



## 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

The *Aletheia* staff chooses topics that pertain to the realities of high school. Each issue comprises of firsthand experiences submitted anonymously by Lynbrook students and alumni, professional articles relating to that chosen 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](http://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 first issue of *Aletheia* for the 2016-17 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 "What My Parents Don't Know About Me"; submissions are due by December 4th, 2016. 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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It's hard to define bullying. What line does an act need to cross in order to be defined as bullying? If it's unintentional, is it considered bullying? If it isn't from an external source, but rather an internal voice, is it bullying? If we can't define it, can we say Lynbrook has a bullying problem? Some people at Lynbrook would say that we don't have a bullying problem, others would say we have a "different kind" of bullying. Personally, I can't say that I have experienced the "traditional" kind of bullying, and I agree that it isn't something prevalent in our school. I would say that the condescending remarks, gossip, rumors, lies, etc. that I've heard and received could be considered bullying by some, but it all goes back to the question of what acts are defined as bullying, and what acts aren't? As for what I've seen around school, I can't say that I really see "bullying," but that's not to say some form of it doesn't exist. I know a lot of kids struggle with the pressure put on by peers, parents, themselves, etc. This pressure is shown in different forms, like peers unintentionally making them feel bad based on grades or success, or someone constantly in a state of self-deprecation. Is this considered bullying? Because I honestly don't know.

*"Blowing out someone else's candle doesn't make yours shine any brighter."*

- Unknown

Bullying is intentionally doing something hurtful, usually either physically or verbally. I think bullying has a completely different nature at Lynbrook than it would most other places. In high schools in movies, the bullies are usually mean big guys who beat up nerds. I don't think this ever happens at Lynbrook. At Lynbrook, almost none of the bullying is physical. If we get upset with people for whatever reason, we chastise them when they are not there. We spread rumors. We promise people officer positions in clubs in return for favors, but we take the favors and do not keep our end of the bargains. We are never confrontational. I think most Lynbrook students are afraid of confrontation, so they try to avoid it as best as they can, but they are also not nearly as innocent as they seem, so they are secret bullies. We also never settle conflicts physically, since we are too scared of anything landing on our behavioral records, and we are petrified of anything hurting our chances of getting into a good college. I was a giver and taker of bullying for a while, but eventually, I realized that it is all bullsh\*t. Making enemies is stupid. Stand up for yourself if need be, but I have never been in a

situation in my life in which someone was bullied, and it was justified.

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I feel that bullying is essentially putting someone down, and doing that in a way that it affects the other person deeply. I feel that I have never really bullied anyone. The only time I remember doing something like that when made fun of someone's lips, and that's something that I still remember today, and regret so much. I have apologized to that person, and I feel that things are good between us, but still it's a vivid memory that I can always recall.

*"When people hurt you over and over, think of them like sandpaper. They may scratch and hurt you a bit, but in the end you end up polished and they end up useless."*

- Chris Colfer

Honestly Miller was a lot worse with bullying for me. I think the biggest problem, though, is when teachers claim to be against bullying, but when it actually happens, and a student reports it - well, for my experience in Miller bullying happened in the form of some students deliberately saying inflammatory statements over and over trying to get a reaction out of me, so, when it happened, teachers would just say not to give them a reaction, and thus putting the responsibility on the student being bullied. It isn't the job of the student being bullied to change their reactions so that the bullies stop; it's the job of the teachers and staff to actually give REAL consequences to the bullies to make them stop. For one thing, even though the bullies in middle school were often very blatant, they never faced any consequences. According to "Zero Tolerance Policy" they should have at least been suspended for some of what they did. But that never happened. Another big issue, is that students are never, ever, EVER taught on what to do if a teacher is bullying them, or making them feel unsafe. Most students simply end up learning on the spot to try to endure through it. With responses like this, and a culture like this, it's no wonder that most students don't even think of reporting, in many cases. It isn't enough for staff to simply say that they have a zero tolerance policy for bullying, and that x, y, and z actions are unacceptable - students aren't going to trust them until they see concrete actions and proof of that.

