



Mission

Aletheia (ah-LAY-thee-uh), which means “truth” in Greek, is a student outreach publication that strives to provide a voice for all students at Lynbrook High School in San Jose, California. Inspired by Los Gatos High’s *Reality Check* and Monta Vista’s *Verdadera*, *Aletheia* was created to facilitate communication and overcome stigmas concerning prevalent and taboo issues within Lynbrook.

About

At the beginning of a publication period, the *Aletheia* staff chooses a topic that pertains to the realities of high school. Each issue comprises of firsthand experiences submitted anonymously by Lynbrook students and alumni, professional articles relating to the chosen theme, and resources compiled by the student staff. Finalized newsletters are uploaded online and emailed to Lynbrook families. Back issues can be found on www.lhsaletheia.org, under Archives.

The content in *Aletheia* is composed by the students of Lynbrook High School. Ideas and opinions expressed within the publication are not necessarily reflected by members of the school administration or faculty.

This is the second issue of *Aletheia* for the 2016-17 school year.

Submissions

All Lynbrook students and alumni are eligible to submit stories. We publish all submissions that adhere to our guidelines, which are posted on the website. The *Aletheia* staff is committed to preserving the integrity of your content and will not make any changes, with exception to certain profanity (which are asterisked-out). We do not edit stories for grammar or syntax.

Our next topic is "Cliques". If you are interested in contributing, a submission box and a suggestion form for future topics are both available online.

*Expressing what
remains unspoken.*

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This month's topic was "What My Parents Don't Know About Me," which is a topic that Aletheia had covered four years ago. In this year's issue, in order to provide more perspective on the topic, the staff decided to include a few submissions from the issue that had been published four years ago. These submissions will be marked with an asterisk.

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My parents don't know I'm gay. While they're not homophobic and do hold a lot of socially liberal viewpoints (on par with most of Silicon Valley), they told me that they were fine with me being friends with other LGBTQ+ kids and thought they deserved their rights, as long as I wasn't actually gay myself. I think it's an immigrant from conservative Asian culture thing tbh, and I don't know when I'd come out. My friends sort of know, but I'm more worried with them that it'd be gossip around Lynbrook because of the novelty of it (even in the liberal Lynbrook)

Since coming out during my senior year at Lynbrook, I've been more reserved sharing my life with my parents. Even though they didn't take it horribly, they also didn't take it well. I don't blame them, because before then they'd never had to deal with anything related to being LGBTQ. But it's hard to talk candidly with them when they can't relate to my feelings or struggles, and don't attempt to understand them better. In college, I've begun to participate in LGBTQ-friendly related activities, including education efforts. I've chosen to I generally don't discuss these with my parents; though they're aware that I'm participating in them, I know that they don't support me being out in college. Though I'll continue to communicate with them, I'll likely withhold these parts of my life at least until I'm out of the stress of college. I'm not interested in sharing the parts of my life that I love with parents who won't appreciate them.

My family is made of devout Brahmin Hindus. We wake up early every each for morning rituals and we don't eat any meat, even eggs. I'm not Hindu anymore but I cannot tell my parents because of how much it would break their heart. We were on a flight once and the airline food had egg salad. I ate it and I saw pain in my dad's eyes when he found out I ate it and said "well ok." That probably ruined the whole vacation for him. I want to live my life without Hinduism, but I feel like I'm letting down my parents, whom I still love very dearly.

