

Mission

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

About

At the beginning of each month, the *Aletheia* staff chooses a topic that pertains to the realities of high school. Each issue comprises of firsthand experiences submitted anonymously by Lynbrook students and alumni, professional articles relating to 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 www.lhsaletheia.org, under Archives.

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

This is the third issue of *Aletheia* for the 2015-16 school year.

Submissions

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

Our next topic is Virginity; submissions are due by April 3rd. If you are interested in contributing, a submission box and a suggestion form for future topics are both available online.

*Expressing what
remains unspoken.*

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I don't know how to define myself. I'm sort of a chameleon, I guess. I can either be a sweet sugarplum or perhaps your worst nightmare. I feel like high school has taken away my identity. It's so much harder now. I used to be so happy, innocent, oblivious. I loved everyone, and I saw only the good parts of life. I don't know anymore. I try to keep my mood up, but there's always something that brings it down. Don't get me wrong, I'm not depressed, but I just don't feel the same anymore. I'm a different person to different people. Before, I would be nice and kind to everyone. Now, I've turned so bitter. It was because of the environment of stigmas that we live in. The people who aren't good at something are often looked down on. Even if it's also because they have less experience. I've realized that when someone become the weaker one, they will often get picked on. There was one girl who always tried to bring people down. And yes, she found so much pleasure in doing so. I saw it at first, and I was simply confused, not mad. I still had my bubbly spirit and believed in all good. But soon, certain conditions brought me down and she never took a break in pointing these out and ridiculing me, telling me I'm pathetic. That's when I lost it. It stung. I hadn't felt a sting like that in my a really long time. She does this to so many others and I've seen her make people cry. I hope she knows that no-one likes people who do that. But her words still ring inhead and it hurts. I don't know. I don't think- or I don't know... I don't feel like I've found myself. I wish I had- but I probably wouldn't be writing this if I have. I don't know if I'm the good I was before or the new more down-to-earth realistic person I am now. So many things and people have changed me. I can't be who I was before. My identity seems grey.

"We know what we are, but not what we may be."

- William Shakespeare

I am a sad person. I get upset from overthinking. I get upset over questioning my life. Why wasn't I was born a year later? Why didn't I confess earlier? I get upset over thinking about death and loss. What if I just throw this stuffed animal into the ocean? What if I jump in front of a bus? I don't want to be ignorant. They say knowledge is power, but through my thought process just now, I realized just how relatable the phrase 'ignorance is bliss' is. For now, I guess this means that

I don't believe in eternal happiness, since the entire cycle of life is upsetting. But maybe pursuing a new paradigm would solve my problems. Perhaps I am stuck in a video game where everyone is a sad person? What if this is just a crazy dream that someone else is having? Until I find the perfect paradigm, I'll have to obtain more knowledge and decrease my ignorance. Social constructionism is the theory that knowledge is created by humans, for humans-- by this definition and applying it to my paradigm, the state of being human is the cause of my sadness. What if I was an animal? What if I turned against the laws that bind me to humanity? Paradigms change. Social constructions change. The world is forever changing, and therefore my identity is always changing. Socrates once said that knowing yourself is one of the most difficult tasks in life. I guess I'll never find myself, given that I keep changing. But I'm okay with that. I can accept it-- at least, for now.

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I am not a disappointment. I am a hard-working human being. I live to find what makes me happy. I strive to start a family with the person of my dreams. This does not make me a failure. I am not someone who wants to live big. Fame, immortality, and life long success are not goals of mine. In fact, I know I WILL fail somewhere along the line. I cannot live in society's construct of a picture perfect identity. So I will not be your superstar shoved through the "adult slaughterhouse", jam-packed with rage and putrid, dead aspirations. I will NOT live a stressful life. I refuse to let your expectations of my identity drag me along the pavement, leaving me battered and bruised on the curb. I will be real. And I will change lives. Inspire and forge intimate relationships with the people nearest me. I am not another pawn in this mind game you call "finding your identity". I will let my identity find me. But if I DO fall subject to the bullshit that taints the innocent beauty of life, kill me. Because I would rather die a meaningless death than life in that kind of a world.

"I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will."

