



The Favorite Child

Ellen Weber Libby

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For more than thirty years, veteran clinical psychologist Ellen Weber Libby has been helping successful, often-powerful clients in Washington, DC—a place known for its outsized personalities—deal with their personal problems. One pattern that has emerged out of some 60,000 hours of therapy is what she calls "the favorite child complex." In this groundbreaking book, she describes in intimate detail how being the favorite child can confer both great advantages and also significant emotional handicaps.

While many of Dr. Libby's clients are successful because of their favorite-child status—they have been brought up to believe that they can do anything and are unafraid of challenges—they suffer from an array of personality problems. Behind the outward appearance of money, power, charm, and attractive looks, they feel an intense pressure to maintain the façade at all costs. Sometimes their ability to tell the truth becomes shaky; sometimes their intimate relationships are elusive. In a series of chapters that offer insightful vignettes from actual therapy sessions (the identities of clients are disguised), Dr. Libby explores why parents, consciously or unconsciously, choose a favorite child, as well as the long-term effects of being the favorite son or daughter of either or both parents. She also discusses family situations where parents have successfully made each of their children feel favored and have instilled in their children a healthy emotional balance. She details parental skills and family processes that increase the likelihood of this type of success and that, most importantly, reduce the risk of the favorite child's curse—power corrupted. Illuminating for adults trying to come to terms with their own emotional baggage as well as parents seeking the best way to rear their children, *The Favorite Child* makes for rewarding reading.

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