Well, I'm a girl, and I'm a lesbian. I guess I kind of recently discovered this about myself, though I've always known in the back of my mind that I was gay ever since I was a little kid. When I was a little kid, I was a big Tom boy, to the point where I wore boys clothes, only really had boy friends or other Tom boy girl friends, and asked for monster trucks, transformers, and baseball cards all throughout my childhood. My sister and mother used to joke around, JUST JOKE AROUND, I knew it was joking around too, that I'd be a lesbian when I'm older. I knew I was gay since I knew what a relationship was. I always knew, was in denial when I was 12-14, but I know now I am a lesbian. My mother has told me before (just came up in a conversation, it wasn't because of anything about me) that she doesn't care if any of her kids are gay, as long as they're happy and it isn't effecting her in any way, she really could care less, and kind of gave me a subtle look like she was talking about me. My dad I know would never care, he isn't really a part of my life much, I don't see him much, I talk to him occasionally, but he's that type of father that if I was to tell him that, he'd react like "okay, cool, I don't care, that's normal, whatever floats your boat, not my problem, if that's what you are, fine, I don't care," and shrug it off like he never heard it and didn't know, like nothing's different. But my stepdad, he's the problem, he's COMPLETELY AGAINST GAYS. Not so against it, just he thinks is gross, weird, doesn't like being around gay people, and constantly makes fun of them. He doesn't care if people are gay, but he doesn't believe in their rights and doesn't like them. He's said if his son (my brother) was gay, just no, he's said "no, I'd just tell him no, don't be gay, don't bring home Boys, you're not Gay, just stop, no," and wouldn't accept him. I know I'm not his kid, and I know my dad isn't really a big deal, and I know my mom doesn't care, but really, I'm NOT comfortable with coming out, but I really just want to get it off my chest and stop hiding things. My family is the MOST judgemental family (I'm nowheres near judgemental though). I hate this.*

"If you want to keep a secret, you must also hide it from yourself."

- George Orwell

My parents don't know about my self harm. I have mild depression, severe anxiety and I am at a very high risk of bipolar, and I don't know how to tell them. When I told a trusted adult I SH (self harm), I was told I would HAVE to tell them and there was no way around it. I cried in front of her, begged her not to, told her I'd do anything and she kept her ground. Thing is, all she told them was 'anxiety'. Not 'depression' or 'bipolar' or 'self harm'. So my parents still don't know. I don't tell them because it would break their hearts and they would never, ever really get it. They think I can wish anxiety away. God knows I've tried. They would never understand it. The feeling it brings me as I take the blade to my hip (not my wrist- I don't want people to notice). They'd be repulsed, disgusted, by that little shock of beautiful, beautiful distraction I get from the mental pain. Anyone reading this would probably be horrified to learn I get as much pleasure from the pain as I do from things I like at this point. I want to quit every time I look at the dark patch of healing and new cuts on my hip, but SH is like a drug and I'm too far in to get back out. I'm pretending to get better for their sakes, but in truth I'm getting worse and worse with each passing day. I feel so guilty, but I can't possibly tell them. How would they feel if they knew that their only child, their perfect daughter, the girl who always laughs and makes people laugh is just pretending to be happy? That in reality, she's almost always moments from tears? That she's learned to look someone in the eyes and lie? That she's considered suicide, and realized it would be so easy- too easy- just to down a few hundred pills and end it all, and that she would do it in an instant if it weren't for the people she let herself get too emotionally attached to? That she literally scratches at herself with a pen cap in school, because she needs something- anything- to take the pain away? That she hates herself so much that she can't even look at herself in the mirror without thinking 'Stupid, ugly, dumb, undesirable, worthless, fat, pathetic little b****'? That she tries, she tries so hard to be everything for everyone around her- the modest Asian girl for her family, the wild fun girl for her friends, the nerd who knows it all for her classmates, but she feels like she's failing and her facade will fall apart at any minute? That the few she has found who understand her, she secretly met through the internet and they live thousands of miles away? It would break their hearts, I think. Thing is, I'd have my heart broken a thousand, a million, a billion times over if it kept me from having to see that sad look in my mother's eyes when I said

'anxiety'. If lies are what it takes to stop my father from wondering where he went wrong, when it was all my fault really, then I will lie my way to hell. If not telling them about who I really am is what it takes, I'll do it. If what it takes to keep my friends happy is joking about Trump, when the idea gave me anxiety attacks the night before, consider it done. Because I don't know how to do anything but lie and have my heart broken anymore. It's too late for me to tell them the truth now.

