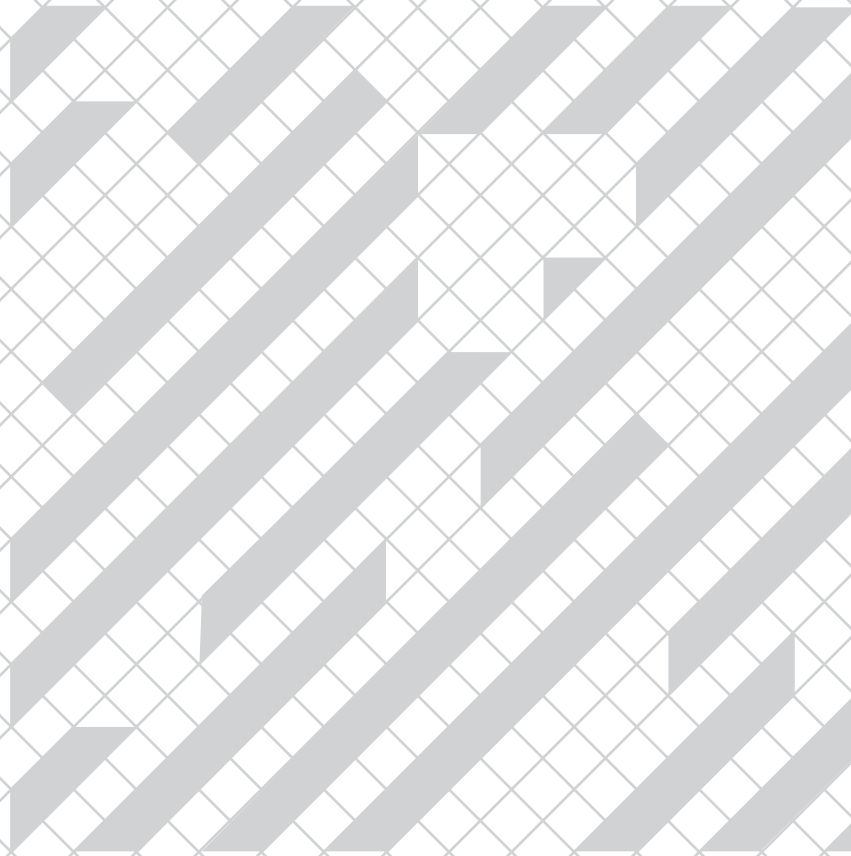


March 2011
Dating and Friendships



Submissions

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

The April topic will be Drinking and Partying. Submissions are due by March 11. If you are interested in sharing your experiences, a submission form may be found online at www.lhsaletheia.org/submit.

Mission

Aletheia, "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, Aletheia was created to facilitate communication and overcome stigmas concerning prevalent and taboo issues within the Lynbrook community. At the beginning of the school year, the staff designates a list of monthly topics pertaining to the realities of high school. Each issue of the publication comprises of firsthand experiences submitted anonymously by Lynbrook students and alumni, professional articles relating to that month's theme, and quotes compiled by the student staff. Finalized newsletters are published into a PDF format. Back issues may be found on our website, under Archives.

The content in Aletheia is composed by the students at Lynbrook High School in San Jose, California. Ideas and thoughts expressed within the publication are not necessarily reflected by the school administration or staff.

This is the second issue of Aletheia. Due to environmental concerns this issue was not distributed in paper form.

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My friends are naturally perfect. Or at least it seems like it. Pretty faces. Above average intelligence. Sociable personalities. Popular with males. And above all, no effort whatsoever.

I'm not jealous. Actually that's a lie. I guess I am jealous. Mostly, I just wish I fit in with them more. They are the girls who get asked to Winter Formal, who get tons of attention. Me? I'm just the boring, unconfident mandatory cockblock friend that all hot girls have.

Sure we're all good friends but sometimes I feel like I am not and never will be truly part of the group. I see their pictures at Winter Formal, beautiful as always, looking like they're having the time of their life.

They're all there together, without me. I will never share these experiences with them. I will always be the boring lame one who lives vicariously through her friends' experiences.

Don't get me wrong, I love my friends to death, but every time I'm with them my self esteem takes a hit and no one is there for me to talk about it. It's not their fault though. They're not bad neglectful friends, I know truly care for me. They just don't understand what it's like to be less than perfect.

"Sometimes you have to get to know someone really well to realize you're really strangers."

- Mary Tyler Moore

I don't really know how I should do this, but here goes.

I've never had that many friends. Even when I was a child in elementary school, I was often picked on by other children. I suppose I submitted myself to the bottom echelon of some sort of status quo. The trivial discrimination I received from the other young children still reflects in the high self-consciousness and low self-esteem I experience today. Even in middle school, things did not change. I hung out with the same clique for years, and I never went outside it. I did not associate myself with others for fear that I was not "cool" enough and they did not need the likes of me hanging around them. In my last year of middle school though, I made a friend that made me feel a little more confident around other people. Even though he does some less-than-honorable things now, I want to thank him for all the help he's given me.

In the beginning of high school, I thought that things had changed for the better. I believe I was still viewed as "weird," but I felt that was okay. I was more confident around other people, and I felt that things had changed. I began hanging out with new sorts of people, and life was grand. It's then that it struck me - I had no real friends. Maybe I didn't paint the whole picture for you, and I'm sorry because it's hard to explain. But quite frankly, I have no friends. I have groups of acquaintances, but I truly feel I have no best friend. It's really quite awkward when people, especially my parents, ask me who my best friend is and I have to honestly admit that I do not know.

"Each friend represents a world in us, a world possibly not born until they arrive, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born."

- Anonymous

I have never met a person who can see through me as well, and as effortlessly (at first anyways) as my S.O. I do believe that is what attracted me to him in the first place. Every moment I look back on how far we have come, I feel like it's a dream. It's unbelievable that I have this person in my life and I feel incredibly lucky for it.

My experiences with him have had a greater impact on me than I wish to admit. I've always felt that relationships should be taken seriously, or else why bother being in one. That's why when I decided to be with him, I meant it with all my heart. I didn't think it was possible to fall in love more, or that I lacked trust in him, or that I was too prideful in terms of our relationship. After months of those feelings, I finally realized how deeply this person cares for me and the extent of how much he looks out for me. He never spares any efforts and constantly succeeds the expectations I claim I do not have. Even if I did have them, he'd always manage to happily surprise me.

I wonder to myself, why did I doubt this person so much? I feel that I have been very independent through my life and didn't want to expose myself to someone else, no matter how much I knew I loved them. But I guess that's what's different about me now. I feel confident to say that being with him has given me

many experiences to mature into a better person. My life changed quite a lot in a short time and I have no regrets. Everything is wonderful as they are.

I understand (or maybe I don't) how idealistic I see the future as, but I do believe that if two people really want to be together, they can work it all out. My relationship keeps me fearless because no matter where I go, I never feel lonely. I'm happy for all the risks and arguments I took for my relationship because it is the best thing that has ever happened to me.

"Friendship is always a sweet
responsibility, never an
opportunity."

- Kahil Gibran

I've been asked out, liked on, asked to dances, but nobody really stood out to me. I don't mean nobody was attractive enough or anything but I had to be captured by someone's personality. And I was. Oh yes, and I still am.

Sadly, this weird insecurity has swallowed me whole. It's. As. If. Everyone. Is. Watching. It's starting to scare the fuck out of me because when you see more than one pair of eyes locked onto you--bad thoughts come into play. I understand if there are those who are jealous--and how it stings—but sometimes I wonder if the boy I selected is even appropriate enough. He's fairly popular, [I find him] attractive, and he's great fun to be around! Oddly enough, I feel like they're all watching. I feel like some of my friends who are "popular" look at me like "Oh...why him?" Does that make sense? Or is it all in my head? Someone please tell me it's all in my head. It'd be nice to be under the veil of anonymity (which is why I'm totally digging this submission) because nobody notices you. I don't know if I've been classified as charismatic because if that were so, I'd be "popular." Sure, I've got friends in that clique, and yeah I'm not some nerd--but I'm not super high on the social scale. I'm not part of that. So WHY are there people looking at me? If something taboo or outrageous has happened to me, they look to me. Even my friends tell me I get more attention than them. Speaking of friends, why do I feel as if they disapprove of this relationship? I feel like gossip is circulating around me JUST BECAUSE I'M HAPPY WITH SOMEONE ELSE. What's the big deal? Whenever a "popular" guy

liked me, all I got was shit for it from the other girls that liked him. I'm pretty damn sure that the people who are staring at us now aren't jealous... they're too vile. But it's developed into this deep paranoia. It's all I think about. "Don't hug me, don't touch me, don't kiss me. They're looking at us." Logically put, they probably AREN'T watching us. Rationally, they're most likely staring at something in our direction. It can't be us. It must not be us. Is love not sacred anymore? Is it not valued? Is it looked down upon? Are we really that shallow? AM I THAT SHALLOW? The question that I should honestly ask myself is... Why do I care? Does it make a difference? I'll still love him at the end of the day. I just don't know why I've inadvertently stopped trying to get out. I hate being seen by "them." What am I trying to prove anyways? I've nabbed a popular guy? I'm popular? We're popular? What exactly is popularity anyways? There's been a sudden shift in my perspective. Consistently seeking safety, trying to hide, I don't want exposure. Why am I downplaying myself? (Heck, I can't even think straight right now. I'm pretty sure this whole paragraph looks like a piece of crap. I sound like a whiny twelve year old, and yet these words are my feelings.) I shouldn't take things too personally... but I do. So please, everyone, just smile. Stop staring. You don't know it's me that's actually worrying I'm being disliked for committing an act of love.

"You have to do it yourself, no one
else will do it for you. You must
work out your own salvation."

- Charles E. Popplestone

What is Love? Yes I know it's a song but I'm being serious right now, Have you ever asked yourself that? I'm the nice guy, the guy that is supposedly the guy that all the girls want, and yet I'm alone. People have told me that I'm ignorant, I'm an ignorant bastard, why you might ask? Apparently girls are hitting on me but I am ignoring them. Who gives me this comment? My sister.... MY SISTER!!!

It doesn't stop there, my mother had a "chat" with me about how I need to grow up. For some reason she feels the need to bring up relationships into the "chat". "You know if you don't call the girl you like the minute you change your plans, she will think you don't care

about her.” Not only was my mom bringing up something that wasn’t really required to be brought up, she also crushed my hope of getting back with a girl. When I’m sad and alone I usually talk to my friends, but because of Feb 14th coming up everyone thinks it’s cool to get into a relationship.

So not only am I sad but I’m single too. Only one person hugged me that day. I’m still sad and single, I’m not using this as a way to make people care for me but it’s just sad. I want someone to love and be with, but no every girl that liked me already made a move on me and I didn’t respond.

Listen.... LISTEN!!!! I don’t want to be that 4% of people in life who die without getting into a real relationship, heck I haven’t even had my first real kiss yet. The farthest I’ve ever gone is holding her hand. Please, if anyone is still reading this I just want you people to understand that dating is hard for me, I do know there are others like me.

“And in the end, the love you take
is equal to the love you make.”

