

# A birth order overview and the life of a middle child

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## **Birth Order and The Middle Child**

Anyone with older or younger siblings knows what it is like to grow up and have to share the attention of their parents. They know at any given moment the attention they are receiving can be interrupted by a sudden fight breaking out between their other siblings, or some other mishap coming along causing mommy or daddy to leave their side and tend to the new situation. Often this leaves a child feeling neglected by their parents and they have to find new ways to make themselves feel accepted. They turn to friends and other peers for acceptance and build close relationships with them in order to help them feel like they matter somewhere. More times than not this child is the middle child. The middle child is the one who is stuck between the over achieving older sibling and the adorable younger one who does no wrong. It isn't just the middle child who has been studied over the years. Only children, oldest, and youngest children have also been looked at to see if there were any traits or patterns in behavior. The concept of birth order to some is something that has no effect but, to others, the child's placement in their family can shape their entire future.

When I was younger I can remember my parents having to constantly take care of my little brother who was always getting into something, or paying attention to my older sister who craved attention and made her presence known whenever she walked into a room. I was the child stuck in the middle and like many middle children do, I often felt neglected due to lack of attention from my family. I was compared to my older sister more times than I can count and nothing was more upsetting to me. I wanted to be

recognized as the individual I was. This is something that is not uncommon for middle children to go through.

### **The Only Child**

The only child is the one who often appears very mature and is often thought to be older than they really are just because of how they present themselves. Only children are usually easy to pick out, they are the ones who tend to strive for the approval of others and want to be in the constant spotlight (Walcutt). Growing up my best friend was an only child. She was a very outgoing person who was always trying to please everyone she met. It is said the only children tend to be perfectionists, when it came to my friend that was a trait in her that really stood out. Everything she did had to be done perfectly and if it was not, she had an urge to redo it no matter what. It is also not uncommon for only children to gravitate towards people who are older than they are (Neal). Only children also have a tendency to have a hard time with peers of their own age. They tend to feel they are more mature than ones their age and strive to associate with people who are more at their level. They tend to be very creative people as well and can easily come up with new and creative ideas that others may not have thought of (Flanagan Morrison). This is something that can make them very valuable in the world of sales and can get them far in life because they are the ones thinking of what no one else does.

Only children are big on equality. They believe everyone deserves to be treated the same and everyone deserves an equal chance (Isaacson). My friend, who was an only child, was one of the biggest voices I knew for treating people equally. She never left anyone out and she expected

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everyone to give everyone a chance. This is something that got her in tough situations often. She believed everyone should have a chance and had a hard time telling people no. She never wanted anyone to feel as though they were being left out and this sometimes caused for too many people and in the end some were inevitably left out. Although there are many positive things to say about being an only child not everything about it is great. Only children can sometimes feel left out by their peers because of the fact that they feel they are more advanced (Stossel). When I look back at my friends who were only children that is something I often saw them struggle with. They loved their families and friends but sometimes they felt left out by watching the sibling relationships that everyone else had. No matter how close they were with their friends nothing can make up for the love and friendship of a sibling.

### **The First Born**

The first born child is one who will always hold a sense of empowerment. They were there first, their parents practice run. As the oldest, children tend to become natural leaders (DeBroff). They need to set an example for their younger siblings and be able to show them the ropes. I found this to be true in my family. My older sister was often the one leading me and my brother around. She would get us to do things for her that she didn't want to do and, being the younger ones, we would do whatever she wanted us to, no questions asked. Another trait that is very common in the oldest child is for them to feel as though they do a greater amount than the rest of their siblings (Klass). They feel as though what they do accomplishes more than everyone else and it is done at a greater quality than if someone else did it.

This can go along with oldest children being more of the show off type (Isaacson). They want people to notice them especially since they can often feel overlooked by their younger siblings (DeBroff).