I always thought bullying only consisted of one kid teasing another, the way we are so used to seeing in movies, but I've learned through my experiences that it is so much more than that. Bullying is an action--whether physical or emotional-- that makes the victim feel hurt, embarrassed, sad, depressed, and many other emotions that no human should ever have to feel. When I first got bullied, I did not realize it was actually happening, until I talked to a counselor who pointed it out to me. For a couple of weeks, I did not want to believe that the people who I called my best friends for several years, were now bullies. We would have fights from time to time and I knew that my relationships with them were not perfect, but to be ganged up on and excluded really crushed me. I was always trying my hardest to please them and be accepted, and this just proved to me that it was all for nothing. From that point on I tried to figure out why this was happening to me. What did I do that made them suddenly react like this? I would read that text message they all wrote to me, and for a while I started to believe that all the names they called me, all the horrible things they accused me of, and all the qualities they said about me, were true. I let them control how I felt about myself. I let them decide my emotions. I let them define me. From endless talks with my counselor and my mom, I soon realized the problem. It doesn't matter what they say about me or what they think because I am the only one who can decide how I want to react. If I knew that what they accused me of, was not true, why did I still feel bad about myself? There's always two ways to look at things; a positive way and a negative way. Although for me where the negative way seems to come more easily, I had to learn that considering the brighter side of things is the only way out. And that's exactly what I did. I knew this was going to be challenging because I am not an independent person and have pretty low self-esteem, which are not the ingredients for making new friends. Despite that, I decided the only option was to not look back, so I just kept going forward. I slowly started to strengthen the little relationships I had with other people, and although it was nowhere close to easy, it worked. Soon I had a place to sit, people to talk to, an environment where I knew I was not being judged. For the first time, I generally feel that people like me for who I really am. Now I can confidently say that I am more independent. I am braver. I am in control of myself. I realized that by not being so isolated from the rest of our school, there are so many other wonderful people who are not judgmental, condescending, or critical.

This experience really gave me more opportunities to explore not only what I am capable of, but meet new people and escape that world of hate. I feel more free, more relaxed, and less worried about what people think of me. I became more involved with the school, more focused on my studies, and overall, the person I wished to be a long time ago. Although the competition of Lynbrook makes it difficult to stay confident at times, it is important to be with people who you feel comfortable with. The unfortunate experience of bullying is like walking through a tunnel. You go in just like an ordinary person, not knowing what can happen, until something horrible does. For a while you're stuck. You are constantly surrounded by hate, depression, sadness, and start to believe that there is really no way out. You walk through the darkness for a while, unsure of what lies ahead. From that point, there are only two options, to look at the negative, or look at the positive. You either give up and forever remain in the darkness, or muster up the courage to try to find the light. At the end of the tunnel, lies a whole other world of opportunities; A place for you to start fresh and never look back.

I am a victim of bullying and a bully. I used to consider bullies as those who everyone knew were strong and demanding people. I was wrong. Becoming a bully gives somebody the illusive power to believe in themselves and force others to respect them through fear and oppression. For me, becoming a bully was something that was rather cathartic. During elementary school, a lot of problems existed in familial relationships and in school, and often times, I would be confused and angry that I couldn't control the events that molded me into a bitter and depressed person. It was a struggle finding friends and being able to talk properly, because I was already marked down as a "tough child" or a "problem child". Because I would push my peers around and be rude, even teachers wouldn't bother trying to understand me, someone who struggled so hard to fit in. It came to a point where I kicked one of my closest friends to a point where she had to see the school nurse and another doctor. She told me that I wasn't going to be a part of a class club she was making, and this rejection, even if it is completely petty, was part of a snowball effect no one knew or understood. I just want to tell anyone who find me cold or harsh to this day sorry. Being a bully wasn't something I wanted to be; I think the process is for people who are scared of losing anymore in their lives. And I was that type of person.

I think that, the Lynbrook environment definitely encourages bullying. This school looks so great but it actually has a lot of problems. I won't deny that there aren't good things, and in my experience when I've reported bullying here the response has been better than Miller, but 1) that's not a very high standard (Miller is...Not good) and 2) a lot of students don't necessarily feel safe to report bullying. I think that one way that could help is if, at the beginning of school, while talking about Zero Tolerance Policy, if the school also explained to students how to report harrasment/extortion/violence/bullying/etc.

