



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 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 In Retrospect. 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 remember in 9th grade, I was with a bunch of friends. Let's just say that they weren't the nicest clique. You have to be able to curse, listen to the "leader"'s music, and look up to her. I wasn't able to curse, and I hated the leader's music. For three months the whole clique treated me like trash and I almost entered depression, and that was the time when I was excluded. Then I had no choice.. (though I DID have a choice). I decided to go back into the clique, and I also changed myself. I was a junky girl, I cursed, acted weird, and my grades were also falling. Then, I started talking to these 2 other girls in my class, they were really nice to me and we shared a lot in common. I quickly left the clique and was myself again. Ya-hoo! I was back to NORMAL! My grades went back up also as well :) Now I'm in 11th grade. and I belong to an Asian group. We share everything in common and I'm kind of the leader. Being the leader of a clique does not mean bossing everyone around, but the members of the clique all look up to you and always go to you for help. I love my clique, and love being included in it.

"I think it's perfectly acceptable not to run with cliques."

- Megan Fox

According to the dictionary, a clique is "a small group of people, with shared interests or other features in common, who spend time together and do not readily allow others to join them." Recently, I've been feeling kind of out of place in mine. I'm good friends with one but everyone else is starting to piss me off. maybe it's just my depression talking, but recently, they've become all loud and kind of boring and annoying and I can't relate to them as much anymore. It's not like I have any other friends outside my clique so I'm not really sure of what to do. I'm lonely without them but lonely with them too. Making new friends is too much work and I don't want to become some creeper who strikes up random conversations with other people. Maybe everyone is just changing and I'm starting to realize that. Or I'm changing. Or everyone is. Maybe my standards are just too high. Or maybe

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I guess cliques aren't really a thing at Lynbrook as much as groups that unite behind a singular theme. While that may sound like the definition of a clique, it's different at Lynbrook. The members might change, but the central theme stays. Most often here it's a pressure for good grades or something similar. Aletheia is anonymous, so I'll share about my "clique". We do a lot of drugs. Not anything too crazy (well, sometimes it might be something pretty hard, but never on a school night Mom, I promise!). LOTS OF DRUGS. I think I need to get out of this clique, but I feel like I won't have any friends if I tell them how I feel. Do you think they all feel the same way and none of us ever say anything?

"Don't give in to all the cliques and popularity. It means nothing. I know super popular guys, and guess what? They're just normal people, too."

- Leo Howard

Cliques. A topic that I frequently ponder over. Am I part of one? Am I contributing to the clique culture at Lynbrook? Are the cliques just in my head? Probably, it's very possible, and most likely not. Unfortunately, those are the most honest answers I can find within myself for those questions. As much as I hate to be part of the problem, I am not strong enough to be by myself. I suffer from crippling anxiety, it's largely all in my head, and at this moment, I am not strong enough to overcome it. I can only hope that one day I will be confident enough to break free and embrace my own identity, one not associated with a clique.

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F*** a clique bro I been kicked out of em and struggled to integrate myself in new ones for my whole hs career. Today I know how to be alone, how to cut off my closest friends if I'm getting disrespected, and how to cherish/appreciate how delicate and wonderful a thing friendship is. the rest of you take that sh*t for granted and you're gonna be lost as f*** when you get put into my position. Only difference is that I've already been thru it and won't break a sweat; 90% of people at this school and in life in general are fake as f*** and nobody really gives a sh*t about you besides your blood. I'm high and focused f*** all of you who switched up on me or tried to pull me down im next up

I think I would define a clique as an exclusive group of friends, especially people who aren't welcoming to "outsiders." My group of friends is pretty inclusive, and different people often join our group for lunch, so I wouldn't call it a clique. I also float around and hang out with various groups regularly. To me, the people on campus who are most reminiscent of cliques are the popular kids. Sometimes they seem unapproachable, and if you joined them you would be interrupting something. But I could be wrong - maybe I just haven't gotten to know them? I haven't really had to deal with cliques at Lynbrook, but I had more problems with cliques when I was younger. Once in middle school, my best friends didn't invite me to hang out with them because they thought I was "annoying". Then it got really ugly, and that basically ruined my friendship with them. So yeah, I don't think there's anything good about cliques at all.

