Personality Traits Linked To Birth Order

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First Born

Newscasters and TV talk show hosts tend to be first born or only children. Prominent examples include: Walter Cronkite, Peter Jennings, Dan Rather, Ted Koppel, Oprah, Donahue, Geraldo, Arsenio Hall and Rush Limbaugh. Over half of U.S presidents were firstborns. Clearly, firstborns are natural leaders. They also tend to be reliable, conscientious and perfectionists who don't like surprises. Although, firstborns are typically aggressive, many are also compliant people pleasers. They are model children who have a strong need for approval from anyone in charge.

Only Children

Only children are firstborns in triplicate. They are even more responsible and even bigger perfectionists. They usually get along better with people older than themselves.

Middle Child

These kids are the most difficult to pin down. They are guaranteed to be opposite of their older sibling, but that difference can manifest in a variety of ways. Middle children often feel like their older brother gets all the glory while their younger sister escapes all discipline. Because the middle child feels that the world pays him less attention, he tends to be secretive; he does not openly share his thoughts or feelings.

Middle children may not feel they have a special place in the family so friends and peer groups become much more important. They can usually read people well, they are peacemakers who see all sides of a situation, they are independent and inventive. If a firstborn is a company's CEO, the middle child is the entrepreneur.

Last Born

Babies of the family are social and outgoing, they are the most financially irresponsible of all birth orders. They just want to have a good time. Knowing that these kids love the limelight, it's no surprise to discover that Billy Crystal, Goldie Hawn, Drew Carey, Jim Carey and Steve Martin are all lastborns.

While lastborns may be charming, they also have the potential to be manipulative, spoiled or babied to the point of helplessness.

"The last born is the one who will probably still have a pet name although he's 29 and has a masters degree," Leman says.

Exceptions?

Some variables can affect the above descriptions. For instance, if there are several years between the first and second child, the second child will have some characteristics of a firstborn. Or, if the firstborn is a girl and the second a boy, the son will have some first-born characteristics because he is the family's first male offspring. Sibling deaths, adoptions and blended families can also upset the traditional birth order.
Children are all different and have to be parented in different ways. Dr. Leman recommends the following as a guide to parent kids by their birth order.

**Parenting The First Born**

- Don't Be an Improver: Your child already feels the need to be perfect in every way. "Improving" tasks your firstborn attempts on her own will only increase the pressure she places on herself. For instance, let's say you ask your oldest son to make his bed. Being a firstborn he will, of course, seek your approval and want you to see the finished task. If you tell him it looks good but then proceed to fluff the pillow and straighten out wrinkles in the bedspread, you send the message that he could have done better.

- Take Two-On--One Time: "Firstborns respond better to adult company than children of any other birth order. Firstborns often feel that parents don't pay much attention to them because they're always concentrating on the younger ones in the family. Make a special effort to have the first born join you and your spouse in going out alone for a treat, or to run some kind of special errand." (from Leman's book "The New Birth Order Book.")

- Don't Pile On Responsibilities: Older children often feel as though they do much more work around the house than their younger siblings. Share the duties and errands as soon as young children are capable. And, stay away from making your first born the family's instant baby sitter. Check with his schedule, just as you would an outside babysitter.

**Parenting The Middle Child**

- Make Time To Listen: Remember that middle children tend to avoid sharing how they really feel. Although it's important to set aside time to talk to all of your children, it's particularly important to make this happen with the middle child because he is least likely to insist on his fair share of time.

- Allow Child to Make Decisions: Empower your middle child and make him feel special by allowing him to make choices such as who gets to bowl first or what the family will eat for dessert. This will help alleviate feelings of always being overshadowed by older and younger siblings.

- Update the Family Album: This may sound silly but it truly is important. There tend to be a billion photos of the firstborn and about six of the next child. To a child flipping through the family album, this is a sure sign that he's not loved as much. Be sure to have photos of the middle child alone, not always paired with the older sibling.

**Parenting The Last Born**

- Stick to the Rules: The saying "he gets away with murder" is based in reality. Statistics show the lastborn is least likely to be disciplined and the least likely to have to toe the mark the way the older children did. You can be sure your older children are watching you closely!

- Hand Out Responsibility: Lastborns often wind up with less to do around the house for two reasons. One, they are pros at ducking out of work. And two, they are so little and "helpless" that the rest of the family decides it's easier to do the work themselves. You want to raise a confident, self-reliant child so don't promote this helpless image.

- Applaud Accomplishments: Leman says that lastborns are well known for feeling that nothing they do is important. Make a big deal out of accomplishments (you may have seen two other kids learn to ride a bike but it's the first time for your baby) and be sure he gets his fair share of "marquee time" on the refrigerator.

**Parents' Birth Order**

We’ve been discussing children's birth orders, but it's important to realize that parenting style is also influenced by the parent's own birth order. Parents subconsciously identify with the child who holds the spot in the family they occupied themselves. A lastborn dad might think his youngest antics are cute while mom sees them as irresponsible.

Also, firstborns are perfectionists their whole lives. As parents, they may set standards that are difficult for a child to reach. This makes them frustrated and their children unhappy.

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