Growing up one of the things I can remember about my older sister is that she was very easy to guilt into anything. For some reason eldest children feel guilty and can be easily guilt tripped (Isaacson). I could make her do almost anything I wanted by bringing up something she had done wrong in the past or by telling her something I had done for her. She would always feel bad about whatever it was and would do the task I wanted her to do for me. Isaacson also said in his writing the oldest child is a people pleaser who doesn't ever want to offend anyone. They do everything they can in order to make sure that the people around them are not displeased with them in anyway. I can remember many times my sister asking my parents what she could do to help out and make them happy. She was always trying to please everyone and too this day she still can't handle it when she knows someone is unhappy with her.

Along with their people pleasing nature older children can also be very bossy and demanding, and lack sensitivity (Leman). They are the ones who want things to go their way and want people to cater to them and do what they want them to do. It is also said that they don't trust others very easily and they have poor delegating skills. Older children aren't really sure how to manipulate people into doing what they want them to do and this can sometimes be the cause for them to break down when things don't go how they want it too.

First born children tend to be the organized, competent, punctual people (Leman). They want things to be done well, and on time. My older sister was one that was like that. She was always one to do any of her work on time and make sure it was done to the best possible quality. I guess that is why older children tend to be the ones to get things done and most Presidents are only children or first born sons.

### **The Middle Child**

When it comes to birth order many believe that “ birth order makes about as much sense as astrology, which is almost none” (Stossel). People believe that how a person grows up has as much to do with their chronological place in the family as it does with the alignment of the stars at their birth.

Although many feel that birth order has no affect on how one grows up, one thing they do agree on is that middle children tend to suffer more than their older and younger siblings. “ Middle children get the worst deal” (Stossel). They get stuck with the hand-me-downs of their older sibling and are often overlooked due to the cuteness and entertainment provided by their younger sibling. The child in the middle doesn't stand out because everything they do has already been done by the older sibling.

The middle child is the one who is known to be very adaptable and very flexible. They are willing to adapt to any situation in order to feel as though they belong there (Flanagan Morrison). The middle child can also be very social and outgoing in order to make the friends the desire to have in order to feel accepted. It has been said that the middle child is the one who “ fell through the cracks” (Walcutt). This means that the child is the one the family just forgot about. It is the child who gets little attention and can often be <https://assignbuster.com/a-birth-order-overview-and-the-life-of-a-middle-child/>

overlooked by the world. As a middle child I often feel this to be true.

Whenever my older sister or younger brother would bring home a good grade it went up on the fridge to show what they had accomplished, I on the other hand had to work to get praise for my hard work and because of this I found myself shying away from my family.

Growing up as the middle was not easy. I always felt as though no one really cared and I was always overlooked. My older sister was always in the spotlight and my little brother was always so cute and entertaining. Instead of trying to draw more attention to myself, I instead went out and found ways to keep myself occupied. I became very secretive and learned how to hide my emotions, I also found my friends to be more important than spending time with my family. This is a trait many middle children are found with. They feel more accepted by their peers and therefore tend to gravitate towards them more (Flanagan Morrison). According to a study done by Dalton Conley middle children are even 25% less likely to be sent to a private school and they are five times more likely to be held back a grade in school. Fortunately I was never held back but many of my family who was the middle child were held back in school. The middle child is often the one who does fairly decent in school but may not excel like their older sibling. When the middle child does bring home a good grade from school it is often not received as well as when the older sibling brings a good grade home.

The middle child is also known as the peace maker of the family (Isaacson). They don't like fights or confrontation and they simply want people to be able to get along. They are known for having a lot of self discipline and are

big on following the rules. One of the traits a middle child has that I found a lot in myself is honesty. Middle children are known to be very honest with people and tell like it is, they are also big at giving peers and family constructive criticism that will help them along in life. I personally am the type of person who gives constructive criticism often and because of this my friends frequently ask me for feedback on the things they do.