"Don't confine yourself to a select group of friends, often known as a clique.

Cliques by definition leave people out. Lock yourself into one, and you'll never know how many terrific friendships you may be missing."

-Jerry Spinelli

Cliques are interesting. It's like there exists another dynamic world within each clique, small microcosms inside an influx of human dynamic at Lynbrook. I'm not going to lie and say cliques are completely healthy or completely unhealthy, that they defined me completely or struck me down. That's an abundance of extremes perpetuated by people hoping friend relationships are as meaningful, predictable, and flawless as depicted in a young adult romance film. I only wish. In my clique, I won't lie when I say a friend I knew for greater number of years than there are fingers on my hands turned from me to snatch at the fleeting chance of popularity. I won't say I didn't as well. In my clique, I won't lie when I say my friend decided that I was a priority and offered a place to rest just in case things got bad at home. In my clique, I won't lie when I say my friend decided I wasn't a priority and decided to chase after someone attractive and approachable. In my clique, I won't lie when I say I'm waiting for a re-

sponse to a message from months back, asking how are you. In my clique, I won't lie when I say friends are able to deal with me thick and thin, even at 3 am, whatever the sh*t I do, they're always there for me. In my clique, I won't lie when I say friends talk behind my back and I greet them with a friendly hello the following day. In my clique, I won't lie when I say someone thinks s/he's alone but in reality, there's no one else I can relate to more. I could honestly go on and on about how this person does this certain thing or that certain thing. Someone thinks alcohol is a solution, another listening to music. My friends make me evaluate what a friend is time and time again. It's a weary process, often full of hate and tears, but I'm making progress. But at the end of the day, each one of these people are part of my "clique" and if any one of these people is not having a good day, this is sort of an indirect message that it's ok to talk about it. Fast forward couple years, and no matter where you all are, I can say thank you for being part of my high school experience. All of you made this world livable. :)

I think that a clique is essentially a group that someone joins almost, and in context to a situation, it is one of many groups in a larger community. I feel that at Lynbrook if there is ONE thing that I always see, it is the cliqu-iness. I'm a senior now, and I've seen classes come and go in my past four years, and every year I go to the quad, and I can see just a bunch of separate groups hanging out with themselves. I think that cliques do affect identity, because your environment really shapes you. I personally have noticed that I act different around different people, and I'm sort of like a different person in different groups. The reason for this is I think that we are really affected by the people around us in how they talk to us and interact with us. I think that cliques have had both a positive and a negative impact on my life. Positive because I've been able to be in a group of like minded people, and that was great, but also negative in cases when I always felt like I didn't fit in, or I was left out, just because I didn't fit into any certain clique.

"The Clique: The only thing harder than getting in is staying in."

-Lisi Harrison

I don't really know how to define clique, but I guess it's a group of people that people assimilate with a single image or quality. In some senses, these groups of people can be really exclusive because of this single way of describing them. Or a more general definition could just be a group of people that are close. As for my own life, I'm not sure how cliques have affected my identity, or if technically I'm in a clique of my own. I definitely have had my experience with cliques, however. Especially in freshman year, when I didn't really have a "group of friends" it became glaringly obvious that others had "cliques" or a group of friends that they could always hang out with and rely on. Over the past couple of years, I have made a group of friends, but I'm not sure if we technically qualify as a "clique" since that requires some kind of definition, and I still don't even really know what a clique is (lol). As for the negative/positive impact that cliques have had, I don't think that it affects my life as much now, but definitely in freshman year it did affect me just because I thought it was so hard to join pre-existing groups of friends. Overall, throughout Lynbrook, I see a lot of cliques (or what I think are cliques). I think there are cliques that form from things like sports and clubs, but most groups seem to be diverse in that aspect. Personality wise is kind of a different story, because a lot of groups of friends are friends because they are similar. It's human tendency to feel more comfortable with people that you are similar to, but I don't think that necessarily makes them a clique. So my conclusion is that I really don't know what the hell a clique is. I guess it's the exclusivity of a group of friends that makes them a clique? I don't know.

high school career. Freshman year was spent running around different groups, not sure which one I would want to immerse myself in... but slowly people started closing their boundaries. I've learned that as high school drags on, people become more and more secluded towards their defined friend group, and it's almost as if they are your obligatory hang out group. If I decide to hang out with someone else, it comes out as offensive. If I find myself hanging out with another group at brunch, they'll ask, where were you today? Am I not allowed to hang out with anyone else? I can't wait for college to come so I relive that short sweet year when everyone includes everyone and the menacing term of "cliques" is but a mere thought and has not become a real occurrence just yet.

"We often surround ourselves with the people we most want to live with, thus forming a club or clique, not a community. Anyone can form a club; it takes grace, shared vision, and hard work to form a community."

- Philip Yancey

People gravitate towards people they connect with. It's inevitable that these cliques form, and it is a huge part of my high school life. I can say that they have definitely been the most stressful part of my

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It's no mystery to high school students that walking onto a school campus will immediately reveal varied sets of groups. If I were to ask someone to tell me about the groups, they will easily be able to pick out who is in which group and what that group is like. Sometimes these groups are referred to as "cliques." But what exactly distinguishes a clique from a group?

I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, and have worked with teens since I was barely out of college. I still work with teens in my private practice, and was very excited when I was approached to write an article for Lynbrook about cliques. To be quite honest, however, it's been a really long time since I've been around cliques. Yes, I often work with individuals who are in some way affected by a clique. But immersing myself in really thinking about cliques presented a new adventure.

In this article, I hope to provide some helpful information about cliques. I'll first discuss what they are and how they play an important part in your social life. Next, I'd like to address some pros and cons of how cliques can affect your personal development and overall mental health. Finally, I will address questions about how to get out of a clique, how to speak up, and where to go for help.

What are cliques, anyway?

Cliques are timeless. Movies like *Heathers*, *Mean Girls* and *The Breakfast Club* all address the complexities of cliques and the social development of teens that range across generations. Cliques happen in other countries, and are not necessarily a cultural phenomenon unique to the USA. They can be composed of really nice people, really mean people, or both. And they vary in size—some are small, and some are really big.

The dictionary definition of "clique" is: A narrow exclusive circle or group of persons; especially: one held together by common interests, views, or purposes. In my opinion, this definition fails to delineate a distinction between a 'group' and a 'clique.' Merriam-Webster kind of makes 'cliques' sound synonymous with 'groups.' And I think we can all agree that while all cliques are inherently groups, not all groups are cliques.

Cliques are distinguishable from groups because of one significant feature. Cliques have an authoritative leader. In every single clique, you will find one person who holds the power in the group. The movie *Heathers* does an excellent job of illustrating this, as everyone in the movie is vying to be the leader of the 'Heather Clique'—even if it means that some really terrible things happen to get there.

The leader of a clique tends to be charismatic, funny, popular, and opinionated. This person can draw you in, make you feel like you are important, and then suddenly dump you at a whim. Such leaders might even turn around and draw you back in if the fancy strikes them. And while this type of person may have one or two "best friends" who rely upon regularly, their loyalty to those friends and all who know them is relatively precarious.

Why are we attracted to cliques?

The fundamental reason we are attracted to cliques is because we are human creatures who long and look for connection. Studies in neuroscience increasingly validate the idea that our brains are wired to connect to each other, and that this connection is vital to our neurological and physiological growth.

Have you ever had the experience of walking into a new environment and not knowing a single living soul? Did you feel that all eyes were on you and that everyone was judging you? Did you also notice that your senses became hyper aware? That in retrospect you can recall every detail of that experience? The place, the time, and even the smells that were occurring when this happened?

Well, that was your amygdala doing what it does best; keeping you safe! Your amygdala is the most reptilian part of your brain. It is the base of the primitive response system of 'fight', 'flight', or 'freeze'. Its only job is to keep you alive. When you were standing there alone and out of place, your amygdala kicked in and brought every detail into focus. Your brain registered being alone with no one to connect to as DANGER!

Doesn't it seem odd, however, that your brain was registering danger even though no one was actually attacking you? It seems like the answer would be a clear "yes". But the brain can act in surprising ways. While our civilization has advanced to somewhat safer times (most of us, for example, no longer have to fear being eaten by a lion), our brain actually doesn't know that. Our amygdala is still standing guard, just in case a lion is waiting in the bushes waiting to pounce us. Or, in a more relatable scenario, in case the room you just walked into not knowing anyone isn't actually a rival tribe that could kill you.

This juxtaposition created by the amygdala and the frontal cortex creates a dissonance in your perceptive reality, also known as "anxiety". I'll talk more about anxiety in a moment. But first, back to the lion and the tribe. Your primitive brain holds historical experiences that actually came before you were even born. In the survival of your ancestors certain traits were passed down through offspring and became wired in your brain. Think of a bird that instinctively knows when to fly out of the nest, or a gazelle that is keenly aware that a lion would love to eat it. Your primitive brain knows that it is in danger when it is all alone and is not connected with a group.

In the history of our species, groups have played a vital role in our survival. It is groups that went out for the hunt, groups that gathered fruits and vegetables, groups that formed tribes and villages, groups that protected one another, groups that raised young, and groups that mold the values of our cultures. A person without a group has historically been a person who is unlikely to survive. It's no wonder that when you feel like there is no one in the world to talk to or trust, you feel depressed. Groups actually help our brains to stay healthy and are vital to our psychological and emotional development.

To break it down one step further and draw some connections: anxiety and depression are often symptoms that something is triggering our amygdala to feel threatened, alone, and in danger. This means that your brain is actually doing exactly what it is supposed to do! It's keeping you alive and letting you know that something needs to change. So, rather than looking at anxiety and depression as weaknesses, I think it's more apt to say they are strengths, indicating that your brain is healthy.

School is the first environment that a person enters into when beginning the process of leaving home. It's natural and necessary for young people to begin creating a life for themselves outside their family unit. And this happens in high school. In therapy terms, we call this differentiating and individuating. It's the act of moving away from your parents and finding yourself. In high school, you are not quite ready yet to jump full force into the world. But you are ready to try on different values, beliefs, thoughts, and actions. And you are ready to start making decisions for yourself, like who your friends are, how you spend your time, and what your priorities are.

Groups (including cliques) give you the support you need to define your identity while not being exposed to real danger as you leave the environment of your parents. They are the first place where you have control in how things happen. Or not. Because sometimes in cliques you might not have any control over how things happen. You might actually find yourself worried and afraid of speaking up or doing things differently. There might even be a part of you that is afraid to be different from your friends because you could risk losing them. Remember that amygdala? Here it is again. Your amygdala doesn't want you to be abandoned by your friend group. So you might start to feel sad, anxious,

Additional Resources

The Bill Wilson Center
(www.billwilsoncenter.org)

Safe Teens: Cliques
(<http://www.safeteens.org/relationships/cliques/>)

Help Starts Here
(<http://www.helpstartshere.org/>)

How to Talk So Teens Will Listen and Listen So Teens Will Talk
by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

Click or Clique: Positive and Negative Teen Social Groups
by Marie Hartwell-Walker, Ed.D
(<https://psychcentral.com/lib/click-or-clique-positive-and-negative-teen-social-groups/>)

worried, and possibly depressed because you have lost that control of being independent.

It's a pretty complicated social dynamic.

Because the clique has an authoritative leader, that person sets the theme to the clique. A student might find him/herself evolving out of that theme only to then worry about the implications of moving on and possibly losing every friend that he or she loves and spends so much time with.

To break down the pros and cons of cliques:

Pros:

1. You get friends and connections.
2. You can relate to others and you are not alone.
3. Your brain feels safe and your amygdala chills out.
4. You always have someone to talk to—someone to know.
5. It's a natural and normal process of differentiating and individuating.

Cons:

1. There is 1 authoritative leader—and it's probably not you.
2. It's constricting as the leader sets the rules.
3. You could lose it at any moment, which could make you anxious or depressed.
4. It limits your expanding identity, and you might want to be different.
5. You lose opportunities of making friendships with other people.

What to do when a clique goes bad.

Before talking about how to get out of a clique and where to get help, I'd like to first talk a little more about the authoritative leader.

I think these leaders get a bad rap. In my opinion, the leader might actually be trying to do the best that s/he can. For one thing, it's hard to run a group. So many people look to you for approval and feedback. That's a lot of power. It would be unrealistic to expect one person to understand the social dynamics of each member in her clique and navigate those systems in precisely the right way for the benefit of the whole. This isn't unique to cliques—I believe that all group leaders, even political leaders, are challenged by this responsibility.

Secondly, the authoritative person is unlikely to get productive feedback from the clique members. For example, if a clique leader pronounces that bubble tea is now the favorite drink, and invites everyone out for bubble tea, then everyone is probably going to drink bubble tea. Even if you hate bubble tea, you may find yourself drinking it without complaint, or making up an excuse to not drink it. More than likely you will make up an excuse—it's just easier that way. But the leader doesn't know that. He or she actually has no idea that you don't like bubble tea. And this aspect, in turn, actually limits the leader's social growth and experience with negotiation.

Let's say one person shyly mentions to you that they hate bubble tea and you realize that you hate it too! Suddenly you have joined forces and can relate to each other. And with one person by your side, you might start asking others what they think. Maybe two or three others all say they are over the bubble tea thing. Well, now you have a group of people who hate bubble tea and can stand united against the leader in putting an end to bubble tea forever.

Well, this is great for overthrowing a system. But the leader has now lost out on being part of the dialogue, negotiating options, making compromises, and figuring out ways to work as a team.

Conversely, this is exactly what the “Bystander Effect” asks us to do in combating bullying and harassment. The “bystander effect” basically states that in groups an individual is inhibited from speaking out for fear of group retaliation and/or a ‘diffusion of apathy’, with no one taking the initiative to act. This is actually a scary concept, because we see people get really hurt when a leader of a group is intimidating, bullying, or harassing a person and the others do not speak up.

When a clique turns bad—for example, when heavy drug use is involved, or violent behaviors happen, the best way to end it is to actually speak up against it. Research on social dynamics and group formations consistently demonstrate that when one person speaks out, there are others who speak out too. Even if not in the moment, others will and do speak out.

Let’s return to the bubble tea example. Let’s suppose that you decide one day to work up your courage and pronounce to the leader and group as a whole that you don’t like bubble tea anymore, and don’t want to drink it. You will probably find that others will support you in your decision. At the same time, the leader will now have an opportunity to participate in the negotiations of trying a new beverage. Whether or not the leader takes advantage of this opportunity is up to him or her.

To recap how to get out of a clique:

1. Speak up- state what you like and don’t like.
2. Be open and honest- transparency builds trust amongst friends.
3. If you see someone being hurt, speak up and get adult help if needed.
4. Let the leader know you are dissatisfied—give the leader a chance to be a part of the conversation and the solution.

Where to go for help.

Unfortunately, there is not a lot for a parent to do in regards to cliques. Most likely, parents won’t know the problems going on in their child’s social group. A parent might know their child’s friends and know their whereabouts, but probably isn’t going to know the intricate dynamics unless things go really bad. At that point, it’s important for parents and teachers to step in and help navigate the situation with the students involved.

It’s good to have someone to talk to about cliques and other significant issues like friends, depression, anxiety, drugs and sex. Often times an older family member like an aunt, uncle, godparent or cousin can provide insight and support. Or you can talk to other trusted adults like teachers or counselors.

As a therapist, I help people to work through and navigate the harder things that come up in adolescence. A therapist is a confidential person who provides support while maintaining your privacy in accordance with the law. If you decide that a therapist is right for you, there are some things to know about picking a therapist.

1. Ask them if they work with teens. Not all therapists are good with teens and you’ll want someone who understands you.
2. When they greet you—do they shake your hand and make eye contact with you? Your therapist should treat you respectfully and let you know that they are there to help you.
3. Do you feel comfortable? If you are not 100% comfortable talking to this person, then you need to find a new therapist. Sometimes you might not be comfortable with anyone. In this case, you at least need to feel comfortable enough that you like the therapist and you choose to see them.
4. Does your therapist speak in a way you understand, give good examples, and trust that you know what’s right for you? A therapist should follow your goals of therapy and relate to you on your terms.

I hope that this article has been helpful in understand what cliques are, why they are in integral part of our social development, and how to change your situation if it has gone bad.