

## Mission

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

## About

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

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

This is the sixth issue of *Aletheia* for the 2014-15 school year.

## Submissions

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

Our next topic is Judgment; submissions are due by May 16th. If you are interested in contributing, a submission box and a suggestion form for future topics are both available online.

*Expressing what  
remains unspoken.*

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

**Advisers:** Cindy Wen & Miko Otoshi

I feel lonely when I feel isolated from other people, when they're having fun without me. I'm not particularly needy; I only need one person's attention to keep me happy. But when there is no one for me, I get really lonely and sad. And that's basically what happened today, on a class field trip. But due to this, I have finally discovered loneliness is not the worst feeling a person can feel without any positive effects. For the first time in six months, I was able to overcome my "writer's block" (having a lot of trouble with coming up with stuff to write, essentially). I honestly wouldn't be here on Aletheia if this hadn't happened. My loneliness has affected my life because it helped me realize WHY I had "writer's block", and how to cure it. 1) I needed a legit inspiration that I could transform into something deep 2) I needed overflowing emotions that would spill all over the floor (literally, in this case) And so I wrote a poem. I am kind of happy with it. I guess there's a silver lining to even the worst of things, huh?

*"My life is just one constant battle between wanting to be alone, but not wanting to be lonely."*

- Anonymous

One of my biggest fears in life was always loneliness. I don't mind having some quality time to myself, but I also crave the company of others. When guests used to come over to our house when I was little, I would always go to bed before they left, because then I could see the lights on outside my door and hear the noise and know for sure that there were people there and I wasn't completely alone inside my room. That childhood fear of loneliness hasn't gone away; it's just translated over into other aspects of my life. I worry a lot about whether I'm going to spend the rest of my life alone. Even living by myself for a short period of time freaks me out. I feel alone sometimes even when there are people surrounding me, though. I feel like high school has forced people into a mold that they may not necessarily be malleable enough to fit into, and that's caused a bunch of chaotic situations for people. I feel like when everyone isn't insanely busy doing important work, it's still harder to connect with some people. I'm rambling a bit, but it's interesting the way that you can feel isolated when with some people and pretty connected with others. For all my fear, however, I still

don't think being alone is a bad thing, and I feel like people may still view it that way. When I'm walking or sitting by myself, I sometimes get self conscious and find some friend to keep me company and prevent me from being alone. But then I realize that I didn't really want to talk to anyone, I just didn't want to be seen alone. It's a weird thing to be self-conscious about, but then I just remind myself that I'm fabulous. That usually does the trick.

~ ~ ~

Loneliness is when you're not sure if anyone really loves you.

*"I used to think the worst thing in life was to end up alone. It's not. The worst thing in life is to end up with people that make you feel alone."*

-Robin Williams

I feel like it is not as bad to be just alone in the sense of wandering alone. It is far worse to be surrounded by friends and family and still feel alone. You see life being lived all around you and yet you remain all alone and ignored. It is almost like being a ghost: physically there, but unnoticed, unseen and unheeded by anybody. That is how I have been feeling for close to a year now. Surrounded by my "friends" who can't seem to understand and so keep pushing me away. I keep trying to tell them how I feel and what I think and whenever I say what I am really thinking or feeling, it seems too much and too raw and they just wonder why I cannot simply get over it. A little part of me died each time they just couldn't handle it. So I just stopped trying to tell them. I smile and pretend that it's all ok now, isolating me more and more. Over the course of the last year I have lost far too many people that meant a lot to me. One to death, two to misunderstandings and more to the fulfillment of a grudge that another had against me. They all happened like dominoes, one after another and each crushed me more and more until I felt like there was nothing left and I felt all alone. I felt trapped in my own bubble where time had not moved but everyone else around me had and had continued to live. When I tried to rejoin the land of the living, too many things had happened and I still

find I cannot ever catch up and am stuck where I was. There were pockets and bubbles of silence that I could not broach. I worked to create these relationships and I find that they moved on without me and didn't ever look back for me, leaving me to straggle along alone. My parents want me to stop being weak, and I wish it was that easy. I used to think it was. But I just can't seem to catch up and continuing to try has tired me out even more than I already had been. Being lonely is taxing. It takes up a lot of energy since there is no one to mix their energy with you anymore. All my friends just don't talk to as much or don't prefer to talk to me because I have grown to prefer being quite instead of expressing what I think because I don't feel even with them. I wish they had stuck by me for the whole ride instead of abandoning me because they could not understand.

