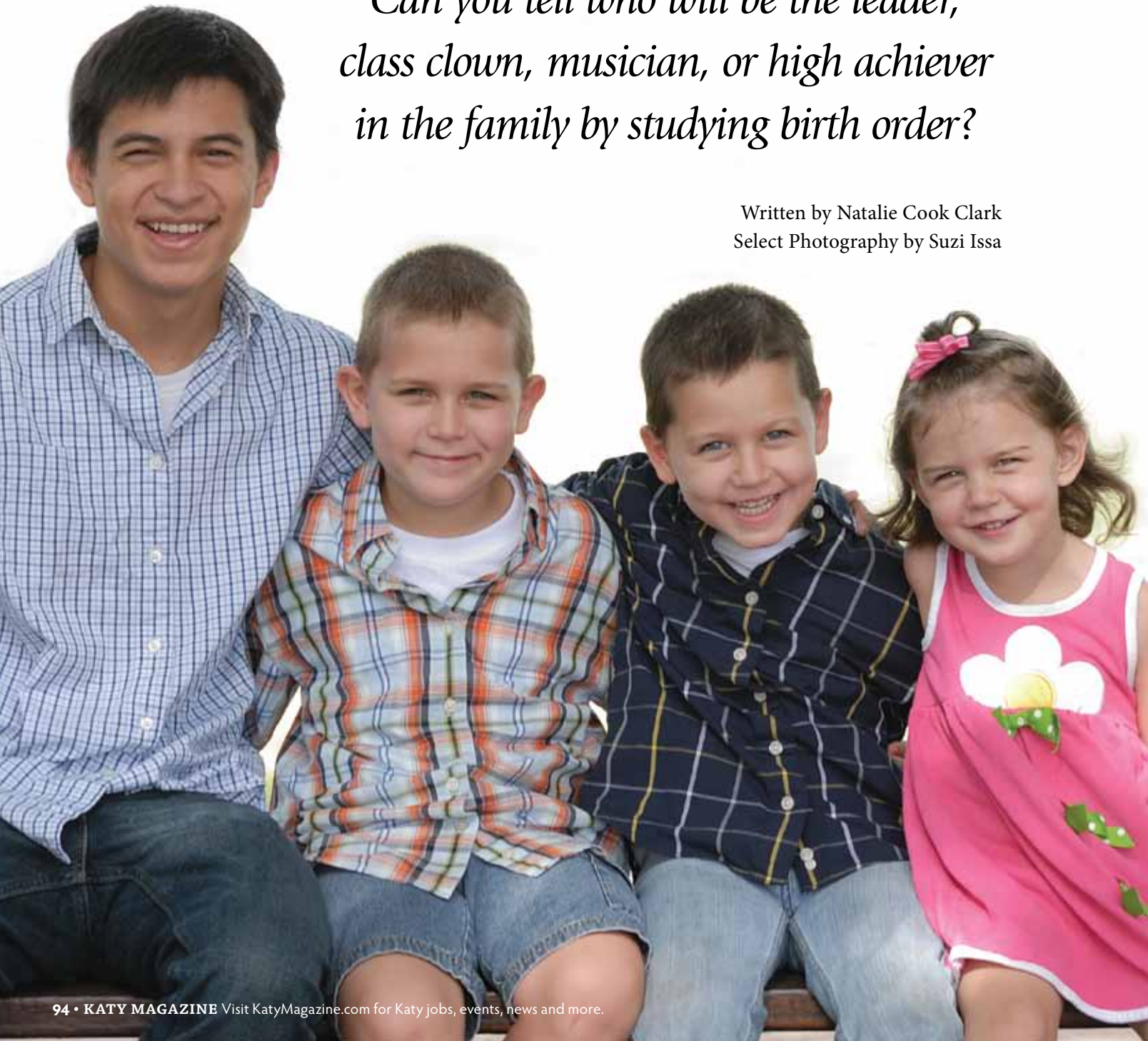


How Birth Order Affects Your Katy Family

*Can you tell who will be the leader,
class clown, musician, or high achiever
in the family by studying birth order?*

Written by Natalie Cook Clark
Select Photography by Suzi Issa



The birth order theory suggests that a child's personality is partially determined by the order in which they were born. For example, oldest children typically are leaders, high achievers, and expect their younger siblings to listen to them. Middle children tend to keep to themselves and try to differentiate themselves from the other children. If they have a sibling who is a natural athlete, they'll go out of their way to become a musician. The baby of the family expects attention because they are used to receiving it. They are usually more outgoing and love to entertain. Parents tend to give youngest children more attention, because they believe them to be their last babies.

Katy mom, Harmony Keel sees the effects of the birth order theory the most in her oldest child. Five-year-old Xan is the oldest of five children and the only girl. "Xan is responsible and motherly towards the younger children," explains Keel. "She even imitates me when I'm speaking to the others." If there is a large gap between children, you may have two children both exhibiting signs of the first-born. Katy mothers, Marie Kime and Jaymie Massey both see this in their children. Kime is a mother to 16-year-old Nicolas, 6-year-old Matthew, 5-year-old RJ, and 3-year-old Grace. "I feel like I have two first-borns with Nicolas and Matthew," says Kime.

Flexibility is the key. With my children's personalities being so different, I must be flexible and focused on their needs.

