

TIFFANY ROWELL

Sink or Swim Studio and Gallery Piercing client

Age: 34

Occupation: High School Librarian

Professional Singer: Cover band Elvis

As a librarian by day and singer in the cover band, Elvis, Tiffany Rowell shares insights to how her piercings offer comfort and confidence.

When did you get your first piercing?

I got my ears pierced for the first time when I was eight years old. I got two more holes in my ears and tried to get my cartilage done when I was in middle school, but it got infected. I also got my eyebrow pierced in high school, but my band director made me take the piercing out for band camp. When I got home and tried to put it back in, the hole had already closed up.

Was there any meaning or significance behind getting your ears pierced or was it just the cool thing to do at the time?

At age eight it was just a fun thing to do, but about six years ago I began getting my ears stretched. That was when I started going to Sink or Swim Studio and Gallery and began working with Piercing Professional, Chris Steele. Over the past six years I have gone from regular earrings to size zero gauges.

For those that may be unfamiliar with gauges, can you give me some perspective on what size hole that would be?

Maybe three quarters of a dime.

Was there a particular reason you wanted to get gauges?

Chris and I talked about the size gauges that I eventually wanted to get to and I really wanted to stretch my ears naturally. He recommended to do it very slowly over time, so I just came up with the idea to do it on my birthday every year. That way, it stretched very naturally, and my ears would be ready for the next size each year that I went to him. It really made the whole process relatively painless. This last one really felt just like a little pinch.



Do you have any special gauges that you wear?

Part of the reason that I wanted to get gauges in the first place is the weight of the earrings. I really enjoy having the physical weight. I talk all the time about how life is already really heavy. I feel that's why we like weighted blankets and hugs. The weight of the earrings on my ears just feels really good to me. I use weighted earrings that are stretching the ears a little bit further than their original size.

Do you have other piercings as well?

Like I said, I'm a high school librarian, so I don't show my piercings, but I also did my nipples. I have a couple of girlfriends who got theirs done, and they really liked how they looked. It's just something that makes me feel a little bit extra confident.

Do you have plans for other piercings?

I'm going to continue to stretch my ears with Chris at least one more size. So far, we haven't really talked about any other piercings yet. I've always wanted my belly button done, but never had the guts to do it. Maybe once I'm done with my ears, I'll think about that. Chris' wife gave me a pair of gauges that I'm really looking forward to wearing once my ears get stretch one more size.

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So, does it take a whole year to stretch your ears one whole size?

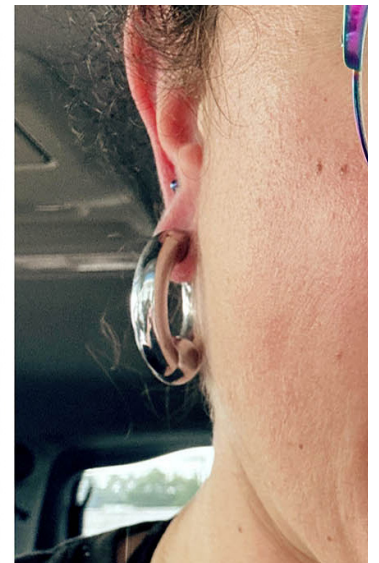
Technically, I could stretch my ears quicker. There are people who will get the skin punched out of their ears so that they can fit a certain size, or they'll stretch it much faster. If you do it too fast, then you run the risk of splitting your ear lobe. So ideally taking some time is best. Only you know how much time you need, everyone responds differently. I just chose to do once a year because I knew my ears would be ready for the next size after a full year.

Do you change the jewelry/gauges that you wear frequently? Or do you leave it in?

I don't change them a lot right now. I changed my nipple piercings once. I have kind of an infatuation with the rainbow titanium color, so I got those. As far as my gauges, I keep the weighted earrings in all the time unless I have to do it for medical reason. Once I get to the size I want to next year, I'll be able to wear the earrings that Chris' wife gave me and I want to get some plugs. One of the reasons that I'm excited to get plugs is because you have to take out metal jewelry for MRIs, which I'm going to have to do next month. If I have a plastic or wooden plug, I wouldn't have to take it out. Plus, I think those look really nice. I'm looking forward to finding some new jewelry next year.

Are there other piercings in your ear?

I do have two other just standard ear piercings in each ear in addition to my gauges.



When you lay on your side, does it hurt?

I would say it's sore the first night and ibuprofen takes care of that. The nipple piercings were very sensitive for a very long time. Everybody jokes that they never heal, but you've really got to make sure that you maintain them forever. That's why it's so important to have a professional piercer work on you so that you know your piercings are going to be done safe and correctly.

What are some of the things that you had to consider before making the decision to go ahead with your piercing?

Having friends, including Chris, you can ask questions about keeping everything clean and make sure that you don't do any harm to yourself. With the gauges, I've researched how big I would want them to look to determine what size I would like. I did consider what would be acceptable to my employer as well. I can't emphasize enough, you've got to make sure that everything is clean, so you don't cause an infection. For that reason, I tend to focus on one thing at a time. I have really sensitive skin so that's been the most important thing for me. My friends did warn me not to use a loofa because it will get caught in the nipple piercing and I didn't go swimming immediately. I didn't want to expose my piercings to the chlorine. We use H2Ocean's sea salt piercing spray to keep everything clean. It's available at Sink or Swim Studio & Gallery. As far as clothing, I'm not a big fan of tight clothing anyway, but I did wait a couple weeks before I wore a sports bra to the gym. The initial sensitivity is pretty normal, but after that you can wear what you want.

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