~ ~ ~

I can tell that one of my closest guy friends is lonely. I'm pretty sure he likes me but I've already told him that I'm not into the kind of person he is. It makes me feel like a jerk, but I had to tell him the truth. I'm afraid he's lonely because of me. Ever since, he rarely ever texts me anymore. He discarded all his social media and he never speaks to me at school. He'll always make eye contact but will never respond when I talk to him. He probably wanted me to be his girlfriend, but when I told him that I wasn't really into him, he pulled away from his friends as well. I see him walking alone around school. He's a cool guy, really, but I don't know what do. I didn't know a simple rejection could make someone feel so lonely, but now my empathy for him is overwhelming.

*"Solitude is fine but you need someone to tell you that solitude is fine."*  
-Honoré de Balzac

Loneliness can hurt you and turn you into a hateful person. Sometimes it's hard to tell people you feel lonely because they think you have all the friends you need. And that just makes you more lonely. It's hard to break out of the lonely habit of keeping to yourself. For me, it's made me depressed. I block out all the people in my life. No one knows my story. I want people to come up to me and work and get to know me. I've tried to do that to other people but I just get blocked out or

ignored. I want to know people care about me because I care about other people. It just feels so one sided. I feel like I'm living life alone and people around me see me as some misfit amateur. Even my family makes me feel this way. However, there are two people who have tried to push their influence into my life. And it's only hurt me more. These two people get upset when I mess up. These two people are the people I should have been able to trust the most. But these two people I block out the most. I avoid them. I hate them. And they don't understand. No one understands me. People think they can try, but no one will truly understand what I am going through. People think my life is so simple and so great and so nice. Why can't people just understand that everyone deals with hardships? Why can't people see that although it doesn't seem like it, I'm lonely and hurt and depressed? Why does it feel like no one truly cares?

*"The loneliest moment in someone's life is when they are watching their whole world fall apart, and all they can do is stare blankly."*

-F. Scott Fitzgerald

I'm Asian. Well, not a big surprise there, but I'm not Chinese or Taiwanese, and this sometimes leads to mild exclusion. With my groups of friends, I'm pretty sure that it's not intentional, but it still doesn't feel very nice. When they talk about specific things in their culture and I ask for simple clarifications, I'll be ignored or given a half-hearted response. I'll find myself more on the edge, and notice that I could not be there and not much would be different. Occasionally I'll feel lonely from that, but I think I'm starting to not care that much anymore. I guess that's how I cope with it? I stop minding that I'm just listening and being passive, and so I don't feel lonely either. It's really true that you don't have to be alone to feel lonely, and also that being alone doesn't mean you'll feel lonely. I'm definitely a social person, so I usually talk a lot and with a lot of people. However, I don't think I can do much when the "me not being Chinese or Taiwanese" hinders my interactions. Which is probably part of the reason I've happened to make a lot more South Asian friends this year. Then again, being a "minority" makes it pretty clear that loneliness at times it simply inevitable. yup, resistance is futile. ciao~

Though I always seem to want to talk to people, it's a hard thing for me to do. I hate striking up conversations because I'm afraid of being shot down. However, that's a completely different story. I feel like over the years, I've gotten used to being quiet and ignored. I just expect people to forget about me. Which explains why I get so talkative when someone does show interest. My lack of communication has caused me to become lonely and for some reason, I was ok with that for the longest time. Recently, I've been talking to more people. But how does anyone get a person to keep talking? How do you get someone to want to talk to you? I've blamed this on looks. Anyone good looking has friends. You can say my loneliness is caused by insecurities, or you can say my insecurities are caused by my loneliness. Either way, it hurts. And I wish I had someone to share that with.

