

# Borderlander

## BECOMING AN AERIE AMBASSADOR: HOW IT GREW MY LOVE FOR MYSELF AND SPREAD LOVE TO OTHERS

I'm smiling as I'm writing this. Despite the craziness that has now become a daily reality and my constant battles with mental health among so much fear and uncertainty, I can't say I'm unhappy. As backwards as that sounds, I would almost say I feel the happiest that I've ever been in my life. Why you ask? The answer is actually the very thing that would cause my unhappiness in the past: social media.

Today I will talk about how I am using my influence to represent my brand and positively impact others, but before I can even get into that I must talk about how representing my brand in order to positively impact others has caused a growth in me like never before. After all, how can you convince others to love themselves if you yourself don't? When I became an Aerie Ambassador, I was a shell of the person I am today. The amount that I have grown in a little over 8 months absolutely amazes me. Before August of 2019, I must admit that more often than not, I would go on Instagram and compare myself to the girls there. Never in a million years did I think that I was pretty enough to be an influencer. I know now that my perception of beauty and what it means to be an influencer was so wrong. Once I began to follow all of the other ambassadors, everything I once knew about social media changed. The posts on my feed were unlike anything I had ever followed before. The women were confident, inspiring, and not afraid to show their TRUE selves. Being exposed to all of this content inspired me to no longer force myself to play it safe because I feared that people would pick me apart. The image in the top right is my most current in-feed post, an image that I probably would not have posted a year ago. Bathing suits always made me feel so exposed, but when I posted the image all I could think about is how good I thought I looked. I loved the body, I loved the smile, I loved myself.



The caption for the image was also much longer and much more thoughtful than captions I was used to. Before the Aerie program, I saw Instagram as just a place to post fun pictures. While I still very much see the fun, I also see that it is so much more. What you post has the power to change someone's life, empower individuals that you may not even know very well. Because of this newfound understanding, I now try much harder to be brave enough to share my thoughts and feelings through my captions or my reposting of content on my Instagram story. Seeing others love themselves fully impacted me in such a large way, so I now feel strongly about inspiring others to see themselves in a new light as well.

The current situation in the United States has uprooted many different emotions within me that I have never experienced before and made a lot of my pre-existing mental health struggles much harder. I have been trying to be candid about how I'm feeling and sharing things that resonate with me or help me cope in order to hopefully help someone else. I didn't think it was affecting anyone so much until I got a direct message after sharing a post about productivity during a pandemic on my Instagram story (pictured in the bottom left). The message was simple: I needed this. It then turned into a much larger conversation about how he was struggling with understanding his emotions and motivations during the pandemic and my recent posts had really helped him. The fact that something so simple as reposting something I resonated with impacted someone else so strongly really fulfilled me. In fact, this entire experience has fulfilled me. I can't tell you how many people have come up to me to ask about the program or Aerie as a brand, and I always speak so passionately about how important their purpose is, as I truly believe that what they are doing is changing lives. I even gave an entire informative speech to my public speaking class about Aerie and how they are changing the culture. Being an Aerie Brand Ambassador has truly been the biggest honor, and I have the biggest sense of fulfillment when I think about the ways my own posts (which I had previously thought of as relatively insignificant) have positively impacted those around me.

