

Dr. Catherine Salmon Shares 'The Secret Power of Middle Children'



By [Deanna Atkins](#)

One thing you can't change in life is your birth order. Firstborns are destined for leadership, and lastborns take the role as the family's beloved baby, making it a confusing ride for a child growing up in between. While a vast amount of research has been done on birth order, it always seems like the ones left out are middleborns. Realizing this truth, Dr. Catherine Salmon strives to credit middle children's extraordinary traits through her research, surprising readers, myth-believers and parents with the real facts about middles. Salmon teams up with journalist Katrin Schumann to reveal how middleborns can "harness their unexpected and remarkable abilities" in *The Secret Power of Middle Children*.

Although Dr. Catherine Salmon happens to be the baby of the family, she has great admiration for her father who was born a middle child. Throughout her book, she speaks about his honorable qualities, which she believes stem from his middle-child nature. A "trail blazer and a justice seeker," her father inspired her to be independent and, above all, herself. We had a chance to speak with Dr. Salmon, and she filled us in on what sets middles apart from their siblings – intellectually, romantically and emotionally.

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Why do you think people still choose to believe outdated myths which categorize middle children as being neglected,

overshadowed, resentful and negative?

I think there are a number of different reasons for it. A lot of time, our opinions are based on what we see in the media. Sometimes, shows like 'The Brady Bunch' give middle children a reputation of being overlooked and neglected, which is powerful because so many people grew up watching that. Also, in general, there's not a lot of research on middleborns; it's usually just firstborns and lastborns, which proves the overlooked theory again. People look to firstborns and assume that, if they are this way, everyone else must be the opposite.

You say that middleborns are great love matches for first and lastborns. Why do these pairings work so well?

Generally, middleborns go well with most other pairings because of the traits they developed simply from getting less attention from their parents. They work diligently to develop relationships, and they're good negotiators as well as cooperators. They tend to be more concerned about what they're doing for others than what other people do for them. This quality transfers to their relationships, thus making them good at understanding what the other person wants.

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What are some disadvantages of having two middleborns in a relationship?

When you match two middles together, neither wants there to be much conflict, so each partner may not address problems that arise in the relationship. Actually, many birth orders don't do well when paired together. Firstborn pairings tend to butt heads all of the time, and when two lastborns are in a relationship, neither really wants to deal with the problems at all. Middles can easily become pushovers, and a relationship won't be successful if that's the case.

Additionally, middleborns have stronger friendships and longer-lasting marriages. What makes them more relationship-oriented than first and lastborns?

Like I've said, middles are better at figuring out what the other person wants. They're dedicated, value their relationships and also show a willingness to survive the tough times. Middles are agreeable, loyal and flexible – which are all upstanding qualities that are essential to making a relationship or marriage last. Having a high sense of responsibility also helps them in relationships because they're eager to stay in a long-lasting relationship.

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Middleborns are also “agents of change in business, politics and science – more so than first and lastborns.” Can you explain this idea further and share a few examples?

One of the things we talk about in the book are the strategies you learn when you're younger to get what you want. Middleborns are not only good negotiators, but they have an 'openness to experience' – which usually derives from not being given enough freedoms at a young age. Therefore, they're open to new things and willing to take risks and think outside the box. For example, Charles Darwin would probably not have come up with the idea of evolution and natural selection had he been a firstborn. He created a huge change in the way that people thought about science because he didn't follow his family's expectations for what he should be, which was a doctor. Middles are more sensitive to issues about justice and whether people are being treated fairly. They see inequities in the world and want to change what isn't right.

What's the greatest hidden personality trait you believe middleborns possess?

The openness to experience – the willingness to not go by the typical way of thinking about things. They're empathetic and

are internally good psychologists. These traits all go into what makes them so successful.

From Donald Trump to Madonna to the Dalai Lama, how can more middleborns channel their secret powers like these famous people did?

Recognition is the first thing. Sometimes, middleborns don't see their skills for what they are because they have a lower sense of self-esteem. They have this great package, and at first, they might not see how all the pieces fit together. I think that, if they had more confidence to go out and do the things that they want, then there would be a lot more successful middles.

You can learn more about 'The Secret Power of Middle Children at [Amazon](#).