

Talking about being gifted



Maybe you've already known for some time or perhaps you've only recently discovered that you're (probably) gifted. You would like to share your experiences and talk with others, as thoughts about being gifted keep you occupied. What does it take to share your experiences? Unfortunately, some gifted people have shared with us that they have had unpleasant experiences on occasions when sharing their thoughts with others. In this leaflet we provide you with information and best practices in order to make sharing your experiences a success!

Why should you talk about this?

What do you want to achieve by letting people in your environment know that you are gifted? Usual reasons include: foster understanding or acceptance, obtain more challenging assignments, a management approach that your supervisor could use and that fits you better, or changes to your personal work space and being honest and open about yourself. Keeping your goals clearly in mind will help turn a conversation into a success.

A lot of gifted people are afraid to come across as arrogant and prefer to keep their abilities to themselves, whereas for others it might be a very personal matter and having an open conversation about this might make them feel vulnerable. All the more reason to prepare yourself beforehand and consider possible reactions.

Whom do you tell?

Make sure to take the kind of relationship you have with the person you'd like to tell into account: partner, parents, friends, children, colleagues, manager, medical doctors, psychologist, etc. Carefully consider what you want to share and make sure it fits the situation. With family members one can usually expect to talk about more private matters than with one's supervisor but of course this is different for everyone.

What are your expectations?

Some people may be prejudiced regarding giftedness. As such, your conversation partner may have a different concept in mind and may tend to focus on other aspects than you would like. Because you would most likely want to share some personal stories it is wise to consider the other's point of view and keep in mind how they might react. For example, one idea could be to explicitly tell that you only want to inform them or let the other person know how you would like them to react. In every case, clearly stating your aim should help. However, you should keep in mind and be open to the fact that your conversation partner may need some time to properly digest the information you share.

What kind of situation is suitable for starting a conversation?

Are you waiting for a specific occasion or maybe you prefer to bring it up spontaneously? Should you schedule an appointment? Perhaps in a private setting or during a group meeting. There's no one-size-fits-all solution. Try to match the situation to your goal and you will be fine.

How do you explain the concept of giftedness?

Experience tells us that the term giftedness might entail unwanted associations. If those are negative it may be hard to deal with the ensuing conversation in a constructive manner. We noticed that describing the characteristics of giftedness as you experience them works best in practice. Try to stay as concrete and neutral as possible. The terms from the 'Delphi Model of Giftedness' may be useful to explain how your giftedness manifests itself for you. This way it should be possible to give the other person a good idea what is going on even (or especially) without using the word gifted. At the end of the conversation you could then consider using the term to sum up the meeting. Having already explained before in an unbiased setting what it means, this should lead to a more pleasant and understanding atmosphere.

Our main recommendation is: "Keep it personal". From our experience we know that some people feel personally challenged when someone else mentions he or she is gifted, as if stating that about yourself means something about them. Realize that their emotional reaction is entirely their own and not your responsibility. So state clearly it is only about your own personal experiences.

In the box below we mention a few recommendations to help you start an efficient conversation about your giftedness:

Recommendations

- Have your goal(s) clearly in mind.
- Prepare the meeting and consider whom to approach and in what setting.
- Let your conversation partner know how you would like them to react.
- Make explicit how your giftedness manifests itself.
- Use the 'Delphi model of Giftedness' to build understanding with your conversation partner.
- Keep it personal.