- The Beatles

[Explicit Content]

I remember how we met that summer. I remember everything about that summer. All the long phone calls, all the hang outs, chatting, hugging, How could I forget? We barely knew each other and it seemed like we had been best friends for years. Of course as the story goes I fall for you and you fall for me and everything is happy for a while. But I went behind your back, you trusted me and I lied to you. I lied right to your face and I lead you on. I kept you going until I could finally break the news to you that I had been seeing someone else. You were so dedicated to me and perfect and even when other girls liked you, you stayed faithful to me. You never lied to me and tried to keep me happy. And what did I do? I treated you like s***. I know you probably will never forgive me and I don’t know how to tell you I’m sorry. And that other person I was seeing? Let’s just say douchedouchedouche-douche. The asshole of all f***ing assholes. F***ing c*** ass mother f***ing asswipe bitchface of a son of a mother f***ing bitch.

So this is me swallowing my pride standing in front

of you saying I’m sorry for that night... I’m sorry and I hope we can still be friends. Even though we barely talk anymore I’m going to make an effort to, starting right now.

“It is better to have loved and lost
then never to have loved at all.”

- Anonymous

Alright I have a problem. Many actually but although others still affect me but I think this is the worst problem I have; I’m just too shy. I know that I have many friends and do hang out with the “popular” people but when it comes to making new friends or talking to people I want to talk to (for example girls) I can’t bring my self to start a conversation and continue it without having awkward pauses. That really sucks.

The cause of this problem all started when I moved here. Until elementary school, I lived in another country and was a outgoing social person that was practically a leader, not a follower. Hey, I don’t mean to brag but that was really how it was there. I was the one who everyone knew for being outgoing and I had alot of friends that followed me whenever I went to buy stuff or play outside. Heck I even was a class president few times (we had class president for each homeroom instead of class rep.). But what happened to that me? Well I don’t really know either.

However, the only real reason I can think of is that I came here. When I first moved here, I couldn’t speak any English and the only word I knew was dog and apple. Therefore, I couldn’t talk at all to my peers that spoke English like they were professors (that’s how I thought back then). So naturally, I had no friends and no one was willing to talk to me because I would say random gibberish.

Student A: “Hey new guy! what’s your name? Where are you from?” Me: “Dog apple uhhh cat dog fun poop” :D Student A: ... “okkkk”.

Now as a 9 year old boy, having alot of friends to nada made me crazy depressed. It shocked me so much that I had fears of people talking to me. Luckily, it’s been more than 5 years from then and I can now speak English fine with zero accents or having to substitute my native language instead of a word. That brought some confidence into myself enough to be able to socialize with others. But, that wasn’t enough

to completely overcome it. I remember when I went to a summer camp, it took me about 30 minutes to say hi to a guy that looked nice enough to be friends with. I know real lame right?

And that's not even the tip of the iceberg. Even now, when I try to talk to people (although it doesn't take 30 minutes) I hesitate and sometimes miss my chance. Why hesitate you ask? Well for some reason, when I try to talk, I become very paranoid about not making mistakes like strange accents or grammatical mistakes. Because of that, when my friends are in a group and talk, I usually stay quiet and don't talk unless the spotlight is on me. Because I'm too quiet, I feel that I am not included in groups and feel left out. Well that's great for my little ego.

Those problems hopefully I can overcome slowly but I don't know if I can overcome my shyness toward girls. Now people might think that is normal for most people to feel that way and I think too. But the problem is that I don't or can't talk because I limit my self. Sure when I talk to girls I have no interest in or feels comfortable I can manage a short talk but when I want to talk to my "Targets" my fear kicks in and I feel very awkward. The majority of my fear comes from my fear of talking to people but some also do come from fear of being rejected. Now like few other people, I have been either directly or indirectly been rejected about 5 times 3 of which happened one after another. That really made me sad and forced be to cradle into a ball and hide myself until I overcame it. Still, when I find a new crush, I feel that I'm too boring and quiet for her and stop myself from trying to talk.

In the end, I feel that I'm just too stupid and cowardly to overcome my fear and make better friends and that is true. I know that if I just forget about my mistakes and problems and just be like my cool 8 year old self. But that is harder that it sounds and I wonder now if I can even do it.

"Be courteous to all, but intimate with few, and let those few be well tried before you give them your confidence. True friendship is a plant of slow growth, and must undergo and withstand the shocks of adversity."

- George Washington

Back in middle school, all the boys threw around dirty jokes and whatnot. So it didn't seem unreasonable for me to go into high school with the goal of making 100 people happy. But, much to my surprise, I found that not many people actually did it. On the first day of school, I met a boy (let's call him T). I decided that day to make T my first target. Except...I can't do it. I did all these little things to get close to T, like get a new swimsuit and go see him at his club. But all that's happened so far is an awkward first kiss on Christmas Eve. I ran away from him that day and then we attempted to make out in the park...but now what? I haven't talked to him since forever. I'm not sure if I like him or not. Maybe Valentine's Day will give me the answers I need.

"True friendship comes when silence between two people is comfortable."

- Dave Tyson Gentry

[Explicit Content]

I'm a senior. And yes, I have always been completely fine with dating and friendships. I have nothing against dating or my friends dating, and I have the most wonderful friends that I could ever ask for.

However, my life took a sharp turn about two months ago.

It was Winter Break. I was in San Francisco for the week. I was walking one day at night on mission ave, when out of nowhere, a man grabbed me. I went get into details. But moral of this story. I was raped.

I couldn't feel my face, fingers, or my body. I was shivering, Laying on the sidewalk I felt the world passing me by. I fainted.

I woke up. I was in a hospital. My parents were there. I felt I was beneath rock bottom. I knew what I wanted. Death.

Suicide. Yes. I did indeed think about it. I was 96% ready to kill myself. I had the drugs and I was in my room when out of nowhere, the picture of my god hung in my room fell. Glass pieces fell everywhere. I knew at that moment, God was with me.

Anyway getting back to my Dating/Friendship thing. This incident changed my entire view of dating. Guys disgust me. I know not all of them are like the ones I unfortunately encountered but whenever a guy touches me, I flinch.

I have been in several relationships. All of them ended because I'm either bisexual or that I look creepy. That really offends me because well knowing that I don't get girlfriends/ boyfriends because of how I look. I feel wanted in a relationship. When I'm alone I feel unwanted. I even once got pulled out of the security line in an airport for looking strange. I try to get some sort of relationship but in the rare cases I do, it usually lasts weeks. Even days. The longest was exactly one month.

“When we find someone whose weirdness is compatible with ours, we join up with them and fall into mutually satisfying weirdness- and call it love- true love.”

- Robert Fulghum

The fourth evening of my five-day orchestra camp, I thought about absolutely nothing. It was, after all, the last night, and I was drawn thin by the interminable rehearsals. I did feel lighter, though, freed by my neither pleasant nor unpleasant roommate-friend-acquaintance who had left early, off to breathe air that didn't smell of the neighboring wildfires and eat food that hadn't crossed the country in a refrigerated truck.

“Emily?” I felt Janet, whose roommate had also left early, turn toward me. We were in the auditorium, waiting for the end-of-camp party to release us already. “What are you thinking?” I blinked and refocused my gaze.

“What?” She slanted her eyes at me, as though she suspected I was dodging the question, and repeated, “What are you thinking?”

“Um, nothing.” It took me a moment to collect myself, but then I realized that a cloud of silvery thoughts had glided below my mind's surface only moments before, scattering like minnows the moment another person spoke. I could no more catch them now than I could breathe underwater. All I could think now was that I would not have minded being Janet's roommate, for though we were not intimate friends, I felt that we could be—but I could hardly share that.

She frowned. “You had to be thinking of something.” I had been, I was perfectly certain. I just couldn't recall

about what. There had been a feeling, like sun on water, shadows on a wall—nothing concrete, only liquid and vapor.

I wanted a meaningful answer as much as Janet did, and perhaps I cobbled something together simply to please her. It was possible I was even a little desperate for a real friend at orchestra, someone I actually wanted to share snacks with during break, someone I wanted to save a seat for—I missed that feeling. Most of my longtime friends had quit by now, leaving me with only my unsatisfactory roommate. I knew very keenly what I was missing, having known orchestra when it was filled with people I did not only tolerate. But I had not found anyone I liked as much as I had Gabrielle, who no longer respected me and whom I no longer respected but at one point had been my closest friend. Gabrielle had quit this year, setting aside her violin to focus on school. I could see some of her in Janet, the same qualities that initially attracted me. I thought they attracted everyone. Refined but not necessarily ladylike, she was the one who seemed to dress and act seven years older, an ideal of business-casual elegance. She was the one everyone stopped to listen for when solo auditions rolled around, the one who didn't need to dress up her words because in her smooth alto, we could all hear intelligence. She was the one who most of us would agree had the best expression in our section. I loved her voice, though I could not describe it—something like honey, or stained glass, or the golden haze of sunrise. I wanted her to talk to me.

We walked back to our dorms together in the dark, trailing far behind the giggly crowd. They took the stairs, while we followed the trail through the woods, talking only when a thought struck one of us. Neither of us seemed to have developed the need to entertain near-strangers constantly yet. The silence was ominous among the trees but comfortable, even familiar under the streetlights. I was glad to have someone like me at my side, not hanging on my elbow, but nearby. I had forgotten this feeling, this getting to know another person. I remembered only faintly being strangers to Gabrielle. Our connection had been visceral, a gut intensity, and so I still cried when I remembered we were connected no more; we were both alone again; whatever had been between us was a brilliant star that had now gone out forever. So I tried very hard with Janet, fumbling to lead someone into my mind without thrusting her straight into its depths and simultaneously trying to apprehend her mind as well. I did my

best to present my ideas slowly, coherently, diluted but still potent so that she would be able to understand. But what I said was nothing more than drivel, grandiose and sweeping yet empty upon a second glance. I posed for her with a peacock's vanity, and she, the not-so-homely female, was instinctively wise enough to evaluate a foolish suitor with an impartial eye. I returned to her initial question again and again, trying to answer but only digressing in ever-widening loops, until I lost even myself in my endless rambling. She twisted her mouth in puzzlement. Her questions were still earnest, but now there was an edge to her words, a biting impatience. Why can't you be sensible? She was asking the question for both of us. Perhaps I should have begged off and gone home early, too. My skull felt hollow and ringing with fatigue; I was in no shape to make an impression. As we headed up the final incline that would lift us out of the woods, silence wrapped around us. We no longer walked shoulder to shoulder. As we emerged from the trees, threading around a dumpster to return to the main road, I wondered, could she understand? I was afraid to ask. I couldn't invite in that unknown, couldn't risk hearing the answer and losing what I thought was a fairytale meant-to-be. On the ground, puddles winked with reflected light, and the air smelled like rain from the evening sprinklers. Janet turned to look at me again. "I don't know you." I stopped. She didn't know me?