"Sometimes it's our secrets that define us"

- Britney Spears

It's not for the reason you think. I don't push away, I don't ignore your words--I don't do it because of me. I don't do it because I love you any less, I don't do it because my life's goal is to ruin yours-- I do it because I need to be me. I need to be able to do things, to be able to do them because of me. I need to be able to know that the things I do are because they are the things I do, not because someone told me to. I need to make my own way, to blaze through this world on my own. And I wish, for once, you would realize that it's not about you. Advice, yes, I understand. Loving concern, yes, I understand. But my decisions are still my own, and even though I will always try to listen, I never will think one way just because of you. Obedience--I know I whine. I know I drag my feet, reluctantly follow your words. And I am trying to work on it. I just wish, for once, you would stop viewing it as an attack on your person, as a sign of my hatred for you. Because that's not what it is. Rather, it's me saying, "It's not about you. It's about me, and who I am." And, just so you know, I am not you.*

"Secrets, silent, stony sit in the dark palaces of both our hearts: secrets weary of their tyranny: tyrants willing to be dethroned."

-James Joyce

My parents don't know that my real motivation for going to college is to get a fresh start from everyone. Growing up here I've been exposed to the same people and dealt with the same history over and over and a fresh start sounds pretty dang good.

In a community like Lynbrook where most of our parents are immigrants, it is hard for them to understand our lives. I have a boyfriend who I have not told my parents about. They can't understand dating because the culture they came from doesn't have it. They just have marriage. My boyfriend is an open secret in my friends and it's really not a top secret relationship. I don't want my parents to know because I don't know how they would react, nor do I want to test them. I plan to explain my "Americanized" lifestyle to them someday. But for now, they know I'm getting good grades and not getting into any trouble. That's enough. I don't need to tell them more and they don't need to know more. Don't rock the boat if everything's running smoothly.

Something i dont tell parents is how stressed i actually am. like, im pretty sure they know that im not happy where i am and how i give myself a lot of stress, but ive never bothered explaining why. when it gets ugly and i feel extra tired and down and bad, i only ever go to a particular close friend for comfort. im not super close with my mom who i would probably talk to instead of my dad (hes not a talk-y emotional dude) and my mom is literally the opposite of me in every possible way. not to mention her very typical asian upbringing means her way of thinking about a lot of things is super different from mine as an american-born. and i just dont seem to be able to meet anyones expectations for me--not my parents' or even (no, especially) my own, and im just. really exhausted and disappointed and "done" with a lot of things.

"I feel bare. I didn't realize that I wore my secrets as armor until they were gone and now everyone sees me as I really am."

- Veronica Roth

I know i tell my parents that i can handle it, that seven extracurricular classes is manageable, no big deal. the homework and stress can pile on, but no biggie; ill survive. i don't want them to know that sometimes i cry during sports practice so that the tears get masked by sweat, mainly because in my mind there's a constant mantra of dancing words taunting me, saying you have this project in physics honors due tomorrow, that assignment in pre-calculus also due tomorrow...

it would make them feel guilty, and of course, it would hurt my teachers if i quit the extracurriculars to relieve that stress. its my problem, not my parents', or my friends', or anybody else's to be honest, since everybody knows that i can take care of myself, and finish everything with top scores. of course, time is an issue. there are all those classes I want to take, that 4.00 gpa to maintain, camps to attend to make the college app look beautiful and stand out amidst those of other top students in the nation--nay, the world. i talk with my mom a lot: colleges, daily problems, life in school, etc. it's a pretty open discussion forum; no secrets... except for that SMALL stress issue. yeah. that might become an issue in the future too, considering i'm contemplating taking 5 ap's in senior year...plus a sport. and maybe the improv team. and of course, my parents = awesome. i love them. care for them. dont want to hurt them in any way, shape, or form. but with 2 sports a year, SAT tutoring, online AP classes to make up for those that i cant take in school, then another 4 or 5 extracurriculars (not even exaggerating; i counted), how long can i stay floating and not dissolve into a useless puddle of salty tears? then again, everyone knows big girls don't cry. me included.*

