


Birth Order

The Forces that shape our choices

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- Where we are in our family of origin affects all aspects of our lives. As humans we gravitate towards relationships that are learned and familiar.
 - We create peer, family and romantic relationships that were shaped from our earliest memories and interactions with our siblings.
 - Career choice is influenced by our birth order.

ACTIVITY

Your family of origin

- write down the name and gender of all your siblings in order from oldest to youngest with the age spacing beside each.

eg. Jim - male
 3 years
 Dave - male
 4 years
 Wendy - female
 4 years
 Joanne - female

Common Characteristics of each Position

- There are general characteristics and tendencies of each birth order position
- They are not hard and fast. Birth order is only one influence on the developing personality.
- They can be effected by large age gaps between siblings, split or blended families

First Borns

- Responsible
- High or overachievers
- Concerned about their performance
- Often out to prove something
- May have played surrogate parent role, caring, instructive
- Potentially authoritative
- Improved cognitive performance

First Born Rationale

- Was the only child for awhile, relished in the limelight. One on one attention gave them a head start.
- Next child came and they were usurped. Could not understand why. Strove to regain favour, maybe for the rest of their life.
- Taught siblings what they knew.
- Had to be the responsible one, or rebelled against it
- May have had to be a caregiver

Second Born or Middle Child

- Competitive
- More adventurous
- Social
- Mediator
- Aggressive
- Rebellious
- Adaptive

Second Born Rationale

- Second child tries to keep up with first born
- May try to make their mark in a different way
- May give up trying to be in the spotlight
- If they become a middle child then they may become more congenial
- They are adaptive as family grows and social skills may develop further

Last Born

- Persistent
- Outgoing, sometimes a joker
- More of a risk taker
- Charming or manipulative
- Feels weak and not taken seriously
- Struggles for independence outside of family
- Usually more creative
- Sense of entitlement

Last Born Rationale

- Usually spoiled by older siblings and parents
- May become the perpetual 'baby' of the family
- Parents lax attitude and lack of quality attention hinders development of independence and confidence
- May become creative in their use of attention seeking strategies.
- Less concerned about achievement as it seems insurmountable to keep up with older siblings.

Activity II

- Look at your sibling list and see if any of these characteristics make sense for you situation
- Do these dynamics play out to this day?
- If not were there large gaps between siblings or split family situations
- Discuss with your partner

Relationships

- We get along best with friends who allow us to play similar roles to what we are used to. Opposites attract holds true. An oldest child may have a best friend who is the youngest in their family. Usually two oldest or two youngest children do not gravitate to each other.
- We often end up in romantic relationships in the same way. Ideal matches are opposites. Two people from the same group create some friction.

Activity III

- Identify three of your best friends and identify their birth order. Is there a pattern?
- Identify three people from your past romantic relationships. Is there a pattern? Which one lasted the longest?

Birth Order and career choice

- There are relationships between ordinal position and career clusters.
- Oldest children are overachievers, doctors, engineers and often choose helping professions.
- Middle children are mediators, lawyers, administrators and can be entrepreneurs.
- Youngest children are artistic, designers, free-lance writers and self-employed

Parents: What to do?

- Awareness of dynamics in your family
- Change things up eg. Give youngest more responsibility, feeding the family pet eg. Let the oldest know it is okay to colour outside the lines
- Keep dynamics in mind when advising your children around peer relationships, jobs etc.