



## 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. Inspired by Los Gatos High’s *Reality Check* and Monta Vista’s *Verdadera* was created to facilitate communication and overcome stigmas concerning prevalent and taboo issues within the Lynbrook community.

## About

At the beginning of the school year, the *Aletheia* staff designates a list of monthly topics pertaining to the realities of high school. Each issue comprises of firsthand experiences submitted anonymously by Lynbrook students and alumni, professional articles relating to that month’s theme, and resources compiled by the student staff. Finalized newsletters are uploaded online and emailed to Lynbrook families who have requested to be on the mailing list. Back issues can be found on our website, [www.lhsaletheia.org](http://www.lhsaletheia.org), under Archives.

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

This is the first issue of *Aletheia* for the 2013-14 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) and basic spelling errors. We do not edit stories for grammar or syntax.

Our November topic is Rebellion; stories are due by October 19th. 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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I'm one of those people that shouldn't fit in anywhere. I'm always called eccentric, weird, and awkward. I don't act my gender or age, nor do I care about the same things that my peers do. I don't make much of an effort to really fit in, because I don't like being associated with certain characteristics outside of social context. But I get classified anyway. People have said that it's part of human psychology to classify, to fit people into boxes. I'm not really sure why; maybe it conserves brain space, because you no longer have to remember what people are really like, just take their actions, put it through a blender, drip it into four different desk drawers, and combine their essence with everyone else who seems to fit into that box. And I hate it. It's pretty clear to me because people always associate me with academic-related groups and say it, half-jokingly but maybe half-seriously as well. But I'm not a suck-up, I just like to be at school and to learn from teachers. I'm not a nerd, I just have poor eyesight and pay attention in class. I'm not a geek, I just happened to learn how to program a bit. I am me, and those of you who want to fit me into a pretty little rectangular box, maybe you'll be disappointed when you find that it's actually a parallelogram and there's actually a lot more to my essence than you thought there was. But I hope that more than that you'll find that it's true of everyone. No one can be defined by labels, and if you seek to be labelled I'd question why.

*"But then I have always been somewhat of a square peg in a round hole."*

*- Cressida Cowell*

I have never tried to fit in. In fact, I try very hard to do the opposite. I'm a rebellious person. I resent being labelled and value my unique person more than anything. I guess that by trying so hard to not fit in, I dug a hole for myself that will not be so easy to escape from. In the days of Abercrombie, I was a scoffer. I thought that fashion was pointless and girly (I'm a girl by the way), and I told myself I'd never become one of those girls who cared so much about their looks and had a million boyfriends. You see, what I did that was so devastating was to limit my scope of vision. I was so focused on not doing certain things that I really lost myself and essentially created another label for

myself. I was the girl who was crazy, didn't care about looks or guys, didn't care about people's opinions. The truth was, the only thing I cared about was that everyone thought I didn't care, when really I cared so much that it was hard for me to be myself at all. Well, it's high school now. I actually am really into fashion, but no way would I ever wear anything remotely fashionable to school. (Another reason is because I'm sure I couldn't pull anything fashionable off, but that's another matter entirely.) And if I did like any guys, no one would ever find out about it (and I hated my hormones during those times, I really did). Outwardly I'm still a fashion disaster, I've never dated. The latter isn't a big deal, because I'm not interested in having a relationship, but the first one is. I still sometimes want to come off as that cool hipster girl who doesn't follow the crowd. And sometimes I wonder what would happen if I wore a dress to school. Would the world freak out? Would my mom have a heart attack out of joy? Would my whole person be questioned by my friends? Potentially. So this is what I think is my biggest problem with fitting in--it's not fitting in that's my problem, it's the fact that I won't let myself.

*"I will never fit in because I was not meant to."*

*- Cher Lloyd*

I'm so scared I won't fit in at college. What if people think I'm too weird? What if people judge me for the color of my skin? I think the scariest part is knowing that my friends and I, who've known each other for almost 13 years, won't see one another every day. Hell, I can't even stand not seeing them for a few days let alone months. And then there's my parents. I'm going far away, so maybe I won't be able to see them until December. What if no one wants me? What if people think I dress weird since I'm from California? Who will I lean on? Leaving home is the biggest risk I've taken. I hope I don't regret my decision.

