

## Simplified Speech #193 – Only children (Ad free)

### Episode description

Although neither Andrew nor Kassy are “only children” (children who don’t have any siblings), that’s the topic of this episode! They talk about their childhoods, their experiences with having siblings, and their impressions of what it might be like to be an only child. This is a great episode for listeners interested in learning a bit about family dynamics in the United States and Canada.

### Fun fact

Families with only one child are expected to double in the United States by the year 2050! Right now, 26.3% of married couples in the United States have one-child families.

### Expressions included in the study guide

- To come along
- To back [something] up
- Well-adjusted
- To cross [one’s] mind
- Disposable income
- Valedictorian



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## Transcript

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Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

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**Andrew:** Simplified Speech episode 193, "Only children", featuring, Andrew and Kassy. Welcome back to Culips everyone. This is Simplified Speech. Helping me today with this episode is my co-host, Kassy. Hey Kassy, how's it going?

**Kassy:** Hey Andrew, I'm doing well.

**Andrew:** All right, good to hear. Well, Kassy in today's episode, we're going to talk about a topic, I think will be a little bit challenging for me and for you as well, because we're going to talk about being an only child. Of course, Kassy, you, and I, we both have siblings. I have a brother and a sister. And if I recall correctly, you have a couple of sisters?

**Kassy:** Yep, I have two sisters.

**Andrew:** Two younger sisters?

**Kassy:** Yes. One of them though, she was an only child for her first six years. So, maybe I can talk about her experience.

**Andrew:** OK, perfect. So, if you're an only child, it means that you have no brothers and no sisters, right? You're a part of a family that just has one child, an only child in the family. But this topic is interesting, nonetheless, it doesn't mean that we shouldn't talk about it, I was actually trying to find somebody on Culips that, you know, could bring the perspective of an only child to this kind of conversation. And I couldn't find anyone. So, everybody has brothers or sisters on the Culips team. But it was suggested this topic, it was suggested to us by Melissa, a user of our Discord server, and Melissa wrote a comment on our episode

topic suggestion channel. And I'll just read the comment here. She wrote, "Have you ever recorded an episode about only children? The pros and cons, your personal opinion, depending on the country, your religion, etc. I think there could be a lot to discuss." And Kassy, with that being said, why don't we get into it and get started by talking about our topic for today, which is, only children. It seems a little bit weird to talk about this topic in that way, right? We have to pluralize it by changing child to children. And it's kind of weird to pluralize because usually an only child is just one, one child in the family. So anyways, guys, please accept that there is a little weird grammar thing going on when we talk about this topic. But Kassy, why don't we start with your story because you said that you had a sister who was an only child until she was six years old. And then I guess another sister **came along**? What happened? What's the story there?

**Kassy:** No. Well, I guess technically, I was an only child for the first three and a half years of my life because I'm the oldest. But it's hard to remember too much of that time. However, my parents did get divorced when I was about 10 and my sister was six. And then my mom remarried. And my stepdad, he had a daughter who became my sister, but she was an only child for the first yeah, five and a half, six years of her life before you know, she joined me and my sister.

**Andrew:** So, she was an only child. And then suddenly she had two older sisters.

**Kassy:** Yeah, the crazy thing is her mom also remarried and she had two stepbrother and sisters on that side. And her mom had two more children. So, she went from being an only child to just like so many siblings.

**Andrew:** Now, did that sister live with you?

**Kassy:** Yeah. So, I guess every divorced family is different. But my sister and I, we would meet our father, like twice a week. But her situation was that she would live with us for a week. And then she would live with her mom's side of the family for a week. And we lived

close enough that it was not a big deal, because they lived within the same school district. So, she didn't have to worry about you know, like switching schools every week that would be crazy.

**Andrew:** Right, right. Yeah, that would be pretty intense. And so, have you talked with your sister about this at all? Have you ever asked her what that was like when she suddenly had all of these new siblings come into her life?