- Charlotte Brontë

I don't like to define myself, because often times, I don't really understand who I really am, and I'm okay with that. I had always thought that math was something that I hated, but when I got into junior year, that changed and I developed a liking towards the subject. We are constantly subconsciously changing in different aspects, and at some point we realize that what we had once defined ourselves as no longer applies to our current selves. It's all part of one of the most important lessons that life has to offer: self-discovery. And as much as we like to think that we know ourselves, there is still so much that we have to learn.

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I've pondered cultural identity a lot during my 3 years with Lynbrook. For one, most of us are of Asian descent, and while Asian culture is part of us, we have been exposed to the west at the same time, dropping a lot of Asian cultural norms by not respecting elders as much and being more outspoken than submissive when facing authority. Not surrounded by our parents' culture in our environment, I observed that some students would latch onto other cultures, appropriating them without necessarily respecting them and their histories. Some Indian students call themselves black because their skin is dark and freely use the n-word without knowing the weight of it, but are far from having been born in or around a black neighborhood. They don't know what Malcolm X did, they don't know about the institutional racism right in front of their eyes, and some actually alienate the very African Americans they identify with, telling stories of how they saw a black person on a field trip like it's a big deal. Like them, a lot of cultural influence that I experienced came from music; rap and RnB, to be specific. Music opens a gateway into cultures, and that initial spark of interest in music that was typically made by and originated from African Americans led me to learn more about black culture by listening to black musicians in interviews or reading articles about them. From that, I learned about their influences, their icons, their stances on and experiences with racial identity etc., and gradually I pieced together a modest understanding, respect, and enjoyment of modern-day and historical black culture. I necessarily can't say the same for some of my peers, like those I mentioned previously, and I believe that's due to a lack of cultural

and racial diversity in our environment both inside and around the Lynbrook area. Part of what influenced my cultural identity and respect for others today was simply exposure to different environments, like the melting pot that LA is, or even Fremont High School close by, a school that has a much lower percentage of Asians than Lynbrook. Today, I've come to terms with identifying and defining my cultural identity. I know where I come from and I pride myself in my Asian ancestry: the food, the holidays, the language, etc. I respect and enjoy black culture that I have been exposed to: the music, the people, the history, etc. And obviously I identify with general American culture like Thanksgiving dinners and July 4th. I feel alienated at times because I identify with different cultures than my peers, or because I see these cultures in certain ways that my peers don't. But I'm proud of it, too. It already has, and will continue to pay off in the future as I meet more and more people of more and more different cultural backgrounds, and get to know them as friends and companions.

"Never forget what you are, for surely the world will not. Make it your strength. Then it can never be your weakness. Armour yourself in it, and it will never be used to hurt you."

- George R.R. Martin

Is it weird that I don't know how to identify myself? It's pretty easy to do it on the surface: Indian male, Senior, intelligence slightly above average and fairly fit physically. Take it a step further and I could say that I have average looks, a decent amount of friends, and a mild sense of humor. But I don't really know how to define myself where it really matters. Am I really happy? Am I unique or special in any way? I can't really remember the last time I felt happy. Now, that doesn't mean I'm depressed or anything, I've just never felt happy. Everything that's made me laugh or smile just feels like a small blip of amusement that quickly fades to indifference. The same goes for feeling unhappy; it just fades to indifference. The one thing which I find the most agonizing to experience is the wide expanse of grey indifference which has become a constant in my life. It's not like I don't know how to react to things, it's just that I've habitually stopped reacting to them. Is

life supposed to get better than this? Am I just being a little bitch because it gets worse? Do other people feel the same sense of indifference? I guess I could say that I know that I'm not happy. But I can't really classify myself as inert, unreactive, and indifferent, can I? I'm not sure if I'm actually different than other people or not. I can be a serious f****t at times, but do other people think of themselves in the same way? Do they make the same stupid ass mistakes which I make? I don't feel like writing the rest of whatever I had planned, so I guess I'll wrap it up. Writing this made me realize one thing, I can define myself. I go through the motions of my life without feeling or reacting to anything. I don't really have any set dreams or plans other than to become an engineer/scientist/doctor/designer or whatever the hell 90% of people from Lynbrook go on to become. Therefore, I identify as a potato.

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I usually don't feel particularly American but whenever someone in class gets picked to read/present and they start reading in a thick accent I am very aware of my citizenship.

