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Our Parenting Laid Bare – We're raising our boy as a naturist

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With a pen in hand, I jotted down each tip my friend told me. "This is so helpful. Thank you," I told him appreciatively.

It was 2009, and John, a photographer, was wise when photographing the human body. I lived in South Africa and was just starting out as a photographer. My main area of interest was taking portraits of people who were semi-clothed or nude. For me, it was when they were at their most beautiful. As we chatted about nudity, John revealed to me he was a naturist.

"I've even been to a nude resort," he said.

Intrigued, I did some research online and discovered that naturist resorts offered a safe, private and non-sexual space to socialise with others in the nude. Later, I mentioned it to my boyfriend, Dion, 26. We both enjoyed the feeling of freedom that naked gave us, which we'd discovered early on in our relationship. Over time, we've stopped wearing clothes in the house, unless other people were there.

"How would you feel about going to one of the resorts?" I asked Dion.

"I wouldn't be against it," he shrugged.

Keen to try it out, we booked a day visit to the resort John had told me about, in a few weeks' time. When the day came, I was both nervous and excited. On arrival, we were welcomed by a member who was completely naked.

"Welcome," he smiled. He said that to enter the club we had to take off all our clothes.

"Ready?" Dion asked. I nodded and then stripped off. We left our clothes in the car and made our way into the resort. My heart was racing, but as we started mingling with others, I soon relaxed. Everyone was so warm and welcoming. Before long, being clothes-free felt natural. There was a pool, spa, and also a dedicated play area for kids.



"I love that it's family friendly," said Dion.

We returned for another weekend before relocating to Christchurch. Once settled, we started looking into what naturist life was like in New Zealand. We found one near our home, which was just as welcoming as the one back in South Africa. Then, in 2017, I fell pregnant, and gave birth to a son. After discussing it, Dion and I agreed we wanted to raise him in a naturist home. The resorts were family friendly so we could take him with us. "If we don't make it seem strange, then it won't be," I said.

Members at nudist clubs are usually subjected to strict screening measures before they gain entry, so I knew he would be safe. Anyone acting suspiciously, or with the wrong idea, was quickly removed. If we wanted to go to a nudist beach, I was selective with which ones we went to, as we couldn't control who went there. As our son grew older, he loved going to the club and playing with the other kids, as Dion and I chilled with the adults. We'd play with him in the pool, too. We left it up to him whether he wanted to wear clothes or not. Usually, he opted to strip off.



DON'T JUDGE (CONT)



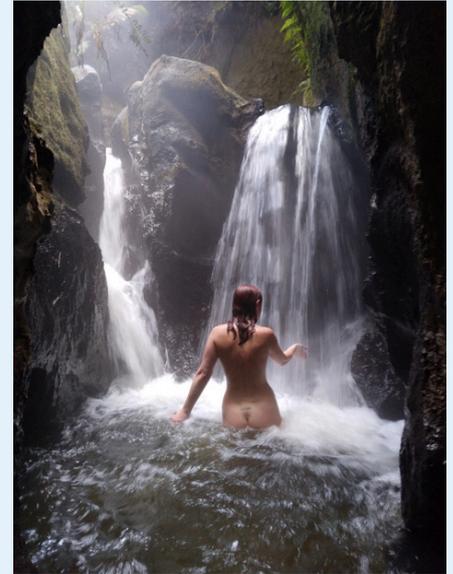
In 2019, we became full-time members of a naturist club. Since then, we've made friends with other like-minded families, who've truly helped us. This lifestyle isn't for everyone, so we don't announce it to our friends and family about it. We'd kept it secret before as both our families are conservative. Telling them, we kept it vague.

"We've joined a sports club where people go into the spa naked," I said.



They respected our choice, but preferred not to know too much. Although, my picture appearing in the local paper, with nothing but a spade covering my bits, on World Gardening Day, gave a lot away! While I know some people might judge our family for the way we live, no one has ever openly criticised me. And if they did, I'd be quick to point out the many positives.

Naturism shows you that bodies come in all shapes and sizes, and imperfections are what make us unique and beautiful. It's an important lesson to teach kids, especially growing up with unrealistic expectations. I want our son to grow up seeing people as they truly are, and not just the filtered, perfected versions he'll come across online. It also helps demystify bodies and removes sexual connotations. Our boy, aged seven, is still young enough to feel completely at ease with himself naked, but we know that might change, particularly when he hits puberty. We'd never stop him stepping away from the lifestyle if that's what he wanted.



We have friends with children who have done exactly that. And if he starts to feel awkward about us being naked, then that's something we'll have to find a way to navigate as a family. I know this lifestyle isn't for everyone, but it works for us, and that's all that matters.