

WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME?

James is a brilliant technology consultant. I met with him while creating the business. During our discussion James asked what being gifted and talented looked and felt like. As I described the social and emotional signs as well as the intellectual ones, his voice changed. While he continued to map out options and many important factors and ideas that would make the company accessible to the gifted and talented community, a far deeper realization began to dawn in James' mind.

Near the end of the meeting, James heard my enthusiastic observations of him, that is, (1) great passion for his work, (2) a unique grasp of complex interconnections, patterns, relationships, and issues, and (3) the ability to capture and apply his insights.

With embarrassment, James shared that these qualities actually made it difficult in the past for him to work for someone else. He didn't think like other people and that became increasingly problematic. Even his energy, passion, and enthusiasm were misconstrued. Eventually, he left his former workplace and formed his own company. James revealed that in the past, others made him think he was ADHD. Testing by medical doctors disproved this theory. James told me that he learned "to cope without hope."

James reflected on what made him different.

"Why did I approach solutions so radically different than other people?

Why didn't others see the answer as clearly as I did?

Why do I refuse to confine myself to conventional wisdom?

Why do I always take the road less traveled by?

Why will I commit to the goal when nobody else will, no matter the cost?"

A few days later James called me at home. He was deeply moved by the service he thought the business would provide and was rocked by the possibility that he was a gifted and talented adult.

What is so painful for James, as it is with so many "undiscovered" gifted and talented individuals, are the specific memories of incidents and events that taught him to hide his intelligence and eventually led him to isolate socially. Never feeling he belonged, feeling deeply lonely, he wondered if he had been dropped to earth from a planet no one understood or recognized. He wondered, "What is wrong with me?"

What James is beginning to see instead is what is right with him. James is a gift, especially to me. What better person could I have found than

someone whose new insights into his own giftedness have given him a fresh understanding of himself, sparked limitless new visions for the company's work, and put talents and skills to use for individuals "out there" also waiting to be discovered?

James admitted that almost weekly he is complimented with phrases like "gifted" and "talented", and even, "genius." Humbly, James attempts to rationalize these compliments as polite discourse from people who may not understand his field the way he does. James told me, "Compliments are nice, but I truly want to be understood."

James started his own company because at some point he said he stopped asking questions about other's perceptions of him and those he had about himself and pushed through as best he could. He let the chips fall where they may. In his mind, he could do nothing more. He knew he might never find out "What was wrong with him."

An email came today from James. He said, "In retrospect, the initial purpose of our visit, the business, seems trivial. As I listened to your vision, I discovered me. Until that hour I had never wanted to find out what or if something was wrong with me, I assumed my options were limited. In reality, I found out there just may be something right with me...and I'm going to be okay."