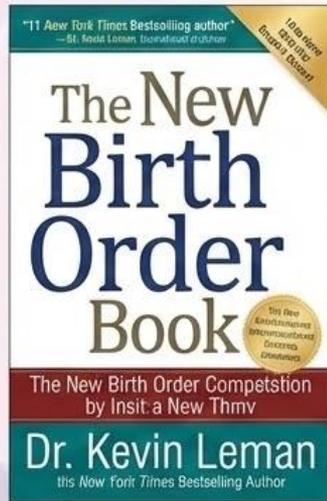


# Teaching And Counseling To The Birth Order



Becky Shryock  
Counselor  
Chisholm Elementary

Birth Order theory is 108 years old!

Developed by Alfred Adler  
1918



# Which Traits Fit You Best?

**A.** Diplomatic, works to avoid conflict, loyal to peers, mediator, compromises well, many friends, secretive, unspoiled, a maverick.



**B.** Charming, manipulative, attention seeker, tenacious, blames others, people person, natural salesperson, precocious, engaging, affectionate, loves surprises.



**C.** Reliable, perfectionist, conscientious, list maker, organized, hard driving, natural leader, critical, serious, scholarly, logical, doesn't like surprises, loves computers.



**D.** Thorough, deliberate, high achiever, self-motivated, fearful, cautious, voracious reader, black and white thinker, uses words like “very” “extremely” and “exactly.” Dislikes failure; has very high expectations for self and others; more comfortable with people who are older or younger.



# The Reveal

**A-Middle Child (move to the back left corner)**

**B-Baby (move to the back right corner)**

**C-Oldest (move to the front left corner)**

**D-Only (move to the front right corner)**



# Group Activity

**1 #1-Choose a leader for your group.**

**#2-Make a list of personality traits that you all seem to share.**

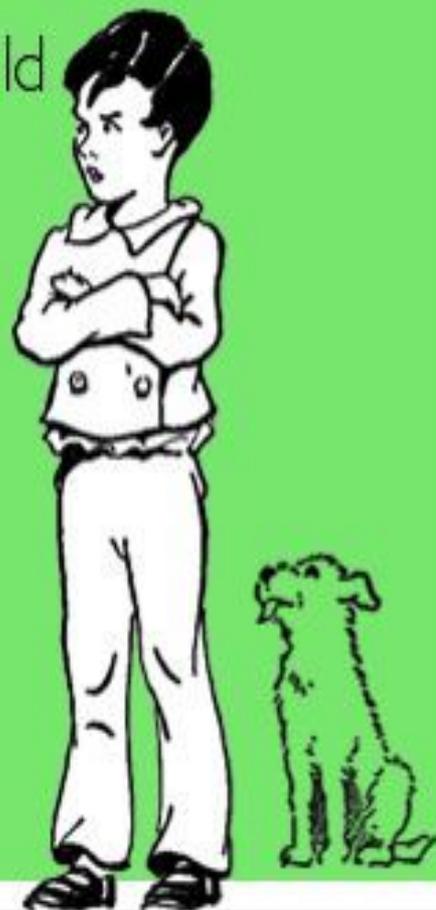
**#3-Create a motto that describes your birth order.**

**#4-In two or three sentences, tell me how you best like to be taught.**

**#5-Create a poster with your Birth Order Motto**

***\*Be prepared to report back to the group with your “composite picture” of yourselves.***

If you are the oldest child  
be honored. It means  
that you were so  
awesome that your  
parents kept trying to  
duplicate.



somee cards  
user card

# First Borns

## *The Achiever*

### Traits:

- ★ **Conscientious**
- ★ **Critical (self/others)**
- ★ **Scholarly**
- ★ **Conservative**
- ★ **Self-Reliant**
- ★ **Reliable**
- ★ **Organized**
- ★ **Goal Oriented**
- ★ **People-Pleasers**

### Two Types of First Borns:

\* **Compliant Nurturer/Caregiver**  

\* **Aggressive/Take-Charge** 

**NEW STUDY FINDS SECOND BORN CHILDREN  
ARE THE BIGGEST SOURCE OF CHAOS,  
BOTH AT HOME AND IN SOCIETY OVERALL**



# Middle Children “Unpredictable”

## The Connector

- ★ Friendly
- ★ Mediator
- ★ Loyal
- ★ Responsible
- ★ Hard worker
- ★ Embarrass Easily



## The Independent

- ★ Loner
- ★ Competitive
- ★ Uncompromising
- ★ Quiet
- ★ Self-Confident
- ★ Impatient
- ★ Creative
- ★ Perfectionist
- ★ High Achievers

\*Do you notice the conflicting traits?