**Kassy:** Yeah, I have, and I witnessed it firsthand, too. I know that one big culture shock for her because you know, joining a new family is a culture shock. I guess the two biggest culture shocks were bedtime routines for her. She actually slept with her parents all the way until she moved in with us. So going from sleeping with your parents to being in your own bed with a new sister also in that bedroom, who has her own ideas of what a bedtime routine should be was very difficult. For example, she was afraid of the dark for a long time. And my sister would be like, "It's too bright, I don't want a light on." And the other one would be like, "I'm scared, we need a light." And I think the other big difference, which I remember from even my three-year-old self was just sharing things. When you're the only child you get all of the love from everyone. And then when you have siblings, suddenly, you know, you have to share that love with several people. And it makes a difference.

**Andrew:** Yeah, absolutely. And did your sister ever mention if she, I mean, maybe this is too deep of a question. I'm not sure. Depends on how close you are with your sister. Did she ever say that she felt resentment about suddenly having older sisters? I imagine like if suddenly you're like, "This is your new older sister and it's Kassy." She's probably really stoked. She's like, "Oh, my God, this is amazing." But did she ever talk about how she felt?

**Kassy:** Yeah, I think the hardest part for her was more about the switching homes every week because the rules were so different. My parents were more traditional, conservative upbringing. And her mom was much more carefree. Like, you know, be your own person,

very quickly, kind of family. And likewise, she was the youngest in our family. But in her mom's side, her step siblings moved out fairly quickly. So, she was the oldest with her two half siblings. And you know, the dynamic, I cannot imagine it but the dynamic of being the youngest in one family and the oldest in another family must be insane.

**Andrew:** Yeah, but in a way, it would give you a really unique perspective to what that is like, right? Like, you mentioned that you're the oldest, I'm also the oldest. And I only know what it's like to be the oldest, but your sister, she knows what it's like to be both the oldest and the youngest. So that's a kind of cool perspective.

**Kassy:** Yeah, exactly. I think for her from what I could see, she felt a little bit like a person in between worlds sometimes. But I think, even though it was hard, she also really loved it because the first few years, I think one of the downsides of being an only child is that you feel lonely sometimes. And yeah, she never had a chance to be lonely after her family expanded like that.

**Andrew:** So, when you were growing up, did you have any friends who are only children? I feel like today, and I have absolutely no data to **back this up**. This is just my gut feeling. But I feel like today, it's probably quite common to have a lot of like, if I don't know, if you're a teacher in like, grade two, and you had 25 students in your class, wouldn't surprise me if 10 of them or even more, were only children. But when I was growing up, I did have one close friend who was an only child. But all of my other close friends all had siblings. What about you where you grew up? Was that like a common thing? Did you have any only children friends?

**Kassy:** Yeah, I was very similar to you. Most of my friends had siblings, but there was one in my neighborhood who was an only child.

**Andrew:** OK. And, to me, my friend who was an only child growing up, unfortunately, once I grew up, I haven't really kept in contact with this friend. But my mom is friends with

his mom still. So, I do hear a little bit of information about him, sometimes secondhand, you know, like, moms like to brag about their kids, right? So, you do hear updates. But, you know, I think one of the things that people worry about with only children is that they'll be lonely, or maybe their social development will be slower, right? They don't have any kids to play with at home. So maybe things like you mentioned, Kassy, maybe sharing is a difficult concept to understand things like that. But this guy has grown up to have a very successful career and a family of his own, very **well-adjusted**, and I never got any of that from him when we were growing up either that he wasn't like, socially able to do anything. I think he was totally fine. I wouldn't have been able to pick him out as an only child unless I had known if I could put it that way.

**Kassy:** I think the parents of only children might work harder to socialize their kids more so they might go to more playdates or take their kids to daycare earlier or, you know, something to get their kids socializing, even if it's not directly with a sibling.

**Andrew:** So, if you were an only child, I mean, it's hard for us to put ourselves in that situation. But what do you think it would be like? I could see there being a lot of pros, and also a lot of cons. Some of the pros, for me are like, I have a brother and a sister, my younger brother is a couple of years younger than I am. And my younger sister is five years younger than I was. And I'm close with both my brother and sister, of course, they live in Canada, so I don't get to see them too, too often, but we're still close. And we have a good relationship. You know, I do remember fighting with them a lot like wrestling with my brother and fighting with my sister, just like about regular, everyday kind of things. If you were an only child, you wouldn't have to do that you would never have to, like, fight with your brother about who can play the Nintendo, or something like that, right? You just play the Nintendo whenever you want. But at the same time, like playing the Nintendo was fun when we got to do multiplayer games. And, you know, I got to play hockey with my brother all the time and play sports and stuff together. And if I were an only child, I wouldn't have had that opportunity to, you know, go outside and always have somebody to play with. So those are some of the pros and cons I can think of. What about you, Kassy?

