go back to what was, to me, a Garden of Eden. Here was a magical, safe space. A space where I was encouraged, as a woman, to be naked, indulge every sensory pleasure, embrace my sexuality, and not fear for my safety.

As women, we never get to experience this so dramatically and fully. We worry walking home late to our apartment, we're told that if we wear too short a skirt we might get raped. We also almost never get to be in the presence of other real, naked female bodies. I saw women of all shapes, ages, and sizes. I saw an old woman with a sagging, pierced clit. I saw a woman with so much cellulite that it seemed to form deep ridges on her thighs. I saw women with big breasts, small breasts, fat tummies, and flat bellies. Everyone, including me, was owning it. Everyone was given the space to simply exist, naked, as they are.

Images: [JulieShakeYaBooty](#), [HedonismJamaica](#), [Rachel Krantz/Instagram](#)