

Too much too young?



We've gotten to know a lot about gifted children. And about gifted adults as well. But there's hardly any information about gifted young adults. And by young adults we mean the young people that have left high school. Those who are continuing their studies as well as those who started a job immediately after school. This leaflet considers some important themes and questions for this age group and we will try to direct you to further information.

Choosing courses or training

Some gifted young people have a strong sense of what they want to study, but there are also some who have no idea what they want even after they've finished high school. There are a number of reasons for this: you are quite good at a lot of things, but what do you really feel passionate about? You wonder how you're supposed to know what is the best choice to make. Maybe you're considering what your parents would want you to do more than what you really want yourself. You may be thinking about what's possible and what's easy, for example staying close to home, or going to the same university as your friends, while that may not necessarily be what suits you most.

Another issue that's not often considered is how people prefer to learn. Gifted people generally need insight and prefer an enriched curriculum. Studying long lists of facts is often very tricky for them, they do better when they understand the overall picture. There are quite a number of courses where the initial phase consists of memorising lots of facts. When you're used to 'just understanding' something without much effort, then this can be a bit of a problem. Knowing what style of learning you prefer could help when choosing what to do and where to go and improve the results drastically.

Friendships

For some gifted people it can be hard to find friends that they can talk to on the same level. However, it's very important that they do! The chance of finding people that you can relate to is best when doing activities that interest you and that you like to do. Mensa, the community of people with a high general intelligence, has a number of very active groups for young adults, as well as special interest groups in many areas (see www.mensa.org for Mensa in your own country). And in the Netherlands the IHBV organises evenings in a number of cities. Getting involved in a student association can be a good idea as well, even when you do have to realise that their members will not all be gifted.

Selecting a job

If you've had jobs when you were still in school or at university, then you'll have some experience with work, and with relationships with colleagues and supervisors. These experiences can help you find out what would be a suitable workplace for you. There is no standard advice to give, unfortunately. We know that a lot of gifted people need work that challenges them to use their talents, and that they like to work autonomously. It can be another type of challenge to do well in a very hierarchical organisation. Some gifted people prefer to work strictly on project basis or be self-employed because of this. And a combination of part time permanent employment and working on projects can be beneficial as well.

Recommendations

- The book 'Gifted young adults on their way to their future' by Janneke Breedijk and Noks Nauta (in Dutch, an English translation is in preparation) contains the stories of eleven gifted young adults, as well as information about how to deal with your talents and possible problems choosing what to do.
- Another interesting book is 'Know your talents' (Beken(d) talent) by Danielle Krekels, about Core Talent Analysis; this can help you gain insight into your nature, potential and intrinsic motivators. (book is in Dutch)
- Attend the open days for the universities or colleges you consider going to. It will give you the opportunity to talk to students who study there and get a taste of the atmosphere.
- Some gifted people benefit from a more general basic education, as offered by some colleges and University Colleges. This way you can postpone a more specific choice.
- Sometimes it helps to consult a student counselor. Make sure you find someone who has experience with gifted people and ask about this when you meet with them.
- When you're looking for help in the mental health area you need to consider that for gifted people many psychological issues are related to 'being different'. You may want to consider going to a coach or counselor who can help you to work on that specific aspect instead of seeking the advice of a psychotherapist or psychiatrist.
- The number of coaches who specialise in giftedness is still increasing. On the IHBV website under the heading 'counselors' you will find a list of coaches and their special areas of expertise.
- Remember that it's not really the end of the world to switch courses during your studies. Expecting each course you choose to fit in seamlessly with your interests and needs can be a bit unrealistic, because in each course there may be some subjects that are less interesting.
- At HB-Forum.nl you will find a very active group of young people. This is a place to meet other gifted people, ask questions and discuss issues (anonymously if you want). You will also find announcements for activities and meetings. (In Dutch, but many will understand English.)
- When you've had problems with supervisors or managers, then try to find out how these problems came about and what your role in the problem was. If you can't sort it out yourself, don't hesitate to ask feedback from fellow students or friends.

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