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I think loneliness is a good thing. We use our friends, our work, our social lives, our media to avoid ourselves, which makes it really difficult when we're finally alone. People are dead, because they couldn't bear to be alone long enough to avoid texting on their drive home. I put videos on late at night as I go to sleep so that I won't be stuck alone with my thoughts. Loneliness is just like being stuck in a room with someone you dislike, except here, that person is ourselves. And the sooner we can come to terms with that, the better.

*"Loneliness adds beauty to life. It puts a special burn on sunsets and makes night air smell better."*

*-Henry Rollins*

This may sound stupid but I tend to value other people's happiness over my own. Because of this, I often don't share what I'm actually feeling if it means protecting someone that I care about. The problem is, I end up suffering on my own. I guess I just kinda wish that I was strong enough to be completely honest all the time, especially since I think (and my friends think) that honesty is one of my best qualities. It's hard to be honest all the time without hurting people though. It's easier to just keep the truth in sometimes, even if it means that I'll be unhappy. So I guess what

happens then is that I'm surrounded by people that are happy and I'm internally suffering but who likes being asked "What's wrong?" all the time? So of course I put on a smile and try to ignore my problems, but they never really leave me. I'm honestly not sure if this is loneliness but it's definitely close to what I'm feeling.

*"At the innermost core of all loneliness is a deep and powerful yearning for union with one's lost self."*

*-Brendan Behan*

Recently, one of my close friends made a new friend. Or, more accurately, a boyfriend. When I received this news, I felt pleasantly surprised, and naturally, I responded, "I'm so happy for you!" However, as the weeks wore on, I wanted to take back those words. This was because although I was still quite close to her, I felt like most of her attention and focus was on her new partner. As a result, even though I was surrounded by many friends, I felt alone. When I first met this friend, I felt that I could always depend on her. She was nice, funny, and could always make me laugh. Although she is still cordial towards me, I can detect a few small changes. Gradually, those changes became more pronounced to me, and our friendship was not as close as before. I felt lonely for many reasons. When I remember during the day to tell her something, I eventually let it go, because I knew she wouldn't really care like she did before. I felt alone because she wasn't there when I needed her. I felt alone because we weren't very close anymore. Most of our conversations eventually led to discussing her relationship. I missed the times before. At first, I was angry at her partner, for taking her away from me, for dulling her sparkle. However, now I realize that I can only blame myself. And that is what makes me feel alone most of all.

~ ~ ~

Sometimes I feel lonely, even though I shouldn't. As someone who goes to church regularly, I am always reminded that I am never alone with God. However, it's hard to always keep that in mind because I have close friends who sometimes don't act as if they are really my friends. I've been questioning whether I am even "in" their friend group because of how distant I feel when I am with them. Sometimes I feel



like they don't care about me or they try to care out of an obligation—it doesn't come naturally to them. I'm worried that once we go off college or even just summer vacation, they'll forget about me and they'll be having fun together while I have to start new again. Alone. Maybe it's because God wants me to focus on Him before I can focus on my friends? I'm not sure. Or maybe the fact that loneliness is my weakness which is being used against me. Either way, I can only pray that it gets better.

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1. not having a girlfriend or social life. 2. binge watching TV. 3. It makes me depressed 4. Yes it makes me jealous and even more depressed that i don't have a social life. 5. not having a girlfriend

*"Pray that your loneliness may spur you into finding something to live for, great enough to die for."*

-Dag Hammarskjöld

It's lonely going to school everyday and knowing that my friends are really competing against me and that whatever bonds we might have won't last.

