

How Do You Get “IT”?

We all know someone with “IT”. Throughout their life they are always able to make friends, receive special favors, attract the opposite sex, and command the interest of others.

Sometimes it is obvious. People who possess “IT” are generally outgoing, quick-witted, warm, energetic, friendly, and very demonstrative in their behavior towards people. They are said to be charismatic. Charming. Engaging. Positive. Funny. They possess excellent social skills. They openly laugh at their mistakes and we love them even more for making them. We feel for them. Feel with them. Get caught up in their life. And we admire them.

Perhaps it is congenital or perhaps they developed it over time. They genuinely like – or appear to like – other people.

However, it is not the people with such obvious magnetism that intrigue me. It’s the people who seemingly possess little charisma – yet receive the same amount of attention and interest of others – that puzzle me.

We know these people, too. Coworkers, neighbors, in-laws, social acquaintances, and others, who for some inexplicable reason seem to gain the favor of others. We witness their popularity and grumble to ourselves, “I don’t get it.”

They are not sociable. They are not very funny. They exhibit poor verbal skills. They seemingly do not care about the lives of other people. They are often moody and unreliable. They are far more negative than positive. Yet, they are the center of attention, more often than not.

As a man, I notice how women are drawn to certain men. Most of the attraction is obvious. He might be good-looking, successful, funny, tall, muscular, or a tremendous, inspiring speaker. But I have also known a few men who possess none of these qualities, yet still attract an inordinate number of women.

In addition, good female friends observed this same characteristic in other women. Women that constantly go from friend to friend, often back-stabbing their previous friend in the process. They possess no visible physical characteristics that should garner attention from either sex, have little personality, are not loyal, and their main interest is themselves. Yet, they are immensely popular.

You know people like this. Maybe you understand them. I don't get it.

While others bend over backwards attempting to fit in, and gain the notice and admiration of others, these people seem to break every recognized social rule for increasing popularity. Yet they are popular. They possess the "IT" factor. I do not understand this social phenomenon. What am I missing?

Is it congenital?

Is it rentable?

Or is it eminently, ultimately, lamentable?

Can it be purchased?

Is it perfectible?

Can it be packaged, processed, or preventable?

I once knew a man many years ago that clearly had "IT." He seemingly mesmerized people. Yet, he neither said nor did anything that you would expect to solicit attention. People would seek his opinion and he would mumble a reply that added nothing. He was neither smart nor good-looking. He wasn't a hard worker nor was he successful in any recognizable way. He was lethargic. His verbal skills were poor, often relying on mumbling to communicate. He was self-centered, and was neither positive nor inspiring. Yet, like flies quizzically drawn to fresh manure, people pursued his friendship. This misanthropic curmudgeon was arguably one of the most popular people I have ever known.

A few others were also puzzled by the man's appeal. "Why is he so popular?" they would ask me. "Why does everyone make such a big deal about him?" I shrugged my shoulders in surrender, and replied, "I don't get it."

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