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 , *Aletheia* 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. Back issues can be found on our website, 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 2014-15 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 Drugs & Drinking; stories are due by October 18th. If you are interested in contributing, a submission box and a suggestion form for future topics are both available online.

Expressing what remains unspoken.

Student Staff: Adam Zhang, Alekhya Surepeddi, Alyssa Zhang, Audrey Ham, Divyya Munshi, Durga Ganesh, Esther Kao, Harsh Jain, Iris Zhao, Jenny Yuen, Jimmy Zhi, Kasturi Pantvaidya, Renee Cai, Sabrina Jen, Shannon Lee

Advisers: Cindy Wen & Miko Otoshi

I'm insecure about my looks. Mainly because of my crush. My crush is the most beautiful person in Lynbrook and I just feel like i'm nowhere near her level. I don't think i'm a BAD looking guy, just not as good looking as she is. I tell her whenever i can how pretty she is, but she rarely says anything back except "AWW THANKS <3".

Several girls have told me that i'm cute or good looking before, and some 'popular' girls have even liked me in the past (including my crush), but my self confidence plummets when i compare myself to her.

If we ever do get together, I'll obviously feel like the luckiest guy on the planet and i'll be happy as can be for the duration of the relationship, but i'll also always feel guilty because i know that she could've done better than just settling for me…

"We're going to have to let truth scream louder to our souls than the lies that have infected us."

- Beth Moore

There are a lot of things I am insecure about. I wish I was someone who had no insecurities, but let's be honest - such a person doesn't exist. The things I'm insecure about are: my weight, my man boobs, my facial expression, my dark eye circles, my facial features, and girls' opinion of me. One of my biggest insecurities is my weight. I can't really wear tight clothes, even though they are trendy, because tight clothes would reveal my fat. I've tried a lot of things to lose weight. I've tried starving myself, eating healthy, and even joining the cross country team. They all worked at a snail's pace, so I've just been living with that insecurity. Someday, when I'm older and unrestricted by my parents, I might get a risky surgery to become skinny, but until then, I'll wear loose clothes to try and hide my fat. I really just have to live with my weight problem for now. I'm also insecure about my man boobs. I don't have gynecomastia, which is the medical condition for males who naturally have man boobs - I have man boobs as a result of being overweight. Just like I do to hide me weight problem, I wear loose clothes to hide my man boobs. The fact that I wear really loose clothes makes me feel bad about my appearance because oversized clothes don't look good. It's a lose-lose situation for me. I can either wear clothes that are my size and expose my man boobs or I can wear oversized clothes that look bad. I'm also insecure about my my facial expression. I often find myself with an awkward facial expression, and I feel like other people think I'm an awkward person because of it. Some people have a cool facial expression, but I'm not one of them. My facial expression makes me look like a social misfit. My eyes widen and I really just look weird. I don't know if there is anything I can do about this problem and I don't really know it's cause. I guess I might see an image consultant some day. Another one of my insecurities is my dark eye circles. I know I have them solely because I don't get enough sleep. I plan to get some concealer and artificially hide them some day. I don't know if I'll ever achieve a lifestyle in which I can get a good eight hours of sleep every night. I'm also insecure about my facial features not looking good. If I'm walking with friends and I see our reflections on a window, I feel like my friends' facial features look so much better than mine. I don't know if I'll ever be able to do anything to just have nicer facial features so I might just have to live with my ugly ones. I have a lot of insecurities involving girls. One of them is that I feel that girls just don't think I'm attractive. I understand that some guys are good looking, but I'm just not one of them. A lot of times, I hear a good looking girl talk about how she thinks other guys are attractive. A good looking girl has never said anything of that nature about me. The only girls that have ever thought that I am attractive have been terribly ugly. That might mean that I'm in the league of uglier girls and I'll never get a good looking girl to be my girlfriend. I hope that isn't the case because I can't settle for anything less than a good looking girl. I also understand that some girls like to hang out with guys because the guys are really funny. I am not at all a funny guy and that just adds to my insecurities involving girls. Pretty much, good looking girls probably don't think I'm worth their time. They think that other guys who are better looking, funnier, and funner to be around are more worth their time than I am. I don't know if I will ever be able to do anything about the fact that girls don't think I'm fun to be around, but I'll try to emulate the personalities of guys that girls love like Channing Tatum and Leonardo Di Caprio. That may or may not make me more fun to be around. Girls not thinking I am fun to be around is the biggest of all my insecurities. To be honest, I've never shared my insecurities with anyone, so for now let's keep them between you and me.

