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What readers say about *The hidden leadership of eldest daughters*

As the oldest daughter, I have had a deep sense of responsibility for my family, family, for animals and the earth for as long as I can remember. I have a big heart for caring. With hard work, at will and with perseverance, I have achieved much. In my choices I trust my intuition, which has never let me down. I know where I want to go, but the way to get there can be different.

~ SABINE RASH, *Administrative Liaison, Director of Work Enjoyment in Healthcare, Speaker, Day President, Theater Producer and former Member of Parliament*

'I read the book in one sitting! Especially your own examples with it made it very inspiring and interesting for me. And vulnerable at the same time. By participating in your year group myself, I also started my heroine's journey.'

~ ANGELIQUE NIJHOF, *director/owner Nijhof Group*

'What a feast of recognition and how wonderful to be able to take my own adult place as the eldest daughter with the help of Aike!'

~ INGRID KRAMER, *Strategic sparring partner Innerstrengths and director of soccer club AZC*

'At the Oldest Daughter Day in 2014, Aike Borghuis facilitated one of the workshops that formed the basis for our book. Beautiful to see - and now also fascinating to read - how she, as a coach, deepens the life and leadership of oldest daughters and adds the dimension of the family system. That we as eldest daughters emerge with all our qualities!'

~ WIES ENTHOVEN & LISETTE SCHUIITEMAKER, *co-authors The Oldest Daughter Effect*

'This book is highly recommended if you, as the eldest daughter, no longer want to have to carry everything, but want to be in work and life with lightness.'

~ NINKE VAN DER LECK, *High value business coach*

'Take the time to read this book thoughtfully. Not only does it give insight into what oldest daughters are up against in their lives, but it also gives practical tools to deal with them. Very inspiring. Thank you, Aike!

~ Marloes BOUWMEESTER, *Founder of the Successful Introvert and Co-founder of the Natural Advantage Institute*

Aike opened my eyes. I had never thought about the fact that characteristics such as a sense of responsibility, perseverance and caring had to do with the fact that I am the oldest daughter. Pieces of the puzzle fell into place. As a result, I can see my roles better in perspective and I dare to make choices that have more impact.'

~ iris MEULENDIJKS, *Advice Anno Nu*

'What a feast of recognition, I should have read this book earlier. It answers many questions you have as the eldest daughter and I also only now understand that they have to deal with this.'

~ MASCHA VAN WERMESKERKEN, *Dentiness*

'The book gives so much recognition and touches me. It makes me aware of my qualities as oldest daughter and entrepreneur. The pitfall: the energy-guzzling vicious circle of eldest daughters is a huge eye-opener. Autonomy is very important to me, but it doesn't mean you have to do it alone.'

~ GerDY PUSCEDDU-SMOES, *DGA Rensink Totaalonderhoud*

'What a recognizable and valuable book. Indispensable knowledge for all oldest daughters who want to be leaders over their own lives.'

~ MARIEKE FROM GINKEL, *Leadership trainer for high-growth entrepreneurs*

'A feast of recognition! A must-read for all courageous elder daughters who are ready to get rid of all the old and non-serving patterns. And thus break through to more powerful leadership.'

~ METTE FISHER, *Purpose Coach @metMETTE*

'Wow, just finished reading my own manual. Touched by Aike's personal stories.'

~ IENSKÉ FLOKSTRA, *Entrepreneur and eldest daughter*

Foreword

Hhe book now before you had almost not been there. The first draft *Oldest Daughters Are Leaders* was 80 percent finished when I balked. Stuck in my writing process, I contacted Ina Boer, former publisher, author and coach for authors, asking, "Can you help me?" She began positively: 'I see you can write.' Then her advice wasn't kind: 'Your concept rattles and that's why you're getting stuck.'

I could have cried. And honestly, I did. From frustration and disappointment - what a waste of time, money and energy. I was angry with myself, felt I had failed and my inner judge became stricter and stricter. At the same time, I could also quickly feel: she is right. While brainstorming with Ina, it became clear that I actually wanted to write a completely different book and that I could use some help with that.

Only in retrospect could I see that while writing that first draft I fell into a typical pitfall of oldest daughters: I'll do it alone. This will feel familiar to almost all oldest daughters. Chances are you also recognize yourself in the great sense of responsibility that oldest daughters possess. With willpower and perseverance, you have most likely achieved great results. Yet there comes a moment when it starts to gnaw at you: in the eyes of those around you, you have it all together just fine. A career, a house, a family, while - when you are really honest with yourself - you ask yourself: is this it?

