When I was younger the word “beautiful” was just an extension of the word “pretty.” I remember when I was seven, my birthday wish was to have blonde hair, blue eyes, and to change my name to Christina. And I don't know why that would've made me feel good about myself but I guess I wanted to change who I was because appearance was something I was never very comfortable with.

One day in 2014 it was the summer right before my freshman year of high school—a big year for me—and my mom, she signs me up for this farm and wilderness camp. It's called Indian Brook and the only thing I knew about it was that it was fun because that's what my mom promised me it would be. So, you know, it's how moms are. But it's this all girls camp, so it's pro-women and it's super cool and I'm really excited. So, I'm in the van going to camp and I'm sitting in the back with a bunch of other girls, and I really want to start making friends and finding my place.

So, I do what I've always done to make friends. I start complimenting everybody. And I turn to the girl next to me; I'm like, “You know, your shirt, oh my God, your shirt is really cute.” And she's like, “Thanks, but no body talk.” And I'm like, “Oh, right. What's that?” And she tells me that it's this policy at camp where, when you compliment people, you don't talk about their appearance, what they look like, just anything in that aspect. You only compliment them on their abilities and the cool stuff they can do. And that’s something that's always really stuck with me. It's something I've always really loved, and it's always just kind of faded away from me in the society that I live in. I kind of become detached from it in whatever this is.

But one night, maybe in the middle of camp, I hear all my kids talking about staff night. And I again don't know what that is, and my friend tells me that it's this tradition for senior lodge on staff night, basically, all of our counselors go up to the lodge and they have this PTA-type meeting about camp and what's working, what's not, and they make all of these executive decisions and changes, and they leave all of us at camp alone in our cabins. Yeah.

So basically, they go up to the lodge, we're alone, and the village people from nearby, they just walk around and they make sure we're good, nobody’s dead, no cabins are on fire, nothing like that, no contraband. But my friends are telling me about the tradition that senior lodge does, basically, where we don't stay in our cabins. We're not going to follow that rule. We're instead going to leave our cabin and run around camp and just be crazy. And I'm like, “Yeah, I can do that, that sounds fun.” I hear the rest of my bunkmates start talking more about it.

They're like, “Yeah, are we going to do that thing this year? Yeah, 'cause we didn't do that last year, we should totally do that.”

And I'm like, “Hey,” I turn to my friend, “what are we doing?”
She says, “We’re going streaking.” Now, mind you, I’m a 14-year-old girl. I’m already awkward enough as it is with clothes on. Now I don't know what to think, and I go through my entire day at camp just, I'm freaking out about this, because what can I do? I don't know how to feel.

I'm scared. I'm just terrified. And it's all I can think about when I'm eating, the dining hall, barns and gardens, workshop, it's the only thing that's on my mind. I'm like, “Holy crap, man, I'm gonna be naked later.” And when it finally comes time to do the thing, all my friends are just like counting down on somebody’s watch the hour of when we're gonna go out. And I'm just kind of, I'm still terrified, freaking out.

And when it gets to maybe around like eight-ish, all of my bunkmates jump out of their beds, rip off their clothes off, start screaming, they're like, “Yeah, free the nipple, man!”

It's crazy. It is total chaos. And I'm standing there in my bra and underwear, I'm just like, “Oh my God. This is nuts.” And I want to be a part of this, I want to do this thing, and I know that it's a very unconventional thing that I am probably never gonna get the chance to do again. So, at the end of the day I’m just like, “You know what, guys? Fuck it.” And I rip off my clothes too. I'm out here, you know, it's crazy. It's crazy, I'm naked with my shoes on, like who does that? It's wild.

And we all run outside into the woods and we're making our way around camp. We're running in circles like crazy people, screaming at the top of our lungs, we're waking everybody up, it's wild. And we finally, we're like making our way up to the lodge, and it's dark, and it had just rained, and it's wet, and I'm freaking out about all these things like, “What if I get a tick? What if I get mosquito bites? What if I fall down?” But the only thing, the one thing I'm not worrying about at all is what I look like.

And we finally make our way up to the lodge. I don't know who started it. Somebody starts singing “Dancing Queen”. We all join in, our counselors are cracking up at us through the windows because we're crazy, we're wild, man, we're wild women of the woods tonight. And we're jumping around, we're going crazy, we're singing together. And we, at the end of it all, we just kind of regroup, we go back to our cabins, we go to sleep, and that's kind of the end of it.

And that's not to say that I am 100% body confident after this spiritual experience, because you know, bodies are just weird, and puberty is “what?” and teens are just like “whoa,” you know, like it's just a lot of confusion in that department, it's very strange, a lot of weird changes going on. But on that night, to me, I was a dancing queen, I was a wild woman of the woods, I was a hardcore lady type. And beautiful was just a bunch of crazy, screaming, naked girls running around with mud on their legs, being brave together. Thank you.