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[Life](#), [Friendship](#)



As an only child, Suzi always was made to feel special. With her birthday being on July 3rd, she always thought that the fireworks displays were for her birthday. She learned as a teen-ager that she was really the result of her mother's third pregnancy, having lost the first two in the first trimester. Her mother had three more after Suzi was born. She was an only child by genetic circumstance, not by her parents' choice.

As a young child, Suzi interacted often with several other children, those of her mother's friends. She also had no cousins, so she was often included in these other families' festivities. In retrospect, she experienced many of the familial traditions and gatherings that families with multiple children did; just she was not actually related to those with whom she shared these moments. The greatest difference, Suzi feels is how her days began and ended. With only one child to focus on, she received a great amount of doting and affection. To this day, her father refers to her as "daughter" as a term of endearment. He refers to his wife as "my bride" at times as well. To feel more included as a child on family outings, often Suzi often brought along a friend when she went somewhere, be it to the park for an hour or the beach for a week. Her parents wanted to be assured that she had the companionship of someone near her age. Often, this person would be the child of one of her mother's friends, but especially as she got older, she was allowed to choose herself who would go with her on her outings.

One thing that her parents tried to ensure in earnest was that she was not materialistically spoiled. Suzi started babysitting at 12 and at 14 started working as a clerk at a local pharmacy. She did not get her driver's license until after she graduated from college to save the expense of paying car

insurance, which would have been her responsibility. She was never in need of anything. All of her necessities were always provided. She needed to work for her personal spending money, to earn those extras that her parents were not willing, although they could have afforded to if they tried, dote on her. On the other hand, Suzi had no responsibilities at home other than keeping her room clean. When Suzi went to first grade and was in school full-time, her mother took a job as an administrative assistant for an insurance company. It was a mile from home and they allowed her to match her schedule to Suzi's school schedule so that she was always available to care for her daughter. In the summer, her mother worked fewer hours and Suzi spent those hours with her grandmother, who lived close by. Other than an occasional evening out for her parents, Suzi was always in the care of her family.

In her elementary school years, Suzi liked to have her friends come to her house to play. There, no annoying siblings would interrupt or worse yet, have to be included. She was able to play and interact with her friends without interference from other children. Her mother would dote on them, offering snacks and helping provide entertainment, such as helping teach new designs to make paper dolls. As she grew older, and wanted more autonomy from her mother, her mother respected her independence and gave her more freedom. It had been earned, and Suzi had earned the right and privilege to be trusted. Often, Suzi confided with her mother with what was going on her life and in exchange, pleased with the smart decisions that her daughter was making, freedom was granted gradually through her teen years.

One of the reasons Suzi did not look at going away to a college more than two hours from home was because of her close familial relationship and wanting to know that she could come home for a weekend visit whenever she decided that she wanted to do so. In retrospect, she spent about one weekend a month at home and stayed at school the other three. She feels that it was a good mix for her, even today. Sometimes, she would bring a friend or roommate with her for the weekend, others she would come home alone. This way she could get a complete break from college life. She kept in close contact with many of her friends from high school and would use these weekends to socialize with them.

One thing that Suzi noticed, both in high school and college, was that she was more driven and was willing to put forth the work necessary and take the extra steps necessary to be at the top of her class. She was third in her high school graduating class. She finished college Magna Cum Laude. She was chosen not only to be a teaching assistant, but also to spend the year after graduation from college, tuition free at her Alma Mater, an expensive private college, doing research and completing pre-requisite courses for her graduate education. This type of work ethic parallels the study by Caspi, Roberts, and Shiner (2005) that supports that only children are motivated to meet goals and have higher expectations of what they are able to accomplish. This is quite an accomplishment from a child who is the first on both sides of the family to receive any type of post-graduate education. Reflecting on those friendships in her adolescent years, Suzi feels that perhaps she was closer to a few of the girls that she spent time with because she had no type of sisterly bond. She is still good friends with these girls

today, even though they all went to different colleges. They are also at different stages of life, with one being college still, because she attends part-time, one being in graduate school, one is a single mother and Suzi is a married professional. They are all in different places in life, a time when friendships often dissolve, but their friendships with each other continue to be a strong bond. Suzi feels that she is the coordinator of the group, planning the events that the group does and is the main contact person for the group. Whether or not this is due to being an only child, or just because she has always liked controlling group situation, such as group projects, Suzi does not know. She has never given it much thought. She does not mind the task and the others do not mind relinquishing the control to her. These types of close-knit bonds follow the research of Wilson and Durbin (2012), who found that only children cherish and value their friendships with others more so than those who have close relationships with their siblings. Perhaps, on some level, their research implies, these close friends are surrogates for the siblings that the only children have never had. However, both the only child benefits from having these surrogate siblings in these life-long relationships as does the other members of the group, who also have psychological benefits of the long-term associations .

Suzi is married to the younger of two boys. Being the younger child, she sees in her husband, Dan, his want and desire to please his older brother and how much his older brother's approval means to him. Dan was actually concerned to tell his brother, Pat, about their engagement since Pat's two-year relationship with a girl had just ended. Fearing jealousy, he was relieved when his brother expressed nothing but pleasure when he heard the news.

Suzi has always wanted to please her parents with her decisions, since she is their child. She cannot imagine the pressure of trying to also please a sibling and wondering how they would take news or what emotions might be expressed when big events and life-changing announcements are made. In the end, Suzi does not feel that she missed anything growing up as an only child. Her parents were aware of her need to socialize from an early age and ensured that the opportunities were there for her to do so. She knows that she is bright, well-educated, and well-adjusted. She is pleased with the way her life has turned out up to this point.

Works Cited

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