*"The fear of not fitting in is a trick to get you to strive for everyone else's approval. It doesn't matter in the end"*

*- Unknown*

I am currently in my Senior year of high school and to be honest, I don't really have a lot of close friends in my school. It's a public school and there are a lot of crazy kids, so it's kind of hard for me to really form strong relationships with people. I do have friends, but we're not that close, like for ex, we rarely hang outside of school, and on the weekends. It's just people are kind of rude, and it's hard for me to relate to them.

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I think I've completely stopped TRYING to fit in, it kind of just works out on its own. Fitting in is completely relative to who you are and what you think fitting in means. For me, fitting in is like being comfortable and content with your friends, your surroundings, and in general- your life. I think that when I was in middle school, there was a big concept of groups. That group, this group, cool group, lame group. I don't really think that applies to me in high school nearly as much. Over the past two years I have developed a strong sense of self and have become rock solid in where I am today. I don't really care if I have two friends or twenty, because the friends I make are the ones I know are truly my friends. I honestly couldn't care less about making lots of friends because I don't feel the need to. Slowly, the things around me have fallen into place and I feel at home with my friends and don't feel the lack of friends or discomfort of ever being alone. Of course, there always are those people who make you self conscious or unsure of yourself, but I think as high school goes on and you get used to the people around you, it matters less and less. I don't really care what people think of me because I'm self assured. In my opinion, the only thing you have to fit in with is yourself. As long as you are comfortable in your own skin and flesh, no one else matters and you become free.

*"Those who follow the crowd usually get lost in it."*

*- Rick Warren*

What is fitting in? Does it mean being accepted? Does it mean speaking your language? Does it mean changing your whole lifestyle or sharing the same interests as a group of "popular" kids? Can a poor student of one ethnicity who works afternoon and

night shifts to support his or her family "fit in" with a rich kid, of another ethnicity, whose parents pay for everything from his or her iPhone to tuition? In Lynbrook, there exists a separation between such groups because in order to accept someone, you have to come from his or her background. In my experience, I have changed my entire lifestyle, not to fit in, but to go above and beyond everyone's standards. As high school kids, we all set unconsciously standards on each other such as the language, interests, looks, and background another person has in order to fit in. I don't speak Chinese. My friends and most lhs chinese speakers speak it in front of me. When I ask a translation for it from my trustworthy friend, I find the translation to be very offensive. I don't fit in because I am not East Asian. But here is the ultimate point: No matter if you are an ASB president, a counselor, the US president, or the smartest kid on campus in math and science, the standards you set for someone to fit defines you, not them. To quote Speaker of the Dead, "The difference between raman and varelse is not in the creature judged, but in the creature judging. When we declare an alien species to be raman, it does not mean that they have passed a threshold of moral maturity. It means that we have." Hence, I fit in because I believe I am greater than the standards you set. In fact, any offensive chinese statements may only make you more of a closeminded individual. I change myself to exceed your standards or hard work. In order to coexist, I may succumb to what you have to say or your order, but at no point will you exceed my capacity for success. All my friends use language and prejudice to look down on me. Everyone thought I was dumb and smelly, but they are the ones who seem "inferior". That's because they all their parents to look for. I lead my own path. It's "normal" to yours. ;)

*I came to terms with not fitting in a long time ago. I never really fitted in. I don't want to fit in. And now people are buying into that.*

*- Alexander McQueen*

It's hard to fit in at Lynbrook because everyone is so focused on their studies, not that other kids at other schools aren't the same. But most of the students here are so academically competitive that they befriend

people just so that they could use the new “friends” as tools essential to their success. I had a friend that I used to be really close to, until I realized that I was just a tool to her. Something that she can use as a stepping stone for her success. Someone that she turns to only when there was no one else that can be there with her. I am personally someone who would be friends with other people because of that person’s personality. Their grades matter somewhat to me, but as long as they have a good personality, I am okay to be friends with them. So when me and my friend’s friendship ended badly, I started scrutinizing the rest of the people at this school, and realized that most of the people here are the same. Thus proving that it’s hard to fit in at Lynbrook, especially if you are someone like me.