You have started working harder and harder and more hours out of a great sense of responsibility. You feel you have to do a lot and yearn for freedom. At night you have almost no energy left for the people you love most. You know what you don't want anymore, but what you do want, you don't really know. You are tired and your body begins to give you complaints: neck, shoulder, back pain. You regularly feel guilty when you are already back at work instead of spending time with your children and your loved ones. You

Resolves to do things differently, but you simply don't succeed
To break the pattern.

I myself learned this lesson the hard way. In 2008, I got stuck. My body hit the brakes and I asked myself the question: if my life were over at the end of the year, what would be on my tombstone? 'How hard she worked,' was the first thing that came to mind. That insight came in like a sledgehammer blow.

I made the decision: *This is my life. I will live it my way.*

Deciding that you want and are going to do things differently is very powerful. And then provided me with many questions: What am I going to do then? Who am I? What do I find important and what is of value to me? It became the start of a journey of discovery through trial and error. For years I had tried to think of the solution in my head - in vain.

Enlisting help

So where would I find the answer? I enlisted the help of a coach. It was confronting to discover that I had become a walking head and was not connected to myself and what I wanted. I discovered that I was not inhabiting my body and not recognizing the signals my body was giving me. My body was not acting awkward, but indicating boundaries, inviting me to take better care of myself. Besides coaching, I signed up for training and courses in intuitive development, in which I learned to trust the wisdom that is already within me.

During that period, I also came into contact with family constellations. I brought up the question of why I could not seem to break the pattern of hard work when I so badly wanted to do it differently. The constellation revealed that I was not in my proper place in the family system. I had unknowingly made myself bigger and put more responsibility on my shoulders.

12 taken than is healthy. I became aware that when you do that, you are less free to make your own choices. When I took my adult place as eldest daughter in that arrangement, a burden literally fell off my shoulders. I experienced an inner peace and space I had never felt before.

And I thought: I also want to be able to lead constellations! That same evening I enrolled in the training at the Bert Hellinger Institute in Middelbert. The training and systemic work were missing pieces of the puzzle for me and for years I devoured everything: books, workshops, trainings and I started my own company.

After a few years, I called in a marketing coach - looking for a common thread in my client base and way of working that I couldn't find on my own. This coach asked me, "What do your very finest clients have in common? And I exclaimed: "That they are oldest daughters! Only to immediately follow up by shouting that this was not a smart idea at all, because those oldest daughters, they do it all on their own. Then silence fell ... and we got goose bumps. My coach said, "Aike, that belief of yours is not correct. You are already working with them...'

Not much later, I made the choice to focus entirely on oldest daughters. For a long time, I myself was unaware of the impact when you are the oldest daughter not in your own adult place in the family system. That impact is huge because the patterns you developed in the family you grew up in, you take with you to other contexts such as your work, your relationship, parenting and your social life.

Taking your own adult place

The quickest way to be able to take leadership of your own life and work is to take your adult place in the family system. In that place, your energy flows, and when your energy flows, everything flows. Then you access the leadership that is currently hidden within you.

It is my intention with this book to make you realize how important it is that you take your own place and space from now on, so that you can discover and develop your personal leadership. I invite you to read this book with a curious and open mind and to discover what touches you, in order to take new steps from this awareness. You do not have to change your whole life in order to experience more energy, joy and fulfillment in the short term.

An insight from the book just might be a pearl when you apply it to your life. That's what I heartily grant you!

Aike Borghuis,
Deventer, May 2023



Introduction

ASK YOURSELF THE QUESTION: IF YOU ARE THINKING ABOUT ONE

15

OLD Daughter, WHO OR WHAT DO YOU SEE BEFORE YOU?

Let the images and thoughts come to you, with your eyes closed.

Chances are you have the image of a woman with a great sense of responsibility. She sees what is needed and makes sure it is taken care of. She is a go-getter and results-oriented. A serious, energetic and perhaps somewhat dominant woman. Recognizable?

What many people don't immediately think of when they think of oldest daughters is women in leadership positions and entrepreneurs with successful (family) businesses. And that is special, because what many women in leadership positions have in common is that they are oldest daughter.