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Society is an interesting tyrant. We are all subjects under its rule, often times unknowingly so. Each time we step outside the protection of our refuges, what do we see? The images of an impossible to achieve model, a new record set by a athletic prodigy, or even just the poker faced people around us at school. So often are we subconscious about what other people think about us, that we forget to be who we really are. Last week, someone proposed a question, why do you wear what you wear? Truthfully, I answered that it was so that I could feel better about myself, and how these clothes gave me confidence. However, that in itself says how much society's views influences our own self image. Society decides what is cool, what is acceptable, and what we should act like. Nowadays, this problem is magnified with the addition of social media,. We constantly try and imitate the looks of others to change the ways others define us. Perhaps, we might never fully be able to express our true selves admist society. But that's why friends are there right? We can be who we really are, dress in whatever we

want, and be our weird selves without having to worry about being something we're not. It's not necessarily a bad thing if you do that, but keep in mind at some point everyone's going to stop caring about what they think about you. So next time you look yourself in the mirror after a long day, ask yourself, everything you did today, did you do it because you wanted to do it or because society deemed it the "cool" thing to do. Just my two cents.

"Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice."

- Steve Jobs

I was always that girl who allowed situations or activities to become my identity. When I was ten, I started playing club soccer and transformed into the 'soccer girl'. It just happened. Then when I was twelve, I tore my ACL. An ACL is a ligament in your knee, and those don't heal naturally. So I has knee surgery. And then I was that girl who tears their ACL. That completely defined me. And in turn, I got depressed. It wasn't part of my plan to go to college to play soccer. It made me feel ashamed, with my large scars running down my leg. I hated the way other coaches and my teammates would look at me, like "there's that poor girl who won't play soccer again". I didn't realize that I was allowing my ACL tear to define me until I returned back to soccer. When I joined back onto the team, a lot of my close friends had transitioned out of my team. I wasn't performing well. y grades were dropping. Then, I tore my ACL again. I know. It still irks me. But now when I look back, I don't feel like I am letting my send tear and surgery define me. It took me a long time to step back from my knee and start focusing on everything else. And that's what I'm still doing, trying to stop letting things define me. I'm going to be the person I want to be and I'm not going to let my identity change because of bad situations.

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I define myself as an overthinking and sensitive person. Lynbrook offers good resources for me to express myself, but the atmosphere at Lynbrook makes me very vulnerable at the same time. Being a gay person at Lynbrook was okay. People accept that. But I don't know.

I define myself in many ways, but does that even matter? People always say being yourself is important. I have heard it for so many times, and I know they just try to be nice when they can't even pick up a bit of goodness from me. If I am not accepted by others, how can I share my happiness and sadness, pride and judgement with others from my emotional heart. I don't like my identity. As a guy, I'm too emotional. I can't find topic to talk with my male friends. Female friends think I am weird when I'm being emotional. My family don't even understand who I really am. I have no one to talk to. Sometimes I just want to share my greatest joy of some accomplishments with friends, and they think I'm bragging. Sometimes I want to use words to comfort others, but they think I'm being fake. Trying to fix this and that of my personality, I really don't know what my identity is right now. I feel lost. Why does being yourself always get opposition from having good relationship with others? :(

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Honestly, in high school, you'd think that you have yourself figured out by now. But I can honestly say that I have so much more to discover about myself. As a Lynbrook student, I can't say that I've developed good habits as I still procrastinate as much as ever, if not more. One thing I've learned is that no matter what school you go to, be it Lynbrook, a highly competitive school where friends constantly ask you about your GPA, or some small obscure school in the middle of nowhere, stress will be constant in your life. I like to think that what defines us is how we handle it. In Lynbrook, where every personal achievement is topped by someone else easily getting straight A's whilst meeting the president for some fancy accomplishment, you tend to feel small. But, my identity doesn't come from comparison to others; it comes from comparison to my past self, and how I've developed as a person.

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My grades and test scores are aspects of how I define myself, but fortunately I don't view them as the most important ones. Life seems great if you could just live how you want with a #dontjudge attitude while people around you think #youdoyou. Yeah okay, let's go through this wonderful place full of happiness that we call high school with an easy-going approach and

then blow our tops off when parents or others, dare I say it, judge and compare us with one another. Gasp. Oh, the humanity! I hear the complaints and it makes me just want to dump buckets of cold water over the complainers' heads. Sure, these "superficial academic achievements" should not be the sole definition of a person, but it's hard to say that they don't matter at all. This mindset may be due to the environment most of us are in, but still. You don't want your parents to judge/compare you? Well what do you think college admission officers will do, huh?

"Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else's opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation."

- Oscar Wilde

When I tell my friends that I go to Lynbrook, they automatically assume that I'm "smart"; that I have straight A's and am an officer of a multitude of clubs. It's hard telling my friends that I'm not that type of student; that I'm one of those that gets an occasional B or even C's. I hate how everyone at Lynbrook can't talk about anything but their grades. I walk around school hearing people say, "What did you get on the Calc test?" or "Ugh, my grade dropped 0.32 percent. Now I have a 98.68% in that class." I feel like grades are how people define themselves around school; that how SMART WE ARE, are determined through a two digit number. But in all honesty, grades don't define me, and never have. I joined the Miller-Lynbrook community a little later than everyone else. I didn't go to the elementary schools in this area such as John Muir, Meyerholz, etc. I came from a small, 500 students, K-8th grade school. At this school, academics weren't a priority. All of the teachers had this philosophy that virtues and morals were more important than subjects such as math, science, etc. The teachers would spend countless hours teaching students about the good of humility, faithfulness, curiosity, etc. I have to admit, I hated learning about these virtues when I was in elementary school, but after joining the Miller-Lynbrook community, I finally realize how beneficial these virtues are and how it keeps me from staying away from Lynbrook's #1 crime: cheating. Teachers know about the cheating problems at Lynbrook, and I see it happening all the time. I hate knowing that most of the

people in our school earn their A's without integrity. I hate knowing that people in our school are getting into Stanford and Ivy League schools without feeling the guilt of cheating to get the perfect A on their finals. Lynbrook has changed me. I am forced into creating a mindset so full of worrying about my grades, that I don't have time to have fun anymore. I'm not the same happy person I was in my elementary school. I don't ever feel free of stress; not even on the weekends. I pack my weekends with extra-curriculars because I'm forced into believing that doing a lot guarantees a good college, which I know is not true. I guess what I'm trying to say is, I define myself as different. I don't feel like I belong at Lynbrook. Why? Because I'm not a "perfect, brilliant" student that'll only become another Lynbrook statistic.

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I think I'm a cheater. All my friends cheat. People who our school respect, like class officers, cheat. Many high scorers on SAT cheated. I think our school is creating cheaters rather than hard workers. I've tried to not cheat many times, but it seems pointless.

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

- Mahatma Gandhi

I define myself as an honest person. In today's world, having honesty in almost any form will make you stand out. If you're the first class to take a test, everyone will ask you what's on it and it's become common courtesy to tell them. If you've been trusted with a secret, it's a given that your close friends will hear about it. If you don't feel comfortable with someone talking to you, you don't admit that to him/her in fear of hurting their feelings. My environment has shaped me in showing me exactly what I don't want to be. I see all these people who are so polite and they make you think they are great people, but if it meant a higher grade, they would steal from a baby. I have found myself. This one day, all my friends were cheating on a test. They had studied what they knew would be on the test and they were bound to get As. I studied the old fashioned way. The one in which I read the entire chapter, look over my notes, and memorized what I could. My friends all got high As, but I got an 84%.

That moment, I felt great. I realized that with my honest identity, I can never be trumped by by any superficial thing. If that means getting an honest B instead of a cheat A, I am happy to do it. All I have to do is be the best person I can be, and that sets me apart from almost everyone else I know. If I am true to myself, I have the most valuable asset that I know of.

"Unlike a drop of water which loses its identity when it joins the ocean, man does not lose his being in the society in which he lives. Man's life is independent. He is born not for the development of the society alone, but for the development of his self."

- B. R. Ambedkar

At this point I'm less of a person and more of a GPA with arms attached to it. When people ask me to introduce myself and I don't talk about academics it feels like I'm avoiding the real core of who I am.

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I define myself as an extremely competitive person, even though I try to hide it on the outside. I used to think if you had straight A's, you were the "top" student and would with no doubt end up going to Harvard or Yale or whatever. Nowadays, I feel like in our society, having a 4.0 GPA and participating in countless extra curriculars is completely ordinary. If everyone else has it as well, why would I be special?

