

SEX & RELATIONSHIPS

How Three Days at a Nude Resort Taught Me to Defend My Boundaries

BY SUZANNAH WEISS MAY 9, 2017 11:50 AM



PHOTO: STOCKSY

Recently I came face-to-face with my fear of being naked in public. It was at [a nude resort in Negril, Jamaica](#), where, in addition to its sexy pool games, public sex "playroom," and large population of swingers, visitors can choose to stay on the "nude side"—a portion of the grounds that's no-clothing-allowed. That's where I'd be vacationing, and to be honest, I was terrified.

Though some guests shed their clothes to confront body insecurities or sexual shame, I had a different fear going into the resort: Namely, that people (mostly men) would take my naked

body as an invitation. After all, revealing clothes are frequently used to excuse sexual assault. If a guy buys into that ideology, what would he think of a woman's wearing literally nothing?

My worries weren't totally unfounded. Despite their hippie-dippie reputation, nude resorts are not free from the same kinds of harassment that women face on the street, in the workplace, and, well, pretty much everywhere. But I came to find out that—perhaps because people at the resort, which was called Hedonism II, are so openly sexual, or because so many things could go wrong without a strong, built-in culture of accountability—speaking out loudly against such mistreatment is a lot more socially acceptable at an organized nude retreat.

Though I didn't really understand what that meant at first. I'd gotten used to being groped on the train as other passengers' eyes darted to the ground. I'd been called "sensitive" and "dramatic" for telling Tinder creeps that their unsolicited sexting was unwelcome. I'd learned that it was best to just politely brush off unwanted advances, and that was the approach I took during my first few days at the resort.

When a guy I didn't enjoy talking to followed me everywhere my first night, I hung out with him out of guilt. When another man wouldn't shut up about how aroused my pubic hair made him and how I should hook up with his wife (which did not remotely interest either of us, by the way), I nervously laughed it off. When another man tried to convince me to sleep with him after I made it clear that I had a boyfriend, I ignored it...and I proceeded to ignore it again the second time. And the third time. *And* the fourth time.



PHOTO: HEDONISM II

At the end of my second day, a woman asked me how this whole nudist thing was working out for me. I told her that, honestly, I'd met some great people, but a few creepers had given me trouble. "Just tell them to f-ck off!" another woman who was, evidently, eavesdropping yelled.

"Have you ever done that?" I asked, skeptical of how easy she made it sound.

"Oh yeah," she replied. "After a guy came up and touched my nipples, I had to. He did *not* touch me again after that."

The next day I chatted with two couples in the hot tub. Both of the women agreed that if someone bothered me, I should speak up, and they reassured me they'd have my back. Just then a stranger swam up and held a vibrating rubber ducky against my breasts. Still intimidated by the prospect of confronting a harasser, I ignored him. But after he left, I asked my new friends, "So, I could tell that guy to stop?"

"Absolutely," one said.

Fortunately I had another chance. He did the same exact thing again, and right before the duck reached my chest, I said, "Don't touch me." He backed off and returned a few minutes later to give me a fist-bump. (I think that's the nudist resort version of an olive branch.)

"Alright," I thought. "Maybe this really is OK."



PHOTO: HEDONISM II

Later that night, in another hot tub (surprise—sex resorts in Jamaica have a lot of hot tubs), a man sat next to me and placed his hand on my inner thigh while saying, "If I may"—as if that were the same as *asking* if he may. "No thank you," I responded. He moved his arm, and another woman beckoned for me to sit next to her instead.

I got bolder as the trip went on. When the guy who followed me around the first night greeted me by kissing my neck, I said, "That wasn't OK with me," and he apologized profusely. A lot of

guys just don't know how to interact with women respectfully, regardless of whether their intentions are "good" or not. By teaching them how to ask, I felt like I was not only expressing my needs clearly, but I was doing them a favor.

But my most uncomfortable clapback came my last night, when an older man stopped me on my way to my room, told me he'd seen me on the nude beach, and thought I seemed like a "nice girl." He then went on and on about himself. Once I could finally get a word in, I said, "Sorry, I have to go, but nice to meet you. Have a good night."

"Where are you going?"

"I just have to go."

"Will you be back?"

"No."

First, I thought, "Wow, Suzannah, that was rude." But then I thought, "Who cares? *He* was rude."

That's when it really hit me: Women are taught to be polite to *everyone*, but if someone's intruding on your personal space, making degrading comments, or touching you without your consent, you don't actually have to be polite. You can say whatever's necessary to take the power back, whether that's a simple "I have to go" or a straight-up "f-ck off."

Unfortunately, not every place provides an environment like Hedonism's, where people will support you if you stand up to harassment. I totally get why many women (including me, sometimes) just keep walking when they're catcalled rather than engage by expressing their discomfort. But when it feels safe and when I want to, I'm now going to treat sexual harassment like the crime it is and let the perpetrator and everyone around me know it's not OK—no matter what I am or am not wearing.