### **Middle Child Syndrome**

Although not everyone who has studied it believes birth order is an actual thing that affects a person many believe it is true that the middle child is often left out and “middle child syndrome” is a real thing that middle children go through. The middle child syndrome can however be counteracted with a few simple things that the parents can do for the child. If the parent takes the time to spend individual time with their middle child, the child will feel more valued in the household.

According to Stacy DeBroff middle children can grow resentful of their other siblings as the years go on. This is can be from growing up in the shadow of the older sibling and from being overlooked because of the younger sibling. DeBroff says that because middle children often feel as a lesser member they tend to become more relaxed and not in nature and don't worry too much about what others think of them. One of the reasons DeBroff says middle children often shy away from their families attention is because they are often overlooked because by the time they make accomplishment the older sibling has already done that and it is old news. As a middle child everything you do has been done once before and the family often feels as though as much praise is not needed for learning how to tie a shoe or ride a <https://assignbuster.com/a-birth-order-overview-and-the-life-of-a-middle-child/>



bike. Once it has been done once, it is the same the next time around.

Because of this middle children often feel as though they need to try ten times harder in order to please their parents and in order to be noticed over their older and younger siblings.

### **The “ Baby” of the Family**

The youngest child in a family is often referenced as the “ baby of the family”. They are spoiled rotten by their parents and can’t do anything wrong. Growing up the some of the friends I had were babies of their families. Their parents let them do whatever they wanted and even when they did something wrong, it was brushed off as no big deal. I saw my little brother get the same treatment from my own parents over the years. He was just too cute to punish. No matter what he did it was always laughed off and he told how adorable he was. When it comes to the youngest children of a family it is often said they are the most affectionate (Debroff). This could be because of all the love and attention they typically get from the rest of the family. Youngest children also tend to be the more socially outgoing ones in the family. They are sometimes known as “ the world’s cheerleaders”. They cheer everyone on and want to see people be successful. Youngest children will go out and take risks in the world and live life to its fullest (Leman). They want to know they have done everything they can to enjoy life and didn’t waste a single moment. Watching my brother I feel that is very true about youngest children. He is always cheering people on and trying to encourage them to do things to make themselves happier and to help them enjoy life more. My closest friend is also the youngest child and growing up she was

always the one to encourage me and my sister. She would be there to pick us up when we fell down and she was always the one to get us going again.

It is often said the baby of the family will marry the oldest child of another family (Walcutt). They claim this is because the baby of the family needs to be taken care of and the oldest child can provide that for them as they have tendencies to be natural care takers. Although the youngest child can be charming and affectionate, it is not uncommon for them to be manipulative and find ways of getting exactly what they want. They also tend to have problems with money and are known to be financially irresponsible (Neal). The youngest child can be manipulative in because they are used to getting what they want and when they don't they need to find a way to get it. My brother was always one for getting the newest video game and getting out of trouble by batting his eyelashes and making promises to clean and do work which he never did. Even though my parents knew he would not follow through they always wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt and gave him a chance to show he would actually do what he said. He never really did but he still always got the chance. That goes along with the youngest child being spoiled. Anyone with a younger sibling will tell you that the younger one always had everything while the older one had to work for their things.

When it comes to academics it is often the baby of the family who falls behind in school and becomes careless (Gugl Welling). This can happen because by the time the youngest child gets into school the parents are tired and no longer want to fight with their kids to do the work. It isn't that the parents don't care about their child's education, they just no longer want to

fight about it (Muhammad). The youngest may not be the one to bring home all A's but instead the B's and C's. When the child finally does bring home the A however it is a major cause of excitement in the family. This is one of the things the youngest thrives on as well and they enjoy the attention being on them more than usual.

### **Parenting Children**

When it comes to parenting children it is important to remember that each child is an individual and each one has their own special needs. Children do not like being compared to their siblings and want to be recognized as the individuals that they are. In an article written by Rome Neal, he explains ways parents can cater to the needs of each individual child based on where they are in the family placement.