**Kassy:** Yeah, I just think about family vacations as well, like, we went to the beach, the same beach, so we call it the beach every year, growing up. And I just can't imagine if I had to, you know, build a sandcastle by myself without my sister, or, you know, dig for sand fleas alone. Again, I imagine that only children probably invite their friends over so much more often than we had the opportunity to my parents were like, "You got each other. There's no friends coming over here." So, in some aspects, I think only children might even be more social than I was growing up, because I wasn't allowed to have as many friends over, which might be a plus, I was a little socially awkward at certain points of my life. But at the same time, yeah, I think at family gatherings, you know, if you're surrounded by people who are a lot older than you, there might not be any cousins who are similar in your age, too, it could be kind of a boring experience. While for me, I always knew I had at least one buddy, similar to my age that I could hang out with.

**Andrew:** You know, you brought up vacations, and it just **crossed my mind**. Like, when I was growing up, my family would take vacations, like in the country, sometimes we'd go to different cities in Canada, sometimes we go to the USA. But that's not like, as exciting as it sounds for most listeners, like, if you're a Korean listener right now, and you're like, "Oh, my God, going to the USA, that's like a huge international trip." But it was only like a 45-minute drive from my home growing up to go across the border. And it didn't really feel any different than Canada, other than the prices of things were a little bit different. And in the States, you could buy Cherry Coke, we didn't have that in Canada. So, I liked to buy a Cherry Coca-Cola. But it wasn't like, you know, this amazing international trip that you might think it is. And I think one of the reasons why my family didn't go to Europe, or we didn't go to New York City or someplace like that, that's quite far away, is because that's expensive when you have a family, and you have to pay for five airplane tickets, and maybe a couple of hotel rooms and going to restaurants and stuff, you really have to be quite well off to be able to afford that. And that wasn't possible for my family. But I'm wondering if I were an only child, if that would have been possible. I think my friend who was an only child did get to travel a lot. And yeah, it might be because of that reason. Who knows, I'm thinking that just could be a benefit of having an only child if your family has a



little bit extra **disposable income** to spoil you with and they're the kind of family that likes to spoil their child. It could be a pretty nice benefit of being an only child, you could reap those benefits.

**Kassy:** That's true. I did think of one more thing that being an only child might prove difficult in a way. I have a friend who's an only child and her mom is quite old, like much older than my parents. And one thing that she's dealing with right now is that her mom got kind of sick like she's OK, but she was pretty sick for a while she had some sort of an infection. And you know, my friend is an only child and she's living in Thailand here working with me, and her mom lives back in the States. And I imagine it must be so stressful being an only child realizing that if you have an elderly parent, and you live far away from them, you might be their biggest support. And you really can't be if you live so far away. I know for me, I worry about that, I don't worry too much since my parents are still young and healthy, thank you. But I do worry living far away that someday, you know, I won't be there for them. But my sister lives in the States, so I could always count on her to be there first, and maybe I could come later. But yeah, as an only child, you might be the one that your parents have when they become elderly.

**Andrew:** Yeah, no, that's a very good point. And I think that's something that probably everybody who lives abroad or lives far away from home even has that worry, right, is if there's a family emergency or something goes down, you're so far from home, and it will take you a couple of days to get there. That's a really scary thought. And yeah, I don't think you're alone in that. But if you were an only child, that would compound it, that would make it even more intense, I think. And yeah, I've heard those kinds of stories before, and it always makes you think twice, right? You're like, is it worth it living abroad if that kind of thing would happen to me? But yeah, I also have siblings back home who I hope could cover for me, in a worst-case scenario, but let's hope for the best.