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My parents don't know i secretly play games behind their backs. Every time I come home from school, I play games until they come home from work. If they leave the house to get some groceries, I get on my laptop and play games. If I go to the bathroom, I play games on my phone. I stay awake at night, waiting for them to go to bed, and then creep downstairs to play some more games. I pull out my laptop during brunch and lunch to climb in Hearthstone. I've already gone from rank 25 to rank 20 in the span of 2 weeks! I hope my parents don't find out because they may take away my phone and laptop and then I won't be able to become a pro gamer :(

"A secret's worth depends on the people from whom it must be kept."

-Carlos Ruiz Zafón

There are many things which we think of as irrelevant. But we do this to prevent ourselves from thinking about it, to not feel those feelings anymore. There are many such things that I keep from my parents, like the loneliness I feel here without the friends that I previously had back there, or the teenage stress and pressure which I usually face along with my parents' burden of certain expectations. I hide this because I'm pretty sure that they won't completely understand it, even though they'd love to help. I would love to share it with them, but I'm pretty sure the result of it won't really help. If I was to share them with someone, it would definitely be my older sister as she might be able to relate to this better and help me. But I really don't know why I prefer keeping stuff to myself. Maybe because I deem them "irrelevant" and try to avoid it as much as possible so that it doesn't influence other parts of my life. If my parents found out about this, they'd be pretty upset as to why I didn't share this with them. And the reason why I didn't is because I don't want them to feel bad or guilty about moving here for my education. It's just that my happiness about this opportunity is balanced by all these things. I would like to tell my parents to maybe consider me as an adult, or at least about to be one, and that I should be considered able to make my decisions about certain things.

"Sometimes the biggest secrets you can only tell a stranger."

- Michelle Hodkin

I have these online friends- an idea considered horrific to them- that they don't know about. They live in Tennessee and Ohio and Florida and Texas and the UK and India and parts of California far away from me. Thing is, they get me like nobody ever has. When they even THINK I'm sad, they always WANT to know what's wrong and if they can help instead of what my parents/real life friends do- don't even notice. Through a screen, I have told these people more about me than my friends/parents know about the real me. They saw a picture of me once- we traded pictures one time using a temporary upload site that deleted them- and they said 'beautiful' and 'amazing' where my parents would say 'why aren't you smiling?' or 'what's wrong with your posture?' My parents would never

understand the bond we share. We're all different- one of my best internet friends is three times my size. Literally. Another is so much shorter. Another is only 12, and she's the sweetest thing, I love her so much it's like she's the little sister I never had and I can't stand to see her in pain. We're all different, have been raised differently in different places, but we understand each other in a way nobody could ever get- we would die for each other a thousand times over, we have and will stay up through the night to talk someone out of suicide and we have and will lean on each other forever. We're each others crutches, support, family, and we will never leave anyone behind. Something my real family could never understand.

"I'd learned that some things are best kept secret."

- Nicholas Sparks

Oh my, what a prompt! I bet everyone will write about how they can't tell their parents they are stressed, or that they have a significant other, or that they got a g**d*** C on their Chem test. I have my fair share of those confessions too, but I think the most mortifying thing about me that they don't know is that I'm one of the biggest w***** on campus! Love my family, but they'd be horrified at my personal life. Throwback to when my dad speculated about my neck hickies and I told him I had bug bites... still, I rock that hoe life ;)

My parents don't know about any of the extracurriculars I'm involved with. I'm sure they'll find out because they have to pay for my college applications in the future and will see them listed, but I want to keep it my secret for now. I feel like if they knew, they would completely take over those extracurriculars I've done for fun and start forcing me to go for leadership positions in them or value them only based on if they'd contribute to my college apps, stripping all the genuine enjoyment I get out of these activities I love like they've done with everything else in my life. My friends at Lynbrook know about what I do, and a lot of my classmates too, though, which is kind of weird because it's like I'm living a (very boring) double life.

