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Bragging

Bragging, from the French *braguer*, is to speak in a boastful manner. Also known as *tooting your own horn*, bragging is generally looked down upon in social circles. Here's what we mean.

Let's say you live in an exclusive part of town, you're a member of the country club, and you drive a Ferrari. You're understandably proud of what you have to show for your accomplishments. If you asked your friends, they'd say you define yourself by where you live and what you drive. After all, what you talk about most is *you*.

Rather than an *if-you've-got-it-flaunt-it* attitude, why not try another approach? For example, say you want to tell someone about that great car you own—more likely a supped-up Chevy Malibu than a Ferrari—but you're proud of it nonetheless. Instead of telling the person directly, discuss cars in general and wait for them to ask what you drive.

Answer matter-of-factly. Don't go overboard by using the question as a springboard to pontificate; boast, that is. Bragging makes a lot of people feel small, in this case because they don't drive as nice a car as yours. The implicit comparison between yours and theirs is what causes the rub.

It's also not just what you say; it's how you say it. Being part of a discussion where everyone gets a chance to talk, as opposed to dominating the conversation with talk about yourself, sends a signal that you're a person of substance. People will see there's more to you than simply a car, house, country club, and talk.

To make this work, you have to strike a balance. You want to be heard without being verbose, you want to be noticed without being a show-off, and you want credit without being pushy. So how's it done? These dos and don'ts will help get you on your way.

Bragging Dos and Don'ts

- Impress people by what you do. Actions speak louder than words.
- Tactfully take credit where credit is due. Then move on.
- Stop comparing. Enjoy being yourself without worrying so much about whether you're better or worse than others.
- Feel good about yourself. Nurture your self-esteem by recognizing your talents and qualities.
- Accept people for who they are. Recognize their talents and qualities without judging them.
- Treat people as equals. They are just that, after all is said and done.
- Cut the B.S.

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