"Comparison is the thief of joy."
- Theodore Roosevelt

And it's funny, no one knows how insecure I am either though. I have this whole thing in my head that if I tell anyone how I feel, happy or sad, they'll feel burdened with my emotions so therefore I keep it to myself. I keep...everything that hurts inside and it claws me out, and it doesn't seem like it's affecting anyone but me.

~ ~ ~

Everything about me is insecure. It's kinda ironic though, I mean...I'm an extrovert. I'm confident. I'm sure of what I'm doing, yet I'm so insecure it's...depressing. From the way my hair looks, to my weight, to really anything I do. I used to be able to raise my hand in class and speak...but now I kind of...shrink away from that. I'm terrified of getting anything wrong, of doing anything that is far from the norm. I think...my insecurities have been formed because of the way society is. I hate to blame society for everything I do, yet it's true. I worry about my weight because of media (and the fact that most everyone at school is stick thin) and I worry if I'm right because of my peers. I worry about how my hair looks because I was once told that my hair made me look six times bigger than I was. I'm insecure about who I am because when I go online, onto social media and talk to people from the other side of the country, the other side of the world, I am told that I am perfect, and then soon contradicted by the hateful words of someone who refuses to show their face.

"I don't let anyone's insecurities, emotions, or opinions bother me. I know that if I am happy, that's all that matters to me."

- Demi Lovato

I believe that insecurities are within every single creatures in the entire world. We sometimes feel fear or unsafe whenever we are alone, because we are individuals. We are detached even though we tried hard to be friends with each other having accompany with one another. In my opinion, insecurities is unpreventable. My insecurities came from the pressure of being an foreigner, and being friends with the people who are born in here had make me fear. I sometimes felt i am only by myself. Nobody can help. I had this kind of feeling since when I was in elementary school. I did not talk about anything negative in front of my friends, teachers, or even my parents. I pretended i was tough. Insecurities affected and made me so scared to do many things. In nowadays, however, my insecurities has been gradually lessened. I felt this is because I talked more about my actual feelings with people around me. Guys, talk about it when it comes.

"One of the greatest journeys in life is overcoming insecurity and learning to truly not give a sh*t."

-J. A. Konrath

I now have an eating disorder because of this. I now refuse to speak in front of crowds (something I did so often). I now refuse to go and talk to my friends about my weekend, about my life! I refuse...to be unique and special. I refuse to do anything because of how insecure I have become.

~ ~ ~

The biggest insecurity as a senior is what colleges will accept me, or whether I'll get rejected by them all

~ ~ ~

Insecurities come from the world.
Insecurities come from other people, the environment around us, and ourselves. Insecurities tear people and relationships apart.
    I feel like my insecurities are the things people will judge me most on, when the truth is I'm the harshest judge. Nobody out there actually gives a crap about all the tiny details I'm picking out on myself. I may tell myself that every day, but when it comes down to it, I still care about what other people will say. It's been getting better, but I don't know if I'd be able to get rid of it completely.
    I sometimes imagine what'd it be like if nobody on this planet tried to hide their insecurities…

"I discovered that my insecurities and my flaws were things that I actually need to embrace, and I let them become my superpowers."

-Skylar Grey

I have never really been insecure about my outer appearance. In fact, I'd like to think I'm comfortable in my own skin. If anything, my biggest insecurity is what people think of me secretly. Not many of my friends know this about me (or at least I think I don't), but I take everything they say to heart, whether they joke about it or not. Usually I follow along with their jokes and even laugh with them, but really everything they say gets stuck in my head for the rest of the day. Every time someone says something to me I get the nagging feeling that maybe I really am not good enough. When people point out flaws that I'm aware of, it's just offensive to me and I have nothing to say. It doesn't really help that for two years I have been surrounded in such a competitive environment that I can't even measure my worth because other people go way past themselves in terms of their accomplishments. Now, wherever I go, I feel extremely out-of-place because I can't look past what everyone else can do, and it's frustrating knowing that I can't ever be good enough. I already feel useless whenever I try. Because I'm so aware of how judgemental people can be, it scares me that I just look replaceable to them. It doesn't matter how kind I am or how well I get along with others, because if I don't fit in, I'm done for.

