

# Making Your Birth Order Work for You!

## Making the Firstborn Birth Order Work<sup>1</sup>

1. **Take smaller bites of life.** Firstborns are known for getting themselves involved in too many things. They frequently wind up with little time for themselves.
2. **Work on saying no.** Many firstborns are pleasers — they like the approval of others and almost always accept invitations, requests, etc. One of the best ways to know how to say no is to know your limits.
3. **Lower your sights a little.** Remember that as a firstborn your parents probably had higher expectations for you than anyone else in the family. And the natural result is that you have high expectations for yourself. You expect to be first, best, perfect. Do a little less and enjoy life more.
4. **Enjoy your natural curiosity.** Firstborns are known for asking a lot of questions, wanting all the details. Don't apologize for this trait, which is a sign of a leader who can size up the situation, be able to outline what has to be done, and then apply a logical, step-by-step process to solve the problem.
5. **Take your time.** As a firstborn, you are likely to be a cautious, careful person. Don't let people pressure you into jumping into things when you would prefer to take the time you need to make your decision.
6. **If you are the serious type, try to develop a sense of humor.** Learn to laugh at your mistakes. At least be more accepting of the fact that you are bound to fail now and then. Mistakes are a great way to learn and improve.
7. **Never apologize for being conscientious and over-organized.** As a firstborn, you need structure; you need your "to do" lists. The trick is not to be driven by them.

## Making the Middle Birth Order Work<sup>2</sup>

1. **Nurture your natural people skills.** Middle-borns probably have certain people-oriented social skills because of all the negotiating and mediating they had to do while growing up. Use these skills to see both sides and deal with life as it really is.
2. **Enjoy your uniqueness.** If you are the free-spirit type, fight to keep your unique qualities. Keep in mind that business and companies are often looking for someone with new ideas and the independence to try them.
3. **Express yourself.** Middle children sometimes feel like no one will listen to them since they may have grown up feeling that their family never listened to them. Instead of apologizing for your opinions, or failing to offer them at all, share your ideas with others.
4. **Focus on meaningful relationships.** If the "socially skilled, lots of friends" label fits you, rejoice and enjoy it. But don't spread yourself too thin. No one can maintain a limitless number of relationships and keep them meaningful.
5. **Don't compare.** Don't get sucked into playing comparison games. You understand better than anyone that there are always people who are above or below in terms of ability, interest, appearance, athletic skill, etc. Comparisons are futile and usually pointless.
6. **Consider taking the lead.** Don't get the mistaken idea that firstborns are the only people who can rise to positions of leadership. Middle children often make excellent managers and leaders because they understand compromise, negotiation, and giving something for something else (the art of quid pro quo).

## Making the Last-Born Birth Order Work<sup>3</sup>

1. **Accept responsibility for yourself.** Are you still passing the buck? You're not a little kid anymore, so why continue acting like one? It's time to grow up and take charge.
2. **Think neat.** Many last-borns are disorganized, even messy. Learn to pick up after yourself.
3. **Give of yourself.** While last-borns are usually people persons, ironically they struggle with self-centeredness. Offer to help others, then follow through and quietly do it without fanfare. Helping others — sharing your money, time and energy—is a great cure for self-centeredness.
4. **Beware of being too independent.** Work on admitting your faults. Don't blame others for your situation even if you think they caused it.
5. **Always be aware of your gifts: being funny, charming and persuasive.** Use these correctly and you will be an asset in any situation. Beware, however, of being a carrot seeker, always working for that pat on the head, and always asking, "What's in it for me?"
6. **Share the applause.** If you love the limelight, be advised that other people like a little of it now and then, too. When talking with others, always concentrate on asking them about their plans, their feelings and what they think.
7. **Before marriage, try dating firstborns.** You may find them the most compatible. After marriage, to any birth order, remember that your wife is not your "mommy," or your husband is not your "daddy."

## Making the Only Child Birth Order Work<sup>4</sup>

1. **Pay attention to all the ideas in Making the Firstborn Birth Order Work.**
2. **Exercise extreme caution.** Be ruthless with yourself in regard to making too many commitments and expecting too much of yourself.
3. **Make time for yourself.** Is time and space for yourself really built into your schedule? Most only children are the type who need some time for themselves.
4. **Choose friends wisely.** As a rule, only children get along better with people much older or much younger than themselves. Try to arrange experiences with both groups because these are the personalities you are most likely to click with and the people who will give you more strokes and argue with you less.
5. **Do a self-inventory.** Only children are often labeled selfish and self-centered because they may never have had to learn to share with brothers and sisters. Take an honest inventory of your life. How self-centered do you act around your spouse, friends or fellow workers? What specific things can you do to put others first, help others more and be less critical of others?

1 Leman, K. (1985). *The Birth Order Book: Why You Are the Way You Are*. New York: Dell Publishing, pp. 54-56. Used with permission of Fleming H. Ravell, a division of Baker Book House.

2 Leman, K. (1985). *The Birth Order Book: Why You Are the Way You Are*. New York: Dell Publishing, p. 97. Used with permission of Fleming H. Ravell, a division of Baker Book House

3 Leman, K. (1985). *The Birth Order Book: Why You Are the Way You Are*. New York: Dell Publishing, pp. 116-117. Used with permission of Fleming H. Ravell, a division of Baker Book House.

4 Leman, K. (1985). *The Birth Order Book: Why You Are the Way You Are*. New York: Dell Publishing, pp. 78-81. Used with permission of Fleming H. Ravell, a division of Baker Book House.