We had attended orchestra together for a few years now, both of us first violins, and I had made friendly overtures but had been too shy to say much more. Left in each other's company by our respective roommates, however, the click had been perfect, the mutual—or at least I hoped it was—respect reassuring. We could be best friends, I thought, if only we saw each other more often. I would have loved to have spent all day at her house on the weekends, analyzing good literature or conjugating Latin verbs, never mind that neither of us even studied Latin. She could have built projects for science fairs with me in my garage. We could have gone camping during spring break and swatted mosquitoes at barbecues over the summer, could have started a lifetime of friendship. She could have been my salvation, and I hers, the way Gabrielle and I had been— But she was right. I didn't know her either. All I had was an idea of who she might be. "I wasn't trying to shut you out," I said rather lamely, my one last attempt at a proper response. "Your question was just so straightforward—I don't know, I don't try to get to know people like that. It shocked me."

"Then how do you get to know people?"

I grimaced. I didn't know myself well enough to say. Maybe in three years I would have put in enough hours self-psychoanalyzing to glibly explain my inner mind, to have a whiplash response to such a probing question. For now, I had to struggle simply to catch sight of a minnow, let alone capture the actual fish. My mind was an infinite dark pool that I could not yet swim. The thoughts at the surface—the thoughts here—are fiercely conscious efforts, inorganic in their construction. The subconscious, however, must eventually rise to the surface in little bubbles of idea, or as fish that leap and flash before disappearing underwater once more. I looked carefully for them as Janet watched me, waiting. A streetlamp flickered to my left. I heard the burble and chatter of people on the other side of the dorms, but here the two of us were, and for all that I could see exactly where we stood, I could no more pinpoint her in the oceans of our minds than I could my own subconscious thoughts.

*names modified

"You know you're in love when you
can't fall asleep because reality is
finally better than your dreams."

- Dr. Seuss

Friends. Friends. Friends.
Where would I be in this world without them? I didn't have many friends in high school. To clarify, I didn't have many close friends. I was what you called a 'drifter.' Without a set group of individuals, I often felt out of place and out of touch. Although I knew it wasn't true, it was almost some sinister form of affirmation of all my insecurities. Hell, this is difficult to even write about right now as each admission of my past is another barb that is shoved into my mental state. But hey, this is how people heal right? First step to solving a problem is admitting you had one and all that. And damn, did that take a while. It was long before I realized and came to terms with my inability to interact with others. I was awkward, insecure and immature. Not a good combination if you wanted to be socially accepted. But then a wonderful, amazing girl came along and lifted me out of that slum. The slum of

social ineptitude. She didn't know it, and maybe still doesn't really fully grasp how profoundly she changed my life. But damn, without her, I would've never been able to admit all this that haunted me in my bed as I crept towards sleep. With her support, care and love I slowly came out of my shell of insecurity and expanded my horizons. I matured, developed and eventually changed myself almost altogether. I have close friends now with whom I know how to interact with. Rejection no longer hurts as deeply. Life no longer feels as pointless. I haven't shrugged it all off, but at least I'm no longer smothered in the depression.

So all in all, friends are a lifesaver. True friends, which I have had the good fortune to encounter, stick by you through thick and thin. She gave me the power to grin. No matter whether I'm riding life's crests or troughs, she has the power to make me glow. I'm glad to have found her and her me.

"Friendship improves happiness, and abates misery, by doubling our joys, and dividing our grief."

- Joseph Addison

Dating and friendship, the 2 most powerful connections people in high school have. There are countless friends, but which of those friends would actually be willing to stick with you until the end? Most people would define friendship as people have things in common. That alone will not sustain a real friendship. A real friend accepts you for just the way you are. Would your friend still hang out with you if you stopped wearing make-up, wore plain raggedy clothes, or changed? I remember I wore my P.E. clothes and approached my "friend", and he told me to back-off because it would be embarrassing to be seen with such an uncool person.

Just recently I met some true friends online, and they both mean and nice. I consider them more of a friend than any other friend I've made personally. The main difference between these two are that one knows when enough is enough, and the other is blind to read the atmosphere, and it pains one to look uncool. True friends stick with you till the end, no matter what. Dating on the other hand is special. I've seen count-

less stories and dates, but never have I seen a couple without make-up, and pretty clothes out in public. I personally have never had a girlfriend, and I am proud of that. I look for a girlfriend with the intent to marry them and start a family. But some people just have girlfriends for fun, and break up and toss them aside like a used kleenex. I take french 4H, and we read The Little Prince, and there was a quote which said "true beauty is invisible". That meant a lot to me because just the day before I was with a group of people and I overheard a girl talking. She says she was on the verge of getting a new job so she could earn money. She proudly said she was of course going to spend it on clothes.

On top of that she also wears make-up, and tries to have a great social life. The reason why most people have relationships on and off, is because of the lack of commitment and going for a relationship based on looks, over personality. It disgusts me to hear or see people only care about their physical beauty. A true relationship starts from the heart, and makes it their foundation, while loving them for both their weaknesses and strengths. When looking for a relationship and you happen to notice his or her looks first, they are not worth it.

"You can always tell a real friend:
when you've made a fool
of yourself he doesn't feel
you've done a permanent job."

- Laurence J. Peter

He has his hands in his pockets, and the hook of his left elbow seems to invite me to tuck my hand into its corner, to take his arm and let him lead me. But we are only friends, after all. Very good friends, but no more than that. And yet this urge is in me, to lay my hand on his arm, to lean against his shoulder, to be charming for him. It's a chilly February morning, the sky steely and unsympathetic. I could complain that my hands are cold and cling to his arm for warmth. I could. His jacket looks soft, all fleece and synthetic fuzz. I could say that I just want the feeling against my skin. Or I could say nothing at all and merely smile. We keep walking. Eventually, I tuck my hands in my pockets, too.

"Truly great friends are hard
to find, difficult to leave,
and impossible to forget."

- Anonymous

The most beautiful discovery true friends make is that they can grow separately without growing apart. ~Elisabeth Foley

Friendship is a really complex thing, but I think you already know that. But to me, it seems much more complex than usual for I have to be two very different kinds of people for two very different kinds of friends. Group the First. They are an highly intelligent and motivated species, the ones who read textbooks for fun (although there is nothing wrong with that, I maintain!), who win national science math and everything else championships, whose houses are probably filled with awards after awards after awards, and whose sports skills are impeccable.

Group the Second. Compared to Group the First, not very smart but ten times as affable, amiable, and well...admirable - and that's just the As. They work very hard at school and are happy with a B (for once!) and they talk about whole loads of things, like drama and after school sports and K-pop and so on. I like them; they are nice.

I am not saying that these groups are mutually exclusive, far from it...but from the way I see it, it might seem so. In my school, I seem like a conduit, if you will. These two groups of friends, while nice to each other but do not really associate with each other, are like two opposite river banks and me the bridge between them. So its quite hard pretending to be smart to perhaps gain acceptance into one group and pretending to be genuinely interesting and random for the next.

It hurts at first, but after two years here I have gotten used to it. I have gotten used to it after I was used and manipulated by a girl who was using me for her own needs. I have gotten used to it when my real friends comforted me after I got a bad grade. I have gotten used to it when I had so much fun filming scenes for several French skits.

Yes, Elisabeth Foley was right when she said that true friendships could -and ought - to grow apart.

Not at this extant, though.

No matter what I do, who I hang out with, or who I talk to, it seems that I'm always left out. Whenever my friends call me and ask if I would like to hang out, it seems cruel and unusual that they call at a time that I tend to be available. Is it really my fault that my parents don't let me hang out before 3 PM? I can't change their minds. In their opinion, I'm wasted with no potential. Arguing that allowing a few more hours of freedom from their iron grip is a lost cause in itself. Instead of hanging out with my friends, I am forced to stay at home while they enjoy themselves, take plenty of pictures, and cultivate new inside jokes amongst themselves that when asked as to the meaning of the joke, their perpetual response is, "You had to be there." They have this belief that I would much rather stay at home doing my homework instead of go the park or the movies with them. Sometimes, they don't even call me. I find out via Facebook that they've been hanging out without me. And what does that make me feel like? It makes me feel like s***. S*** they tossed to the side of the street and forgot about and accidentally stepped on. Why is it so hard to include me in these things? Am I unlikeable? Do they have a problem with me? If any of that is true, why can't they tell me to my face? They have no idea what it's like coming to school everyday, trying to find a niche which you can occupy and call your own, i.e. to be accepted, only to find out that the people who you call your friends are becoming even more tight-knit without you. I hate being the last one to be kept in the loop, if they even remember to keep me in the loop. It sucks. And the worst part is, it's an endless cycle of frustration and pain.

"In prosperity our friends know us, in
adversity we know our friends"

- John Churton Collins

Everyone has that elementary or middle school crush, you see that pretty guy or girl go by and you feel like the world is spinning around. Your heart gets beating faster and you feel a new type of sensation you ordinarily haven't felt in the past. My experience with a crush I've had for a long time is a similar one to many of you reading this. My friends and I were

just walking around in the middle school campus talking about the most pointless things, such as our maplestory characters, new games, and etc. It was then that I just happened to pass by this incredibly attractive girl and wanted to find out her name. After school I searched a LONG time to find her on Myspace (which was popular at the time) and really just went around reading her profile and info(yes, very stalker like). I found out what an interesting girl she was and was completely attracted. So, what happens next? I ask her out, and she rejects me flat out, almost way too harshly. I had a friend tell me later she laughed at how this ugly guy with acne, horrible hair, and who looked like a pile of s** asked her out. It was offensive really, but I didn't want to give up so easily and did all sorts of things to try to impress her. I bought the "in" clothes, got myself into athletic teams, worked even harder on academics and the end process? To make a long story short, I pretty much got used by her and then after I got used, she just vanished.

When I look back now, I see that the emotional pain has made me grow as a person and she really made me into who I am today. It may sound cheesy, but I'm not sure if I would be so self confident about myself and appeased from the desires, I would originally have, without the pain she gave me. I deserve better and I know that rejection from one girl isn't everything. I know I have value and I'm always proud to be who I am.

"Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down."

- Oprah Winfrey

Dear S,
I miss it. I really do. And it may not have seemed like it at first. But I guess I was just confused and upset or something. After giving it time though, I realized I miss it with all my heart.

Months went by without words. I tried to start up a conversation on chat after that long time but I only got a couple replies from you followed by you logging off without a goodbye. I tried again a couple times afterwards only to get the same results. I really felt rejected

at that point, like you had completely moved on from me, to the point where I wasn't even good enough to be your friend anymore.

All I'm trying to get at here is I miss having you. I miss having someone to always talk to or text. Someone that would always keep conversations going and had the same sense of humor as me. Someone that knew me better than anyone else and was with me through everything I did and was always at my side. Someone I was able to look forward to through hellish practices and make them bearable. Someone to fight for during matches. Someone that kept me optimistic.

Even though there's probably no chance of a part 2 for us, I just want you to know I dearly miss having that someone and that I will never find a someone that is the same.

Love,
Me

"Are we not like two volumes
of one book?"

- Marceline Desbordes-Valmore

Sometimes I wish I could be more honest.
I think sometimes if I had been more honest I could have changed things. I could've had a chance to go out with the person I fell in love with eight months later. Too late for that, eh?

As a child I was rather independent. I didn't think I needed anyone. When all my friends were absent one day I just played by myself and went about my business as usual. Relationships were stupid, I thought. Why invest all that time on a bond that'll eventually, sometime, somehow get broken? I should work on bettering myself instead.