You can think of Oprah Winfrey, Brené Brown, Eva Jinek, Queen Máxima, Annemarie van Gaal, Neelie Kroes, Rebecca Gomperts, Christine Lagarde, Kamala Harris, Hillary Clinton, Jacinda Ardern, Marianne Thieme, Femke Halsema, Angela Merkel, Sabine Uitslag.

During networking meetings with experienced entrepreneurs, when I ask the question, "Which of you is oldest daughter?", almost all hands go up. All these eldest daughters are in a position, in which they bear a great responsibility. What is characteristic of this is that they not only look at their own organization, but at the same time make the connection to the bigger picture. In this way, they contribute to sustainability, equality and a future-proof society.

That being the eldest daughter's place in the family so determines how I did and do certain things is something I was not aware of for a long time. I only really saw that during and after the Oldest Daughter Day on March 8, 2014. The Oldest Daughter Day was organized by Lisette

Schuijtemaker and Wies Enthoven to conduct research for their book

The eldest daughter effect. That day I led a workshop and explored with some of the more than one hundred oldest daughters present their own place in the family into which they were born. In their research, Schuitemaker and Enthoven discovered five characteristics that almost all oldest daughters recognize: responsible, dutiful, progressive, serious and caring. In retrospect, on this day, a

16 important seed planted, which Steve Jobs so beautifully described as, "You can't connect the dots if you look forward, you can only connect them if you look backward.

A special place

You may now be wondering: what is so special about that place as the eldest daughter? Eldest daughters, because of their place in the family in which they were born and raised, carry a lot of responsibility from an early age. They can do that well. At the same time, they are focused on strengthening the whole, primarily in the family system. Therefore, it is not surprising that they hold leadership positions in organizations, are board members or entrepreneurs with a successful business. They "roll" into that. It is not a conscious choice, they are mostly asked for such positions and functions. Others see their natural leadership qualities before they do. For example, I myself was asked at age 16 to run leading in the scouting of younger children and at age ²³. having just graduated, I started my leadership position in a healthcare facility.

When I ask the question "Do you see yourself as a leader?" oldest daughters frequently answer in the negative. In other words, they do not see themselves as leaders. They have an 'old' image of leadership. What was an eye-opener for me personally was Brené Brown's definition of leadership: 'A leader is someone who takes responsibility for recognizing the potential in people and ideas, and has the courage to develop that potential.' When I read this definition, I thought, yes, this is exactly what I do and what I believe in!

Therefore, if you recognize this, you are a leader.

It is my intention to make you, as the eldest daughter, aware of your hidden leadership qualities, so that you can live and work animatedly in a way that suits you. In other words: to occupy your own place. Taking your own place as a leader is not about working harder, but about doing the right things. That provides pleasure, energy, inner peace, connection and satisfaction.

INVESTIGATING THE INFLUENCE OF YOUR PLACE IN THE GEzIn

Does your place in the family affect how you develop or not? This is a question that several researchers have considered. There are studies that show that not only genes and nurture determine your character, but also your place in the family. For example, the image of oldest children is that they are responsible, middle children are peacemakers/mediators and the youngest child is a rebel.

But is it true that one's place in the infantile queue determines one's personality? The first publication on your place in the child row was written by Francis Galton (1822-1911), a distant cousin of Darwin. He discovered that in science firstborns are over-represented. His explanation: oldest children develop so well because they get the most attention and the best food.

More recent are the practical findings of clinical psychologist and publicist Linda Blair in her 2011 book *Your Place in the Family*. She found that the first child receives the most attention from parents; after all, they are also doing this for the first time. The first child is encouraged, motivated and stimulated and therefore develops self-confidence. First children are also dutiful, have a great sense of responsibility and want to set a good example for siblings. Oldest children were also found to be good at leadership; they are achievement-oriented and perfectionist. Number two gets more space to discover the world, is social, can mediate and compromise. The youngest gets a lot of attention, is allowed more than older children, is popular, social, easy going and likes to cooperate.

Oldest daughters in leadership positions

The question that fascinates me: *Does one's place as the eldest daughter in the family affect one's leadership qualities?*

I decided to follow my curiosity and investigate. What makes it difficult is that you cannot isolate this question from the context that is different for each oldest daughter. Every eldest daughter is unique and faces an interplay of nature and nurture (parenting). Some issues and themes also play a role in the lives of non-elderly daughters. The moment multiple factors influence

18 are, how reliable are your research results?