*Fitting in is a short-term strategy, standing out pays off in the end*

- Seth Godin

I never felt like I fit in at lynbrook. The overall attitude towards academics (anything less than an A is tragic) and drinking/partying/weed (it’s all evil!!!) was (is?) ridiculous. There is such a thing as a balance, but it seems like many people at lynbrook have no concept of that. That’s why I felt I didn’t fit in. people at lynbrook were nice enough, I guess. No real cliques or bullying. I appreciated that part, since it meant there was a little less pressure to fit in.

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I realized that the older I get, the less need I have to fit in. As I get to make some mutually understanding friends, I feel less need to search for outside affection and attention. When I was younger, life was just starting and fresh, it was typical that I would want to meet more people and do more crazy things. But now I’ve held back a bit and just appreciate what and who I have. I already have two or three really close friends whom I have heard and understood their stories, seen one another get furious, and stayed with them when they cried. As I develop deeper friendships with them, I no longer find any motivation and reason to fit in. It’s like when a girl finds someone who would love and care for her, she no longer feels the obligation to dress less for attention and flirtation.

*“In terms of fitting in, you know, I don’t have a lot of armor up. I’m a raw nerve and it’s really uncomfortable for a lot of people.”*

-Shirley Manson

I admit I always wanted to fit in during my time at Lynbrook High School, but really, your real friends are the ones who will like you even if you don’t have the money to buy all the latest technology and fashions. The ones who will stick around even with your unusual sense of humor, unique hobbies, and/or awkwardness. You might not end up with much in the end, but the ones who you do end up with will be worth a thousand “facebook friends.” If you do want to change something about yourself, do it for your own satisfaction instead of others’

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Ha, okay. So everyone’s seen those background images or whatever stating that “we shouldn’t be afraid to be weird,” or “I’m weird, deal with it.” Then we’ve got everyone saying, “Yeah, I’m kind of weird,” and smiling--but not awkwardly. Ohhhh no. They smile in a way that so obviously shows how proud they are of getting an opportunity to say that. Because saying it means that they. Are. Special. Here at Lynbrook, we aren’t concerned about “fitting in,” but rather, standing out. Everyone here wants to be known as someone crazy and funny. Everyone tries so, so hard, when all I want to do is grab them by the shoulders and tell them that we’re aren’t going to forget them if they just let themselves BE for one moment. I won’t say I never try to be “different,” and for that I am guilty as well. But I see all these people putting all this energy into cracking the best jokes and creating the wildest antics, and all of it just seems so tiring.

*“That’s the pathetic thing about high school. Everyone tries so hard to be something they aren’t. So how can I even try to be who I am, much less who I’m not?”*

- Katie Alender

I have never tried to “fit in” in the traditional sense, being a jock, nerd or “mean girl”. In Lynbrook, and schools elsewhere, “fitting in” is demonized and treated as a one-stop ticket to bullying. And it’s true. What happens if you’re a square peg and there’s only circles and triangles? So we encourage students to find their own path and not worry about nonconformity. Our culture encourages everyone to be different. Cue the rise of the hipster, someone who intentionally doesn’t conform to “normal” things, like pop music or fashion. I must confess something. I actually like some American music, and only got into K-Pop, Vocaloid (music made with software instead of a real singer), and house/trance music because people will TEAR YOU APART for liking humans singing in English to real, physical instruments. That’s how prevalent the instinct of “DON’T CONFORM” is, it’s beautiful! I don’t like typical TV dramas, wear whatever I want, and don’t bleach my hair brown. I like to draw. In any other school I would have broken my nose multiple times getting beat up for being “nerdy”, or given death threats for not wearing 20 pounds of makeup every day. I don’t conform. And I could find hundreds, maybe thousands of other students, from Lynbrook and out, who would qualify as “non-conformist”. We all try so hard to be different that there’s nothing to be different from now. We’re rebels without a cause. There aren’t “groups” or “cliques”, we just float about with our friends, being us. Not a goth, or a jock, or the hot girl, or the slut, but just a person. Lynbrook is a pile of sand, while we all think it’s a series of boulders.

