

beauty



*Confessions of
the Newly Natural*

By Brie Daniels

Still addicted to the “creamy crack”? No shame, boo. But for those of us who have said good-bye to relaxed hair and hello to the kinky ‘fro, there’s a huge learning curve.

On May 19 of this year, two days after I graduated from the University of Missouri, I walked into a barbershop and told them to take it all off.

Here are my experiences — and my confessions.

Confession #1: I was going to get the big chop, but I ended up getting a sew-in.

Yeah, you heard right.

I first considered going natural during the summer of 2012 before I was scheduled to leave for a semester abroad in Buenos Aires, Argentina. I knew I wouldn’t be able to get a relaxer down there, so it seemed like as good a time as any. But after weighing my options, I ended up getting a weave.

A part of me felt badly for backing out of something I’d thought about for so long, but in the end, it was the best decision for me. Plus, the weave I had helped me get used to seeing my hair curly and it also helped my real hair grow a ton. I thought it would be easy to chop off my relaxed ends once I got back to The States.

I was wrong. 

Not even two days after returning from my five-month trip to Argentina, I got a relaxer again. And I felt guilty again. But, I knew guilt wasn't a good enough reason to do the big chop. If I was going to do it, it was going to be because I wanted to and because I was ready.

Fast forward to the next semester and I was wearing weave again.

Don't judge. This is all about keepin' it real.

I grew tired of not being able to scratch my scalp as much as I wanted, and I was very much over all the shedding the weave was doing. Finding piles of balled up hair all over your carpet? Not cute.

And also not fun to clean up.

I told myself that the next time I took my weave out, it would be to go natural.

I was ready.

I started watching YouTube videos and reading Nikki Walton's (better known as Curly Nikki) book, *Better Than Good Hair*. I talked to my friends, who are all natural, about what the process was like for them and grew more and more confident about my decision. All that was left was to tell my mom and my boyfriend, the two people Curly Nikki said would be the most likely to, well, not like it so much.

My mom didn't necessarily agree with or understand my reasoning, but she supported me. My boyfriend listed things I could do instead of chopping it off, like eating better (because that's the same thing??), but he supported me, too, and their support was all I needed.

To be honest, now I think my boyfriend likes my hair even more than I do.

Confession #2:
Natural hair is not low maintenance.

I had many reasons for going natural, and one of them was because I'd heard that natural hair is low maintenance.

Wrong, Wrong, Wrong.

The time you'll spend figuring out how to do your hair without a relaxer is almost more important — and more time consuming — than it is with a relaxer. Each decision is an experiment you hope comes out right — but often doesn't — kinda like my first attempt at a DIY deep-conditioning treatment.

Confession #3:
I did my first deep-conditioning treatment five weeks after the big chop and it was extremely messy.

I used a Curly Nikki recipe, which included combining 1/4 cup of honey and 1/4 cup of olive oil and warming it up in the microwave for easy application. I felt it penetrating my scalp almost instantly, but the mixture was dripping all down my neck — even with my plastic cap on.

I tried to use paper towels as a barrier. Didn't work. (Next time, I'll be sure to use some kind of cotton coil. I'm sure those absorb oil a lot better than the collar of my T-shirt did.) In the end, though, it was worth it. After I rinsed out the conditioner, my hair felt 50 shades of fabulous.

Confession #4:
Now, I've been natural for four months.

Eek! How exciting! I have to say that I've learned a lot on this journey, but one of the biggest things has been the importance of confidence. If you don't love your 'do, how can someone else? If you decide to do the big chop and don't love it, you've got to look like you do, and fake it 'til you make it.

No one can change others' minds about your new style faster than you, and with the right moisturizers and accessories, you'll see that nappy can be happy, too.

A NATURAL'S MUST-HAVES

1. ROOT STIMULATOR'S VITAL OILS
2. SHEA MOISTURE'S CURL & STYLE MILK OR CURL ENHANCING SMOOTHIE
3. OLIVE OIL
4. HONEY
5. A SPRAY BOTTLE FILLED WITH WATER FOR DAILY MOISTURIZING
6. A WIDE-TOOTHED COMB