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Sometimes the feeling of loneliness made me can't breathe. I just feel really sad and has no one to talk to. Especially when pressure comes from school, family, and worries about future mix with loneliness. I came to the U.S. for college, yes, getting into a good college is my ultimate goal. However, learned from former EL students who got into a Ivy League school, soial life should be mostly sacrificed if a EL student wants to go to a good college. Instead, studying and boosting up tests scores should be the things that we need to do, and nearly only do! Therefore, I tried to quit all my social life. I do not want to talk to as many people anymore, because I knew they don't like to talk to me, and I spent too much energy on think about how to make them like me. As a result, my only few ways to cope my loneliness has been gone. I don't know how long am I going to miantain this state.

I'm lonely but i'm too scared to tell anyone because i don't think they'll believe me.

*"Remember: the time you feel lonely is the time you most need to be by yourself. Life's cruelest irony."*

-Douglas Coupland

As usual, I'm not too certain where or how to start as I have had so many experiences with loneliness. Though I know loneliness like the back of my hand, it still holds that sense of mystery to me and I know for a fact that this won't be a revolutionary insight, just a compilation of my thoughts. Despite what many may picture when they think of the word lonely, I don't believe I fall into those stereotypes. I'm not the acne-infused, friendless teen who hides behind books or video games, who can't hold a proper conversation. With all honesty, I'd say that I'm rather the opposite in that when people see me, they assume that I have a fantastic social life with constant attention, that I'm not ever lonely. Perhaps it's in the way I dress and how put together I seem. Either way, it's evident to me that loneliness isn't confined to the particular image that we all hold onto. And frankly, I can almost guarantee that even the most surrounded people have sensed loneliness before. In an attempt to trace back, I really cannot pinpoint the moment loneliness intruded into my life. Just a gradual one by one buildup of negativity, starting with the death of a parent, followed by a distancing of myself from other people. Among the clearest memories of that period in my life, I can recall confining myself. One would ask, "How are you holding up?" and I would fake a smile, and use the same response every single time, "I'm doing great." Not once did I sit down and reveal to the people around me how I was truly doing. And that's where the loneliness stemmed from. It was an act of me blockading my emotions, acting as if I was capable of holding every bit of myself together, and in a sense, convincing both those around me as well as myself that I didn't need a single person. I told myself that strength came from never needing to depend on anyone and that's what I attempted for two years straight. Due to this mindset, I spent my days going through the motions with a lot of solitary activities. Music, reading, sleeping, running. The deal with loneliness, however, is that it begins to feel normal. Once you've made a habit of

being alone, it's not difficult at all. In fact, the opposite happened and I began to find it hard to be around people, even my dearest friends. Though I lost a lot of my friendships, the strangest aspect was that I grew immensely comfortable with myself, so secure in who I was because not for a moment did I need/have people around me validating/criticizing what I did or who I was. And whenever I roam the school or streets or downtowns or even movie theaters alone, people are always somewhat in disbelief, deeming it as a "brave" action and labeling me as a girl who is so confident in herself. While they're right, they're also couldn't be more wrong. We're social beings and that's a fact. And isolation is damaging, also a fact (watch the TEDTalk -Lethality of Loneliness, for evidence). I credit my crawling out of isolation and reaching back into society to one person. A single person who made me remember what connection felt like. Who tore through my layers to reveal that I did want to be around people, that I needed people. I have no idea how he cracked me open the way he did but I remember telling him, "I have a hard time opening up". His reply was simply, "Let's work on it together." So I've come to realize that loneliness is so pervasive for several reasons. I hid my vulnerability, wanting to be the epitome of any ideal girl who has her life together, even when I so obviously didn't. In gluing ourselves to that image, we lose out on connections. We forgo the possibility of someone else truly understanding our emotions, someone empathizing, someone being there for us. When we open ourselves up without holding anything bit of us back, that's when loneliness fades.

*"Language... has created the word  
'loneliness' to express the pain of being  
alone... it has created the word 'solitude'  
to express the glory of being alone."  
-Paul Tillich*

## Maritza Henry

### MFT

Maritza Henry, a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, has been developing and implementing specialized programming for children and youth with learning, social-emotional, and attention challenges for many years. As Director of School-Based Services at Family & Children Services of Silicon Valley (FCS), a nonprofit organization, she provides mental health assessments to schools, leads our Teen Families and Schools Together (FAST) Program (currently offered at three San Jose high schools with low graduation rates), and supervises on-campus student counseling programs. Maritza also provides counseling services for adolescents, adults, couples, and families with particular expertise in the areas of trauma, mood disorders and blended families.