I went to middle school and my opinion changed little, but it started to waver as I observed one such couple in my midst and saw how peaceful they looked just talking to each other. Living in the moment. I questioned myself then--had I just been delusional? Did every person really need "the one", that supposed other half? Was everyone just kidding themselves because they were hormonal and going through puberty? I decided yes, they were just kidding themselves.

I came to Lynbrook. My first day in a certain subject I was the only one who got lost finding the room because I was the only freshman. So, I realized, I

knew no one. In another certain subject it was a bit better because there were a few underclassmen, but not all. Why say this? Both classes had one person in common, and it was that person I befriended in spring, and it was that person who shared everything with me but I told nothing. Because no one needed to know my secrets. There were only little tidbits I let slip, and those weren't important, and I essentially refused to answer anything even slightly personal. I didn't think I was ever romantically attracted to this person. It didn't hit me until May when they confided in me certain things and I realized I cared more than anyone else at the time about this person.

Spring felt like molasses. Every second I spent talking to this person felt like an entire day in peace. But June through August, we don't talk at all. I felt almost relieved, like I could just throw this away and never think about this again. I felt like I was betraying my child self, who would have never thought twice about another person in this way. Yet come the new school year we share a class and lo and behold, sit next to each other to boot. And so the cycle restarted. And again the next day. And again, because natural flirts seem to like doing that to people. And again, until now when I've tried to fall out of love (because as cheesy as it is I genuinely think this is how I felt) and the past autumn and winter have basically screwed me over, threw me into a washing machine and hung me out to dry. 'Course, I'm not nearly that weak, so I've forced myself to not look at the person or speak with the person anymore. Except they've decided to do that first.

Biter.

Here I sit, foot numb because I always crush it underneath my other leg. I decide, and this is where I stand, that yes, I am just kidding myself.

"The language of friendship is not words but meanings."

- Henry David Thoreau

Being in a relationship as the same time as your best friends have it's benefits, but to be honest I know that it makes my relationship more negative. Both of my best friends are in a relationship and I can't help but compare my relationship with theirs. It's hard not to, I mean what do you expect? I'm jealous whenever something good about her boyfriend pops up

and I ask myself why can't we be like that? I know I'm probably the worst best friend in the world for saying this, but I can't wait until you break up with him. I know that you guys are going to last a while, but I just want the old you back. I hate the you when you're in a relationship. You're so attached to him and it's like you can't live for five seconds without him.

It's really sad and I miss the old independent you. Spending time with your girls doesn't seem important to you anymore, and I feel like I've been replaced in your life. I hope I'm not just the back up friend that you hang out with when you need someone. Because it's been such a long time since we've had a legitimate phone call. I always always always always put you in front of my boyfriend, but to you he always comes first. I guess best friends grow apart but what happened to chicks before dicks? No matter how much you push me away I'm always going to be here for you even when he breaks your heart. He might not stay around but I will. Your whole world revolves around him, and I'll be there for you when your world falls apart.

Because that's what best friends are for right?

"What is a friend? A single soul dwelling in two bodies."

- Aristotle

I've heard about something called hyperdating. Hyperdating is when you completely shut out your friends once you are involved in a relationship. In sophomore year, one of my best friends was involved in a serious relationship with another in our class. Initially, it was exciting to hear about all of the cute things that they had done, especially because my friend was always in a happy mood. Like all relationships, however, there were the occasional fights and disputes. I comforted her and listened to her because, well, that is what friends do. I didn't console her out of obligation. Everything was just fine. But after a while, it became a routine, a monotonous drill that occurred every single week. It was just the same thing over and over again. The same stories, the same fights, the same resolutions. It reached the point where my friend's moods fluctuated depending upon her relationship with her boyfriend. If I ever had problems, I knew I would no longer be able to rely on her because of her constant mood swings. Everything pretty much went downhill

from then on out, even after the relationship between my friend and her ex-boyfriend ended. To this day, I don't think she's realized the reason why we've drifted apart. It was not because of our drastically different schedules in junior year or changes in our personalities. It was because I realized that, if she were ever to be in a relationship again, I would be a second priority, an afterthought. Relationships undoubtedly take a toll on the strength of friendships. I can fully see how it's difficult to balance a relationship with a friendship, but it's definitely possible. There are no hard feelings between me and my friend after these years, but my friend's previous relationship is a reminder of a time when I was entirely pushed aside for the sake of another. I've found that I've naturally been more unsure and iffy about even hanging out with her. I don't think that I would ever want to be that close with her again in case something like this happens again. We're still good friends, but the circumstances have changed. I guess you could say that the love is no longer unconditional.

**"It is easier to forgive an enemy
than to forgive a friend."**

- William Blake

When I was younger, my best friend went out with the love of my life. I was 11. And that experience ruined me emotionally. Even though I didn't give any hints to either of them about my real feelings, and that those feelings only really surfaced after they started going out, I still felt profoundly betrayed.

Because of my "best friend" f***ing me over I don't feel comfortable opening myself up and extending my emotions.

In the past couple of years I have attempted relationships. I really have. But it hurts so bad when I see the same thing happen all over again...my new best friend gets buddy buddy with the girl I love and I am blocked out of her life. She gets other boyfriends and I try to show her how much I love her. I really f***ing tried. That guy was no good...I tried to help. He deserved a punch in the face. Not that he got one...I just wanted to look manly in front of her.

I pretty much gave up on her - let's call her "X" - a few months ago, and have since moved onto friend. I think she's different...she actually sees past my flaws to my personality. I even went to winter formal with her.

She kinda ignored me the whole night and flinched every time I tried to dance with her or speak to her, but it still shows progress right? Let's call *her* "Y".

She tried to distract me from my real love. We dated for a couple weeks, kinda, but only because I was so messed up at the time and didn't know what I really wanted. I broke up with her though because I can't really handle anything right now. My life is pretty intense at the moment. Maybe things will get better.

*Names have been changed to ensure anonymity

**"Be honest, brutally honest. That is
what's going to maintain relationships."**

- Lauren Hill

I don't know what to say when comforting someone over love. I'm honestly really bad at comforting people in general, but dating or whatever this stuff is - is really a blind spot for me. I don't understand what it means to want someone so bad that you cry over it when you get rejected. Am I heartless, for the fact that I have never had a crush? Sure, I may think someone is interesting or feel awkward around someone - a little embarrassed, but I can't imagine kissing anyone and enjoying it. I doubt that I'm asexual because I still have lust, but honestly, I can't understand anything outside of family love. What is it with crushes anyway? From what I gather, it starts out because of their appearance. I'm not saying that appearances don't matter, but honestly, with people that have multiple crushes - they usually don't care in the end. You cry once, you get over it.

You probably didn't even know that guy well enough. No one knows what someone's really like inside, or what things they do everyday unless you hang out with them all the time. So what is with these "crushes"? I can't respond whenever someone says something like, "Oh - that guy looks sooo hot!" (and vice versa). Maybe I'm missing something, but I'm a horrid person who thinks mostly everyone looks average to ugly until I like their personality. I don't fall for movie stars. I don't fall for anyone, and maybe I'm missing something out because of that. In my future, my dreams are to be a successful person with a clean apartment and a job I can enjoy (maybe that's asking

too much), but I don't see myself with a special someone. To be honest, I'm really weird - I dislike babies. I think some animal babies are cute, but human babies - I just have an empty spot for. I can't react whenever people are fawning over those creatures that I can't stand to touch until they're around first grade.

My sister got dumped over summer break, or rather she dumped her boyfriend. But she still cried, because they broke up over a test she gave him. She had wanted him to say that he didn't want to break up, because he really loved her (or something of that equivalent sap-piness). She cried and cried, and felt like crap over the entire break. And I felt really useless, because if there's one person I can really be myself around, it's her. I felt like I couldn't help her at all, because I suck at consoling people and uh just I don't understand person to person love. I kept saying the same things over, like "oh, I'm sure you'll find someone better" but I really wanted to do MORE than that. What do you say when these things happen? ...and then afterwards she got back together with him. To be honest, I feel like my greatest friend - my sister, is being taken away from me because of her boyfriend. I've moved around a bit in my life, and I don't have very much time with her (especially now that she's in college). But I don't think she likes me the same way I like her. Although I don't understand "true" love, I understand family love, and I can say that I really really really love her, if she's not the most important person to me. Inside, around my family, I'm really clingy, so I'm always trying to hug her or something, or hold her hand, but she feels awkward with that type of stuff and always tells me to get off. I know that she's not into the touchy feely type of thing - but what really gets to me is that she can do all of that (+ kissing and more) with her boyfriend no trouble at all. I feel like I've lost in a certain way, and that her boyfriend gets special rights. I don't understand at all, I don't get it. What is true love anyway? Does it mean putting someone you don't-even-know-if-you're-gonna-spend-the-rest-of-your-life-with-because-you're-kind-of-only-in-college over your family members? I once asked my mom, when she had an obsession over a guy (mental illness): "who would you pick, me or him?"

Which is kind of a crude question, but I really wanted her to give him up (oh wait, mental illnesses aren't that easy). She said that you couldn't compare the two. But what if you /are/ in a situation where you have to choose one? Does it depend on your mood? Sometimes, I imagine myself or some-

one like my sister or mom or dad picking between a family member and the one they /love/. I'm confident about my dad picking me, and my mom's illness got treated - but back when she had it, I don't know what she or my sister would have chosen. I would like to think that they would choose me. Love isn't supposed to be something that can be measured, but I do it all the time. I know I love my sister the most, then my dad, and my mom. If I had to choose someone to live (morbid situation), then I would go in exactly that order (if I couldn't sacrifice myself for the three of them). My mom's illness showed me the horrible side of love, but before that happened I was already stunted. These emotions have never been /in/ me, and I had already decided this stuff from 5th grade. I remember when I was younger, I would fake having a crush so I wouldn't be abnormal. What is love? Do I want to experience it? I read tons of girly romance mangas, and I like the sap-py story lines and how it's all generic and happy ending and cutesy, but I don't think I would want that in real life. Maybe a part of me wants to, while the other part knows that it's so much better if I don't. I /especially/ do not see the point of falling in love in high school or college for that matter, because everyone goes their separate ways and then your relationship is over. I also think it's really stupid to fight your friend over a certain someone you like, because friends are so much better in the end. Friends over love interests is how I view it. People say I'm lucky because I don't have to experience the sadness of love, but if that's so I'd at least like to be able to comfort someone properly.

"Each relationship nurtures a strength or weakness within you."

-Mike Murdock

I wonder why it is that we stopped talking to each other? We didn't even get in a fight. It's as if some outer force grabbed an invisible knife and severed the ties between us. The friendship we had back then no longer exist. What's the most shocking to me is how sudden it was. We talked everyday, then you just stopped talking back. During this period of time, I took the initiative to start a conversation. However, you would simply blow me off with a one word reply. Since when did we become so distant? We used to be so intimate. Sharing each

others secrets, talking to each other on the phone, waving enthusiastically in the hallways, hanging out after school...

Why did it have to stop? Why did this sudden change have to arrive?

You just stopped waving back to me or even waving at all. I try not to give up on you, but it's hard. It hurts. To look for you in a sea of people, only to see you turn your back on me.