*“Over come the notion that you must be ordinary. It robs you of the chance to be extraordinary.”*

*-Uta Hagen*

When the thought of “fitting in” comes in mind, people usually think of drugs, and alcohol, or cussing, to fit in through peer pressure. For me, it’s the fact that I’m in Lynbrook and having the pressure to be a hard-working competitive student that cares about getting a good GPA and do 300+ community service hours and most likely majoring in math or science in college. That’s my struggle of fitting in. These past two years have been hell for me, having to still stay afloat while everybody takes countless counseling sessions

and SAT classes from Flex. I’m not saying it’s not right to work hard, but I want to be able to live my high school life learning and discovering new things, instead of focusing on that 2400 on the SATs. The entire environment here makes it hard for me to breathe, to be able to create myself into a person I want to be. My parents aren’t the “typical Asian parents,” but they do want me to do well, do my best, and be happy. And let me tell you this, it’s been the opposite so far. At school, I joke around with my friends, get all silly and slap that smile on my face. And to be honest, in that moment, I feel like I fit in. I feel like I’m a part of the group, a part of Lynbrook, content. Then I go home. I realize that all my friends are getting tutored right now, doing more SATs classes, getting criticized by their parents for getting a 90% on some Calc BC test. I’m just at home, feeling un-accomplished and lame. I just don’t fit in. I want to be able to follow my own path of learning, without “fitting in” with the stereotypical Lynbrook norms, but I still don’t know how I will be able to keep my boat afloat that way. I don’t... This is the year that counts the most, I have to make it work. I have to.

*“You only get to walk variations of the same lines everyone has already drawn for you.”*

*- Courtney Summers*

I simply cannot fit in. Sure you think that in a school full of Indian and Asian people, I’d fit right in, but it doesn’t work that way. To what extent have I gone? Trying trashing your whole wardrobe for one you would expect to find right out of a forever 21 catalog. Can you imagine what it’s like to go through the whole day with friends but on the inside you know that you don’t even like them at all? I try to tell people, but again, everyone in trying to fit in themselves. No one has time for your petty little friendship problems. Until I left private school, which was after second grade, I was the leader. Everyone knew who I was. Teachers and students alike I was that one girl who talked to everyone and knew everyone. Public school changed me. I went from that wild, talkative kid to a more shy girl who always portrayed an I-hate-the-world attitude. I don’t know where I fit in, if I even do at all. If they sell a bottle of how to fit in potion, tell me. I’ll buy the whole counter.

*"Let's face it. No kid in high school feels as though they fit in."*

*-Stephen King*

I think that when you fit in, you can accomplish so much more. Like when you fit in with the popular people, you feel you belong somewhere and I guess you're more outgoing. Well, I guess not necessarily more outgoing but I know that if I were popular I would participate more in homecoming, ASB, and just school in general. And honestly to relate to people, I have lied just to talk to these popular people by saying stuff like I wear makeup all the time. I recently joined this club or this organization and it was a huge honor to be accepted but now I dread going there. I thought it was a pretty inclusive club but when I got accepted in, I realized everyone already had their own big loving group and they didn't really talk to me. I feel like a foreigner when I walk in there and I barely speak. I can't even speak up in class. I don't know what I'm scared of exactly, but I know that if I had more people I was comfortable with in that class, I would talk more. But the problem is, I don't feel close to anyone anymore. And I may want to fit in with the general crowd, but if I don't feel like I want to be friends with someone, I don't make much of an effort to fit in with that person. And with that, I have lost connection with so many people. We may sit next to each other at lunch, but I feel so far apart. I don't think I've fitted in with one other person for so long that I can't remember the last time I told someone a secret. I don't fit in with individuals, and I don't fit in with the crowd. I guess I just want to be normal and happy like everyone else I see. Maybe that's why I want to fit in with them.