**Kassy:** Yeah, let's hope there are none. Yes. Ah, Andrew, I have one final question for you on a slightly happier note. This is a hard question. Do you think that only children have



a higher imagination than one's with siblings? Since they might have to entertain themselves more? Or do you think you know, bouncing ideas off of another person might also boost that creative element of your brain? What do you think?

**Andrew:** That's a great question. I have no idea. Like, I'm just trying to think growing up. I think some of the reasons why I would fight with my brother and sister is because they would distract me while I was trying to concentrate, I'd be trying to read a book or do some homework or something. And there'd always be somebody running around or making noise, I'd be like, "Shut up! I'm try to read my book." So, I'm wondering, like, if you were an only child, and you had that nice, quiet environment all the time, if it wouldn't be more suitable for studying, for learning. Like you said, maybe you'd have to entertain yourself. So, you'd have imaginary friends, or yeah, you could, you know, strengthen your creative skills, your creativity that way. I'm gonna say like, I think there's something to that idea. I'm not a child psychologist, or an educational expert or anything like that. So, I have no clue. But just based on what my past was like, and thinking about it, yeah, I think you might be on to something there, Kassy, I think that might be true. What do you think?

**Kassy:** Yeah, I think so too. I know that I definitely played imaginary games with my siblings. But you know, it would be a share of ideas. So sometimes theirs, sometimes mine. And you're right, we would bicker over whose idea was better. And sometimes that would devolve into an argument, and we just quit the process altogether. So, maybe only children, maybe they're not more creative, but maybe they're more, they're more able to concentrate for longer periods of time, than people that have had siblings, since they have more uninterrupted work schedules.

**Andrew:** Maybe they're better at thinking their ideas through to completion. Like if you're playing with other kids, and you're like, "Let's do this. Let's do that." Then some other kids like "No, I want to do it this way." And like your original idea doesn't get to come to fruition doesn't get to become reality, because you have other people chiming in and changing it. But if you were an only child, and you were by yourself, you could just do things the way

that you want to do it, right, like, I remember, one of my favourite toys was Lego. And so, we just had tons of Lego blocks in these big Tupperware containers, Rubbermaid containers, and when my friends would come over to play, or when I'd play with my siblings, we just dump the Lego out and go freestyle, go crazy and just make all kinds of wild, creative buildings and structures and those kinds of things. But it was very collaborative. We talk about what we want to build, and we'd be working together and building together. And sometimes you'd end up with really cool things when you're working together with other kids. And sometimes you're like, "That's not what I wanted to do. Like this sucks. Like, why did you have to ruin my awesome city that I was building?" I was always into city Lego. However, if you were an only child, I think it's like, "I want to build this Lego structure exactly the way I want to do it, and nobody's gonna stop me." And you could do it. So, yeah, pros and cons to both, yeah.

**Kassy:** I think that what we've discovered through this episode, Andrew is that there are definitely pros and cons to being an only child. And one is not better than the other. But there are interesting perspectives that you might gain as an only child that you might not gain having siblings and vice versa.

**Andrew:** And I think, especially for this episode, Kassy, we really need to rely on the support of our listeners, for giving us a wide range of opinions about this, especially if you are an only child out there. We would really like to hear from you because unfortunately, Kassy and I, we can just guess, right? We don't actually know what it's like. So, we'd love to hear what your experience was like growing up and what you think the pros and cons of being an only child are. And the best place to let us know and to give us your feedback and to share your opinion is on our Discord server. So, we'll put the link in the description for this episode to join our Discord. And we hope you will chime in and share with us there. We'll be waiting for your message. Kassy, we're going to keep going for a little bit longer here with some bonus questions for our Culips members. We got three rapid fire questions to talk about here. And I don't know this topic is kind of a deep topic. We'll try our best to be rapid. We'll see how it goes. Question number one is if you were an only child, OK,

imagine you're an only child. And I don't know, you're an adult now. And maybe you're hanging out with your friend group. Maybe it's some new friends, they're just getting to know you. And they find out, "Oh, you're an only child?" You know, that's a little bit unique, not everybody has that experience. In that situation when other people find out that you're an only child, what do you think, would be the number one question that people ask you? What's the number one question that only children hear when other people find out they're an only child?