They say that friendship is one of the strongest bonds in the world. Why did it break so easily for us? Won't you talk to me again?

"Don't smother each other.
Nothing can grow in the shade."

- Leo Buscaglia

[Explicit Content]

Hands, A Promise

I have never been in a relationship in my life. There, I said it.

Cue the gasps of shock.

Is it even possible to be 16 and single? Isn't this supposed to be the spring of our youth, or some crap like that?

I can't be in a relationship. I don't fear guys at all, and all my friends know how I go woozy for some specific guys, but not even my closest friends know why I'm so reluctant to become physically close with a boy.

Even my parents have questioned me, asking me why I so emphatically refuse their requests for me to go out on dates like a "typical teenager."

Warning: This next scene may contain explicit content, parental supervision suggested.

When I was about five, my mother invited her friend and her two children to stay over at our house. One was a girl, aged eleven, and a boy, aged nine.

The girl took one bed, the boy and I shared another in our own room. The sleeping arrangement was apparently decided when the boy took a look at me and begged to sleep with me. His sister kicked too much, he claimed, and snored like a pig. His doting mother, never one to refuse her little boy, persuaded me into agreeing. My mother, too, saw nothing wrong in the situation. So I adapted to it with little protest; after all,

what could I say?

The very night of their arrival, the boy turned and whispered to me, asking if I wanted to play with him. I asked what we could play at night, and he said not to worry, he would take care of it.

The next thing I knew, he had shoved a small wriggling hand down the front of my pants, fumbling with foreign body parts. I had never felt anyone's touch there before and tried to gasp, but he muffled my mouth and assured me that we were going to have lots of fun. He said it so conspiratorially, like we were both partners in crime.

He worked clumsily at my pants and nightshirt until I was left trembling naked under the covers, at the mercy of his hands.

After that, my memory of that night becomes an out of body experience. I can't remember anything now but those hands. Those hands, on some nights, would fondle the area between my legs, on others, would run over my undeveloped chest.

After each of our "games," I would silently put my clothes back on, and he would make me promise not to tell. On my mother's life, I swore not to tell. You promise? he would ask. I promise, I would reply. The next morning, we were best friends, sharing a secret. I went to school and felt superior to those who had not played our game. I always dreaded those nights, but afterwards felt some relief that it was over, like receiving a shot. And after I got my shot, I was wiser and more mature than my peers.

The games continued for five months, until I was almost six. Then he moved, and a part of my life moved on without me ever telling anyone. I went through elementary school and middle school as a relatively normal child, if a bit shy. Until the day we began learning about sex, I never once questioned the innocence of those games. What I learned shocked me, yet did not come as a complete surprise. I retreated further into my emotional shell, while outwardly presenting myself as a loud and generally confident individual.

Up until now, I have masked my fear of intimacy with the well-practiced art of self-deprecation. When I realized not long ago that the belittling comments I made about myself made people laugh, I turned it into a profitable career. My pain becomes joy, my tears became pain.

So when you ask me why I don't want to dance, or why I don't want to go on a date, I might smile and make a self-disparaging remark. But really, I can't tell you why. I made a promise.

I hate it when they ask that question, because I know exactly what their reactions will be. "Where does your girlfriend go to school?" "UC Riverside."

If they're nice people, they politely smile and mask their contempt with a simple "Oh".

If they're not, I've gotten many skeptical "Really?"s and even a "Oh, thought you would've gotten someone smarter. Like someone who goes to MIT or something. Heck, I didn't even apply to Riverside."

To the latter people, I don't think you understand how goddamn hurtful that is. She makes me laugh, makes me the happiest I've ever been in this bulls** world of getting 5's on AP exams and angsting over B+ borderlines. She studies way more than I do, hours during breaks, trying to transfer into a more socially acceptable college so that I don't have to put up with that shaming people give me.

And seriously, if you're using the same filter that the college admissions board uses to find your significant others, you're going to be completely and utterly screwed.

"Attraction is not a choice."

- David DeAngelo

I know I made a mistake, but I thought everyone deserved a second chance. Instead, you simply befriend someone else that obviously wasn't there for you last year like I was. That just goes to show how multifaceted you are. Everyone sees you as this cute little child that is nice to everyone. But you're not. I hate how you take advantage of me. Constantly asking me for my work so you can "compare" answers. What's more, is that you only talk to me when you need my work. I remember when we used to have completely random conversations for hours, not mentioning school AT ALL. What's changed? I know the workload is heavier, but that doesn't give you the right to stop putting effort into your friendships.

I also hate how you use your looks to manipulate everyone. I know you're cute and irresistible and all that, but don't over do it. So many guys have liked you, and you know it. Yet you continue to toy with their feelings, leading them on, when you know they have no chance with you. Who the hell do you think you are? Quit be-

ing such a superficial bitch. One day, those guys are going to see you for who you really are: a manipulative coquette.

What I hate the most, though...is the way you move onto someone new whenever a person close to you makes a mistake, like me. Like I said, I know I made a mistake, which hurt your feelings, but I've incessantly apologized to you. Words can't compensate for the drift that I've caused, but I know you know that I really am sorry for what I did to you. Except now the tables have turned. You're taking revenge on me so I can experience what you felt. I'm not saying I don't deserve it, but this endless cycle of mistreating those you love won't fix anything.

I know it's not very conspicuous, but I still care a lot about you. I try to act like nothing's happened to us, talking to you as often as I can, but it's not working. You're busy off with your new "best friend", linking arms, having inside jokes, and walking off around the school. I've tried telling you my feelings, how it makes me so jealous. You apologize, but your word shave no emotion, so I know they're just useless words. Whoever is reading, let me tell you this: all those over blogged tumblr posts about friendship, is complete and utter bulls**. Don't put effort into a relationship that has no chance of revival. If a friend is treating you like crap, take it in stride and move on. Don't even bother looking back, because once you do, you'll be pulled back in. Don't put the people that put you 2nd, as your 1st.

"Fear makes strangers of people who would be friends."

- Shirely MacLaine

About a year ago, I began a new job. I made lots of friends and developed some great skills, including the ability to distinguish between the fake friends and the ones that will be with you till the end, thanks to one girl, unparticular.

The day we met, I was doing great. My shift liked me. I liked them. I was picking up on their jokes. I wasn't the new girl anymore. I was getting better at the job. I was chatting up the customers and making friends with the important people. I had finally found a place where I belonged and fit in. I was supposed to be teaching her. Showing her the ropes. Little did

I know she would use everything I taught her against me. Right from the start, she had the upper hand. She looked like a Barbie doll. She was tall, curvy, and blonde. She had perfect skin and blue eyes. She had a boyfriend. She had money. She had stories. She had a way of charming boys to do her bidding. She was a hard worker and a fast learner. She was a kiss-up, and immediately, we were friends.

But as the weeks progressed, we grew apart. We both ignored it. We didn't let it get in the way of our work. When I finally had to leave for good, she didn't say goodbye. She didn't look me in the eye. Not even a nod. That was the moment that I realized that every look she ever gave me, every compliment, every sour punch straw she shared with me, none of that meant anything. It was insincere. We were never friends. Our relationship was built on jealousy, not trust. Her constant need to dominate in everything she did. She had to be prettier than me. She had to have more boyfriends than I did. She had to finish her job faster than me. She had to have more money in her wallet than I did. She had to have gone to some party the night before with all of her older friends while I stayed home. It was impossible to emerge from her shadow. I wasn't me. I was just [insert name]'s friend. And when it came down to it, I wasn't even that.

The most important thing in a relationship is what it's built on. For instance, if you have a relationship built on trust; it's bound to last a long time, if not forever. Trust will provide a strong base that will hold it up through the toughest of times. Unfortunately, we will have very few relationships like this in our lives and we're lucky when we stumble across one.

"An insincere and evil friend is more to be feared than a wild beast; a wild beast may wound your body, but an evil friend will wound your mind."

- Buddha

I see you flirting with her all the time. You know that I like you, and you still flirt with her right in front of my face. It sucks to be in all the classes that you two have together because I feel like killing myself everytime I see you with her. We used to be friends though, best friends in fact. Now were just strangers

that occasionally say hi to each other, and pretend like nothing ever happened between us. Why do you have to put me through all this bulls***?

I know people change and these things happen, but I remember how it was back then.

I wish things could just go back to the way they were, I loved you. I still do.

"Don't cry for a man who's left you, the next one may fall for your smile."

- Mae West

I hate being your friend because you're so f***ing perfect. I don't even like standing next to you because I know I look fatuglystupid around you. You're so unhateable because you're so real and nice to everyone, and you're really funny too. How can someone be so perfect? Skinny, smart (freshman in algebra 2/trig), funny, outgoing, dresses nicely, friendly, a guy magnet too. I don't even want to talk about how many guys like you. You don't even have to try to get guys, they just flock towards you. It doesn't just apply to all the freshmen, a ton of upperclassmen like you too.

The worst part is that you're so down to earth. You're not fake, and you don't brag about anything. I can tell you're honestly sad when you find out another guy likes you. Why do I have to try so hard to only achieve nothing? I have to watch my weight and count all the calories that I eat. Of course, you're a size 0 can eat anything you want. I get compliments sometimes from people who genuinely think I'm pretty. When they tell me that, it means the world to me because I honestly don't picture myself as pretty or beautiful in anyway. And when I'm in the bathroom with you, I look at my face then yours and I feel like crying.

I wish I was as perfect as you. I strive to be you, even though I know I should just be myself. It's hard not being as amazing as you are you know? Everyone wishes they could attract the guys you attract. They're all the top of the top cutest of the cute. The jokes you crack they're funny as hell too. What girls would do to be you.

Even though I just met you this year, I'm already trying to be you. Something that I'm not. But in high school, being you is the ultimate goal.

Late one night, while my friend and I were having a sleepover she confessed to me that out of all our friends, she feels most comfortable confiding in me. I was really happy to hear her say this, and noticed that all of my friends give me the inside scoop and share how they feel with me. I'm not quite sure why I'm so easy to talk to, but I'm glad that they feel comfortable sharing with me.

Lately though, I've been having some issues, and to make a long story short, I literally feel like my whole world's falling apart. I make myself so stressed and so upset that I ache all over. I cry on a daily basis, and yet when I get to school I put on a smile, and laugh with my friends. I wish I could get these things off my chest, but I don't share my feelings with anyone. I don't know how to. I never talk to my family members, even growing up I felt that I could "walk off" feelings the way you "walk off" an injury. Knowing that all of your friends can confide in you is great, sure, but what's the point if you end up in an empty room, crying yourself to sleep?

"Friendship is a balance. Both parties must partake in the giving and receiving."

- Anonymous

I thought that I had a special connection with you. Sure, we weren't BFFs, but I thought we could have been if we spent more time together. There has always seemed to be someone else that was more important in your life than friends, though. A significant other, one after another after another.