When it comes to parenting the oldest child Neal says it is best to not try and improve them. He says the oldest child already feels the need to be perfect and trying to improve what they do. This is something parents should take note of and really pay attention to, if parents are trying to tell their child they need to be better when they already feel like they are doing all they can to be the best. Another thing Neal says is important to oldest children is something he calls "two-on-one time". This is a time when the child gets to be alone with both of his or her parents and the focus is directly on them and they get to choose what they do. This time is important for the child because it reminds them that even though mommy and daddy may have to focus on their younger siblings at times, they are still just as important as the younger ones. For the oldest child it is also important to remember not to give them too many responsibilities. Although they are older and their parents may feel <https://assignbuster.com/a-birth-order-overview-and-the-life-of-a-middle-child/>

they can handle more tasks such as babysitting the younger siblings and helping around the house more it is important to remember that the oldest child needs to not feel as though everything is on them. They need time to themselves and time to be able to relax just as much as anyone else does; if not sometimes more due to the pressure they put on themselves.

For the middle child Neal says it is important that parents make time to listen to the child. Although all children need to be listened to the middle child often feels as though they are not heard enough and if the parents take the time to ask them how they are feeling and ask them about their day they are more apt to feel as though they matter more. Another things Neal says is important for parents to allow their middle child to do is make decisions, even if it is simple things such as what they have for dinner or who goes first in a family game. Allowing the child to make these decisions will make them feel as though they are valued in the family and will help them feel more included. This will also allow the child to not feel overshadowed by their other siblings.

When it comes to the youngest child the best advice Neal gives is to stick to the rules. The youngest child typically doesn't get disciplined as much as the older children and it is important that when they do the parents stick to what they say and not let them off easy. Neal also says it is important that parents give responsibility to the youngest child. It is not uncommon for them to be able to find a way out of doing things and parents need to make sure that they are doing all they can to make sure the youngest is given an equal amount of work. Something else that Neal says is important when it comes

to the baby of the family is to make sure their parents praise them for the things they do well. Youngest born children can have the tendency to feel nothing they do is important and therefore it is important that their parents recognize the things they do well.

### **The Exceptions To Birth Order**

When it comes to families and birth order there are always going to be exceptions. Not every family has three children or just one to parent. Some families are much larger and in that case it is said the middle child could be one or many in the middle, and the oldest child could change over the years as one leaves for any reason (Walcutt). Even in smaller families the oldest child could change when the first oldest leaves to go to college or just be out on his own. In cases like this the characteristics that are said to show in the oldest, middle, and youngest child can appear in more than one child. For example when you have a family of four the two in the middle may both show traits of the middle child or neither one of them could show it. They may show traits similar to the oldest or youngest depending on which one they are closer to in age. Also when the oldest leaves the next in line may pick up the place of being the oldest and show traits of being the oldest child. According to Diana Walcutt, author of "Birth Order and Personality", if a family is a single parent home, there is a death in the family, divorce, or remarriage, the traits may not show in the children as far as their birth order. Things like this can cause children to grow up faster and where a typical baby of the family may be one to want everything given to them, in situations such as the one listed previously, they baby may be the one to step up and try to bring the family together in hard times. Walcutt also says

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that when there is a large age gap between siblings such as six or more years the traits will not be as prominent due to the fact that it is a generation gap between the siblings. In these cases two children may show the older child traits and the younger one will still be the baby but a middle child may not be present. Wallcutt's writing explains to us that just because there is a middle, oldest, or youngest child in a family there are many things that can affect the outcomes of the children's personality.

Birth Order is a topic that not many people think of. No one thinks that their child is bossy and demanding because they are the oldest, or that their baby is not good with money because he was spoiled and had everything handed to him. They don't look at their middle child and blame their secretiveness on the fact that they get less attention. Parents want to believe they treat all their children the same and no one believes that the family placement can have an effect on how they grow up. When I first started looking into the topic I wasn't even sure birth order really mattered. While not all the traits and personalities I read about hold true for everyone I know it is clear to me that birth order does have some impact on a child even if it is minimal.