**Kassy:** Pretty sure it would be, were you lonely?

**Andrew:** Yeah, I think so too. Were you lonely? Or do you have any, like social anxiety or something like that? Yeah, some question like that.

**Kassy:** Were you spoiled?

**Andrew:** Yeah. Were you spoiled? That's a good one, too. OK, question number two. Would you rather be an only child or a twin, who has a super deep, super close connection with their sibling? I'm not talking about like a conjoined twin. But, you know, two separate twins, two separate bodies. But you know, I've never known a set of twins like this in real life. I actually know a lot of twins, amazingly enough. But none of them are identical twins. And none of them have those special twin powers. But I've seen it on TV sometimes, you know, twins are so close. And they can finish each other's sentences. And they just have this incredible bond. There's kind of two ends of the spectrum, right? Being an only child or being a super, super close twin with your sibling. What do you think is better?

**Kassy:** It's hard. I'm a teacher to identical twins. And I don't know, their connection seems special. But at the same time, like, it's been months, Andrew and I still have trouble figuring out which one is which, they're that identical. And I feel like sometimes you don't, you wouldn't feel like your own person. You know, like, "Oh, I'm not Kassy." Let's pretend my twins name is Carol. Like it's Kassy and Carol, Carol and Kassy, every time, you

know? It's hard, I think I'd still pick the twin situation just because I can't really imagine myself being an only child. But it would definitely have pros and cons. How about you?

**Andrew:** Yeah, if you are the twin, you can have a lot of fun. Like, your twins are probably pranking you behind your back, right? You could play a lot of jokes and stuff. You know, in this episode, we talked a lot about some of the pros about being an only child. And it got me thinking like, sounds pretty good. Being spoiled, getting to go on trips, more attention with your parents. You know, a nice quiet environment.

**Kassy:** Uninterrupted work time, yeah.

**Andrew:** Yeah. Build whatever you want with your Lego set. So, I'm thinking that maybe I would go with an only child and also you wouldn't have, you know, if you're an identical twin. And I'd love to hear from any of our listeners who are identical twins. Maybe you guys could chime in and let us know. But I think there's like the social aspect of being a really close twin like that you would stand out more. And I don't like being the center of attention. But if you were an identical twin, and you finish each other sentences and stuff, you would kind of stand out more, and it would be hard to just kind of just live a life without attention. So, I think for me, I would probably choose being an only child.

**Kassy:** All right, Andrew, last question for today. Oh, OK. So, pretend you didn't choose only child, say you could choose any number. If you could have any number of siblings, what number do you think it would be and why? Let's try to choose not an only child this time.

**Andrew:** Yeah. Well, I think what I wanted to ask with this question is like, I have a brother and a sister now. But if I could change that configuration, would I change a different number of siblings? I think three is perfect. I'm kind of biased, but like, three seems all right. Like I had one brother and one sister. So, I got to know what both of those aspects were about.

**Kassy:** Yeah, but on like amusement park rides and stuff. Some of you can always sit two a seat. So, like, ones left out?

**Andrew:** I mean, this question, I don't want to be offensive to anybody because if I say, having a big family seems to be very difficult to me, somebody from a big family might feel offended. I'm not trying to communicate that kind of point at all. But I think, personally, I think, yeah, maybe smaller family is a little bit better, just because, like I was thinking about growing up, I didn't get to take those trips. Money is always a little bit tighter with a bigger family, the smaller the family, maybe the more things you can do, the more experiences you could have. So, if I had to have a different number of siblings, I would choose probably just two kids in the family might be a good fit. I'm sorry to either my brother or sister. One of them gets cut out. I won't say which one, though. What about you Kassy?

**Kassy:** Yeah, I think I agree. I see these really cool YouTube videos, though, of big families who live on farms or big pieces of land and their life seems so cool. Also, chaotic. So, depending on where I got to live, and what resources I had, maybe a big family would be a cool experience. But you know, for what my trajectory is in life currently, yeah, I think two would be the maximum and how my life was growing up, couldn't imagine more than we already had.

**Andrew:** Well, where you grew up, Kassy, in that area of Pennsylvania, there must have been some big farm families?

**Kassy:** Yeah, there were a few. Not a whole lot, I guess not like the South, but we had one family. They were the **valedictorians**, all of them were geniuses, but they were all farmers too. So, like the farmer geniuses, they were quite a family.