"The reason we struggle with insecurities is because we compare our behind the scenes with everyone else's highlight reel."

-Steve Furtick

I think my biggest insecurity is my face. I know that I'm horribly ugly, but no one says it out loud.

I'm really insecure about how other people, specifically adults, view me. There's no reason nor stigma that caused me to feel the pressure to please everyone I've been around; I just feel overly embarrassed and guilty when I feel I've failed to meet what someone thought of me. I get super nervous when someone tells me something like, "Oh you're good at such and such," because then I feel pressured to always be good at it and passionate about it, when it really isn't the case. Honestly, for most of my extra-curriculars, I don't genuinely enjoy them. They can be slightly likable at times and they're always tolerable, but I feel that I'm doing them because I would feel too guilty if I quit. I think I would just make my teachers really sad, because what signals does it send when their student quits? It undermines their sense of confidence when teaching; they start to question whether they're bad teachers or not. I don't want to do that for anyone, even if they are bad teachers, because I don't want them to be sad. When I'm in college, I'll be free, but will I really? I've immersed myself in this alter ego where I act interested in things that I'm really not for so long, that I'm so lost as to what I actually like anymore. My main, excuse me, my ONLY motivation to do things these days seems to be fear of failing in front of others. I'm so affected and afraid by what I think people's perceptions of me are to the point where I unconsciously act the way I think they perceive me as. If I get a sense they think of me as an innocent and boring person, I act like one. If I get a sense that they think of me as charming and witty, I act like it. If I get a sense that they think I'm not good at a certain skill, even if I'm actually good at it, I start sucking at it when I'm around them. It's so frustrating because I can't determine who I really am when I'm around other people, and I can't block out my mind from automatically seeing how others would categorize me and then acting upon it. I just wish we lived in a hippie world where no one called each other any adjectives and treated everyone equally.

"Don't let mean words from an insecure soul blind you from the truth of your beauty."

-Dr. Steve Maraboli

I'm super insecure about my weight. I struggled with anorexia ever since first grade, dropped to about 40 pounds in fifth grade, and recovered in sixth grade. Now, I'm about 106 pounds and I'm struggling with it again. I haven't eaten a full meal in the last two months. Every time I raise my spoon, I hear the voices of my friends and parents telling me I'm fat, gained lots of weight, and could stand to lose a few. And then I stop eating. Logically, I know I'm not fat at all. I just wish others would know that, too.

~ ~ ~

I now know what I'm good at. Even so, I know that I'm not as good at those things as other people. I am entirely insecure of my ability to succeed. This fear of perpetual mediocrity keeps me awake at night and keeps me from fully commiting to whatever it is I do. I've lost countless passions because I've been scared to go through the uncertainty until I became confident.

"There can be no courage without fear."
-Eddie Rickenbacker

Just how some females develop insecurities when looking at models, I developed my insecurity looking at "hot men." There's this part on my face that doesn't match any other males' and I feel like because of that I'm not attractive or good looking.

I get complimented and flattered often but that doesn't help, only makes me doubt more about whether or not I'm actually not that good looking.

Because of this, I'm extremely self conscious especially around other females. I wouldn't be classified as shy but around girls I definitely show some sign of social anxiety. How can I change this? Grow up, accept myself, realize no one else really cares. But I don't.

~ ~ ~

I'm not that developed as a girl. and I have to say that this is really saddening. I am really insecure about it, even though I overall have normal self esteem. When people mention the topic, I become even more aware of my insecurity and just wish that I was more like everyone else. It's not even a genetic thing; apparently my body's functioning is just off. It really makes me miss the past, like back in elementary and middle school, when females were judged by personality and who they were like more on the inside. Actually, that was only elementary school, because for middle school it was only like that until 7th grade. In 6th grade, people didn't make others feel insecure. After that, physical appearance became a main factor and I felt my friend groups dwindling. It's not like I don't have friends now; I have lots of idfferent friend groups and my face is considered above average. Not beautiful, but definitely not as bad as you'd think considered how I'm judged here. My insecurity about my physical development (or lack thereof) affects my friends because when they joke around about things that get close to that, they start glancing at me more almost pitifully. and it hurts more than if they just didn't notice. They mean well, and don't want to offend anyone, but it's the dumb pieces of feces here that think they're cool that make snarky comments. If they're trying to hurt people like me, too bad for them, since I value their thoughts almost as much as I value my own feces. Besides, talking behind someone's back is usually not that literal. You talk somewhere they won't hear you. It's funny how the very people that you rub shoulders with in elmentary