I'm not sure if my parents know how much I appreciate them. Because when I was younger, I swore that I would get away from them as soon as I could. I couldn't stand it when my mom made me recite the times table, when my dad screamed at me to spike the volleyball harder; and recently, when they questioned why I didn't work harder, persevere longer, act more "normal". That rejection letter that overshadowed every other disappointment in my life: it swallowed my entire being instead. Imagine the worst, most blackening, loathsome disappointment one could ever feel in the world, and that was how I felt my parents thought of me. Do they see right through me into my selfishness and ignorance? Do they see not a reflection of themselves, but of two decades of time and hopes spent in vain? I've always been hesitant to look them directly in the eye. It wouldn't seem so, from the way I complain at yet ignore them; borrow money from them but conveniently disappear in times of need; always struggling for that American idea called 'individualism' in opposition to their experience as Chinese immigrants in a strange land. It wouldn't seem so, but I couldn't tell them how much I appreciate them. Yes mom, I remember you used to kiss me on the forehead every night before I told you to stop. Yes dad, I can't count the number of times you've unclogged my toilet, because even though I felt like puking from the smell and humiliation, you would do that for your kid because you are the nicest person on Earth. Who would I have been, if I hadn't spent every weekend daydreaming from the backseat of the SUV while being chauffeured from place to place, or if I hadn't gone on the roadtrip to Yellowstone and saw bison and geysers and meadows of prairie grass; if I never had my mom's beef and wintermelon soup when I was sick, or if my parents hadn't decided to move to an old and bland house, on which they pay mortgage every month, so that I could go to school in the district? Certainly not who I am right now. Even with all my failures, it's because they let me make them. I'm not invincible or untouchable. I'm merely my own person, whom my parents have had the kind regards to raise, listen to, and live with for eighteen years. It's always hard to say thanks, I but I guess this is a start.*

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I'm suffocating

Ann Lo

Ann Lo

Ann Lo is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. One of her specialties is working with families to improve their relationships (between parents and children, young adults and their parents, and spouses). As a second generation Asian American, she has both personal and professional experience navigating the cultural and generation gaps between immigrant parents and their children, and has given many workshops on the topic.

Humans are hardwired to connect. The field of interpersonal neurobiology, which draws from various scientific disciplines, increasingly finds correlations between relationship experiences and brain structure growth, emotional regulation, identity development, and learning. Our early experiences of being cared for, responded to, and comforted, have much bearing on how we end up viewing ourselves (“am I lovable?”), and relating to others (“can others be trusted?”). Attachment Theory gives a framework for understanding why people feel, think, and act the way they do. Those who have a “secure attachment style” feel secure in knowing they are loved, are at ease relating to others, so have an easier time launching into the world to live life/grow/explore, because there is a secure base of a loving relationship to fall back on. Those with an “avoidant attachment style” experience their needs and emotions being overlooked, so they learn to take care of themselves, but at the expense of “avoiding” depending on people or being sensitive to emotions in themselves and others. The “anxious/ambivalent attachment style” experiences unpredictable care responses, is frequently uncertain of what to expect from others, so they can be both insecure and desperately demanding. If there is abuse by caregivers, the attachment style becomes “disorganized,” confused by the impulse to seek comfort from the very ones causing the pain, not knowing how to relate to others. Repeated patterns of experiences not only create internal models of how relationships work, but also start to shape one’s sense of self.

On top of this backdrop of relationship-influenced sense of self, a key developmental task in the teen years is identity formation (google “Erikson psychosocial development”), the normal quest to figure out “who am I?” and “who do I want to be?” This exploration happens through actions, decisions, values adopted, goals pursued, in a process to see what “fits” and to see what will work as one takes more ownership and responsibility for one’s life in the march towards adulthood.

