

F1: Would you like some more dessert?

F2: No, thanks, Linda. Everything was _____, but I couldn't eat another _____! Thanks so much.

F1: So, Jeanne, how are your _____ doing?

F2: Well, that depends on which one . . .

F1: Well, how about the _____? That's Brian, right? How _____ is he now?

F2: He's fifteen. Brian's fine. Brian's always fine. He's doing great at _____. I'm sure he'll _____ into a great _____ in a couple of years. He's a great _____—_____ hard, he plays by the rules, and he's _____ at almost everything he does. The only thing that sometimes _____ me about Brian is that he can be a little too _____.

F1: Self-critical? How so?

F2: Well, Brian can be pretty _____ on himself: no matter how well he _____ at something, he's not _____. He always _____ he could do better.

F1: That's so interesting. Our first, Eric, is like that, too.

F2: Really?

F1: You know, I once _____ this article in one of those popular psychology magazines. It _____ that first children are often self-critical because parents _____ them to _____ more than they do with their other children. I don't mean to _____ you did that, and I don't think we did that with Eric, but it's interesting because it's so _____. I just wonder why.

F2: Well, I do think there's some _____ to that in our case. Harvey and I were _____ in everything Brian did—music lessons, karate lessons, Chinese class on Saturday—we _____ him to all his classes. We _____ him up after they were over. We always _____ him a lot of questions about how he was _____. He probably _____ our message to him was that he had to be good at everything. But we were just _____. We didn't actually push him to be good at everything, but he may have thought we _____ a lot of him. Kids internalize those messages.

F1: I imagine that's pretty _____. It's no one's fault.

F2: And one more thing—if you _____ into that—you know—"nurture theory."

F1: Yeah?

F2: Brian's sister Annie wasn't _____ 'til Brian was eight. He really had more contact with us and other _____ than he did with someone closer to his _____. I'm sure all that contact with us probably had a huge _____. And, interestingly, Brian has always been _____ with adults.

F1: From what you're saying, it sounds like Brian is the classic first child. They say that first children often feel more comfortable with people older than themselves. They seem to have a short _____ and grow up fast.