-Marie Kime

Massey is mother to 20-year-old Jessica, 14-year-old Jordin, and 3-year-old Jacob. "Since they are so spread out, they all act like only children," says Massey. After having two girls, Massey says that her son, Jacob was a completely new experience. "It was like having a baby for the first time," she explains.

Embracing Each Child's Unique Traits

Keel agrees with the birth order theory, but also sees differences in her children that may be attributed more to gender differences. "My daughter wants to learn and the boys need to be engaged," she says. Despite their birth order, Keel says that all of her children are unique in their own ways. "Understanding what works for each is crucial in being able to discipline them effectively," she explains. "What works for one doesn't always work for another." Keel's youngest two sons are 7-month-old twins. She is excited to see how they develop and if they exhibit the typical characteristics of a youngest child.

The important thing to remember is that all children are unique and different. It is fun to try to find the birth order theory in your own children, but do not use the theory alone in parenting decisions. "My parenting varies according to each child," explains Kime, adding, "And I constantly evaluate what works."



Jacob Massey, 3, and his sister, Jessica, 20



Kariethna Urquieta, 10, with her sister, Karenina, 8, and brother, Kevin, 7



Daniella and her brother, Antonio



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Personality Traits by Birth Order

Oldest Children:

- Are natural leaders and problem solvers
- Have strong organizational and reasoning skills

Middle Children:

- Are great negotiators and peacemakers
- Love socializing and often have laid-back attitudes

Youngest Children:

- Are very outgoing and make great team players
- Get babied by their family and can be dependent on others

-Adapted from *parenting.com*

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Spears says that for most people, their older sibling will have more influence over them than any of their other brothers or sisters. With this in mind, capitalize on your oldest child’s sense of leadership and let them help you raise the younger children. This parenting tactic helps Keel foster her oldest daughter’s nurturing personality, while better maintaining some order amongst her five young children.



The Keel children, from left, Kennan, 7 months, Liam, 4, Austin, 2, Xan, 5, and Josiah, 7 months

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Because they are spread out in age, Jessica, Jacob, and Jordin share personality traits of only children, says Katy mom, Jaymie Massey



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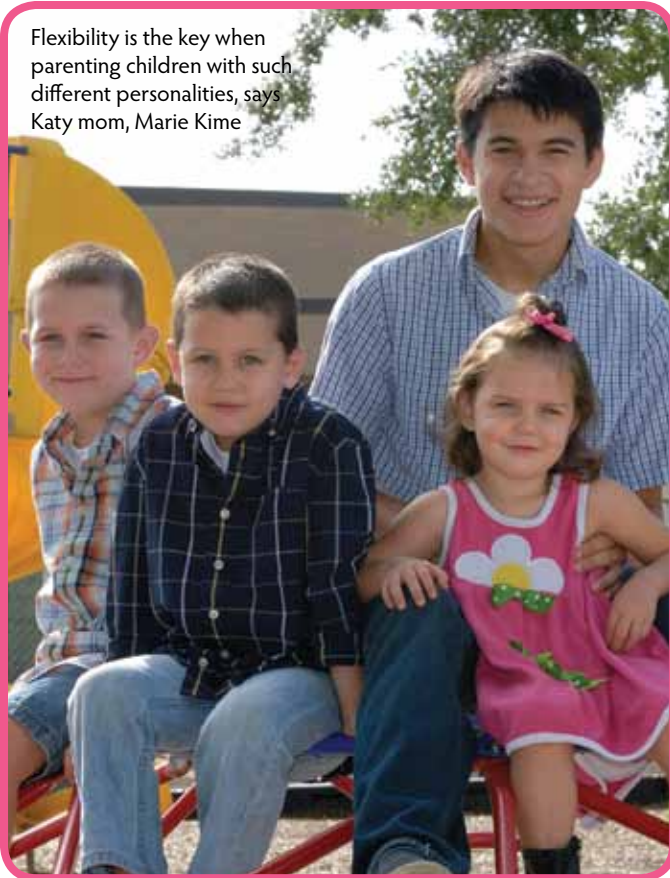
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Understanding what works for each is crucial in being able to discipline them effectively.

—Harmony Keel

Flexibility is the key when parenting children with such different personalities, says Katy mom, Marie Kime



A Fun Way to Better Understand Your Family

Even though birth order theory is popular in our culture and a continual hot topic among parents, it can't explain every personality quirk and isn't always right. "With creativity, one can find birth order theories in each family," says Dr. Merriman. "The birth order theory is about as indicative a predictor analysis as handwriting analysis is." With that in mind, it's certainly fun to consider the theory and see if it fits any characteristics of your family.

Whether you believe in this popular theory or not, most parents see different personalities amongst their children. Now, if that is due to birth order, environment, or parenting skills, we'll probably never know. But what is important is that parents can recognize these differences and target their parenting to what's best for each child. "Flexibility is the key," says Kime. "With my children's personalities being so different, I must be flexible and focused on their needs." While birth order may play a role in your child's personality, it is just one of many factors that make your cuties who they are. **KM**

NATALIE COOK CLARK is living the dream by working from home as a freelance writer in her hometown of Katy. She lives with her wonderful husband, Stephen, beautiful baby girl, Angelina, and dog, Oscar.

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