Because many different perspectives are possible, in this book I have chosen to examine the place of the eldest daughter in relation to leadership from a systemic perspective. This is based on my years of practical experience in working with eldest daughters. I have substantiated this experience with field and literature research. The research method I used is the grounded theory approach, a method used by Brené Brown. It is a qualitative research method in the social sciences and humanities, where you engage in conversation with oldest daughters without hypothesizing or asking guiding questions.

I am aware that no two oldest daughters are the same and your context can vary. Whether you live with your family or live alone, you may or may not be in a relationship, you may or may not have children, yet there are similarities in the line along which they develop. It is the invitation to you to read this book with an open mind and discover what is true for you.

UPDATE OF THE BOOK

In Part 1 of this book, I take you through the knowledge and insights I have gained from years of working with oldest daughters from a system perspective. What position do you occupy as eldest daughter, in the family system? What are typical qualities and pitfalls of oldest daughters? What is the "oldest daughter dynamic" and how do you break through it? Why is it that the leadership of many oldest daughters is still disconnected? How can you take your own place as a leader in your work and life in a way that suits you? This is all the baggage you will need in the personal journey you will take in Part 2 of this book.

Part 2 is structured using the Heroine's Journey and is inspired by "The Hero's Journey," first described by Joseph Campbell in 1949 in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. 'The Hero's Journey' is a common structure in stories and films and describes the pattern the hero follows as he or she embarks on the journey of self-discovery and faces various trials along the way.

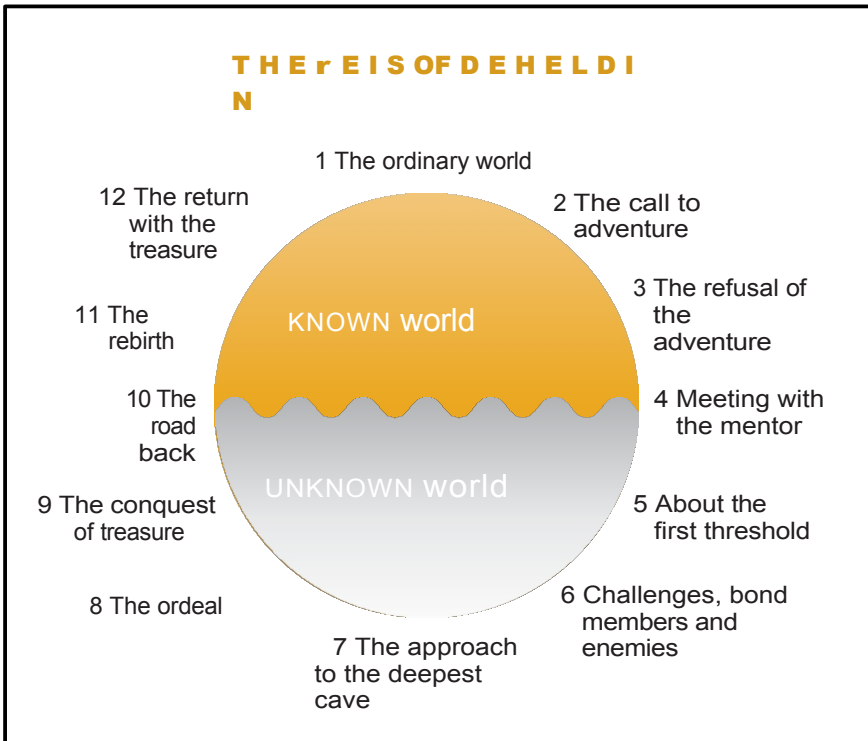


Figure 0.1 The 12 steps of the Heroine's Journey.

The Heroine's Journey is a journey of discovery, or a cycle of twelve steps, that you go through over and over again in your development. The twelve steps of the Heroine's Journey can be divided into three phases: the preparation, the journey itself and the return. In practice you will find that these steps are not always sharply defined, but for the readability of this book they are.

THE PREPARATION

(steps 1 to 4)

STEP 1 *The ordinary world*

STEP 2 *The call to adventure*

STEP 3 *The refusal of the adventure*

20 STEP 4 *Meeting with the mentor*

THE JOURNEY

(steps 5 to 8)

STEP 5 *Over the first threshold*

STEP 6 *Challenges, allies and enemies* STEP 7

The approach to the deepest cave STEP 8

The ordeal

THE RETURN

(steps 9 to 12)

STEP 9 *The conquest of treasure*

STEP 10 *The way back*

STEP 11 *The rebirth*

STEP 12 *The return with the treasure*

Will you join us on a journey of discovery?