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I am many things: a good programmer, a singer, an aspiring hero, a procrastinator, a transhumanist, a runner, a writer, an atheist, a compassionate person... But above all, I am a person who does what makes sense, regardless of whether it fits the labels society gives me. I make sure to keep my identity fluid and malleable, because I don't want to be pigeonholed into doing what fits my role as a student/girl/math nerd/whatever.

A Teacher's Perspective

Ms. Orozco shares about her ever-changing identity

Q: How has being a teacher changed you?

MS. OROZCO: “I would say that being a teacher and helping people has always been a part of my identity. But sometimes I wake up and I’m like, ‘My God. I’m a teacher. These kids think I’m an adult.’ It really struck me that I have to be responsible and people are counting on me. I’ve never felt like that before. I’ve always been a student, where people tell me what assignments to do and that’s it. But now I have to be on top of my work and school life and know that people are counting on me. These students’ lives depend on how I produce the material and I really have to be attentive to their needs. I’m proud to say that I’m a teacher at Lynbrook. People are like, ‘Oh, really? Isn’t that the number one school?’ Of course, it was intimidating even before I started. I was like, ‘Am I good enough to teach these kids? In the end they’ll be teaching me.’ But these kids surprised me in a good way. They ask questions. They get things quickly. We’re going to do a debate and I’m really excited because at my student teaching workplace I could never have done something like this debate.”

Q: How do you think the students see you?

OROZCO: “I think that depends. My philosophy is that I don’t care if the students like me; I just want them to respect me, and that’s something that I feel from them. These kids respect me. If you come to my classes, they’re absolutely crazy, people are cracking up, and they love the World War I lectures that I do. I’m nine years older than them, so I know the language that they use and they talk to me about different stuff, like, ‘Can I add you on Snapchat?’ and I’m like, ‘No, that’s weird.’ So I feel like they can connect with me, and I help them out because I know that they’re stressed out. For the most part, they see me as someone that they can trust and feel comfortable with.”

Q: Is there a side to you that your students don’t see but you wish they knew about?

OROZCO: “Sometimes I mess up, because I’m a new teacher and I mess up all the time. I want them to know how thankful I am for just going with the flow of things, even after a lesson that was completely terrible. But they accept everything I give them. “I really am happy that I’ve been accepted at Lynbrook

and I’m having an awesome time being a teacher here, but sometimes I wish that they knew that I’m dealing with the same things they are. I really felt out of place in this school, because I’m Hispanic and a large number of the teachers are not. I’ve been really accepted, but still, it’s always in the back of your mind. I want them to know that even though they feel out of place that’s not a feeling that only they feel. I feel it too, sometimes. “My parents criticize me a lot, and my dad and I never get along. He’s always criticized me. and I hear about stuff like that from my students as well. So I want them to know that it’s not just them, and that it’s okay. You’re never going to make every person happy. Accept yourself and stop caring. There comes a point in your life when you’re just over it. I’m not saying not to care about your grades; I’m just saying that things happen. A lot of kids get really anxious and I want them to know that it’s not the end of the world. It’s all about grades right now, but they have to look at the bigger spectrum. I want them to look around.”

Q: How would you define your identity?

OROZCO: “Being Nicaraguan has made up a big part of my identity. I’m also very school-oriented—I’ve always been academic. But I feel like my identity has been changing as I keep growing up, and it’s because of my experiences. During college my identity totally changed. It was a whole different environment. It was the time of my first relationship and the end of my first relationship, which was one thing that really changed me. It was not the best thing for me, and I was told that teaching is not a valuable profession, for example, but I’ve accepted it. I’ve changed. I used to be really shy and now I’m not shy anymore. I keep evolving and I’m willing to try new experiences. So it’s hard for me to say what my identity is because I keep changing it. Of course, I love saying that Lynbrook is part of my identity. I really enjoy it here.”

Q: What are some activities that you enjoy outside of school?

OROZCO: I’m a sports fan—go Giants!—and I’m very artistic. I play the violin. I’ve done a lot of artwork. And lately tennis has been a big part of my identity because I’m making a lot of friends that way.”

Maureen Johnston, LMFT

Maureen Johnston, LMFT

Maureen Johnston has been a LMFT in private practice in San Jose for over 20 years. A large portion of her practice is with the Transgender community and their families. She and her colleagues run monthly support groups for Gender

Nonconforming Kids/Teens and their Parents. She provides training for other professionals interested in creating Gender Affirmative environments. You can learn more about her at www.maureenjohnston.com.