Acknowledging your faults won't help unless you make an effort to change them. I've always been pretty patient, but people get tired. I got tired of waiting. I got tired of putting you first while you put me second, third, or perhaps, last. You said that friends are supposed to be there for each other through thick and thin, time and time again. Would you have done that for me? Friendship should be mutual. If one person is trying harder to maintain the friendship than the other, then that person will be the one losing and the one who gets hurt. If, like you said, our friendship does happen to reignite when the time is right, it will never be the same again. I don't know why I've held on to you for so long, knowing that our friendship didn't

matter much to you. I'm glad we ended it today... it seemed almost like an official breakup to confirm our breach. Friendships naturally come and go; they should not be hard to maintain. To everyone in a non-mutual friendship/relationship: you don't have to try any more than the other friend does (unless you desperately want to keep the friendship). You deserve just as much dignity as they do.

"A good friend can tell you what is the matter with you in a minute. He may not seem such a good friend after telling."

- Arthur Brisbane

High school dating. What is the one truth that we know about young relationships? They won't last. Right? Wrong. Why do we think this way? Maybe because we are in that transitional period from teenager to adult, we have too much to think about. Or maybe because other couples never last. But is that true? I feel like we rely too much upon this stereotype, this accepted norm that young relationships always come to an end. Perhaps it stems from my odd independent nature, but I beg to differ. I am facing this very problem in my own relationship. My girlfriend has already decided to break up with me when we move to college. She says she doesn't believe we can last in a long-term, long-distance relationship because we fight so much. When I heard those words, I was so shocked I could not speak for several moments. To her and the people following the status quo, I'd like to say: with that kind of attitude, can you really expect anything else? It is true that most relationships don't last, but if both truly want it to, then it definitely can. I know people whose parents met in high school. What can you say to them? You were an accident?

Relationships are incredibly complex. Trust me, I know. But they are grounded in two very important things: compromise and honesty. Compromise is important because it allows both sides to agree on a mutual solution. If your companion is always the one who orders you around, can you really say that you have a relationship? Also, failure to compromise just builds up bad feelings between both parties, eventually leading

to a large meltdown. For example, my girlfriend hates seeing me with other girls. She hates it, she hates it, she hates it. If I so much as talk with another female, she becomes sulky and says I don't care about her, even though she walks to class with other guys herself. Now, is this really fair? I'm not cheating on her or flirting with other girls. I'm just being friendly. I care very deeply about her, but this is ridiculous. I have my own life too. If we want to have any chance of continuing our relationship after high school, this must be resolved. This is where compromise comes in. By working this out together, she could perhaps understand that I just have female friends, nothing more, nothing less, and that I will continue to have interactions with other girls my entire life. I, in turn, could then acknowledge her jealousy and attempt to put her mind at ease. Through compromise, both of us will build our trust in each other, though only if we follow through on our promises.

Honesty is probably the biggest part of dating. We all know the classic husband-cheats-on-wife, wife-finds-out, wife-goes-apes*** scenario. Just look at Tiger. But it goes deeper than that. Honesty means that both people understand what the other person expects of the other. I can be a perfect example of what not to do. Although my girlfriend can be overly jealous, until we work it out, I have to acknowledge that. Recently, I worked on a project with another girl without telling her. When she found out, she was as upset as I've ever seen her. It was the worst thing I could have possibly done. This might seem like a trivial matter, but when put in terms of candor, suddenly it explodes. I knew that my girlfriend hated seeing me with other girls, but instead of telling her, I locked it up, hoping that by keeping it secret, she would never become angry. What I should have done was speak to her about it, face her anger, and at least show that I cared about her feelings. Unfortunately, I failed to do this and as a result I have lost her trust, but I have also learned a valuable lesson. Honesty is absolutely essential to relationships because it builds trust, which helps reduce the number of fights that a couple has. Instead of feeling cold and empty at the end of the day, why not feel warm and fuzzy inside? Everyone loves to be warm and fuzzy...

Back to high school dating. Relationships rarely last, but this is not necessarily because we are too immature or unwilling to make a commitment. Rather, it is because we (sometimes epically) fail to see the key parts of every personal connection. This is important not just for dating, but for every bond that we will have

in our lives. Whether for the sake of friendship, work, family, or even everyday affairs, the sooner we recognize how to get along, the better off we will be. I know I have a lot of work to do. I am not perfect. In fact, outside of writing for some random, obscure school publication (just kidding), I am rarely as open-minded. But maybe that will change with this post. Maybe I can incorporate what I have learned here into my own life. Let's not follow peer pressure. Let's carve our own paths and prove all those haters wrong. Relationships can last, anytime, anywhere. It all depends on us. And to my girlfriend, I love you.

"The meeting of two personalities
is like the contact of two chemical
substances: if there is any reaction,
both are transformed."

- Carl Jung

This is a very personal story of mine. I'd like to thank the Aletheia for giving people a chance to give their stories. This personal experience of mine affected me very deeply. As if being a teenager wasn't hard enough, being a teenager in- of all places- Lynbrook High School is downright stressful. I don't know about the rest of the school population but I had the misfortune of grouping myself with the wrong people. And I don't mean they smoked or drank or anything. They weren't the right people FOR ME. I was relatively new at Miller and I, like most young people, was looking for a place where I could eat lunch with friends and not look like a total loner. I found this nice group of girls that I thought were really cool. (Let me say now that I was very very naive). They seemed really close-knit and could really connect with some of them. Others in the group: not so much, but we got along and we had our laughs. Of course as time went on people move along with it. I lost some friends but had to move on like everybody else. Onto High school.

I still hung around with my group of "friends" but then eventually it turned into something else. It wasn't a loving group of friends that had laughs and shared friend-moments with each other anymore. It became a competition to be the coolest, the biggest bad-ass,

the wittiest, the funniest.

The point is though is that I lost my friends. They were no longer my friends. They never were there for me when I was having problems. I never had someone to cry to or bitch to. Although I was surrounded by so many people, that period of time was probably the loneliest I have ever felt. And so I left.

My story isn't so sad, really. Because of those people I learned a lot about myself. I became closer with my parents and siblings who are always there for me. And eventually other people came into my life: teachers, mentors, and eventually I joined a new group of friends. They're the awesomest people in the world and I love them all to death. I have never felt so loved in my whole life.

I'm older now and have a little more experience. Moral of the story? Always surround yourself with people that truly care about you. You'll always be able to tell who does and doesn't. And when you find those people hold on to them for dear life because... well because they care about you. How many people in the world do that?

"You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. You are the guy who'll decide where to go."

- Dr. Seuss

I view myself as an independent female, who doesn't need a guy in my life to make me happy. I just don't think chasing after a guy or daydreaming about boys are fulfilling anymore. I'd rather not waste myself with some immature boy who will eventually cease to have any significance in my life.

I wasn't always like this. Last year, I was boy-crazed. I was always dramatizing my love life, and whenever a guy liked me (which was often) I would giggle and obsess. Now that I look back, meddling with boys' affections (and my own) was kind of a stress-relieving hobby for me. Call me heartless, but it was my (un-wholesome) way of dealing with hardships and reassure myself I was loved.

Eventually I realized (after a series of mortifying events) that I wasn't ready to be romantically involved with anyone, that we were all too immature, and that all relationships right now are foolish. So this year, I was 100% boy-free. I hardly even thought about/talked to a guy.

But these days, for the first time in a year, the feeling of guy-interest is returning... should I push it away? I will try my best to control my emotions and tell myself to be smart. I've learned my lesson. And during my year of restraint, I've gained 10 lbs and lost the confidence to flirt or think a guy could possibly like me. Strange. Just a year ago I was so certain that any guy would fall head over heels for me, and I would walk away with my nose in the air. I suppose it's a waste of time to mourn over this though. It's not worth hating myself for a guy.

"I don't like to be labeled as lonely just because I am alone."

- Delta Burke

[Explicit Content]

I used to wonder if the group of people that I've hung out with for the past four years were people I could call my friends. In my sophomore year I had a fear that I was invisible to my friends. I was consumed with loneliness and I began to go a little insane. I was having issues at home and I just wanted someone to talk to. I tried to talk to my friends about it but every time I tried to, it was like I hadn't said anything and they completely ignored me. At first I tried shaking it off. But as my situation at home got worse, I became even more insecure without a person to confide in or to give me advice. Eventually that insecurity became an obsessive craving for attention. But words couldn't get any attention from my friends so I used an alternative method. It was a winter day at brunch during my sophomore year and I counted 11 of my friends around me talking to each other. I gripped a metal mechanical pencil in my hand trying to think of reasons to not let my insecurity become insanity. But I was so desperate. So I rolled up my sleeve, pierced the metal tip of the pencil into my other arm, took a deep breath, and slashed at the flesh four times. Four streaks

of dark liquid oozed out. I looked up at my friends. There they were, still talking among each other, smiling. My fear had been confirmed. "Bye guys," I said to them. No one replied. The bell rang and I walked to fourth period. There's more to this story but I'll just say that a few weeks later, two of the biggest events of my life happened on the same day. The first event inspired me to kill myself that night. The second event was an extremely lucky coincidence that saved me. A year later I finally gathered the courage to tell my friends everything that had happened. I told them the story and showed them the scars on my arm. They were shocked but they listened. Today I can tell my friends anything and they will be there for me. I think that I'm dealing with even more difficult issues than I was two years ago but it has made all the difference to just have friends that listen.

"In everyone's life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit."

- Albert Schweitzer

We used to be best friends, or so I thought. We would talk about everything under the sun, laugh and have fun. We used to have inside jokes about everything and would sit in the back of class laughing at our teacher's antics as he tried to make the class more fun. People thought we were dating because we were so close, we would laugh it off. I celebrated with you when you got into your top choice college. I supported/hugged you during times when you were down, thinking that you would always be there for me when I needed it. I saw you be mean to other people, but I never thought that you would be the same with me. I thought that we were too close for you to EVER hurt me. I guess I was wrong. I guess I was just too naive to see that you were doing the same things to me. I considered you one of my closest friends since freshman year. We used to run behind you to hide from others, you would say that you would never let someone hurt me, that you would protect me forever, and you promised that you would NEVER hurt me. Was I imagining all of this? The insults started, I laughed it off. Too

naive to even realize that you probably actually meant all that. You stopped the texts, the chats, the Facebook wallposts and you ended the poke war. Your insults started getting meaner and meaner, and they started to hurt. But I never showed them, because my mind kept telling me that you promised to never hurt me, but my heart told me otherwise. I wish I had told you to stop, but I let it slide. I thought I knew you well, I told you everything. But I guess you never thought of it as anything too special. You hurt me the other day, insulting me in front of everyone. I should have defended myself, but I was so shocked that you would be so rude that I couldn't tell you off. I let you insult me, and for that I hate myself. For that I am very disappointed in myself. It hurt, it hurt a lot, to be insulted in front of those who thought that everything was fine. Because the truth is, you are a jerk, but I never thought you would be a jerk to me. I let everything slide, because I thought that you were joking. That day I realized that I refuse to see the bad side in anybody that I am too close to. I knew that a lot of people would hurt me in my life, I just never thought that YOU would be one of them. So thanks, for making me see the truth; the truth that I have been too naive this whole time. Thanks for making me realize before I went to college, because at least now I won't be so naive and let people walk all over me. I'm not saying sorry because I still don't see my mistake in this. I just wanted to ask what happened to us? What happened to the inseparable duo who used to take over each other's walls? Who would get presents for each other wherever they went? I guess I kind of do miss you, but I'm not going to show it. I walked past you today, and you didn't look at me once. I hope we can patch things up before we go to college, because I don't want to go to college leaving things as it is. I want to talk to you, but if this is a test of wills, you know how competitive I am, and I am going to win. I will miss you next year because you will always be one of my closest friends.