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Bullying is where someone intimidate or blackmail someone else. I, \*\*\*\* \*, have experienced bullying, and it has made me see the bully in a different way. The bullying started by a facebook group made by \*\*\*\* \*. After he made this facebook group, I wanted to leave. When I left he made some threatening statements about the fact that me leaving caused other to leave. Thus, I am now sure that I will never accept to join another facebook groups. Now, I am not as mentally scared as I was before because I learned to change and become a new. I have not witnessed any bullying in the Lynbrook Enviornment. Lynbrook enviornment has many restrictions but at the same time, it encourages and discourages bullying. It allows for freedom which causes bullying, but al the same time Lynbrook also makes many rules that discourage bullying.

*"Never be bullied into silence. Never allow yourself to be made a victim. Accept no one's definition of your life, but define yourself."*

*-Harvey S. Firestone*

One of the things that pisses me off, is when I see teachers claiming to have their classroom be a safe space, but then the teacher themselves actually makes things unsafe, from sexist and transphobic jokes, to ableist statements and activities. I once had to argue in a class, about who we should save on an island. Many students said that we should let the disabled person die, because they're disabled and so not as useful. I am disabled. And the teacher /knows/ that. And what does the teacher do? Nothing. his is just one of many examples with where teachers don't actually make their classrooms a safe place.

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

*"Bullies want to abuse you. Instead of allowing that, you can use them as your personal motivators. Power up and let the bully eat your dust."*

*-Nick Vujicic*

April 17, 2016. In response to the events I witnessed today, I would like to address this issue. Today, a very good friend of mine visited me. I hadn't seen him in a while. You know, my day would have been lovely--had I not come home to this bull. The events which prompted the #notanumber posts. This is absolutely disgusting. As shown here, Lynbrook obviously does have bullying, but it's often very invisible. I've seen it time and time again. I myself have been called abusive names. To my face? No. When they thought I wasn't listening? Yes. Online? Most definitely. To me, it seems most of the bullying that happens around here happens where other people can't see it. Nobody has the guts to do it with others watching. If you have no problem doing it in "private", why won't you do it in public as well? In addition, my ex-friends used to call another friend names behind her back. Did she know? Probably not. Was she hurt? Probably not. Still, that is not acceptable. This kind of behavior is extremely disrespectful and serves no productive purpose. Berating another person is not going to help anyone's well-being. It is just going to end up destroying your relationships. Maybe it's a sign of low self-esteem. Instead of pretending that other people are inferior to you, why don't you focus on making yourself a better person? To the boys who think it's acceptable to objectify women: what are you trying to accomplish? Finding a wife? Please. With that attitude, you are going to end up alone. My point is, if you can't talk about someone respectfully, then don't talk about them. Think twice before talking about someone behind their back



## Melissa Pirwani, LCSW

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Melissa Pirwani is a therapist in private practice in San Jose, CA. She works with children, teens and adults of all ages, and facilitates trainings on suicide intervention for anyone in the community interested in learning life-saving skills. Her children's book "No Touching Secrets! Let's talk about okay and not okay touching" helps adults talk to children about sexual abuse. Find out more information at [www.melissapirwani.com](http://www.melissapirwani.com)

Spreading a rumor. A condescending remark. Jokes in the classroom at someone's expense. Tagging classmates on someone's vulnerable Facebook post to make sure others "see it". A tweet. Excluding others in person or online in a way that is obvious. Name-calling. Ranking each other. Labeling others' "setbacks" as personal and permanent failures. This is what bullying looks like at Lynbrook High School.

Perhaps as you've read this edition of the Aletheia, you've begun to see bullying in a different way. As you reflect, is it possible you have bullied or mistreated your classmates? Have your actions, or inactions, supported or contributed to a culture of bullying at Lynbrook High? Very few people readily see themselves as bullies, and yet bullying is occurring in your school and in your online community.

Like many therapists, I have worked with people facing unique and difficult circumstances, for instance, those grieving, depressed, suicidal or healing from prior abuse. Additionally, I have worked with people who are court-ordered to counseling because they have hurt others, sometimes having committed crimes against adults or children. During our therapy work, we discuss how they came to a place in their life where they began hurting others. Often we uncover experiences of pain, mismanagement of feelings, and distorted thoughts about themselves and others. Hold on to that for now—I'm going to come back to that idea.