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There's this girl that I just met last year. She's the kind of person who is liked by everyone because her personality is just amazing. We used to talk almost everyday, but this year, she stopped hanging out with me and I always see her with a bunch of other people. I'm sad because I think she's trying to fit in at Lynbrook. And I'm not exactly the most popular so hanging out with me won't exactly make you fit in.

*"Don't try too hard to be something you're not"*

*-Daniel Radcliffe*

I am not going to sugar-coat everything and tell you a fake story about how my life is all rainbows and butterflies. But I will tell you the truth. It took me sixteen years to finally become the person that I want to be. All of my life, I tried to become someone I'm not. I tried to become the person that others wanted me to be. I know it's almost impossible to have individuality here at Lynbrook. Every single freaking class you walk into, there WILL be at least one person flipping out about a test, or complaining about their huge workload from all the advanced classes. I was pressured in the same way; taking hard classes and to be smart, to basically turn myself into someone that I'm not so I can fit in the "standard." But is that what I really wanted? My sophomore year, I took Chemistry honors, since all of my friends were also taking it, regardless if they even LIKED science or not or if they were even recommended to. I was really close to getting recommended to take honors anyways, so I decided to give it a try. Worst. Decision. I. Ever. Made. In. My. Life. Not only did I get a crappy grade in that class, there were countless nights of staying up and studying, just to get a "F" on nearly every test. Also in that same year, I hung out with a group of friends that were study-freaks. Every brunch and lunch, they would be digging face-down into their notes and textbook, complaining over a test that they were going to get an A in anyways. You can probably guess by now, that I was the one that never even bothered to study. My "friends" made me feel useless everyday because what's the point of having friends when they value the letter "A" more than they value their friends? I'm not saying that your grades aren't important, I do understand how important education is to people, but I learned that forming genuine friendships is what makes you happy in the long run. Why bother hanging out with a group of friends that make you feel like crap everyday because they rub it in your face that you aren't as smart as them? I stopped hanging out with that group altogether, and I'm so glad it's all over now, but if there was ONE thing I learned last year from Chemistry class and my old group of friends, it is that you have to wake up and see reality. You have to be your own person and not become someone you're not because you want to please the norm. You don't have to feel the need to study eight hours of day just to meet the Lynbrook "standard." Make your own standard. This year, I'm taking all easy classes and focusing on my true passion, the arts. Yes, people, there is more to the world than academics. These days, I'm even reconsidering if I really want to

go to college or not. I may just start working full time right after graduation (what a big shock as a Lynbrook student, some of you guys may be gasping at this horrendous story right now, but let me tell you: I DON'T CARE ANYMORE. I FOUND MY PASSION. That's what matters. Screw society.) I realized that I don't need to work my butt off in a class that I do not even like, just because other people are taking it. I actually really like my life right now. So overall, I am just going to leave you with this: Do you enjoy where you are at life right now? If not, don't care about others, and just do what makes YOU happy, because that is what ultimately matters. I guarantee you, when you find your passion and stick with it and ignore everything else, you WILL find genuine happiness. Go live your life and have individuality. Peace

## Sarah de Sousa

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I am currently in my second season as an Educational Counselor with Insight Education in Cupertino, CA. I have had the pleasure of working with many Cupertino area students as well as students all over the Bay Area, East Bay and North Bay. In doing so, I strive to help each student cultivate unique talents, interests and character strengths that will ultimately shine through in the college application process. In my experience, the most successful applications not only demonstrate a student's academic preparedness, but also what other passions and qualities of character will flourish and find expression in the broader campus community. Prior to working at Insight Education, I was the General Manager of Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting, my family's gourmet coffee roasting operation in Santa Cruz, CA. As a professional in the coffee industry, I travelled the globe from Rwanda to Nicaragua and everywhere in between developing supply chain relationships as well as launching initiatives aimed at improving quality of life for coffee farming families at origin. If you watch National Geographic or PBS, you may have seen me on "Coffee: From Beans to Buzz." When not working hard at my own job, I can usually be found assisting my husband at his job as a professional dancer and dance instructor. I am a competitive dancer myself, having spent 20 years studying classical ballet, ballroom and social dances such as salsa, tango and west coast swing.