and middle school, the same friends that followed you around then, now don't give so much as a sideways glance (if they do it's only to think of how bad you supposedly look and to say something -cough- biotchy about it) and are rude now. Everyone has insecurities. I know they do to, and they complain about them so much, yet they still like to bring out pain in others, as if it will make them better. Maybe these exact people will read though this and feel accomplished that someone's writing this. But in a way, this is a good way for me to deal with my insecurity. They say that if your friends judge you by how you look, then they don't deserve to be your friends. Heart-warming and optimistic, but it ain't reality. Everyone judges physical appearance and development now; I'm not excluded. So as a final note to those fish-floppin' -cough cough sneeze strangles them- biotches out there, stop judging people solely by their bodies and looks, including how they dress. and I'd say this applies a lot to girls. Just stop it. You obviously don't have a heart, but imagine if you did, and try being in their place. Would you feel secure when you walk around school with those clouds of judgement following you? I didn't think so.

"You don't have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body."
-C.J. Lewis

I'm not insecure. It's stupid and it keeps me from having fun. I'm a badass bitch and I don't need to tell myself otherwise.

~ ~ ~

Because of some strange experiences when I was younger, I have now developed an irrational fear of exposing too much of my body. I don't mean this in a straight-up sexual way, but just in the sense that, unlike most girls I am around with at school, I don't feel like I have the greatest body. I typically describe myself as a 12-year old boy type; no curves, not long and lean, nothing. Just a 12-year old boy on campus.

Everyone around tells me "OMG you're so hot and skinny!" but I can't get over the fact that my hip bones jut out, my knees look strange, and every time someone bumps into my shoulder they make a face like I just stabbed them. I just can't.

So you can imagine that I hated the PE swimming unit more than anything else on the planet. You want me, skinny boy creature, to stand here in some "hot"

swim suit? Thank you very much, now point me to the door.

Then came that age where a girl meets a boy and they start getting physical, but I can't do much past kissing because I'm too scared that if anyone sees my bony frame, they'll tell me to go to the hospital. There's nothing wrong with me, I swear I eat everyday, but when I look in the mirror I just see bones. And everyone is scared of skeletons.

"Free the true spirit."

-Frousse

NOTE: For the following submitter, please refer to Additional Resources.

I'm insecure about everything. and the fact i have no friends isnt helping. the fact that i get scrutinized for each thing i do isn't helping. being insecure is shitty. you get to this point after a long period of time and for me its been my entire life. this is f***ing shitty. this is f***ing stupid.

to everyone who thinks being insecure is a choice and you should just f***ing man up, suck a dick because that's not how this goes. so f*** off because being insecure is f***ing killing me (and i mean that literally).

~ ~ ~

My figure is definitely one of my biggest insecurities--i have flab in all the wrong places, and I know that people know it.

I think, for me, it's the hardest thing to deal with, because if you're just naturally unattractive, then people can't blame you, because it's your genetics. But if you're fat, people think of you as lazy and not willing to work for your health. If you're fat, people give you looks when you reach for that cupcake and you're never, ever once called pretty by someone who really means it.

I don't know, I'd take being too tall or too short or something like that over being overweight any day. And it's not that I'm trivializing other people's insecurities. It's just that I think being overweight sucks in a world where everyone judges and loathes fat people. Have you noticed that main characters in movies are never overweight? And that undesirable love interests are normally pudgy?

Anyway, it's really affected the clothes that I wear. Instead of wearing pretty clothes, I wear anything I can find that will hide all the things I want to hide. I think it's really affected my self-esteem, and I feel like everyone who meets me is thinking, "Oh, it's a fat girl." I don't want to be known as the fat girl. But generally, if you're overweight, it becomes your label and who you are. For a while, I didn't volunteer for anything because I felt judged all the time. To make matters worse, my mother took every opportunity she could to bluntly state, "You're too fat. Lose weight." (she even showed me a picture of myself and compared my figure to an ideal figure) But now I'm sick of it.

I have a friend who could be considered overweight, and yet, I've noticed that she's never really been held back by any of the worries and self-loathing that I've been plagued with. Instead, she's bold and steps up to do whatever she wants. In a way, her confidence is inspiring. I think, for a while, I viewed the world through a lens--skinny or fat--and judged people just as much as I thought they were judging me.