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**Andrew:** Seems like somebody needs to make a movie about that family. Yeah, sounds cool. All right. Awesome. Well, I think we will wrap things up for here for today, everybody, thank you for listening. Take care, and we'll talk to you next time. Bye-bye!

**Kassy:** See ya!

**Andrew:** That brings us to the end of this lesson. Talk to you next time. Bye!

## Detailed Explanations

### To come along Phrasal verb

Andrew asks Kassy to describe the composition of her family. As he understands it, Kassy has a step-sister who was an only child until Kassy and her younger sister **came along**.

There are a lot of common ways to describe new people entering our lives. Sometimes we simply use the basic verb *meet*—for instance, you could say, “I met my friend Rachel in 2017.” However, there are other expressions we can use for when someone new appears. **To come along** is one of these verbs.

When a new mother describes how her life has changed since giving birth to her baby, she might say, “Ever since the baby **came along**, I have been struggling to get a full night’s sleep.” When a groom is sharing his vows at the altar and describing how he met his bride, he might say, “Then Emily **came along** and everything changed.” When a helpful and competent coworker has been hired at your company, you might praise her and say, “We’ve been a lot more productive since Anna **came along**.”

As you can see with the above examples, we often use **come along** to describe the arrival or appearance of someone in our lives who had a big impact on us. It can sound like fate or destiny that this person showed up.

Be careful, though—don’t mix this up with the more common usage of **come along**, meaning to go somewhere with someone (as in “Why don’t you **come along** to the beach with us this weekend?”).

Here are a couple more examples with **to come along**:

**Edward:** How was your date last night?

**Mary:** Oh, don’t ask. It went terribly.

**Edward:** Sorry to hear that.

**Mary:** I just wish the right person would **come along** already so I could stop having disastrous first dates!

**Hank:** How have things been since the baby **came along**?

**Amelia:** We’ve had ups and downs, but being a mother is bringing me so much joy.



## To back [something] up

Phrasal verb

Although he says he doesn't have any data to **back this idea up**, Andrew suspects that a little under 50% of the children in a classroom today are only children.

**To back up** means to support or prove a claim, decision, or action with evidence. When Andrew says he simply has a gut feeling and can't **back up** the claim about the number of only children in a classroom, he means that he doesn't have any statistics, studies, or sources to support this guess.

When you're assigned a research paper, you're asked **to back up** your arguments with a list of citations and sources. When making a sales pitch to a prospective customer, they will be more likely to buy your product if you can **back up** claims of its effectiveness with studies or evidence.

This is a great phrasal verb to know, especially these days when there is a lot of misinformation and fake news being spread on social media. If someone posts something suspicious, you can ask them, "Can you **back your argument up** with a source?"

To remember the verb **back up**, imagine helping someone continue to stand upright by pushing your hands firmly on their back. Much like how you support an argument by **backing it up** with evidence, you are supporting the person standing by keeping their back upright.

Here are a couple more examples with **to back [something] up**:

**Mark:** I believe that enforcing stricter penalties for littering will help reduce pollution in our city.

**Rose:** Can you **back up** your opinion with any evidence?

**Mark:** Yes, actually. According to a study conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency, cities with harsher penalties for littering have seen a significant decrease in pollution levels.

**Natalie:** I don't trust Rebecca's new boyfriend.

**Chris:** What? Why? Do you have any good reason to **back that up**?

**Natalie:** No, it's just a gut feeling. He seems really shady.

## Well-adjusted Adjective

Some of the negative stereotypes about only children are that they lack social skills, are self-centred, and have trouble sharing with others. Andrew has one friend from childhood who is an only child—however, none of these stereotypes apply to him. Andrew's friend is successful, sociable, and **well-adjusted**.

When we say someone is **well-adjusted**, we mean that they can handle dealing with other people and the typical challenges that one encounters in life. Someone who is **well-adjusted** does not struggle with antisocial behaviour or anger issues. A **well-adjusted** individual is able to manage their emotions and function well in society.