**Dear Lynbrook students,**

You are probably expecting me to say that "fitting in" is a myth, that what matters is being yourself and not sacrificing your values and your authenticity for the sake of gaining approval. But before I offer that advice, which I inevitably will, let's pause and acknowledge that we are in some sense wired to "fit in." Human beings are profoundly social creatures. We crave affection, admiration, acceptance from others and this is not a bad thing. Our capacity to cooperate, coupled with the depth and complexity of our emotional lives is perhaps the essential evolutionary advantage that has carried us from our hunter-gatherer days to the days of Facebook and LinkedIn. Furthermore, developmental psychology describes adolescence as a time in which the key learning and growth opportunities occur in the context of group identity, alienation, fidelity, peer pressure, and experimenting with new roles. In other words, asking oneself again and again, "Who am I now, and who will I become?" I offer these frames of reference as a way of saying it's perfectly normal to want to "fit in" and it's perfectly normal to want to stand out. Between these poles of carving out one's unique identity and inhabiting roles that are defined by their social context, we come to an understanding of our own truth. It is truly a life's work.

So as one student asks, "What is fitting in?" Is it being accepted by others? Can that acceptance transcend boundaries like race, money, age, social status? Do we have to be "like" other people to "fit in" with them? Reading your letters brought me back to my own high schools days when I wondered if I was popular (enough), wondered if I was attractive (enough), smart (enough), talented (enough). It's that implied "enough" that captures one aspect of what "fitting in" means. But it is often hard to pin down exactly for whom we hope to be "enough." For ourselves? our parents? our peers? society? When I read student essays, I often see this word "society" pop up as though there exists a set of monolithic standards, composed and imposed on us all by a jury we call "society," or sometimes "culture." But the truth is, who we hope to be and who we are change in the course of a single day, as we relate to others through our different roles: student, daughter, friend, girl scout, prom queen, wall flower, researcher, psychologist, step-mother, husband, breadwinner. In other words, the jury is always changing. It changes many times in one day and infinite times throughout our lives.

In these letters, I heard the voices of young adults, who are struggling with the conflicting demands of roles like student, daughter, friend, and boyfriend. Each role implies a different set of expectations, some familiar and some entirely new and unfamiliar. As you mature, you will find yourself inhabiting roles like, wife, father, employee, friend, co-worker. And you will still crave the acceptance, love and admiration of your peers, your family, and your colleagues. I can honestly say that at my age I do not worry about "fitting in," but I do care about feeling connected, cultivating community and feeling a sense of belonging in myself and in the world. Experiencing a sense of belonging-- to loved ones, in a chosen profession, within a community, whether that community is Lynbrook High School, or a few close friends you can count on one hand, imbues life with a sense of purpose. The key is, to arrive at this place, to experience belonging as I have described it here, we have to cultivate compassion, not only outwardly toward others, but more importantly, inwardly toward ourselves.

In the same sense that it can be difficult to pin down exactly what "fitting in" means, it can be equally difficult to pin down what it means to "be yourself." This is why I have resisted the temptation to advise you to simply "be yourself." I worry that even "being yourself" becomes a new imperative, a new yard-stick against which we do or do not measure up. The best advice I can offer you is not to "find yourself" or "be yourself" or "accept yourself;" it is to be kind to yourself. You will change, you will make mistakes, you will wake up some days and feel confident, you will wake up other days and feel insecure, you will at times succumb to peer pressure, at other times you will find in yourself courage, resilience and inner strength that you did not know you possessed. You can choose to look at these experiences through the eyes of an internal critic, who asks even of your accomplishments, "are they enough?" Or you can choose to listen to the voice that says, "you are enough," or as my own mother used to say to me, "you are perfectly imperfect

just the way you are.”