I dunno. It's definitely still a struggle and I'm definitely still really insecure about it. But I'm trying to be more positive about it. i guess these things take time!

"The important thing isn't what other people think you are; it's who you are."

-Shannon Alder

Is it weird to have a single hair, like a really long one, on your back? Im too afraid to ask my friends.

~ ~ ~

My World Literature and Writing teacher has caused me to become extremely insecure about my writing. I try so so hard, always ending up with B's. I mean, B's are fine and all, I'm not complaining, but SERIOUSLY!? I work my ass off for days on end, 4 revisions with at least 3 people editing it, but it's not ever up to her standards. She makes me cry.

"Everyone is insecure. The trick is to make an attempt at greatness despite your insecurities."

-Tsepiso Makhubedu

I am ok looking but sometimes when I go to school people call me Gollum. They don't know me. I think the nickname is only because of my ears, but there is

no way to be sure. I am insecure about my appearance, but my mom tells me it's what is on the inside that counts. Once you get to know me, I am really more of a Smeagol. For the most part, I'm a quiet freshman (sophomore next year), but I am well-intentioned and wish people at Lynbrook would take the time to get to know me more. Lynbrook students are great, but they should try to be more inclusive and friendly toward everybody. I feel uncomfortable when I can tell people are avoiding eye contact with me. If I were someone else, I would be friends with me. I'm an average level of cool, in my humble opinion.

I was a slut. I slept with guys, basically living to f*** and honestly it was the best time of my life. I felt so alive, and since I knew it was all casual and meaningless, I never had any regrets or emotions about it. But once everyone started finding out about my high sexual drive and desire, they shamed and punished me for it. I lost friends, I have a bad rep, and I'm my only good friend. I still hear the names people used to call me, but now they're coming from my own head. All this slut shaming has caused me to see myself like that.

But was it really necessary for everyone to gossip about me like that? What good did it have? Why can't a girl feel good? It's my sex life, not yours, so why do you even care?

I didn't need to be tormented like that for something so small and stupid like a couple of orgasms. Thanks a lot, society. You really f***ed me over this time.

"The opposite of security is insecurity, and the only way to overcome insecurity is to take risks."

-Theoore Forstmann

I have the biggest f***ing sideburns ever. If you've seen the show Avatar: the Last Airbender, there's this bad guy in book one called Admiral Zhao, and he's known for his ginormous sideburns. Mine are akin to his. Except mine aren't sharp enough to puncture the hull of an Empire-class Fire Nation battle ship, leaving thousands to drown at sea. Mine don't look "cool." Mine aren't in accord with the fashion of the times; mine don't garner respect nor fear from oppressed nations; because I'M A F***ING GIRL. I want to get them waxed, but if you get them waxed once you have

to continue getting them waxed for eternity, and that's a commitment I'm not ready for. I'm not rich. I'm not drowning in gold I stole from innocent Water Tribe villages. I'm just a pobrecita Bay Area teen. The real question here is whether or not I should sacrifice my time and money to look like the Painted Lady, or if I should accept my disgusting facial hair as it is. Perhaps I should go bald. Perhaps becoming an Air Acolyte is the only true solution. I don't know. I'm just sick of being hairy and having to un-tag every picture of me in a side profile. I just want a nice side profile. Beautiful spirits deserve nice side profiles. All my friends are hairless and sharp and close to Spirit-level beauty. I just want to fit in. All references aside, though, I really do hate my sideburns. They make me feel like a man, which isn't a bad thing, but it is inconvenient when your fashion goals are leaning towards the feminine side. Which mine are. I've got hair everywhere, and it pisses me off. I bet I could grow a beard if I tried. I hate looking like an ape all the time.

~ ~ ~

I'm fat, stupid, and have no future. My parents were right.

Sharon C. Martin, LCSW

Sharon is a psychotherapist specializing in helping adults and teens find great self-acceptance in order to achieve their goals for personal and professional success. She provides counseling for anxiety, stress, self-esteem, grief, and parenting support in her San Jose office.

SharonMartinCounseling.com

Insecurity is a feeling of being "less than", of uncertainty about yourself, or a lack of confidence. This week, as I listened to the radio and thought about this topic, two songs caught my attention.