When the Aletheia staff first approached me to participate in this month's issue, I was delighted with the topic: Identity. This felt like the perfect topic for both the students, and for me!

It is perfect for the students because the formation of one's own identity is the primary goal of adolescence. As Erik Erikson, one of the grandfathers of psychology, describes it in his stages of psychosocial development, the task of this period of life is *Identity vs. Role Confusion*. And the Existential Question at this point in life is: *Who Am I and What Can I Be?*

The adolescent is newly concerned with how they appear to others. ... As they make the transition from childhood to adulthood, adolescents ponder the roles they will play in the adult world. Initially, they are apt to experience some role confusion—mixed ideas and feelings about the specific ways in which they will fit into society—and may experiment with a variety of behaviors and activities...

Youth is a time of radical change—the great body changes accompanying puberty, the ability of the mind to search one's own intentions and the intentions of others, the suddenly sharpened awareness of the roles society has offered for later life.

Adolescents "are confronted by the need to re-establish [boundaries] for themselves and to do this in the face of an often potentially hostile world."

Wikipedia

I personally love this topic since so much of my daily life is focused on helping my clients and colleagues to define themselves and to find ways to live in the world in a manner that feels both authentic and safe. A large portion of my work these days is focused on gender identity. For the last 10 years, as I have been providing therapy to many in the gender nonconforming community, I have learned so much from them, not only about gender, but also the importance of being seen and recognized for who we really are.

For most of us, a big part of our identity revolves around the roles we inhabit: Student. Friend. Sister/brother. Daughter/son. Parent. Much of the time, we are not even really conscious of the roles that are most integral to who we are; we don't even think about them. I probably never wake up in the morning and think, "ok, today I am a white, middle-class, suburban mom and wife, born and raised in the Midwest, but now living in California" – but these are all very important aspects of my identity.

At other times, these core parts come very much to the foreground. Depending upon the context we're in, we are very aware of our cultural heritage, our gender, our position in our family, and/or our spiritual community. Sometimes, we are completely unaware of aspects of our identity until they are challenged or threatened in some manner.

Sometimes, my clients focus on sorting out how much of their identity is self-defined and how much is put upon them by others. It can be difficult to figure out who we really are and not just what others have told us we are. For many different reasons, very large parts of who we are may go underground and stay hidden for long periods of time.

As the Aletheia staff read the submissions out loud, I was not surprised that the vast majority were focused on their identity as a student, but I was saddened to hear how many described the intense pressure to get excellent grades, no matter the cost or the method. This kind of pressure can be harmful on so many levels and can lead to lots of different problems: psychological, relational, and physical.

I am sure that it is no surprise to anyone in the Lynbrook community that many students are very stressed about their grades. I believe it is still important for parents, students, teachers, and administrators to occasionally step back and ask yourselves what are little and big steps that can be taken to alleviate the stress. Taking a broader view of who you are might help.

Tips for parents

- Tell your kids in your words and actions how much you love them and are proud of them, regardless of their grades. Let them know that who they are is more important than what they've done.
- Slow down and take time to really LISTEN to your child. Find out what is really important to them, not what you think they should believe is important.
- Understand that adolescence is a time of experimentation and exploration of ways of being in the world.
- Keep reminding yourself that your teens' grades are not a reflection of you. They are their own persons with their own thoughts, actions, perceptions, and opinions. They have their own strengths, challenges, and weaknesses.
- Be sensitive to the fact that your children are very aware of your feelings about their academic performance. They really do want to please you and make you proud of them.
- Be very careful of the pressures, subtle as well as overt, that you place on your kids.
- Take the focus off their grades and put it on what they're learning.
- Remember that there are many paths to success, and many different ways to define success.

Tips for teens

- Try to remember that it is completely normal to feel confused about who you are and where you belong at this point in your life. It is actually how you are supposed to be feeling.
- Give yourself permission to experiment with different looks, roles, perspectives, and friends.
- Accept that who you are now, what you believe, and many of the things that are really important at this point, are all going to evolve and change over time. And, that this is a good thing.
- Your grades do not define you. You are much more than your test scores. In just a few short years, no one will care how well you performed on the SAT, ACT, or an AP test. They will care about what kind of person you are.
- Know that there are many paths to success, and many different ways to define success.