Which brings me to the role that parents can play in helping children to navigate the minefield that is adolescence. Let me start by making an important distinction: helping your child cultivate self-acceptance is not the same as being a permissive parent. It is possible to have high hopes for your child and at the same time maintain an awareness that these hopes will not always come to fruition, that there will be setbacks on the road to success and that our own dreams for our children are not always the same dreams our children have for themselves.

In my role as an admissions counselor, working primarily with Cupertino area schools, I have to be honest and say that, more often than not, I see students who at this crucial juncture in their lives feel incredible pressure to become something that they are neither suited for nor deeply passionate about. They also feel compelled to apply to a long list of colleges with names that will impress rather than a short list of schools that represent the best fit for their personalities, talents and interests. It has happened that I've seen a few students who are so focused on their future profession that I have no doubt they will be both successful and fulfilled in their careers, but it is understandably rare to encounter that degree of focus in a 16 or 17-year-old. And the truth is, the indicators of future success that make me most hopeful about a particular student are not test scores, GPA or college admissions profile, but the student's attitude toward life, toward set-backs, toward the influence of their peers, an ability to keep things in perspective. They are the students who have the capacity to listen to the voice that says, "You are enough. You are loved." And they can hear that voice because it is the internalization of a voice that has echoed throughout their lives, since the moment of their birth. So my advice is both simple and incredibly challenging: be the voice of compassion for yourself and be that voice for your child, so that when peer pressure comes knocking in one of its many disguises, your child can say, "I don't need to 'fit in,' I already belong and that is enough."

## Additional Resources

### **Letters to a Young Poet, by Rainer Maria Rilke.**

This book was given to me on my 16th birthday by a mentor and has been a constant companion in my life ever since.

### **How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity and the Hidden Power of Character, by Paul Tough**

The story we usually tell about childhood success is the one about intelligence: success comes to those who score high on tests, from preschool admissions to SATs. But in *How Children Succeed*, Paul Tough argues that the qualities that matter most have more to do with character: skills like perseverance, curiosity, conscientiousness, optimism, and self-control.

### **The Romance of Risk: Why Teenagers do the Things They Do, by Lynn E. Ponton M.D.**

In *The Romance of Risk*, Dr. Ponton refutes the traditional idea that risk-taking is primarily an angry power struggle with parents—so-called teenage rebellion—and re-defines it as a potentially positive testing process whereby challenge and risk are the primary tools adolescents use to find out who they are and determine who they will become. For adolescents, the powerful allure of the adult world is equaled only by the fear of failing to find a place in it. Parents can ease that transition into adulthood, however, by promoting healthy risk-taking so that dangerous options will be avoided.

### **Hardwiring Happiness, by Rick Hanson Ph.D.**

Rick Hanson, Ph.D., is a neuropsychologist and author of *Hardwiring Happiness*, *Buddha's Brain*, *Just One Thing*, and *Mother Nurture*. Founder of the Wellspring Institute for Neuroscience and Contemplative Wisdom, and an Advisory Board Member of the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley, he's been an invited speaker at Oxford, Stanford, and Harvard, and taught in meditation centers worldwide.

### **Greater Good Science Center**

<http://greatergood.berkeley.edu>

The Greater Good Science Center studies the psychology, sociology, and neuroscience of well-being, and teaches skills that foster a thriving, resilient, and compassionate society. This website is full of educational and parenting resources, free webinars, links to many bay area events and excellent resources for teens.

### **Stanford School of Medicine Center for Compassion and Altruism**

#### **Research and Education (CCARE)**

<http://ccare.stanford.edu>

CCARE investigates methods for cultivating compassion and promoting altruism within individuals and society through rigorous research, scientific collaborations, and academic conferences. In addition, CCARE provides a compassion cultivation program and teacher training as well as educational public events and programs.