The various student/alum submissions describe aspects of this exploration which are hidden from parents and sometimes friends. What is the motivation for that, for keeping things unrevealed, and choosing instead to display a façade of “who someone else wants me to be”? If it is fear that “who I am” (or at least who I’m trying to figure out of this is really who I want to be) will be rejected, deemed defective, constricted, then perhaps that points to an ultimate human need for acceptance. Acceptance is being validated as a person, that in the core of my being I am received by another person, connected, not alone.

Is it possible to accept someone even if you don’t share their point of view? Is it possible to feel accepted even if the other person doesn’t endorse your behavior and choices? Can two people have differences, and still have a good relationship with each other? What can make this possible is the concept of “differentiation.” That means that I recognize myself as separate from you, and am able to

accept both myself and you. I don't need to insist that you agree to my choices to validate me. You don't need to force me to be like you. Respecting one another's autonomy and separateness, yet choosing to interact and accommodate to one another, that is a balance which allows relationships to flourish.

Tips for teens:

Make sense of your life. Spending time to be self-reflective and gain clarity on who you are is a worthy endeavor, and an invaluable life skill. Some helpful questions to ask yourself: Why am I doing what I'm doing? What am I feeling and thinking? What do I want? Why is that important to me? What am I going to do about it? In particular, consider how the relationships in your life have shaped your sense of yourself. How do you want to continue developing as a person?

In studies of attachment in adults, it was found that some people who had difficult childhoods somehow were able to form healthy attachments and relationships later on in life, and were able to raise children who had secure attachment styles. In contrast, adults who were detached from their emotions ended up having children with a detached/avoidant style of relating, and adults who were anxiously preoccupied with things of their past raised children who were anxious. What made the difference? Those who were able to achieve what researchers term an "earned-secure" attachment style made sense of their lives. Somehow the process of understanding one's life history, and connecting the dots between things that happened and its emotional impact, allowed healing and self-understanding to increase.

Make sense of your parents. Spend effort to understand your parents and their point of view. This will paradoxically help in your own growth to understand yourself. Some helpful questions to ask as you see your parents from a differentiated perspective: What things in their upbringing have shaped who they are, and influence the way they parent you? Why do they have the values they have? Can I accept my parents for who they are, not just who I wish they would be?

Tips for parents:

Make sense of your life. You have a major impact on your teen's sense of well-being and ability to thrive, more than any college-prep class or activity you can sign them up for. Your personal time and attention, and emotional connection with your teen, fulfill a fundamental need for teens to have a secure base from which to launch. Understanding your own life history and attachment style will help you understand why you relate to your child the way that you do, and open up options for how you can improve the relationship to optimally benefit your child. A good relationship will be your best conduit for transmitting your values and having

Additional Resources

"8 Keys to Building Your Best Relationships" by Daniel A Hughes

"Parenting from the Inside Out: How a Deeper Self-Understanding Can Help You Raise Children Who Thrive" by Daniel J Siegel and Mary Hartzell

"Raising An Emotionally Intelligent Child: The Heart of Parenting" by John Gottman

"Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities"

influence with your teen. Control and force may seem effective to get results in the short run, but have long term negative emotional consequences.

Pay attention to emotions. If you could do something so your child has higher achievement, better physical health, get along better with friends, have fewer behavioral problems, better impulse control and delayed gratification, would you? “Emotion coaching” has been correlated with these among other benefits. Emotion coaching parents see emotion as an opportunity to connect with their teens. Some practical steps:

- Be aware of the emotion in your teen. Find out what it’s about. Ask, be curious, open-minded.
- Listen empathetically. Acknowledge the feelings (vs. ignoring it, trying to shut it down, or correcting it).
- Help them use words to describe how they feel
- Explore ways of dealing with the situation which brought about the emotion

When it comes to problem solving, give teens a chance to develop their critical thinking (“what do you want to do about it”), rather than jumping in with a solution or a command. Give them a chance to practice and develop their competence. A frequent refrain heard from teens is “I wish my parents would trust me.” Having parents who believe in them, and prioritize relationship with them, is one of the best resources for teens.