I blame my parents for  
my OCD... Only Child  
Disorder.



# Only Children

*“Lonely Only”*

## Traits:

- ★ Perfectionist
- ★ Anxious
- ★ Overly mature
- ★ Serious

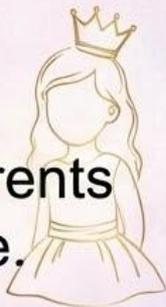
- ★ Entitled
- ★ Uncompromising
- ★ Immature



## Two Types:



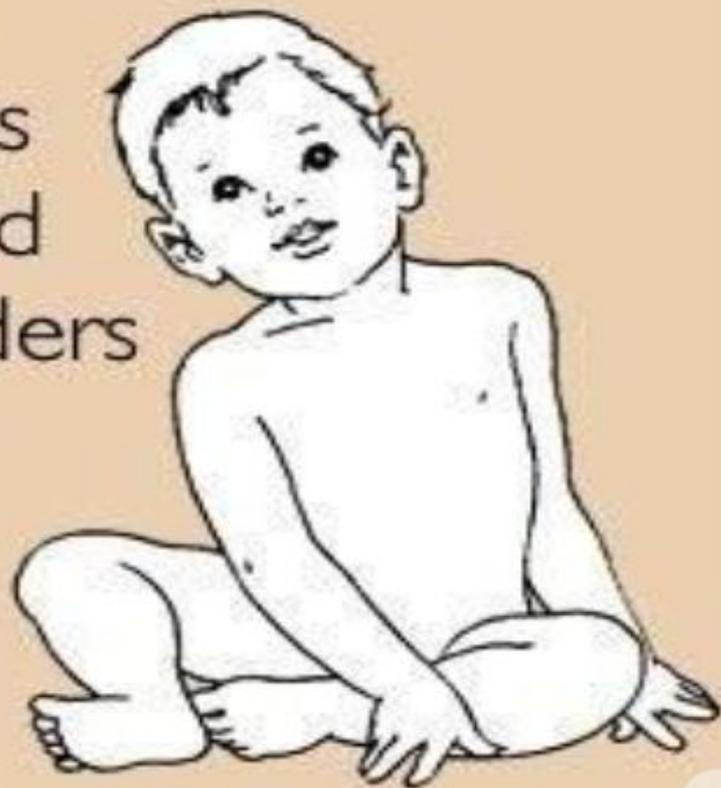
**Precious Jewel-Parents**  
could only have one.



**Planned-Parents only**  
wanted one child.



First child eats dirt. Parent calls doctor. Second child eats dirt. Parent cleans out mouth. Third child eats dirt. Parent wonders if she really needs to feed him lunch.



# The Baby

## *"The Comedian"*

### Traits



**Social**



**Charming**



**Playful**



**Impatient**



### Traits



**Rebellious**



**Temperamental**



**Manipulative**



**Self-Centered**

# First Borns as Learners



## The Competitive Edge

Not interested in games or “fun” unless it’s a competition. They are “in” when there’s a clear goal.



## Blueprint for Success

Want to know three things:  
What exactly to do, how much time, and when it is due.



## Avoid the “Why” Question

Perceive “why” as doubt or criticism. It threatens their sense of control.

# Middle Children as Learners



Good group workers, they have been doing it their whole lives.



Like questions—like to give their opinions.



Wants to know if everyone has to do the assignment.



Can be competitive/determined.

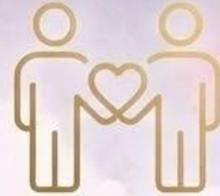
# Babies as Learners



Like stories, creativity, color and ATTENTION.



Will almost always volunteer, but can have silly answers.



Even more relational than middles.



Active, need to change activity often, and may move around a lot.



Are risk takers, aren't afraid of mistakes.

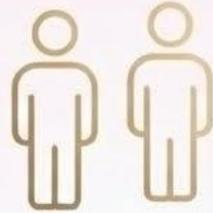


Often rush through work.

# Only Children as Learners



Beware of sensory overload.



May not blend well with peers.



Not good group workers/tend to give in too easily, or want their own way.



