

Psalm 139:13-14 You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous -- and how well I know it. (NLT)

We are each uniquely created and wonderfully complex. Every personality is not only hardwired by our Creator, but also informed by various environmental factors as well.

Birth order stereotypes are simply stereotypes -- perhaps oversimplified, but not always wrong. No one person will "check each box" or "fit exactly". However, it is both extremely important and also fun to notice and understand the different personality traits of your children. As Dr. Leman has implied in previous sessions, this series is designed to challenge and change you, the parent, and your parenting style. A good parent studies their child, reacts sensitively to their innate temperament, and adapts their upbringing accordingly. To avoid the negative effects of stereotypes avoid making assumptions or creating labels for your children. Be curious, instead.

IT IS IMPORTANT IT IS FOR US TO REALIZE THE INDIVIDUALITY OF EACH OF THE CHILDREN.

First-Born

First-born's traits are developed in an environment of being the only child (for however long) in a family of adults, which may explain why they are often seen as adult-like. We groom the first-born child for *success* in life. First-borns tend to be reliable, contentious, cautious, and controlling. They are often high achievers, perhaps because they have had more one-on-one time with their parents. First-borns score higher on IQ tests, get more education, and tend to out earn their siblings.

Your Parenting Challenge

First-borns tend to be perfectionists, striving to please. Because they are often given more responsibility at home (chores and sibling duties) they might often take charge, which can lead to excess stress for a child who might already feel a pressure to be perfect. Dr. Leman warns parents to watch for their critical eye. Parents should not become fault finders because it can create an environment where the first-born becomes a self-defeated perfectionist rather than a person who is a pursuer of excellence. Your job is to allow your child the opportunity to fail without condemnation or judgment. Remember your first-born is still a child. Be careful about putting too much responsibility on them.

Middle Children

Dr. Leman says the one thing you can count on with birth order, is that the first-born and the next born are going to turn different. Middle children are raised in an environment with a more experienced parent. These parents tend to be less concerned about what they now consider to be minor aspects of parenting in addition to having less time and energy to be as attentive as they once were, especially as a younger sibling begins to demand the parent's affection and attention. Parental attention is typically focused elsewhere, so middle children tend to make their mark among their peers and seek acceptance from outside the family. Middle children tend to be competitive and somewhat rebellious, thrive on friendships, and have a large social circle. They are often negotiators and peacemakers. Middle children must continually learn how to "fit in" and tend to be seen as more agreeable than their siblings.

Your Parenting Challenge

Although middle children are semi-neglected, they benefit from this over time. They become more independent, think outside the box, feel less pressure to conform, and are more empathetic. Because they receive less attention at home, middle children tend to forge stronger bonds with friends and are less tethered to their family than their brothers and sisters. Remember they were once the baby of the family, but now they are not. They can become hyper-aware that they don't receive as much attention and can feel like their needs or wants are ignored. It is easy for them to get lost in the everyday busyness of family life. Your job is to provide them opportunities for two-on-one time with your middle child while continually encouraging and highlighting your child's importance to the family. Dr. Leman says the most important thing you can do for your middle child is to listen to them.

Last-Born

This child is often raised in a much less restrictive environment because parents are now veteran parents. The baby of a family tends to be fun-loving, outgoing, and uncomplicated. They can also be manipulative, self-centered, and attention-seeking. Last-borns tend to be natural charmers and comedians as they play for the family spotlight. Because they are being raised by experienced parents who will now allow it, they tend to take more physical risks than their older siblings and are open to more experiences.

Your Parenting Challenge

Dr. Leman says last-borns often feel that nothing they do is important because everything they do has already been done. Your son or daughter will believe lies about themselves based upon how you interact with them and how the siblings interact with your son or daughter. They learn manipulation to get their way in a household where everyone is older, bigger, and smarter than they are. They tend to be given fewer responsibilities, chores, and rules than their older siblings and are often held to a much lower standard. Your job is to give them opportunities to be responsible.

Only-Child

Only-children are raised in a unique environment. With no one to compete with, they are the sole recipient of their parent's attention and affection. They are maturing as people at the same time their parents are maturing as parents. In a sense, their family is growing up together. Only-children tend to be mature for their age, perfectionists, and conscientious. They tend to be diligent leaders as well.

Your Parenting Challenge

Only-children tend to spend a lot of time alone, which can be advantageous. They become creative and focused because they have to learn to entertain themselves. The undivided attention of their parents can lead to high self-esteem and a strong identity. Your job is to resist over protecting your only-child and allow them to make developmentally appropriate decisions for themselves as they grow and mature.

Variables

There's variables that can debunk all theories listed above. Two major variables include sex of the child and physical differences. Where your boys and girls fall in the order greatly impacts their behavior. Additionally, large gaps can make a youngest child feel more like an only child.

IT'S A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE TO REALIZE THAT GOD'S MADE EACH KID DIFFERENTLY AND THEY ARE GOING TO RESPOND TO YOUR CORRECTION MUCH DIFFERENTLY FROM ONE ANOTHER.