"A friend should be one in whose understanding and virtue we can equally confide, and whose opinion we can value at once for its justness and its sincerity."

- Robert Hall

My friends have always been vital parts of my life. It's a bit trite to say that they're there for "moral support" and to offer "a shoulder to cry on", but it's absolutely true. Without friends around to prop me up, I would have crumbled under the gross tonnage of life after my first "rejection" in middle school. Whether or not I choose to acknowledge it, my friends have, in a sense, kept me alive and afloat thus far. I think we all overlook the heavy influences that our friends are on us. The beauty of having such people in my life is that I can thoroughly rely on multiple layers of friendship-ness to keep us from breaking through the ice when we get into mature disputes (ie. "who gets the last piece of chicken?", "who's paying?", and "who gets to take the cute one to the dance?"). A friendship is nothing without a measure of depth. Without layer upon layer of solid foundation, a seemingly great friendship will crack splinter, and promptly give out from underneath.

The same rules and premises that apply to friendships also apply to romantic relationships. Simply put, you're not going to get far with your new playmate if you don't know how to share your toys. Love is a treasure probably best handled after the hormonal drama of high school is in one's rearview mirror, but if one absolutely insists, there are definitely some rules to follow: No overt favoritism, No overly-honest opinions, and No outright betrayals, just to name a few. (Observed carefully, friendships and loveboats are not unlike. Either way you're in deep water.) Restrictions are hardly ever fun, but hardly ever unnecessary. As much as you may not like it, you can only take one person home at a time.

A little word about love:

I personally have been in a few relationships, my current one lasting just over a year-to-date this week. Out of all the things one could possibly do to mess up one's life, being in love maxes out as the biggest whopper in the bag. The distractions, complications, and everyday rollercoasts can disorient and disconcert. At the same time though, you wind up learning more about yourself, other people, and the world around you than you thought there was to know. Each new person you fall for is an entirely different trip through millions of years of emotion and millions of miles of character. True love is not for the faint of heart. In every way, it is a world uncomparable to anything you've ever experienced. I know I wouldn't trade what I have for anything in this world, anyway.

*** I thought I'd throw in some technical notes on

terminology to clarify any confusion among youth. Editors feel free to remove this portion, I hereby grant you permission.

-Going out on a date with someone does not mean that you are dating them

-Dating someone does not wholly signify that they are your boyfriend or girlfriend

-Being someone's boyfriend or girlfriend does not mean you are legally, morally, physically, or otherwise bound to them

-You're not necessarily in love with any of the aforementioned, if you don't want to be

"I present myself to you in a form
suitable to the relationship I wish
to achieve with you."

- Luigi Pirandello

I don't think I'm ready for a relationship right now. I know you asked me out and all, and of course I said yes - I mean, what else could I say? You mean everything to me.

I couldn't ask for more. You seriously are the perfect guy. You're responsible, funny, nice, kind, caring, supportive, helpful, outgoing, and so much more. What would I do without you? You're my best friend, and I guess now you're my boyfriend too. But I don't know if I want you as a boyfriend. I'm scared of ruining our friendship again, and I don't know if I can commit. We've been through so much crap in the past, and out of all things that could have happened, we got together. Really? And another reason, you could do way better than me. After all the s*** that I put you through, why would you still like me? I'm so confused. I was so glad that we were still friends, but things moved along quick.

On top of everything, I feel like you don't really like me. You only like me because you can't get the girls that you really want, and that hurts a lot. I feel like some sort of a last resort, and I know that I probably like you way more than you like me.

I wish that we weren't going out and we could just be friends and take it slow. But I can't tell you that.

If you're reading this and you're thinking what the hell just tell him the truth, you don't even know half of it. It's so complicated it would take my ages to tell

you the whole story. But anyways, I'm happy we can be together for now. I hope it lasts and everything will work out.

"A friendship can weather most things
and thrive in thin soil; but in needs
a little mulch of letters and phone
calls and small, silly presents every so
often-just to save it from drying out
completely."

- Pam Brown

It's hard to say if you can still be friend with someone after a fight. Some friends pretend not to remember what happened and we become friends again. However, not all relationships are this simple. Friendship can be complicated. Some people can be friend with you one day and stranger the other day. there is this one particular person. We were super good friends with each other in elementary school. Again, super good friends. We had similar family background and similar hobbies. We even share our deepest secrets with each other. Then one day, she stopped talking with me. I don't know why and forgot how it happened. We are just no friends anymore. I later transferred to some other schools and we lost contact. (She probably doesn't even know that I transferred.)

After a few years, I came back to LHS for high school and I saw her again. I don't know if she recognize me or not but she still didn't talk to me. She changed. She was so sweet and cute in front of everyone yet still refuses to talk to me. It seems like she is treating me like a stranger. Yet, she is nicer to other strangers than she is to me. Maybe she is ignoring me completely. I tried to talk to her once or twice but she her reactions were cold. Don't know what I did wrong but I really want to be friend with her again. She was, after all, my best friend in elementary school. How can relationship between people be so complicated? Why can people all be friends and be happy?

"A friend to all is a friend to none."

- Aristotle

Often times, friendships are some of the most important, and most fragile things in our lives. For one, friends can be real friends that support you and stick with you. But, they could also just be your friend to use you or some of the things that you might have. We may perceive people as friends, but what are they really, friends, or are they people that abuse us? Why do we keep the people that abuse us as friends in the first place? Is it to feel safe, or is it because they're popular and being with them makes us feel like we're popular as well.

More likely than not, people will try to use you, but that's up to you on whether you want to be used or not. Before you try to make someone a friend, ask yourself this, are they going to use me, or are they going to actually be my friend? For example, when I was in elementary school, I wanted to be friends with this really popular guy. He kept trying to use me claiming he was being my friend when in reality he's not. He often tried to get me in trouble or often tried to get me to humiliate myself in public. I oftentimes got in huge trouble because of him. So, the moral of this is, think about who you become friends with.

"Friendship is unnecessary, like
philosophy, like art . . . It has no
survival value; rather it is one of
those things that give value to
survival."

- C. S. Lewis

I have been at Lynbrook for a little while, have had a lot of classes, have a lot of friends, and I have never been on a date. Sounds like a lot of people and I'm sick of it. Believe it or not I have tried but it is too hard. Most of you girls think oh it's another boy who only wants a pretty girl to look at. Well that is part of it (Being a boy it is near impossible)but I like to meet someone who I really like personally and share anything about myself. Sounds like a bit from a movie don't it. The thing is I don't know what love is or what it feels like. So until I know it can be true I will be scared for rest of that time. One time I thought I felt it but I will let you judge. In one of my classes I sat next to this girl. Anyways she was sweet, easy to talk to, was perky, and really had a positive outlook. Not to mention she was smoking hot. After about three weeks I really was talking to her and I did my fair share of

listening. Then one day she was wearing this dark blue dress and smelled like peaches and oranges and I could not stop looking at her, then something happened that I have never felt before or have again. My heart started to beat faster, I was sweating, my eyes darted to her and out, I could not pay attention to the lecture. I don't want to say its love but I could not help to say it's a crush. But being the chicken of a man I am I did not say anything. So I will be in the dark by myself as Miss Teen walks by and dates a guy with a better face and a lot more to talk about. All because of my fear of dating and what would happen should she not accept me. I guess it's true what they say about crushes, sometimes you get CRUSHED!!!!!!

"You are protected by your ability to love"

- Dumbledore (J. K. Rowling)

Back in seventh grade, my friend told me about this theory of how it was better to befriend everyone that you could then because when high school rolls around, that's when you'll realize who your real friends are—the ones that stick it out with you through thick and thin. I always thought he was thinking too much, but as we got older, I realized...he may have been onto something.

I think when most people think of the term "best friend", they automatically think of that person who you've known since kindergarten or something and have been with you all these years. As heartwarming as that idea may be, I don't think it's a very realistic way of looking at things. Over the years, I've noticed that the amount of people I consider as "friends" shrink in size as each year passes. If I ever encounter these people in the halls, the most that would ever happen is a small wave or smile exchanged. But more often than not, it's as if we hadn't even seen each other at all. Sure, sometimes I'll catch myself wondering what our friendship would have been like if we were still close, but for the most part, it never really crosses my mind. That is not to say I never cared—of course I did!...back then... Hell, I don't even talk to my "bffs" from elementary school anymore, but it doesn't mean they hadn't been, at one point in my life, like sisters to me. The bottom line is, people change and things happen and you can't calculate your friendships based on who you've known

the longest.

Some only talk to me in class, some know exactly how to get me to smile and some tease me relentlessly just because they know you won't take it to heart. But which ones are the ones that aren't afraid to fight with you because they know you can do better than you believe? Which ones are the ones that won't turn a blind eye when I want to give up on life? Which

ones are the ones that are willing to stay with me—on the phone, by my side, or just continual imes—for hours on end, even though I stubbornly refuse to tell them about all the s*** that's going through my head? It might seem surprising, but some of these friends aren't even people I'd been close to for all that long; I may have known OF them, but not ABOUT them... not really. I'm not always the most optimistic person out there, but when these few willingly probe me just so I don't keep these negative thoughts all bottled up in my head, it stuns me to see how they have can so much patience.

This past year, I learned the hard way that no one thing is set in stone. One month, it'll seem like the group of friends I had known for six years would last forever, and the next, it had broken into pieces that cannot be fixed. I guess that's what my friend meant when he told me his theory: over time, you begin to comprehend the true nature of those you call friends, especially the ones you thought you knew so well. So to say that I still have those few people that I call my best friends in my life who I can tell my darkest secrets to...I think I'm pretty damn lucky. I don't think many ever find even ONE person they aren't afraid to sit with and cry for hours to when you've hit rock bottom.

During one of my gloomier days, someone came up to my friend and me and told us that we looked like sisters—she, being the older sister, holding on to the younger one, me, in such a manner that made it seem like if she didn't, I would get lost in the crowd. To me, that's the best compliment I could ever get about my friendship with someone. This is basically saying that in the eyes of a third party, we have an inseparable bond that only exists within family members. Sisters, whether they're laughing with you or laughing at you, whether they're proud of you or f***ing pissed at you, they love you with all their hearts.

These few individuals are the ones I know will still have my back even after high school ends and everyone goes their separate ways and I wouldn't ever trade them for the world. I hope they know how much grateful I am to have them in my life.

I would never tell you this to your face, and I know that I should be happy for you and all, but I can't wait for you and him to break up.