Can be a good mediator with friends, but may also get overwhelmed and work to avoid conflict.

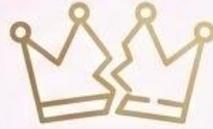


May be sensitive to perceived criticism or disappointment.

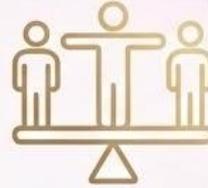
# Caveats



If there is a 5-6 year age gap between kids, the birth order starts again.



You can unknowingly give up your birth order due to illness, disabilities, sex or personality....remember functional first borns.



A three (3) year age gap between kids seems to be ideal.



Only one boy means he often rises to first born status, sometimes not willingly.



If you are a twin, the first born is usually dominant.



Parents tend to over identify with same birth order children.



Blended families cause birth order changes.

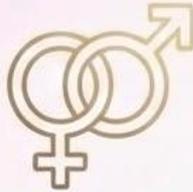


Only two kids means that they are often total opposites.

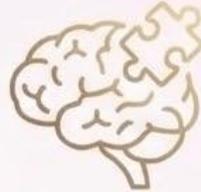
# Caveats



Spacing—the number of years between children.



The sex of each child—and what sequence males and females are born



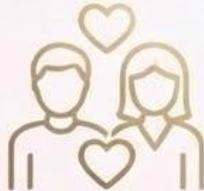
Physical, mental, or emotional difference—special needs



Sibling deaths—birth orders bump



Adoptions



The birth order positions and the relationship between the parents



Blending families—stepfamilies can change birth order.

# 10 Things To Consider When Counseling With Birth Order in Mind.



1-Decoding Classroom “Roles”



6-Correcting “Private Logic”



2-Group Counseling-The Sibling Constellation



7-Social Interest Development



3-Teacher Consultation and Support



8-The Family Constellation Interview



4-Navigating the “Sibling Shadow”



9-Identifying the “Life Style”



5-Parent Consultation



10-Reorientation and Encouragement

# #1 Decoding Classroom “Roles”



## Encouragement Vs. Praise For Oldest/Only Students

Instead of “I’m proud of you.” say, “I noticed how hard you worked.”



## Niche Building Approach for our Middle Children

Help them find an interest or skill that is entirely theirs.



## Step-by-Step Empowerment for Babies of the family

Break tasks into smaller pieces, don’t rescue them in order to develop self confidence.

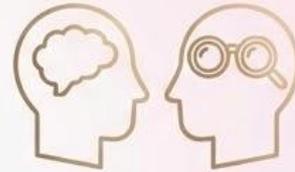
## #2-Group Counseling: The Sibling Constellation

Knowing the birth order of your group members will help as you use techniques like:



### Role Reversal

Have natural leaders (typically older/only) become learners while youngest/middles lead the activity.



### Perspective Taking

Have student share their “rank” at home, and what it means to them. Helpful for kids to see that others in their same birth order have many of the same feelings, and it helps to hear other birth order perspectives of what it is like in their birth order too.

## #3-Teacher Consultation

Helping teachers see how birth order can play a part in classroom management and behavior.



### **Oldest/Only**

Bossy Perfectionists.  
Give them focused roles as mentors to younger or struggling students.



### **Middles**

Lacking motivation or checking out. Give them 1-on-1 time and talk about things that aren't tied to family.



### **Babies**

Helpless/Class Clown.  
Increase their accountability, give them legitimate jobs in your classroom.

## #4-Navigating the Sibling Shadow

Students are often compared to older siblings by teachers.

Interventions include:

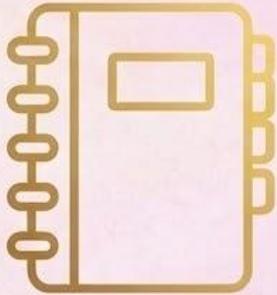
### The “Clean Slate” Intervention

Work with the student to create a “School Identity Statement” that defines who they are at school, apart from their families

### Advocacy



Gently remind teachers that a student’s birth order could be influencing their behavior, and those students are not responsible for repeating OR repairing a siblings reputation.



# #5-Parent Consultation

Birth order is a non-threatening way to discuss family dynamics with parents.



## The Dethronement Talk

When behavior changes e.g. grades drop after a new baby arrived, you can help parents see that it may be due to the loss/change of status in the family.