Although **well-adjusted** is a positive adjective, we don't often use it in daily life to describe our friends' personalities. **Well-adjusted** is an adjective usually used when talking about mental health, parenting, or schooling. The goal of a parent is to raise their children to become mature, **well-adjusted** adults. Schools aim to produce graduates who are well-educated and **well-adjusted**.

Some antonyms of **well-adjusted** include dysfunctional, maladjusted, or unstable.

Here are a couple more examples with **well-adjusted**:

**Jessica:** Did you hear that Victoria and Matthew became foster parents recently?

**Tyler:** What? I didn't know that.

**Jessica:** They've taken in two little boys. They're brothers. Victoria says that they're surprisingly **well-adjusted** despite the fact that they've bounced between several foster families before.

**Tyler:** That's great. I've heard the foster care system can be pretty traumatic.

**Martin:** How has your daughter's first semester at university been?

**Carolyn:** Great! She says she's making a lot of friends and enjoying most of her courses.

**Martin:** I'm glad to hear that! It can take a long time to adjust to being completely independent and living away from home for the first time.

**Carolyn:** Definitely. I certainly had some trouble when I was a freshman, but Ilana is so **well-adjusted** and mature. I'm not surprised she's enjoying her freedom and doing well.

## To cross [one's] mind Idiom

Kassy tells Andrew that she really enjoyed having a sister to play with during family vacations at the beach. She can't imagine what it would have been like to play alone without a sister. Hearing about her vacation experience, it **crossed Andrew's mind** that the more children you have, the less money you might have to take family vacations.

**To cross one's mind** is an idiom that means to suddenly have an unexpected idea or thought. You can remember this idiom by imagining ideas and thoughts as people crossing a crosswalk at an intersection as you sit in your car in front of a red light. As the people walk in front of your car and cross the street, you notice them. In the same way, you notice an idea or thought if it **crosses your mind**.

For example, after waking up, the first thing that **crosses your mind** might be, "I need a cup of coffee." If you are chatting with a coworker and you just remembered that she moved to a new house recently, you might say to her, "It just **crossed my mind** that I haven't asked you about your move. How do you like your new house?" Just like in these examples, we use **to cross one's mind** when a thought suddenly pops into your head.

**To cross one's mind** is also a great expression to use when someone tells you something you have never considered or thought about before. For example, let's say you want to buy a used sofa but your car is too small to transport it. You're about to give up on the idea when your friend says, "Why don't you ask your neighbour if you can borrow his truck to move the sofa?" You didn't think of this, so you can say, "The thought never even **crossed my mind**. That's a great idea!"

Here are a couple more examples with **to cross [one's] mind**:

**Amber:** My car broke down last week.

**Benjamin:** Oh no, I'm sorry to hear that. Wait, how have you been getting to work?

**Amber:** I've been taking Ubers to and from the office every day.

**Benjamin:** You could have asked me! I would have helped drive you to work.

**Amber:** It never even **crossed my mind** to ask! Thanks, Benjamin.

**Julia:** It just **crossed my mind** that we never called Mom to wish her a happy birthday.

**Steven:** Oh no, you're right! Let's call her right now.

## Disposable income

Noun

It crossed Andrew's mind that the more children a family has, the less **disposable income** they have for things like yearly vacations. Therefore, one potential benefit of being an only child might be that your parents have more money for fun things.

**Disposable income** refers to the money that a person has available to spend or save after paying for necessities such as rent, food, and bills. It's the amount of money left over from your paycheck once you've taken care of all your essential expenses. This extra money is called **disposable** because you can freely "dispose" of it (that is, use or get rid of it). It's not already designated for required things like rent or groceries.

Let's imagine you earn \$2500 per month from your job. After paying \$1500 for rent, \$300 for groceries, \$200 for utilities, and \$100 for car insurance and gasoline, you have \$400 left. This \$400 is your **disposable income**. You can use it to buy things you want but don't necessarily need, like going out to eat with friends, buying new clothes, or saving up for a vacation.

**Disposable income** is sometimes called **discretionary income** (income you can use at your discretion, or based on your judgment) or **spending money**.

Here are a couple more examples with **disposable income**:

**Nicole:** Joe, Monica, Derek, and I are going to take a weekend trip to Montreal during the second week of April. Do you want to come with us?