### Feeling Lonely? You Are Not Alone

If you are feeling lonely, you are not alone. Many of us experience loneliness at some point in our lives. The degree and duration of loneliness varies from person to person. One may experience loneliness even in the midst of a group of caring friends or while eating dinner with one's family. One may feel loneliness in an intimate relationship.

Some of us feel lonely because we are actually isolated from others. That isolation may be due to others' perceiving us as different or by us thinking we don't fit in.

For many, loneliness is hard to talk about because it is fraught with shame and self-criticism. This can lead to keeping the feelings hidden, rather than admitting to difficulties.

What makes you feel lonely? Loneliness may result from not feeling like we matter to another person or not feeling accepted. When we don't feel seen, heard, understood, or considered, we can feel the most alone.

How do we heal loneliness? Or manage our loneliness? Feelings of occasional loneliness are natural. Managing or healing loneliness isn't simply a matter of seeking out the company of others. We can still feel lonely when spending time with a group of caring friends or even one friend. For some, seeking out the company of others may help, but first one needs to have an awareness of who one's true self is and not be afraid to be this true self.

What is your true self? Your true self is the sum of all of the things that add up to make you uniquely who you are, rather than who you believe you are supposed to be or what you believe others want you to be. Simply put, it is being yourself. One's true self may be quirky, funny, caring, insecure, loving, compassionate, intuitive, worldly, shy, logical-minded, and/or analytical.

One can gain self-awareness through solitude. In that space of solitude - quiet time with yourself - you find yourself. Solitude allows for self reflection which allows us to identify how we are feeling or what we are thinking, recognize the source of our thoughts and feelings, and find solutions to managing or taking in those thoughts and feelings. Connect with all the things that you like about yourself. Being able to be in solitude and connect with yourself will help you to connect with others from an authentic place.

Second, managing or healing loneliness also requires self-compassion. Every time you feel lonely or lacking, rather than placing judgment and shame on yourself, practice compassion: Be your own best friend and provide words of support to yourself that you would provide to a friend. As you grow in liking and accepting who you truly are, you will feel more comfortable being your true self in the presence of others and you will find you are able to be more accepting of others. If others do not want to connect with you or do not accept you, you may experience sadness and feelings of rejection. Yet when you feel rooted in who you are and like who you are, working through that sadness is easier and you can gain courage to continue to connect with others.

Connect with others with whom you can relate. As you develop your sense of identity, seek friends with whom you can be yourself. If you are fascinated by trains, join a train club. If you enjoy writing or drawing more than one-to-one conversation, join an expressive writing or drawing group. If you are questioning or exploring your cultural identity, sexual orientation, or gender identity, talk to an adult you trust, so you can be linked with resources and social support.

And remember these wise words from author Oscar Wilde: "Be yourself; everyone else is already taken."

#### Note to Parents:

As a parent, the more you can express acceptance of who your child truly is, the stronger your child will become rooted in his/her true self. Ask yourself what characteristics of your child make up who she or he is. Harville Hendrix, Ph.D., bestselling author of *Giving the Love that Heals*, coins this as "Discover

Your Child.” Not only discover, but also reflect back to your child how you value those characteristics. By consistently sending your children the message that you accept them for who they truly are, you will help them discover self-love and self-acceptance. If you are struggling with accepting your child for who they are, please seek support from a mental health professional.