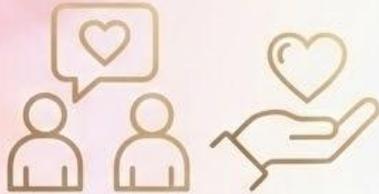


## Competition Analysis

Help parents reflect to determine if they are unknowingly creating a “race” between siblings. e.g. benchmarks, athletics, grades. The “losing” student can develop low self esteem.

## #6-Correcting Private Logic

Children can develop a private logic such as; “I’m the smallest, I must be taken care of.” Counselors work to change these misconceptions, by using;



### **Validation**

Affirm their feelings and acknowledge how that behavior has worked in the past, but it’s time to “change the tapes.”



### **Cognitive Reframing**

Helping the student see how those strategies might be causing problems with friends and in the classroom.

## #7-Social Interest Development

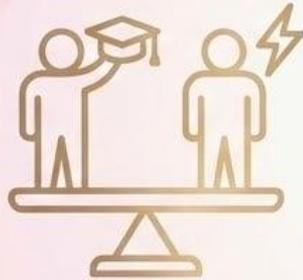
A key goal of birth order counseling is changing the student from a competitive mindset to one of Social Interest. This technique involves finding ways for students to use their natural birth-order strengths to be an asset instead of an excuse to stay in that birth order mind set.



## #8 The Family Constellation Interview

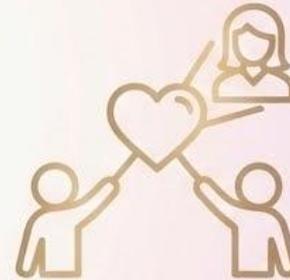
When discussing family, instead of just asking for a birth date, explore the dynamics between siblings by:

### Sibling Comparison



Asking the student to describe their siblings in terms of “Who is the most successful at school?” or “Who is the rebel of the family?”

### Vulnerability Mapping



Identifying who the client felt they had to compete with for parental attention. “Who needs your parents the most?”

## #9-Identifying the Life Style

Adlerians believe birth order helps form a “Life Style”-a set of private ideas and patterns we use to navigate the world.

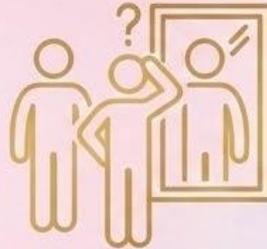
Counseling techniques include:

### First Born/Only Overachievers



This is where we help kids to address perfectionism and the “dethronement” anxiety they felt when a younger sibling arrived.

### Middle Child/Mediator



Work with students to find their own identity outside of being the buffer or the invisible one.

### Youngest/Charmer



Address with these students their need for dependency or the feeling of never being taken seriously.

# #10 Reorientation and Encouragement

This is a specific set of interventions that include:

## Spitting in the Soup



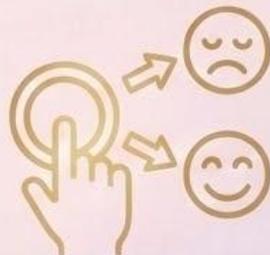
Identifying the “pay-off” of a behavior e.g. youngest acting helpless for attention, and creating the goal of making the behavior less appealing to the client.

## Catching Oneself



Helping students realize when birth order “tapes” take over their thinking, then encourage them to acknowledge they are thinking from their birth order and help them find ways to stop that response. For example, movement, get a drink, listen to a song, write in a journal, use a fidget or develop a mantra.

## The Push-Button



Have the child visualize different roles in the family, and then helping them realize they have the power to change their thinking.

## Student Sibling Comparison Worksheet

### Student Sibling Comparison Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Part 1: The Family Line-up

List your siblings from oldest to youngest (including yourself).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

#### Part 2: "Who Is Most Likely To..."

Put the name of the sibling (or yourself) who fits the description best:

- Who is the most "responsible"?
- Who gets into the most trouble?
- Who is the "best" at school?
- Who is the funniest?
- Who is the quietest?
- Who is the "baby" of the family?

#### Part 3: Sibling Traits

- One thing I admire about my sibling(s) is:
- One thing that is hard about my spot in the family is:
- One thing I am better at than anyone else in my family is:

#### Part 4: Counselor Reflection

- Does the student feel "squeezed," "dethroned," or "babied"?
- Is there a significant age gap (5+ years) changing the dynamic?
- How does this role show up in the classroom?