I'm your best friend. I've been there for you when nobody else was, I helped you through your tears, and I've done everything I could for you. Before he came along we would hang out all the time and just enjoy everyday that we could spend with each other. I took it for granted, even though I know I shouldn't have. I miss all the good conversations that didn't include his name it, the phone calls that actually didn't have anything to do with him. Why does he just have to come out of nowhere and steal my best friend from me? You two have known each other for only two or three months, and already you're blocking out everything else that's important. Everything that we do now, we won't last ten seconds where you don't talk about him. And about how happy you are, and I say I'm happy for you too. The truth is, I get pissed off every single time I see you two together. You never spend time hanging out with your other friends anymore, and all you do is stick with him. I'm tired of talking about him every five seconds, because frankly I don't give a s***. Sometimes I wish you would shut up because no one gives a f***. You treat your friends like s*** now and you never make an effort to talk to them. I can't wait for you guys to go break up. We never talk about my day or problems or anything. The first thing we do is talk about the boy and what he did yesterday and how that made you so happy. I would tell you about my life, but you don't listen and of course you don't care either. I lost hope and I don't give a f*** anymore. Maybe when you two break up I'll try to be best friends with you again, but right now I can't stand you two when you're together. Get a room, do something, shut up because I've stopped caring.

I can't wait for you two to break up.

"The sincere friends of this world
are as ship lights in the stormiest of
nights."

- Giotto di Bondone

One of my friends is an extreme supporter of prohibition. Her thing is that it's not a real or lasting shot at happiness. She prefers to go for relation-

ships. But in my experience relationships are just as transitory as the effects felt from ingesting any chemical. The difference being that relationships last longer, and in some cases the high is higher, but when it all finally comes to an end the comedown is similarly longer and lower than any low you could get off a substance. Basically, what I'd conclude from this is that I have to go for what you believe in and what you think fits for you. Don't let other people make these decisions for you.

There is nothing like the razor
sharp tongue of a good friend to cut
through the lies we tell
ourselves.

- Laura Moncur

Friendship is like Pandora's box. Everything is interesting at first, and you really want to know more about that person. You grow more curious and want to have a closer connection. You feel as though you might've found your new best friend. They are the one you will be calling when your boyfriend breaks up with you. The one you will have those weekly sleepovers with and spend all night Facebook stalking the new hottie in school. The one you will run to when you feel lonely. The one. You have never felt better when talking to him/her and never felt so open to someone. You guys have that special bond that only you two have, the bond that keeps you close together. All goes well until you "open" them up. Suddenly, they are a different person. A stranger, smiling at you with a evil glow in their eye, and you wonder if it's real or not. Someone that gives you that uncomfortable feeling in the pit of your stomach whenever something goes wrong. Were they who you think they were the entire time? Was the friendship something that spontaneously shot up but only to go back down? Was it even real? Everything that you shared gets thrown out the window; trust, respect, forgiveness, companionship. The list goes on and on and the things you share grow less and less. You don't know who to trust anymore. Things are not the same without someone by your side. There's a deep hole in you and you need someone to patch it back up. After a while, you start to realize something; everyone has imperfections. Nobody's perfect. That

line has been said numerous times in many places, but it's true. In order to have a successful friendship, respect not only the perfections, but the flaws in that person. Whether it's the way they eat or the mole on their face, they're still the same person. The one thing left is hope. Hope that the friendship will last.

When the character of a man is not
clear to you, look at his friends.

- Japanese Proverb

The poison before me is pure and simple. It has been refined countless times, from secret glances, passing daydreams, and my endless thoughts of you. It embodies all my twisted pain and bitter hatred, creating a vile concoction which no one would ever dare drink.

So perhaps I am brave.

You are my poison, pure and simple. Every graceful movement leaves me without peace, every soft-spoken word lingers, burning me slowly from the inside out. And you are clueless, without a care in the world, for you are incapable of consciously hurting another, incapable of intentionally inflicting pain; you are a perfect angel, you are a brilliant star, and you are the one who every night drives this spear deeper into my heart, slicing open half-healed wounds, and leaving me shattered, broken, pieces of what I used to be. Everything I do, I do to prove to myself that perhaps some day I will forget why I need you. But around you I am sub-human, with you I am inferior, and everything in this pathetic world converges back on the one thought that I shall never be good enough for you.

That much will never change.

I shall drink my poison, pure and simple. The vicious acid shall burn my throat and scorch my soul, but I am not afraid. I fear not the pain, or the desperation which accompanies it ever so often. For this drink shall be the 2365th round, one a day, every day, ever since that fateful day we first met. I have not forgotten. And the darkness that shall surround me is familiar,

comforting even, for in that single moment I shall forget that once before I had tasted perfection, that once before you were mine and the world did not matter. But memories of you now only feed the noxious fumes of this volatile liquid I so desperately hold.

And so, a toast. To your health and my suffering, your perfection and my hopelessness. For your poison is all I have now.

"The opposite of love is not hate, it's
indifference."

- Elie Wiesel

Often times, friendships are some of the most important, and most fragile things in our lives. For one, friends can be real friends that support you and stick with you. But, they could also just be your friend to use you or some of the things that you might have. We may perceive people as friends, but what are they really, friends, or are they people that abuse us? Why do we keep the people that abuse us as friends in the first place? Is it to feel safe, or is it because they're popular and being with them makes us feel like we're popular as well?

More likely than not, people will try to use you, but that's up to you on whether you want to be used or not. Before you try to make someone a friend, ask yourself this, are they going to use me, or are they going to actually be my friend? For example, when I was in elementary school, I wanted to be friends with this really popular guy. He kept trying to use me claiming he was being my friend when in reality he's not. He often tried to get me in trouble or often tried to get me to humiliate myself in public. I often times got in huge trouble because of him. So, the moral of this is, think about who you become friends with.

Holly Osment

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Dating and friendships: two of the biggest areas of focus in many teenagers' lives. Have you noticed that there are many movies and books about teen romance, but few about friendships? And yet as many of you likely know, there can be just as much turmoil and confusion and delight in friendships.

In friendships you can have... deep understanding, crazy joy, longing, envy, betrayal, heart-break, confusion, anger... feelings of being accepted and known for who you are... suffering the loss and pain of a friendship "break up"... feeling the deep loneliness of not having true friends to connect with... Why isn't there more written and shown about all this?? In my opinion it is certainly just as central of an issue to teen's lives as is dating (or grades/college, or parents, etc.). Friendships can be life-changing, and lifesavers.

It's interesting to see that when you ask people to tell you stories about dating and friendships, you often will get stories full of pain. The pain of loss, of not connecting, of rejection or betrayal. And yet we reach out again and again, or wish we could. We are born to connect, and yet being born to do this does not give us a manual for how to do it. We are all of us imperfect, and we stumble through our connections – our hits and misses, our days when we're proud of our actions and days when we know with secret shame that we acted dishonorably. We may sometimes bitterly withdraw but usually, at some point, we try again because that's generally what being human is about.

There's a lot of confusion around definitions. What is love? What is a true friend? I wish there were simple, agreed upon definitions for these but there

aren't. The fact is, we have to decide for ourselves and there is good and bad in that. You get to decide if you love someone. And maybe you don't know and you wonder, how will I know? There's no answer, or rather, the answer is inside you... One day you just "know," or rather, you decide to label your feeling: love. You may love someone and wish you didn't, but that's another issue. What I mean is, no one else can tell you how you feel or give your feelings a label. You can't find out how you feel from anyone else, any higher authority. Only you can do that. Sometimes that is highly frustrating! But you know what? It can be empowering too.

The same is true for the idea of a true friend or a best friend. People have different definitions. "A true friend never does x/y/z, or always does x/y/z." "A true friend is forever." But then, what happens when the friend doesn't do what fits the definition? Does that mean the person was never a "true friend"? Or were they a true friend for a while, but then the relationship changed? Do you throw out the whole friendship, past and present? Friendships change, even though usually we don't want them to. We get along with someone, it's great, let's say there's no complicated sexual attraction – what could go wrong? But sometimes it does, even to the best of friends. Friends let each other down, they grow distant and/or grow closer to someone else. Friends betray each other, sometimes without really meaning to. Friends love each other, but as I said before, we're all imperfect and so that's where the pain comes in. It is really complicated, and expecting things to have simple definitions usually doesn't work. Of course, always, you get to decide what you think and how you label it. But when it comes to relationships with others, friends or otherwise, it's a twisty path full of unexpected roadblocks and surprises.

There are a lot of wonderful things about friends and relationships! I focus on the pain first because that's what comes through in so many of the submissions to this issue. When things are going well in dating and/or friendships, they are some of the most powerfully positive forces in our lives. No one should minimize the healing, comforting balm of someone who listens to you and cares for you, someone who sees your worth and can laugh and cry with you. These relationships are precious. Sometimes they last a lifetime, sometimes they end sooner than we want them to. But the value of what you gain when things are good is tremendous.

"Oh, the comfort – the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person – having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but pouring them all right out, just as they are, chaff and grain together; certain that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and then with the breath of kindness blow the rest away." – Dinah Craik

This is a beautiful statement, yet I am also aware that it's not always so easy to find a relationship like this. When you want to connect with others but somehow you aren't, or it seems like you can't, that is often a lonely painful place. The feelings of not having friends, not having a boyfriend/girlfriend, not fitting in, are no fun for anyone (and often more people can relate to these feelings than you might think). There are no quick, certain solutions to these times. Remember that when you feel alone, you are still always in relationship with someone, and that is yourself. Having compassion for yourself is one of the greatest gifts you can give.

"You, yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection." – Buddha

To Students:

Some of the submissions in this issue talked about very serious things... abuse, suicidal thinking, cutting. Since your stories are submitted anonymously, there is no way to reach out to you with help, and no way to know if help is wanted. If you have been violated or have hurt yourself or are considering doing so, all I can do from here is to urge you to take care of yourself. Do whatever is in your power to keep yourself safe; that might even mean safe from yourself. It might mean sharing your stories with people you trust. It might mean talking to a therapist or clergy or other trusted professional or adult. It might mean calling a hotline for support if you still want to remain anonymous. The Aletheia staff can provide you with resources. You can submit a request for such resources through the website. They can publish the information publicly (not your request, just the resources themselves), or you can provide a private way for them to reach you. Or you can contact me directly through the contact information provided here. Your body and your life are important. I realize I don't know you, but I believe deeply in the value of each human being and that includes you, since you are of course a living human being.

To Parents:

The relationships that teens form with their peers are often enormously important and can sometimes be all-consuming. Adolescence is the time when we develop stronger social connections with our peers, and more independence from our parents; this is natural and desirable to help us become functional adults in the world.

It is easy sometimes, as parents, to be so focused on our teens' academic performance, extracurricular activities, college applications and the like that we forget to give adequate weight to their social needs. Teens do need friends, have a need to belong and feel important to their peers. This may or may not include dating. When teens run into social difficulties as so many describe in this issue, it behooves you to take their pain and struggles seriously, and treat them with dignity. You may not always know what is going on, but providing a safe and loving space where their feelings are respected will only strengthen your relationship with your teen.

Additional Resources

■ "When No One Understands: Letters to a Teenager on Life, Loss, and the Hard Road to Adulthood," by Brad Sachs

■ "Teen Love: On Relationships, A Book for Teenagers," by Kimberly Kirberger

■ "A Good Friend: How to Make One, How to Be One," by Ron Herron

■ "Staying Connected to Your Teenager: How to Keep Them Talking to You and How to Hear What They're Really Saying," by Michael Riera