You can help your child develop critical social skills by setting aside time for face-to-face conversations and interactions. How do you do this? Claim a quiet space. It can be in the house or outside with nature. Turn off any distractions, such as digital devices, and spend some time, 15 minutes or so, on a consistent basis, asking how they are doing, what happened during their day, and how their friends are doing. During that time, give your child your full attention. As you talk together, be open and accepting of what your child shares. If you hear something that concerns you, brace yourself to not react but respond. This takes practice, but you can do it! Dr. Hendrix’s communication strategy, intentional dialogue, can give parents and teenage children a framework to establish open, honest, and healthy communication. In his book *Giving the Love that Heals*, Dr. Hendrix describes how parents can learn to provide support, structure, and safety for their children at each developmental stage.

As previously mentioned, loneliness may be due to isolation. If you suspect your child is being isolated from others or is isolating because he/she is suffering from anxiety or depression, please consult with a mental health professional for help.

Note to Students:

#### **Juggling busy schedules while feeling connected**

Many of you may at times feel disconnected even from yourself as you juggle busy schedules. If that disconnect is resulting in feelings of loneliness, try taking 10 minutes a day to sit in a quiet space, with all electronics turned off, and just relax and connect with how you are and what you are feeling or thinking. Ten minutes may sound like a lot of time when you are busy, yet I encourage you to give yourself the gift of that time.

#### **Enjoy face-to-face time with others**

You may enjoy social media as a form of connecting to others. I do, too! It’s convenient and it allows us to create and share information, ideas, pictures, and videos instantly. However, many people who are connected through social media still feel lonely. Why is that? In Sherry Turkle’s *Ted Talk, Connected, But Alone?*, she says “‘When we relate in social media, we can end up hiding from each other even as we are all connected to each other. When we relate in real, face-to-face time, we can’t edit what and how we want to express ourselves, so we relate to others from a more authentic self and experience a real human connection.’” There is nothing more healing from loneliness than being able to be your true self in the physical presence of another person who accepts you for who you are. I am not suggesting that you throw away your smart devices or stop texting and chatting. I am suggesting that you create a balance of connecting through social media and connecting face-to-face in real time.

#### **Let others know that they matter**

Let others know that they matter to you by listening attentively as they share their thoughts and feelings with you or simply by smiling or saying “Hey” or “What’s up?” to a student sitting alone. That smile or greeting can send a message of “I see you, I acknowledge you, and you are not alone.”

If you are experiencing feelings of rejection, isolation, or loneliness, please seek support from a caring and trusting adult. You do not have to manage alone. Confidential crisis lines are available, and Lynbrook High School has therapists right on campus.

Thank you, Aletheia staff, for choosing this topic. It allows students and parents to understand loneliness is a common experience for many, and it is not something to feel shame about or keep hidden.

## **Additional Resources**

For Teens:

Contact Cares-24/7 Line for Youth  
1-888-247-7717

Crisis Hotline (Santa Clara County):  
1-855-278-4204

Family & Children Services of Silicon Valley

[www.fcscservices.org](http://www.fcscservices.org)

- LGBTQ Youth Services  
(408) 343-7940

[www.youthspace.org](http://www.youthspace.org)

Counseling, social events, drop-in center, and workshops for LGBTQ youth and young adults 13 to 25 years old.

- Counseling Services  
(650) 326-6576

Individual and family counseling in San Jose and Palo Alto.

- Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing Services  
(408) 292-9353

Counseling and support services for children, youth, and adults.

- Step Up – Youth Substance Abuse Treatment

(650) 326-6576

Meets in Palo Alto.

Suicide Hotline:

1-800-784-2433 or 1-800-273-8255

Teen Line:

1-310- 855-4673 or 1-800- TLC-Teen

Text TEEN to 839863

Open from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. every night.

Readings for Teens and Parents:

Teens Understanding the World: Figuring out Life, People, Myself [Kindle Edition] by Frances Victoria, 2015.

Freedom from Loneliness: 52 Ways to Stop Feeling Lonely by Jennifer Page and Pam Rhodes, 2012

Readings for Parents:

The Seven Spiritual Laws for Parents: Guiding Your Children to Success and Fulfillment by Deepok Chopra, 2006

Giving the Love that Heals: A Guide for Parents by Harville Hendrix, 1998