Being bullied is very painful. It can make someone feel powerless. It can make someone feel disoriented—like their world is out of control. I wanted to highlight a particular submission included in this edition of the Aletheia. The writer describes their experience of being bullied by several friends. As a result, they sought out support from a counselor and parent. The support they received helped the writer break free from the people bullying them. Additionally, the writer developed a new way of thinking about themselves, about what happened to them and what to do next. Here's the sentence within their powerful testimony that caught my attention: "I am in control of myself." Wow! Wow! Wow! Here's how I heard it: "I am in control of myself—of the way I think— and what I choose to do next." Their experience of healing and thriving was awe-inspiring.

No question, seeking out support is essential. But this writer highlighted a really powerful insight and a great truth. It may be a surprise to learn that the way we think about ourselves, others and our circumstances can be so powerful. Our thinking can hurt us (and others). And our thinking can heal us. Our thinking influences our feelings, and it impacts what we do next, for better or worse.

Everyday we have new experiences. Sometimes these experiences are wonderful and sometimes these experiences are extremely painful. How we let ourselves think about the things happening in our lives starts us down an emotional path and heavily influences what we do, including how we treat others and how we treat

ourselves.

Our community and culture sow the seeds that influence the development of bullying. Academic pressure and competition amongst each other was mentioned repeatedly as one of the motivations for bullying at LHS. The demands for excellence at all times, no matter the cost, shape how students see themselves and treat their peers.

What can the adults in this community do? First, be aware of the signs of bullying and be responsive. Learn how to support a youth in crisis and identify local resources. Be aware of the risk of suicide and know how to respond or refer responsibly. Regarding academic pressure, teachers, parents and community members can be mindful of their own thoughts about academics, about success and about the intrinsic value of the students in this community. Think about how you are communicating those messages, directly or indirectly, to a LHS student. Think about the impact of these messages. No doubt, your messages influence how the student will think about themselves and their peers. It will impact what they do.

As a student, if you are being mistreated or bullied by a classmate, a peer or a teacher, I urge you to report it, get help from an adult and seek out support to talk about what you have gone through. Perhaps you are hoping it will blow over or you want to believe it's not really "bullying"—but it is a big deal when someone mistreats you. It's painful and it's not right. Kids have rights—real rights—including the right to be safe and free from bullying and abuse. LHS has a zero tolerance policy against bullying. Tell a teacher. Tell an administrator. Tell a parent. Tell a school counselor. Keep telling people until you have a safe place to live, learn, and thrive. Your life is important and valuable.

As a student, if you are mistreating others, I encourage you to get support to do things differently. Mistreating others usually comes out of pain—

painful experiences, painful thoughts, painful feelings. Likewise, talk to a teacher, parent, therapist or administrator and ask for help with the painful experiences and thoughts you have. You have a right to a safe place to live, learn, and thrive. Your life is important and valuable.

As a student, if you notice bullying behavior or behavior that violates the integrity of another, I encourage you to speak up. Speak out against bullying and stand up for those who are being mistreated. Silence (and laughter) condones bad behavior and can further traumatize someone who is suffering. Your actions determine the culture of your school. Everyday you will have an opportunity to take a stand against injustice and the misuse of power. As you live your life, you will see other injustices, big and small. Your voice is powerful and it will always be welcome in the cause of justice.

## Additional Resources

*Stomp out Bullying (National bullying and cyberbullying prevention organization)*  
<http://www.stompoutbullying.org>

*Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255 or online chat option)*  
<http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

*Teen Line (Call, text, email and message boards for support)*  
<https://teenlineonline.org>

*Pacer's National Bullying Prevention Center (Information Resources)*  
<http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/>

*Safe Kids (Bullying and Cyber-bullying Resources)*  
<http://www.safekids.com/bullying-cyberbullying-resources/>

*American Psychological Association*  
<http://www.apa.org/topics/bullying/>

*It gets better*  
<http://www.itgetsbetter.org>

*Cyberbullying Resources for Parents*  
<http://cyberbullying.org/resources/parents>

*"The Silicon Valley Suicides" The Atlantic*  
<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/12/the-silicon-valley-suicides/413140/>