**Will:** I wish I could. That sounds like a lot of fun, but I don't have a lot of spending money right now. All of my **disposable income** has been going towards my Spanish lessons.

**Penny:** I really want to renovate our kitchen. It has been needing an update for a while.

**Nate:** That sounds like an expensive project. We'll have to look at our budget and see if we have enough **disposable income** for it.

**Penny:** Actually, I was thinking we could do it ourselves. That will cut down a lot of the costs.

**Nate:** That sounds a little too challenging for me. I don't know the first thing about installing cabinets or putting in tile.

**Penny:** Come on, it might be fun!

## Valedictorian

Noun

At the end of the episode, Andrew asks Kassy if any really big families with many children lived in her area. She said there was one family of farmers who had a lot of children and they were all the **valedictorians** of their classes.

**Valedictorian** is a term used in schools, primarily in the United States and Canada, to describe the student who has the highest academic achievements in their graduating class. They usually give a speech as a representative of their class at the graduation ceremony.

The **valedictorian** is often selected based on their grade point average (GPA), which is a measure of how well they performed in their classes. Sometimes students with the highest GPAs are nominated by teachers and the rest of the class gets to vote on which candidate best represents them. In this way, popularity and other characteristics are sometimes also considered in deciding who gets to be **valedictorian**.

Being named **valedictorian** is considered a great honour. The title can open doors for opportunities like scholarships, college admissions, and future careers, as it demonstrates a high level of academic excellence and dedication.

Here are a couple more examples with **valedictorian**:

**Vince:** I'm proud to announce that Michael has been named the **valedictorian** for this year's graduating class.

**Erica:** Congratulations, Michael!

**Kevin:** Who did you vote for to be **valedictorian** at graduation?

**Sara:** I voted for Cassandra. She's the smartest girl in my biology class and she volunteers for the animal shelter. I think she's a great person.

**Kevin:** I voted for her too, but I heard that a lot of other people voted for George.

**Sara:** George? But his grades are much worse than Cassandra's.

**Kevin:** Yeah, but he's popular. It's not just about grades. No one knows who Cassandra is.

**Sara:** That's lame. Getting to be **valedictorian** shouldn't just be based on popularity.

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## Quiz

- 1. Which of the following is something you would spend your disposable income on?**
  - a) mortgage payments
  - b) groceries
  - c) concert tickets
  - d) phone bills
  
- 2. Which of the following is a good synonym for “to cross one’s mind”?**
  - a) to suddenly think of
  - b) to suddenly forget
  - c) to deeply consider
  - d) to purposefully ignore
  
- 3. Who is the valedictorian in a class of students?**
  - a) the athlete who gave the best athletic performance in their class
  - b) the student with the best grades who gives a speech at the graduation ceremony
  - c) the student with the worst grades who will not be able to graduate
  - d) the student who had the best attendance record in their class
  
- 4. Your friend says, “I wonder when my true love will come along.” What does she mean by “come along”?**
  - a) find a new job
  - b) go for a walk
  - c) move into town
  - d) enter her life
  
- 5. Which of the following best describes someone who is well-adjusted?**
  - a) someone who avoids conflict at all costs
  - b) someone who is emotionally mature and resilient
  - c) someone who cries whenever they’re criticized
  - d) someone who is selfish and bad at dealing with other people

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## Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Are you an only child or do you have siblings? If you're an only child, please describe the pros and cons you experienced being an only child when you were growing up. If you have siblings, please describe their personalities and what it was like growing up with them.
2. What do you think is the ideal number of children to have? Why?
3. Have you noticed any trends or changes in the number of children families have in your country? Please describe them.
4. Please describe one thing you would change about your childhood if you could.
5. Please describe an aspect of your childhood that you are grateful for.



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## Quiz Answers

1.c    2.a    3.b    4.d    5.b

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### Episode credits

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Hosts: Andrew Bates and Kassy White

Music: *Something Elated* by Broke For Free

Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates

Audio editor: Marshall Vaillancourt

Transcriptionist: Heather Bates

Study guide writer: Indiana Brown

English editor: Stephanie MacLean

Operations: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Image: Vitaly Gariev (pexels.com)