EchoSmith is singing:

I wish that I could be like the cool kids
'Cause all the cool kids, they seem to fit in
I wish that I could be like the cool kids
Like the cool kids
And Colby Caillat's song called "Try":
Put your make-up on
Get your nails done
Curl your hair
Run the extra mile
Keep it slim so they like you, do they like you?
.....
Get your shopping on, at the mall, max your credit cards
You don't have to choose, buy it all, so they like you
Do they like you?

It seems we are all trying to fit it and be accepted. Unfortunately, sometimes we end up compromising ourselves in order to be like everyone else or be one of the "cool kids". Our differences are often seen as deficits and barriers to connecting with our peers and families.

We live in a competitive world and you go to a competitive school. There is a lot of pressure to prove ourselves and be the best. What makes us insecure is our perception of how we measure up; our worth compared to everyone else's. Starting at a very young age, we begin to internalize the messages we get about ourselves from parents, teachers, society at large. These messages become our belief system and the lens we use to interpret what happens to us. Simply put, if you are told you're too fat, you will learn to believe you are unattractive and likely berate yourself about it.

Insecurity is not only painful. It's shameful. Brené Brown, a researcher and expert on shame and vulnerability, said it best: "Our culture teaches us about shame - it dictates what is acceptable and what is not. We weren't born craving perfect bodies. We weren't born afraid to tell our stories. We weren't born with a fear of getting too old to feel valuable. We weren't born with a Pottery Barn catalog in one hand and heartbreaking debt in the other. Shame comes from outside of us - from the messages and expectations of our culture. What comes from the inside of us is a very human need to belong, to relate."

It's hard to talk about our perceived short-comings and ways we feel "less than". We feel alone in our insecurities, and yet we aren't. Haven't we all felt worried and judged in similar ways?

I'd like to tell you to stop caring about everyone else's opinion, but I know it's not that simple. We all want approval. We all want to belong. And yet we seem to all feel like we're falling short. We're not living up to expectations. Colbie Caillat's song suggests we consider whether we like ourselves and let go of expectations:

Wait a second,
Why, should you care, what they think of you
When you're all alone, by yourself, do you like you?
Do you like you?
You don't have to try so hard
You don't have to, give it all away
You just have to get up, get up, get up, get up
You don't have to change a single thing

Perhaps the only thing you need to change is your own thinking. As a psychotherapist, I am interested in helping people change and grow into their best selves. I love this quote from renowned psychologist Carl Rogers, "The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change." We obviously can't change all of the negative messages we get about ourselves. We can, however, learn to love and value ourselves. Our imperfections and differences do not make us unworthy. They simply make us human.You can create your own definition of success, beauty, wealth, or happiness. Have you ever stopped to think about whether you share the expectations, beliefs, and goals that others have for you? You can find a balance between what your parents and society say is important and what is really important to you. You can strive to be your best self and at the same time accept who you are right now.

My hope is that you will live in the present. Don't assume the future will turn out just like the past. Think about how the present situation is different from past situations. Be willing to take risks. Look for commonalities with your classmates and friends, rather than how you are "better or "worse". Most importantly, be kind to yourself. Chances are that if you don't treat yourself with respect, no one else will either. Worthiness doesn't come when you're a size 2 or get into Harvard. You can choose to feel bad because you're not _____ (smart, beautiful, athletic, talented, etc). Or you can choose not to. The power is in the fact that you and only you get to decide how you feel. I will leave you with one final quote from Geneen Roth, "What you pay attention to grows. Pay attention to your loveliness, your magnificent self. Begin now."

An Extra Note for Parents:

Adolescence is a confusing time. Our teens get a lot of conflicting messages about what's important from parents, peers, teachers, political and spiritual leaders, and society at large. One of the core developmental accomplishments of adolescence is the development of self-concept, an understanding of who you are and hopefully self-acceptance. It is important that you not only model acceptance of your child, but also your own self-acceptance. My best parenting advice is to give your children unconditional love. Let them know what you expect, but show them that you love them even when they fall short. We all have a desire to please our parents and it hurts a lot when our parents criticize or chastise use. We all learn and achieve best in an atmosphere of love and acceptance. Unconditional love must be expressed in words and actions or your child won't know how very much you love and want the best for them.

Additional Resources

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

1-800-273- TALK (8255)

Recommended Reading:

Daring Greatly by Brené Brown, Ph.D., LMSW

Self-Compassion by Kristin Neff, Ph.D.

The 5 Love Languages of Teenagers by Gary Chapman

The Four Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz