

VOLUME 1: BREAKING POINT



a l e t h e i a

TRUTH BE TOLD

MAY 2018

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letter from the advisors

As the advisors to Aletheia, we have been deeply touched by the level of compassion each staff member has expressed during the school year 2017/2018. We have been advisors for the last three years and each year our staff brings new energy and ideas such as with the current compilation you are about to read. This edition has brought together multiple topics and student articles under one publication: "Pressure". Included in this compilation are topics such as "Pressure=force/area" dealing with the pressures students face during their high school years; "Mirror Mirror" which deals with different reflections on our perceived beauty; and "At A Crossroads" dealing with the contemplation and uncertainty of life's decisions.

Each article was anonymously submitted by Lynbrook students and have been included unedited, in the author's own words. In order for an article to be included, it needed to reflect the experiences of the author.

This brand new format required extra diligence and collaborative effort. It is amazing what nine staff members can do to bring the issues of high school students to life! We hope you appreciate this edition.

Sincerely,

Laura Gloner & Kim Silverman
Parent Advisors

staff

LYNBROOK HIGH SCHOOL

Advisors

Laura Gloner & Kim Silverman

Aarushi Agrawal	Year 3
Zahra Attarwala	Year 2
Elyssa Yim	Year 2
Medha Gelli	Year 2
Selina Li	Year 2
Sophie Guan	Year 1
Sarah Sotoudeh	Year 1
Megan Xu	Year 1
Cassie Yu	Year 1

A note from the staff: For teen and parent resources provided by the professionals who wrote articles for this issue of Aletheia, check out our website.

lhaletheia.com

$$\text{pressure} = \frac{\text{force}}{\text{area}}$$

Strange as it is, I feel that the competitive environment of Lynbrook pressures me the most out of anything/anyone, even more than my friends and family. I feel that if I didn't go to this school, I wouldn't be so interested in my overall GPA and grade on every single project. To be honest, I feel that I would be way happier if I didn't feel this constant pressure on myself to do well at everything. Yes it is true, I like being successful and doing well in school, but I also want to be able to do fun things on my own time beside schoolwork. I rarely have time to hang out with friends, watch tv, and enjoy myself on weekends. Instead, I am studying, doing homework, and stressing about my grades. I think that if I wasn't spending all my time doing homework and working on projects, I would be able to pursue my true interests. However, I also feel pressured to become a typical Lynbrook student and go to a great college and become a stupid scientist or engineer. What if I don't want my career to be STEM related? What if I want to obtain an arts degree? What if I want to go a different route? I say yes, the pressure of the school says no. It's a sad process, but it's undeniably present.



Some people were trying to convince me to smoke weed, and I'm glad I did. It was swell. I'm thinking about trying coke next.

I feel the pressure to do well at school. I feel the pressure to be happy and good and the pressure to get better as soon as I can. And I feel absolutely abysmal all the time. I hate this

There's an odd sort of pressure on me, and I know this sounds like a bad TV show. I'm adopted, but the records show that I have an identical twin. Someone out there has the same blood and flesh and face as me. And I think I found him, a couple weeks ago on a sh*tty instagram account with 73 followers. We share the same face, and he says he's adopted. So this isn't the typical Lynbrook pressure, more of a what-do-i-do-with-my-life-please-help-me.

Pressure is something that's hard to put a finger on, but I feel like it's something a lot of us have gotten used to. We get used to pressure that when someone even tries to alleviate that pressure, we brush it off without a careful consideration. We're pushed here. We're not used to be laid back. I'm too used to it too, honestly. I'm used to my parents coming home every night and telling me to look into all these fields of study that I'm not interested in the least. I'm used to my parents telling me that I can't be just friends with people of the opposite gender, that there must be some ulterior motive to being friends with them. And I'm so used to it that I brush it off, and then they get mad at me, yell at me and tell me I don't try hard enough. It's like a huge nasty circle that will keep going until I can find a way to stop it. So until then, pressure is just something we've accepted without second thought, and it will consume our lives no matter how much we try.



im pressured by my gay friends to come out. i know i should tell them to stop, its my choice, leave me alone, etc. but i really do wish i could come out too.

staff comment

NOTE

Staff comments are anonymously made by individual staff members regarding their personal opinions toward one of the three topics in this compilation, including thoughts and advice for the student body based on the submissions we received.

"THERE IS A CHOICE BUT THERE IS NOT A CHOSEN DESTINY."

What is pressure? Is it a force under which diamonds are made or a weight beneath which everything breaks? We are all pushed and pulled by pressure, but it is us who really make the final decision of shattering or adapting. People are constantly telling us what to do: parents demand us to follow their wishes, peers remark on the paths they chose, and the 'friendly' school environment already has a trampled trail for us.

Can we let the force push us down the path? Can we simply let go and follow the footsteps? Yes, we can. Can we chisel our own path? Can we diverge at the hidden creek? Can we force our way through the tall grass field where rain has already washed over the previous footsteps? Yes, yes we can. Are we going to get lost in the undiscovered horizon? Are we going to trip while walking down the carved trails? Yes, we might.

So what are you going to choose? Does it really matter? For either way, they're both dotted with uncertainties and heaviness. In the end, what really matters are your actions. Do you say 'left' or do you say 'right'? Do you take the road or do you take the wide field? What is pressure? Is it someone telling you to do something you don't want to do because you have your own plans or is it you telling them you don't want to do something yet having no plans of your own? Is it your cry for help or is it your instinctive refusal for guidance?

Next time when you feel pressured, take time and discover. Why? Why are you pressured? What are the hundred and forty-seven ways you can do to deal with it? What have you tried and what haven't you? Are you really falling or did you merely close your eyes and fear? There is a difference, and there is a choice but there is not a chosen destiny.

pressure = force/area

mrs. reynolds



"life is so much more fun when you're actually able to be yourself and express yourself...and you don't have to worry about what people are going to think of you."

AARUSHI: WHAT WERE SOME SOURCES OF PRESSURE THAT YOU FACED AS A TEENAGER? HOW ARE THEY SIMILAR TO OR DIFFERENT FROM THE PRESSURES THAT YOU THINK LYNBROOK STUDENTS FACE, AND WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO STUDENTS WHO ARE FACING PRESSURE RIGHT NOW?

Mrs. Reynolds: I feel like the way that I experienced pressure was actually kind of similar to the way that you guys experience pressure. The school I went to was really similar in the sense that grades and getting into college were the most important thing -- but I remember it wasn't to the same degree that you guys experience. The grades thing was part of the culture at my high school, but it wasn't everything. Another big source of pressure was having money. I remember this one time in Econ class we had this activity, and it was basically "if this one thing is true about you, come into the middle of the circle."

And I remember specifically that one of the questions was if anyone had bought a car with their own money, and I was the only one in the middle of the circle. I remember that everybody had a car and a license, but they all had these brand new BMWs and Mustangs, and things like that. I never really felt bad about that, it was just really present at our school. I also felt a lot of pressure with being accepted and being liked. I think that it's so huge, especially when you're a teenager, to be accepted by other people.

AARUSHI: FROM A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE, DO YOU THINK THE PRESSURE LYNBROOK STUDENTS FACE IS A COMBINATION OF FITTING IN AND GETTING GOOD GRADES?

Mrs. Reynolds: Definitely. Here, I think a big part of feeling accepted is getting good grades, and that wasn't really the case at my school. They were two separate things. From what I see, I think that part of fitting in here is getting good grades, or pretending to, because that is the box that kids are trying to fit into. But, I mean life is so much more fun when you're actually able to be yourself and express yourself, like wearing pajamas on Pajama Day and doing stupid things like that, and not have to worry about what people are going to think of you.

AARUSHI: SO WOULD YOU SAY THAT YOUR ONE LINE OF ADVICE TO STUDENTS WOULD BE TO JUST BE YOURSELF?

Mrs. Reynolds: Yes, because I think you can never remove yourself completely from what other people think of you. I think that it's really important that you don't not care at all; you want to be yourself, but still listen to other people's advice. So, I guess my advice for students is to have two or three people that you really respect, that you know care about you and love you, and care about what those people tell you, but don't care about what all the other people think about you. I feel like people are so worried about this invisible 'they' who's always watching you and judging you, but that just doesn't exist.

AARUSHI: HOW HAVE THE PRESSURES YOU USED TO FACE EVOLVED AS YOU BECAME AN ADULT?

Mrs. Reynolds: They've changed, because I obviously don't care about grades anymore since I'm the one grading people now. But I think that pressure to be accepted still very much exists. But it's different, like instead of what other people think of me being a source of pressure, it's now more like what do I think of me. The pressure I feel like I face most now, is like whether or not I'm being a good teacher, a good mom, and a good wife. And there's nobody outright saying that I'm not doing a good job with this, but I think that this pressure is a lot more internal. I want to be the best version of myself, and I feel like that's always hard no matter what path you choose.

AARUSHI: DO YOU THINK THIS INTERNAL PRESSURE EXISTED AS A TEENAGER TOO?

Mrs. Reynolds: I think it did, it definitely did. But I think that the voices telling me to be something else were a lot louder. I know that a lot of me wanting to get good grades was an internal thing, but I don't think I would have recognized that as much in high school. I think I would have said that it was my parents that wanted me to get good grades, but I think that was an internal drive. But yeah, I think that it also depends on where you get your values. I feel like your pressure is always going to come from what you value. Whether it's personal achievement or not letting other down or whatever it may be, it's always going to drive you and control you.

AARUSHI: HOW DID YOU DEAL WITH PRESSURE AS A TEENAGER? HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH PRESSURE NOW?

Mrs. Reynolds: I think mostly talking with friends, and venting about things when I felt like it was too much pressure. I think I also dealt with the pressure by rising up to it. As an adult, faith is actually really important. For me, my highest value is my faith and I think that's how I deal with pressure. I believe that I am loved by God, and when things get rough, reflecting on that helps me let go of the pressure. It helps me not grab onto little things, and gives me the perspective that a lot of stressful things aren't that big of a deal in the long run.

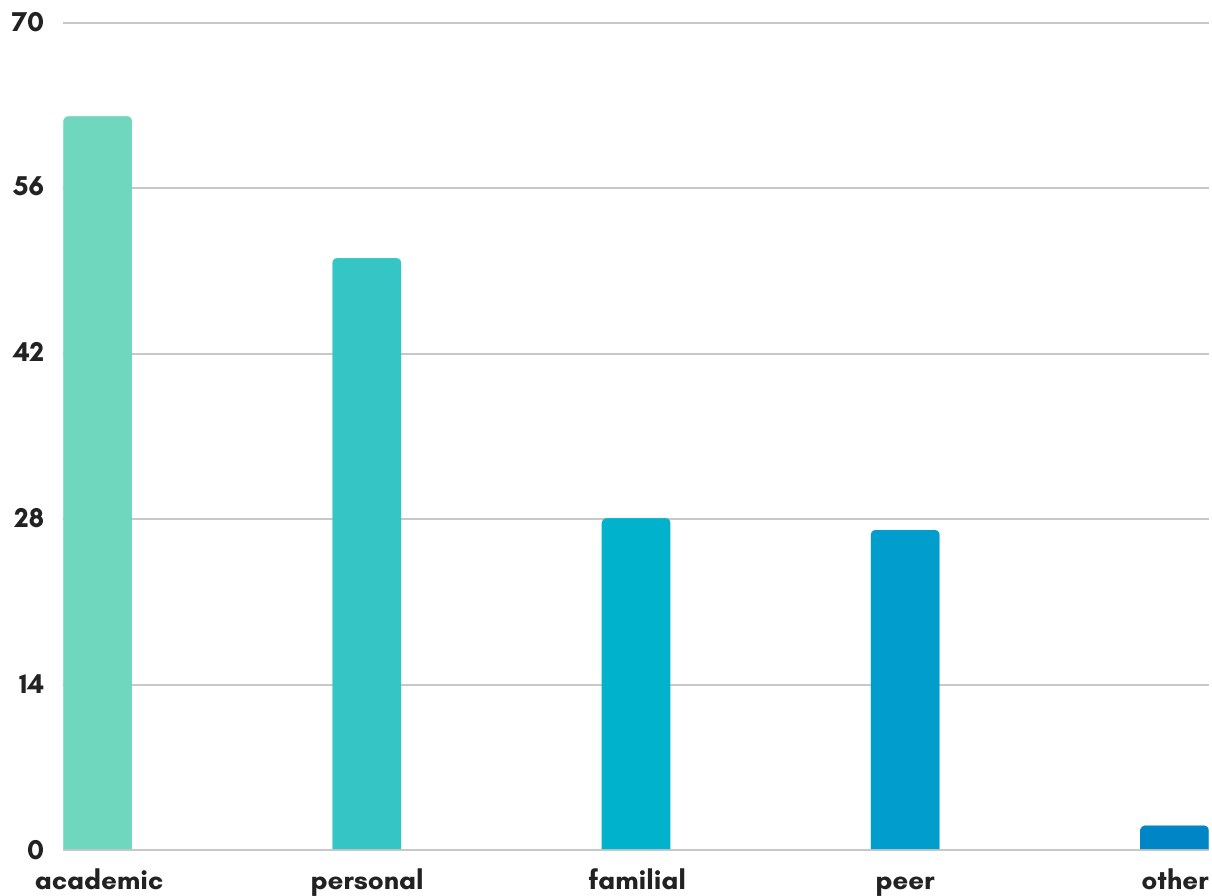
AARUSHI: IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'D LIKE TO SAY TO WRAP UP?

Mrs. Reynolds: I think people just need to understand they're doing OK here, and that if they don't get into their dream school, life goes on and they're going to be OK. I feel like people just need to be loved and know that they are loved -- I think that will help so much because people should know that they're kind of awesome just the way they are.

survey results

PRESSURE = FORCE / AREA

What are the biggest pressures you currently face?



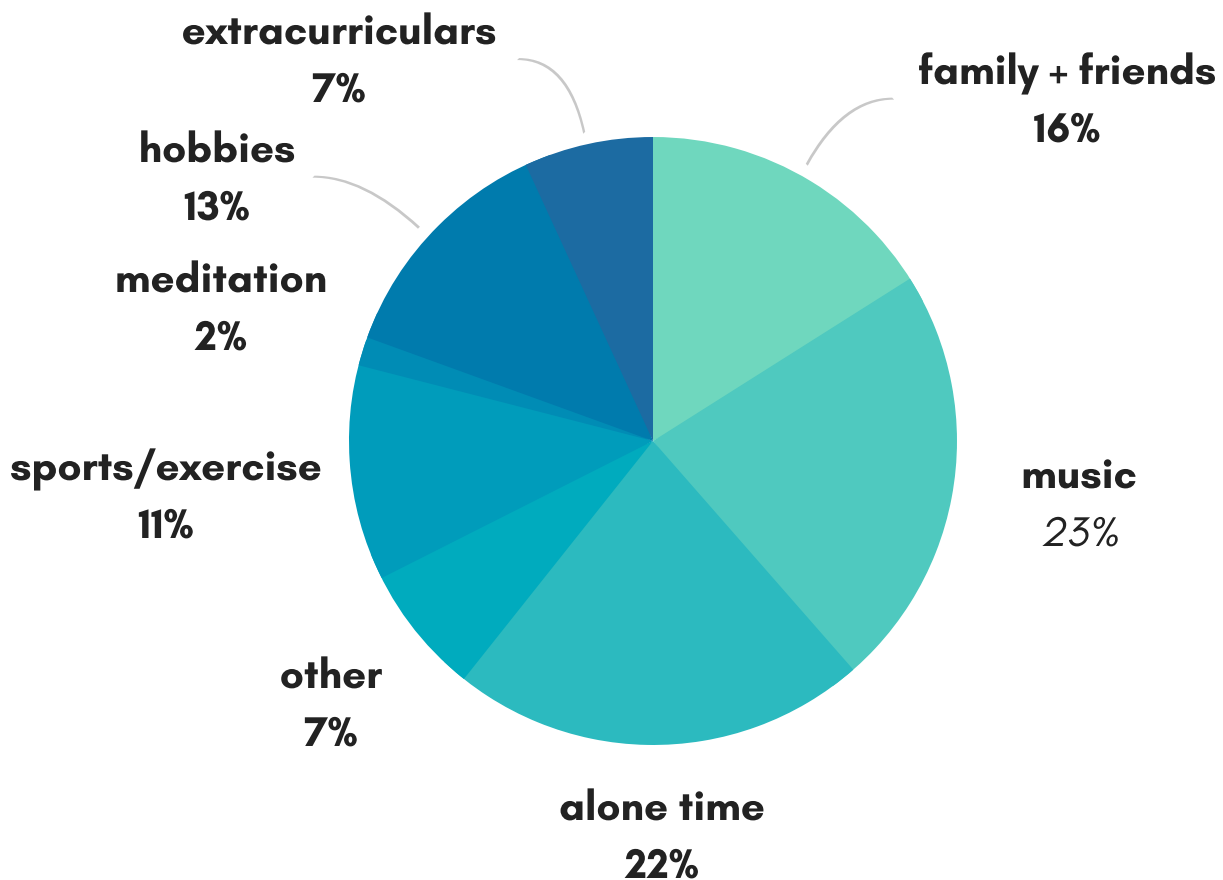
*** respondents were allowed to choose more than one answer*

A note from the staff: Thank you to everyone who shared your experiences by participating in our survey! We truly appreciate your help in making our biggest project yet a reality. Survey results gathered via LHS Facebook group

survey results

PRESSURE = FORCE / AREA

How do you relieve your stress?



*** respondents were allowed to choose more than one answer*

pressure

INGRID HIGGINS, LMFT

It is an honor for me to be able to write an article for Aletheia. I love seeing young minds at work. This topic was an interesting one in that students' responses referenced several different types of pressure, such as academic pressure, pressure from parents, competitive pressure, mental health pressure, what-do-i-do-with-my-life-please-help-me pressure and label/understanding self pressure. I hope to be able to address the different facets of teen age life in this article.

Productive pressure is one that I think most can relate to. That is the pressure felt to always be producing something and not to waste time relaxing. It's the idea that you always have to be doing something. I fear the harm in this is that students begin to feel they are only valuable for what they can do, and not for who they are. Balance in life is important and that includes downtime, relaxation, socializing and rest.

Parents can be a source of pressure for teens without realizing it. Well-intentioned pushes to prepare for a future and have a good life can be taken as "I am not good enough" and always need to be better. Fights over test scores, chores, friendships and college applications can erode the best of relationships.

Competitive pressure is one of the most harmful types of pressure. I believe the reason is that we compare our insides with the best of other's outsides. At school it can seem that everyone has it together and lead you to wonder, what is wrong with me? On social media a false picture of a perfect life can be compared with the life that is behind closed doors.

Pressure to be healthy in regards to mental health is affecting teens. An increase in depression and anxiety without a good understanding of these illnesses can lead to a downward spiral. The idea that if one tries they can overcome depression or anxiety can lead to frustration and backfires as a downward spiral is ignited. I am not happy, so what is wrong with me, thus making the depression and anxiety take a tighter grip on an already struggling teen.

Figuring out your life can be difficult and often we can't foresee the path we will take.

Pressure will tell teens that you have to know what career you want and begin striving for that at the young age of 17-18. Most teens say they don't know what they want to do with the rest of their life, but there doesn't seem to be much room to explore different arenas. In contrast there is pressure to declare a major and head towards that goal with 150% effort.

Sexuality is a confusing and complicated matter at best. The additional pressure to give yourself a label rather than exploring and figuring out sexuality can be difficult.

Teens may feel they have to come out before they are ready. Or that they have to identify their sexuality in labels such as gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, gender fluid, gender neutral, transgender or straight. Knowing what to call yourself and having the courage to tell others who may not be accepting is a form of pressure that can leave one frozen.

In our discussion the question arose of what is the source of the pressure? Is it society? Is it the school? Is it parents? Is it peers? Is it self pressure? Is it self pressure projected on others? Communication is key. Parents should check in with teens about what types of pressure they feel and how they handle it.

Teens should check in with their friends. All should internally fact check their thoughts and remember that feelings are facts.

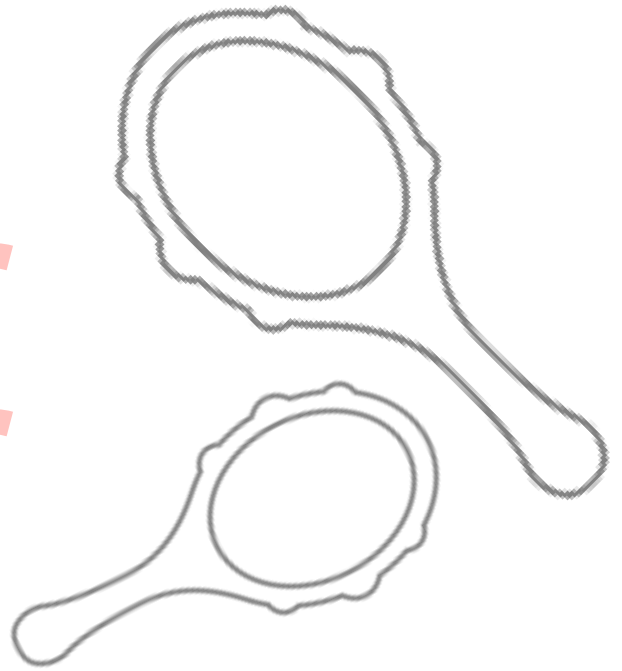
One of my favorite resources is Mindfulness. Mindfulness is the art of keeping your mind on the present moment and not living in the future or the past. It has been researched and proven to reduce stress, anxiety and depression. It can be a gentle reminder to look at all of life and appreciate it rather than looking only at performance and productivity.

Parents and teens can both benefit from a mindfulness practice and classes in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction are available for both parents and teens. Having someone who is safe to talk to and can listen is also beneficial. Therapy can help teens and their families navigate this difficult transition from adolescent to adult.

Ingrid Higgins graduated with honors from Santa Clara University with a Masters of Arts in Counseling Psychology. She completed her undergraduate work at Bethany University earning her Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Addiction Studies. Ingrid is certified in EMDR and skilled in treating trauma. Her variety of skills enables her to effectively treat a wide range of problems, including abuse, depression, anxiety, drug/alcohol use, low self esteem, trauma victims and self harming clients. She has provided mental health counseling on a school campus through PVPSA (Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance), volunteers for A Home Within and is now working in private practice in downtown Campbell.

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mirror mirror



all throughout ninth and tenth grade, i absolutely *hated* myself for not only looking how i did physically but i also constantly berated myself for doing little to change it. i had the mindset that i had to "fix" myself and be who others expected it to be. my performance in school crashed and i lost interest in most of my hobbies and quit, and at my lowest point i would sleep about half an hour each night for days on end-- eventually, my body became used to it.

i was convinced that changing would help me become happy and content with my life, and though i can't say that i am 100% now, a lot has changed since those self-loathing times and i now try to do things for myself. i think beauty in other people is from within: it can be found in the form of genuity and empathy despite lack of understanding. i don't think being honest is the same thing as being blunt, as there a greater desire to stand by someone and do whatever they can to help.

i think beauty is also emotional support and the feeling that you're not alone, because that was what drove myself deeper into my self-made bubble and what broke me down. i think it'll be difficult given what society is like now, but i do hope that society's expectations embrace the self much more; i think not everyone realizes how destructive expectations can be and that the pressure they feel may be different from someone else.

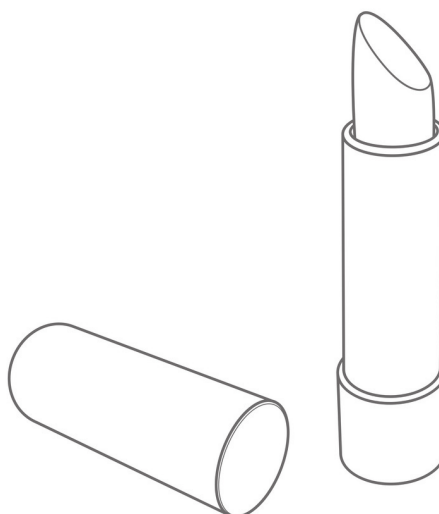
beauty; seemingly a foreign concept to many of us. beauty; a word that echoes through our society. beauty; really, what is beauty? i've been here for over a decade, and truthfully, i can count the number of times i've felt "beautiful". somedays, i measure my beauty by the acne on my face, and somedays i measure my beauty by how small my wrists are. i wasn't aware that appearances were so significant until middle school. it wasn't until i realized my clothes were still stuck in elementary school but body and brain weren't.

personally though, i find a lot of things beautiful. i like how the rain drops down the car window. i like how my best friends laugh until they fall to the ground. i like when people put aside their own work, to help others. i like when people just listen to another person talk for hours. i like the way my dad laughs at his own jokes. i like the way my friend sweeps everyone up in hugs. as cliché (maybe creepy too) as it is, i find these things beautiful.

it was a little before a while back that i felt comfortable in my own skin (spoiler alert: i don't anymore). weight, skin color, the length of my nails, and hair didn't matter to me. but then someone close to me commented on my weight, and little old me, a little sensitive and a little new to the whole beauty thing, took it pretty hard. my search history consisted of "weight loss tricks", "how to lost 10 pounds in a week" and many, many, many more of the likewise.

i know a whole lot of you can relate. i never really felt comfortable in my skin again. i became pretty shy about pictures. jackets and hoodies became my best friends. i could say that was my lowest point. i didn't take it as hard as many people have. it didn't destruct me. it just tore apart at little crevices of me, and of course, it hurt, but i was stronger than that. i still don't feel comfortable in myself, but i'll get there, and when i do, it's going to be on my terms, not on someone else's words.

what i'm trying to say is that we all struggle with ourselves. social media is pretty trash when it comes to shaping our views of beauty. social media is a representation of a utopia. a utopia that we do not live in. and therefore, our standards cannot be based off of social media. makeup is cool and each to their own right? but at the end of the day, as cliché as it is, people most definitely appreciate the beauty on the inside. beauty is nothing without brains. beauty is nothing without motivation. beauty is nothing without people. and i think people are quite beautiful.



society and media has shaped my view of beauty because I feel that those major influences focus mostly on outer beauty rather than inner beauty. makeup, hair, eyebrows, "ig-baddie" clothes, and even simple things like lip size have never been so focused on than this year. It's possible that high school is partly to blame for it, but it rly bothers me. It's hard to avoid the pressure to look nice all the time, especially when I f*cking want to wear sweats and a messy bun everyday. like what's wrong with that?? why do I have to try so hard? honestly I don't know. and sometimes I don't care. I just wish others (including me) wouldn't care so much and be constantly focused on our appearances. it's conceited. and sh*tty. it also makes me feel worthless sometimes. other times, I feel great. it's honestly just an emotionally draining process getting up everyday and trying to look good for people who I don't even think about outside of school.

Personally, I find that the beauty of an individual can be seen through their actions. Kind and caring people have always struck me as being perfect role models, and I notice that when these people are considerate to others (and are overall genuine people), their appearance never even crosses my mind. Being considered beautiful shouldn't only be judged by what strangers can view from the outside. It should be judged by the way your friends and families see you through your words and actions. Everyone is beautiful in their own way :)

My self worth in the past was very dependent on how people perceived me. There was a time someone called me ugly for a straight month in the past lol. I think the effects of it still lingered on. I was scared to wear makeup or tight fitting clothes in my sophomore year of high school because whenever I did, there was a couple of boys who would text me asking if I could suck their d*ck or f*ck me.

As for the tight fitting clothes, there was this one time someone yelled "Your boobs look huge!" when I was wearing a crop top long sleeve, and 4 guys looked at me. One even looked at me for more than a minute. Some guys would say I have a nice *ss if I wore skinny jeans. I don't know if it helped my perception of beauty but it made me scared to embrace it sometimes.



staff comment

"YOU KNOW HOW MUCH YOU ARE WORTH, NO MATTER WHAT PRICE TAG MEDIA, YOUR PEERS, OR THE MIRROR TRIES TO ASSIGN TO YOU.

I'm not going to lie.... It hasn't been the longest time since I've stepped on the scale and crossed my fingers that the number hasn't risen a few decimal points. It hasn't been the longest time since I've checked my grades on schoolloop, praying that my teacher was forgiving enough to curve that one chem quiz everyone bombed. It hasn't been the longest time since I've stared in the mirror counting how many impurities existed on my face....

But I've been getting better.

I've started to value my self, not for what everyone else sees me as but for how I see myself. I've learned the truth to self-worth, and I'm working hard everyday to practice it.

I know some days are hard and you may feel like giving up, but remember the people around you that support you and love you. And, above all, remember yourself, and how much you should love yourself. Because you are loved, you are beautiful, and you are important.

Beauty is not skin-deep. Beauty is that one song on your Spotify list that you can't get enough of. Beauty is your grandmother every time she gives you a warm hug. Beauty is that crush you have that you are eager to ask out to prom. Beauty is your friend, who is always there for you no matter what. Beauty is you, yourself, and your own; because you know how much you are worth, no matter what price tag media, your peers, or the mirror tries to assign to you.

Stay strong, stay loved, and most of all, stay beautiful, because you are worth everything in the world and more.

mr. lee



**"...you've got to love yourself.
You've got to take value in yourself and treat yourself well."**

ELYSSA: AS A TEENAGER, WHAT PRESSURES DID YOU FACE IN TERMS OF OUTER APPEARANCES OR REPUTATION?

Mr. Lee: I went to Monta Vista, and I feel like it was a little similar to how Lynbrook is like now but with slight differences. I would say my Korean parents put a lot of emphasis on looking a certain way... and on acting a certain way. In terms of body image, in particular, they wanted me to be very middle ground, average. To have a certain weight. To have certain skin clarity...skin tones even! You kinda lose out on your individuality I would say. Because of parents and also based on just being a teenager, you tend to follow the norms or you conform to standards.

ELYSSA: HOW DO YOU THINK THE PRESSURES YOU FACED COMPARE WITH TEENAGERS TODAY?

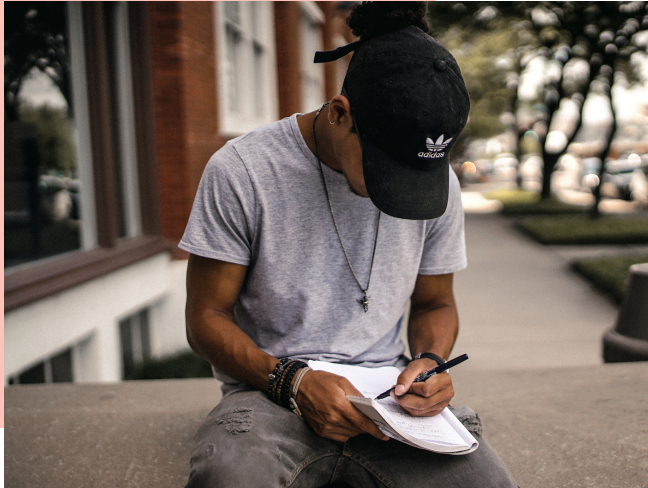
Mr. Lee: I would say the biggest difference between when I was a teenager and teenagers now is obviously social media. With so much social media and like people trying to be "insta-famous," I would be curious to know how many fashion people or models the average teenager follows. I think there is a lot of pressure now for people to follow this idea of becoming more fashionable, trendy, or beautiful, or whatever it is. I would say teenagers have it, I mean I don't wanna say harder today, but it seems much more saturated. As a result, I think teenagers may veer a little over, their self esteem may fluctuate a lot more nowadays than before. The funny thing is that I have been really interested in skin care recently. Even then, I would get a lot of weird looks. Like...You're doing a four step process? Just wash your face. No, I just want to take care of myself. That's most important, I would say, taking care of yourself.

ELYSSA: AS A MALE, HOW DO YOU THINK BEAUTY STANDARDS MAY IMPACT YOU DIFFERENTLY/SIMILARLY THAN PEOPLE OF OTHER GENDERS?

Mr. Lee: As a male... yeah. Well beauty depends on how you define it. I think males tend to feel that they can't express themselves. I think that the stereotype for males is that they can't be sensitive or they need to be tough or emotionless. I think that still exists to a certain degree today, which hinders some males from expressing themselves completely and fully. I think that also applies to females, just different standards... like what they need and maybe potentially hide. I would say males in general, may be afraid to express themselves because of that general stereotype.

ELYSSA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO STUDENTS WHO MAY BE FACING STRUGGLES WITH THEIR SELF-IMAGE?

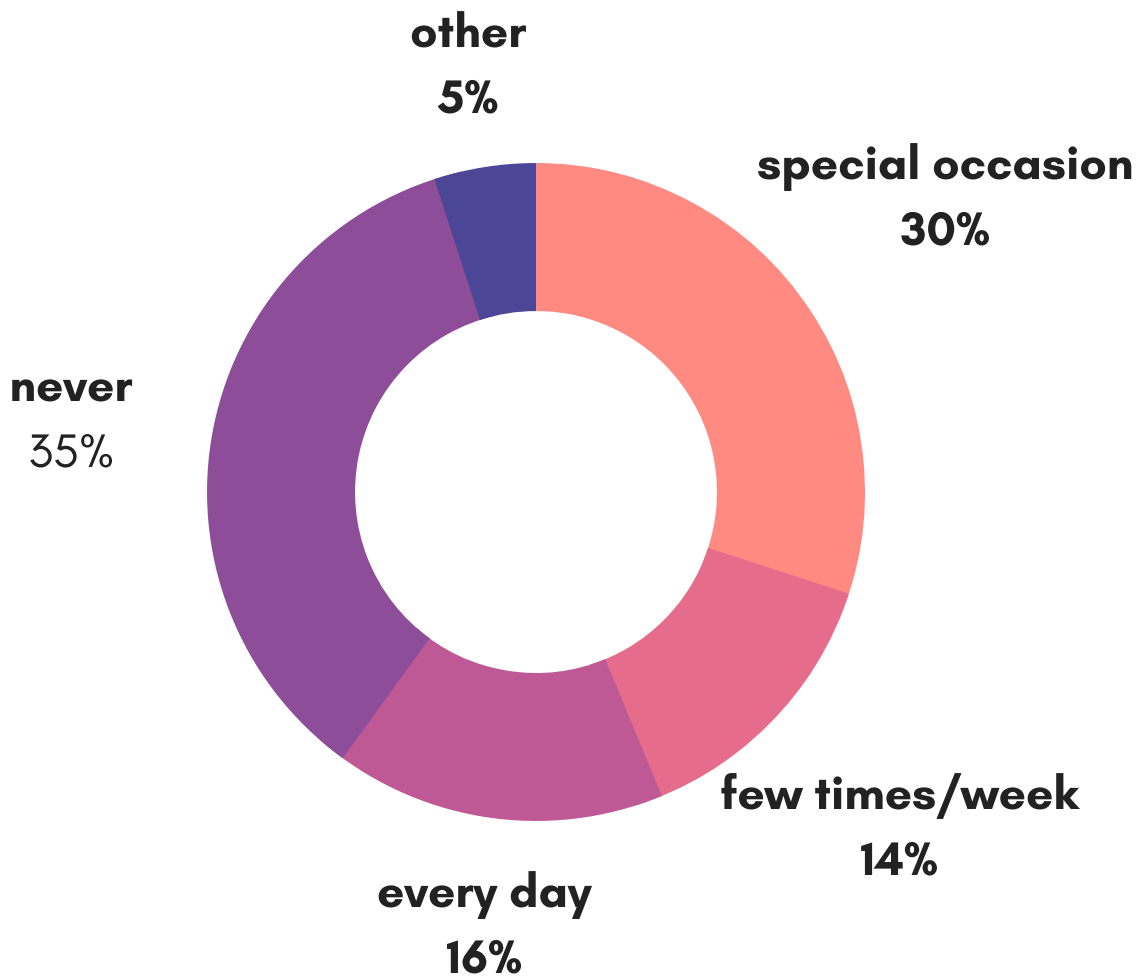
Mr. Lee: I think that reading the question initially, I would say beauty is in confidence and confidence is not necessarily getting the things you want or the outcomes you want. It's about whatever situation occurs to you and you being content with whatever the outcome is. If you post a picture on Instagram and you expect 120 likes and you don't reach that, then you suddenly question if you need to delete it. Confidence is not caring about what people think, it is more of being content with who you are. That means that whatever happens, you are content with who you are in that moment. And that means you've got to love yourself. You've got to take value in yourself and treat yourself well. And I think that's something that everyone should focus on more than artificial or superficial looks or what not. It's about yourself and taking care of yourself and being confident in yourself.



survey results

MIRROR MIRROR

How often do you wear makeup?

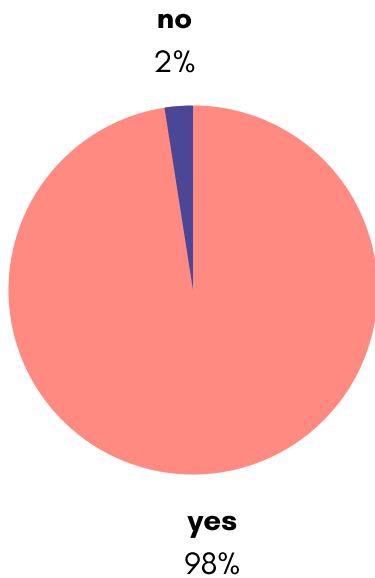


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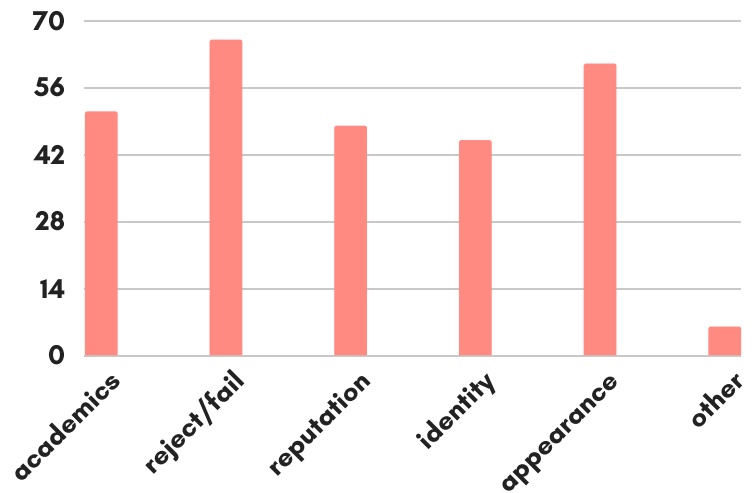
survey results

MIRROR MIRROR

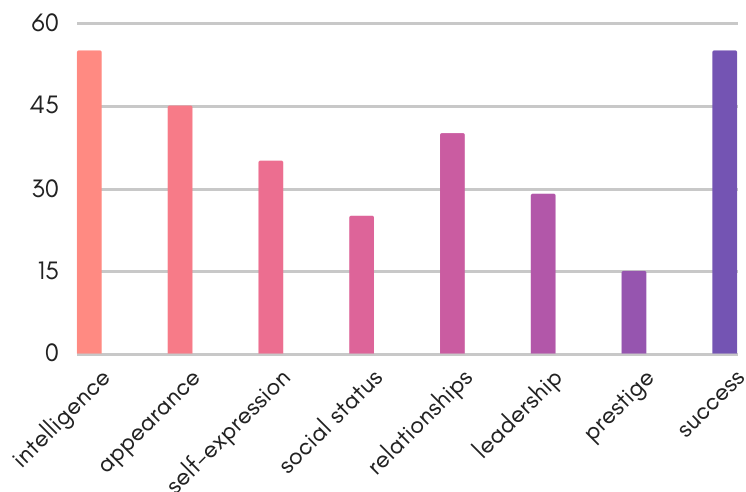
Do you have insecurities?



If so, what are they?



What boosts your confidence?



***respondents were allowed to choose more than one answer*

beauty

DEBORAH VANNI, LMFT, REGISTERED ATR

If you are 16 years or older, there's a good chance you have read F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic novel, *The Great Gatsby*. If so, you will most likely remember Daisy's famous words after discovering the child she has given birth to is female, "... so I turned my head away and wept. 'All right,' I said, 'I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool—that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool'" (Fitzgerald 20). Daisy's notion is simple: the best chance for her daughter to be happy is to accept a subservient role as a female, and simply get by with her good looks, but never be smart enough to know that she has settled. The setting is 1922, and although women are beginning to feel their independence as they establish a new place in the world, Daisy knew from personal experience that being born female had its unique struggles.

Although beauty may seem like a contemporary social issue, it in fact has been a topic of conversation as far back as Socrates. The Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle attempted to define beauty as early as 300 BC. Although the word was mainly connected to aesthetics, the fact that these great thinkers attempted to give meaning to the word "beauty" so long ago tells you how ingrained the idea of beauty is within human nature.

Beauty is a growing epidemic. Even though beauty affects men as well as women, "society's image of an 'average woman' is far from what most women look like naturally" (Karin). According to the Plastic Surgery Statistics Report, 17,192,816 cosmetic procedures were performed in 2016 alone. Of these procedures, 92% were performed on women (American Society of Plastic Surgeons). The same percentage is attributed to eating disorders; men represent 10%, women 90%. In addition, women reportedly spend approximately \$426 billion a year on beauty products (Adams). These alarming statistics reveal the chronic obsession with beauty in our country.

There are many factors that contribute to the growing phenomenon, of "beauty sickness"; Beauty oppression can be established several ways including:

Objectification Theory. This theory suggests that people (women and men) internally acculturate an observer's perspective and make it the primary view of their physical selves. This outside view can cause a person to continually "body monitor", and may lead to anxiety, shame, and other mental and physical health issues. Internalizing impossible beauty standards increases the possibility that a person will develop poor self esteem regarding beauty.

Social Comparison Theory: The social comparison theory was first proposed by psychologist Leon Festinger in the 1950s. He suggested that people rely on external models to form their self-perceptions. Models come from a variety of places, and range from people they know (friends, neighbors, family, etc.) to people they have not met (popular media figures such as: movie stars, musician, politicians, athletes, etc). This can lead to upward or downward comparisons depending on whether the model makes them feel superior or inferior. Although one could feel better about himself, most of the time comparing oneself to another is a dangerous path and often leads to depression and lowered self-worth.

Fat Talk. This is a term for negative body-related conversations that often take place between friends. Typically these discussions involve criticisms about the body or face. Though the goal may be to highlight and motivate what a person may want to change or improve, fat talk has been linked to increased negative body image, low mood, and an internalization of an ideal that one cannot reach ("fat talk").

Idealized Media Images: We all know that the airbrushed images and unhealthy body weights of models that the media perpetuates are impossible to achieve. However, anyone falling short of this "ideal" body type is vulnerable to body dissatisfaction and depression. What is important to glean is that being educated about the media's influence is only helpful on a cognitive level.

Unfortunately, "knowing" the reality and "feeling" the reality are not connected. Even the most educated person can fall victim to standards that are out of reach. Teens are particularly vulnerable to media influence because media plays a greater role in their lives as they begin to develop a sense of individual identity while transitioning to adulthood.

Many psychologists agree that a more healthy view of beauty can be achieved if we each commit to a healthier perspective about ourselves and others. According to Renee Engeln, Professor at Northwestern University, "Our sense of what's real, [and] what's possible when it comes to beauty, [has been] warped by our overexposure to [media] images. Instead of seeing them for what they are, which is extraordinarily rare, we start to see these images as typical or average... even though they are not. So, it warps our sense of what's real, it's making us sick." Perhaps this is the best way to see the importance of curing "beauty sickness": one cannot monitor his/her body and at the same time be engaged in the world because while monitoring your beauty there is a mirror between you and the world. Do you have trouble putting down that mirror? When we place beauty above all other elements of life, we tend to lose what is important.

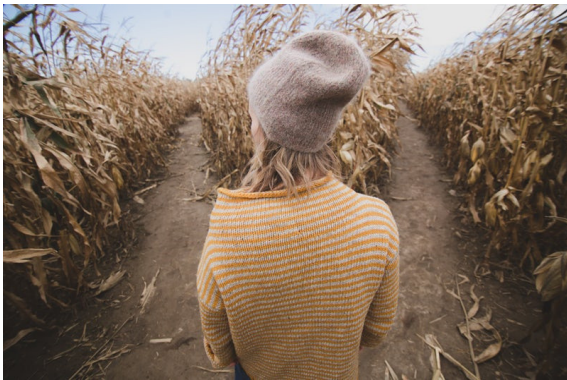
What can we do?

1. Invest less in beauty and more into things that last much longer such as strong friendships (which contribute to a much more conscious world).
2. If you find that media (television, movies, social media, etc.) make you think more about your appearance or worth... stop. Limit your engagement with the outlets that cause you to compare yourself with others.
3. Do not think of your body as a collection of parts, but rather as a unified whole to help you explore the world.
4. Limit your mirror time.
5. When you want to compliment someone, remove "you're pretty/handsome", and consider complimenting qualities such as commitment, hard work, intelligence, kindness, generosity, etc. This advice should be applied at all levels of growth. A simple request to all parents raising small children: please rethink telling your child, "You're so pretty!"

We will never rid society's desire for beauty, but perhaps we can diminish its importance by encouraging children and teens to focus more on what they have to offer the world and less on what they look like.

Deborah Vanni is an English teacher. She taught at Monta Vista High School from 1990-2011, and presently teaches at Homestead High School. She has also been a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist since 2008. She continues to do agency work at a domestic violence center and specializes in Art Therapy. She can be reached at dvanni_therapy@att.net.

at a crossroads



The toughest choice I have had to make involved leaving behind a friend.

One day, over the summer, I was hanging out with one of my friends whom we'll call "J." J thought it would be a good idea to introduce me to a new friend "C." The way I used to pass time with J, she thought C would fit right in. We were really into makeup, we did photoshoots, we'd sing, and we did other things like that. But the first day I hung out with C, I just didn't feel like I was clicking.

Of course, you get more and more comfortable with new people as you get to know them for longer, so I didn't think it made sense to give up on C just yet. And to be honest, not many Lynbrook girls were into the same pastimes we were into. I mean, all the other kids at Lynbrook do SAT prep for fun (just kidding... kind of). And since there weren't many other girls I could do these things with, I felt a little obligated to hang out with C.

I had my doubts from the beginning, and as time went on, I became more and more confident that C and I were never going to be friends. But C didn't see (no pun intended) me the same way. C continued to call and text me literally every day, wanting to hang out, or telling me a joke of some kind. Our senses of humor were so different, that her jokes literally annoyed me.

The worst part was that since J and C were already friends, I couldn't even hang out with J anymore, without the implication that C would come too.

And I wasn't hostile around C. I would put up a facade, pretending to be interested in the stupid things she would talk about, and I fake laughed at the stupid jokes she would tell. I sound like I had malice against her, but to be honest, she really was a nice person. Easily one of the nicest people I knew at Lynbrook. She meant well, and she even baked me a cake on my birthday. But our personalities were so different that I always had to pretend like I was having fun with her.



It's easy to say that I should have just told her we weren't getting along. But you have to understand that she was one of the most sensitive people I knew, and I really didn't want to make her feel bad. She made me a cake, and you expect me to tell her we can't be friends? There were times when I didn't respond to her texts, and she'd followup with something like "you haven't responded to my last four texts. Did something happen?"

So that's kind of where I'm at now. I think I'll have to keep ignoring her, until it gets through her thoughtful, polite, kind-hearted, sensitive, incompatible head that I DON'T WANT TO BE FRIENDS.

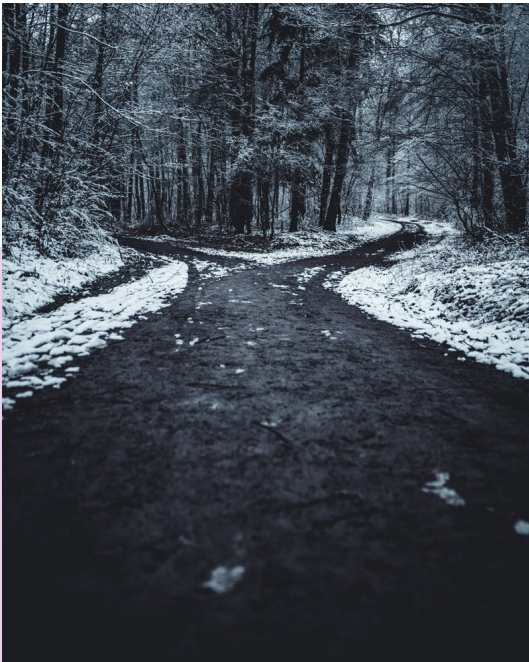
I chose to live. I chose to fight on a little longer. I made the choice for *him* at first because I couldn't bear to think of him grieving for me, and that choice, the choice to fight on a bit more, it's given me the power to live for me now.

Course selections are coming up, and naturally, students are asking to skip classes. More like the parents are asking. I know my mother plans for me to take two (three, four?) classes over the summer in preparation for the coming school year.

While I'm unsure and not confident, I can't say no. It's either all or nothing. I either take these AP classes and join this club and do this, or I quit all extracurriculars and just focus on schoolwork. That's the rule. I do love some of my hobbies, so I do all. I'm scared that if I tell her I don't want to, she'll accuse me of being too laid-back, overdramatic, "it's no big deal my friend's son went to Harvard and he did exactly what you're going to do." Perhaps not wanting to skip is a sign that I'm lazy. Maybe skipping is no big deal. Maybe I'm overreacting. Maybe I sound like a whiny b*tch. Maybe I should grow the f*ck up and deal with it. Maybe I'm the one who's not efficient enough, doesn't work hard enough.

Part of it is peer pressure, too. Recently, I haven't been very emotionally stable. One time, I broke down crying in the middle of an outside class because I felt like I was the worst student in the room. I'm constantly stressing over other people's accomplishments, asking myself how can I compare? Everyone wants to skip. Maybe it's not that big of a deal after all.

Half of this rambling isn't even related to the topic, ha. It's supposed to be the time in my life where I start forming my own opinions and making my own decisions, when right now it is the opposite. Here is where I am at a crossroads: with my path predetermined, should I follow it and learn to adapt or should I try to make my own?



Everyday, I choose to beat myself up. I don't know how to love myself. I've never been in the crossroads because somehow, sometime, I made an unconscious decision to close my mind to my achievements. I decided on this checklist, everyday, every moment: accept nothing but perfection (in a relative sense), fail to reach that perfection, beat myself up about it, repeat. I know this is a choice. Loving yourself is a choice. Rejecting self-deprecating is a choice. But at this point, I don't know how to be happy. For so long, I was bullied and laughed at, people thought that I was stupid or annoying.

I don't know if those stereotypes are still lingering around Lynbrook, but all I know is, I still believe them. Today, I won this competition in one event but missed an award in the second event and I wanted to cry. What the hell is wrong with me? Why couldn't I just be happy about that one event? The other one didn't even matter. I don't know. But at this point, I'm literally unable to smile up to my eyes. All I can think of is how anti-social, awkward, untalented, stupid, this, that, this, that, I am. If I keep expectations low, maybe one day I'll meet them. But I can't keep them low. Because if I make this many mistakes when I push myself so hard to be better, how will I be if I choose not to care about my mistakes?

staff comment

"IF YOU TRUST YOURSELF, YOUR GUT, AND YOUR FEELINGS, I PROMISE YOU
THAT MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, YOUR CHOICE WILL BE THE RIGHT ONE."

Y

ou're going to make many decisions across your lifetime. Some will be trivial, and others will be life-changing—either way it won't be easy. No one can tell you how to run your life or what choices are best for you except yourself. But if there's one piece of advice I could give you, it would be to always listen to your emotions. Often times you might get stuck on which path to take, but if you trust yourself, your gut, and your feelings, I promise you that more often than not, your choice will be the right one. Take me, for instance. For a while I felt that a certain friend was neglecting their relationship with me, but I brushed those nagging feelings off as unimportant like I tend to do because I thought I was only overreacting. However, once I finally confronted that person about the way I felt, I found out that our friendship really wasn't worth continuing after all. Although ending that friendship was a painful decision to make, I know it was best for me in the long run. Likewise, I hope that the next time you find yourself questioning your intuition you realize that you know yourself best and that you are living this life for you, yourself, and no one else.

mrs. rollins



"and I think that stuff happens, like events ... force you to grow up really fast."

SELINA: WHAT WERE SOME OF THE TOUGHEST DECISIONS YOU HAVE FACED OR ARE FACING AS AN ADULT?

Mrs. Rollins: I think a lot of the students that I've had in my classes know one of my toughest decisions was helping my mother through her illness. And there were a lot of decisions I had to make about that. One was that right before she was diagnosed my boyfriend at the time, who's now my husband, had gotten into UC San Diego and we were supposed to move down there and I really wanted to be an actress. And so I was going to live in L.A., and he was going to move in and I was going to try to make it in L.A., you know, and I was finishing my master's degree and was really involved in my performance stuff and I had to give that up. Best decision I ever made because I probably wouldn't be here now if I [hadn't made that decision]. But lots of very hard decisions during that time.

You know, decisions of like, are we going to get her a feeding tube? No we're not, because she doesn't want to have this extended death and so she gave us this gift of making that easier for us. But I was only 28 years old and I had to make decisions about her will and see lawyers and go to funeral homes and do all these really adult things that I didn't feel ready to do. But I did them. And I think that stuff happens; events happen in your life. I think they force you to grow up really fast and that was one of the things that forced me to grow up really fast. Also I would say within that situation one of the hardest things that I had to do was my father was living with us at the time. I felt like I had to take care of him too. And he wasn't really helping me take care of her, so I had to ask him to leave. That was one of the hardest decisions I ever had to make. And I mean everything is right with my dad now, but at that time I had to tell him he had to leave our house (my own dad) and that was really hard for sure.

So, very difficult decision for me to come here although it just sort of fell into place really fast, which is what I feel happens sometimes in life with things that are put in front of you, and you're like I wasn't ready to leave my school but now this opportunity has come my way and it was very hard to leave. I had very good friends and colleagues there. I loved my drama students and my English students. I really loved my students. When I told them we all cried. It was really hard. But, you know, I expected people to be like "No don't leave us." It was a good test of my own ego. I was surprised at how supportive people were, including parents, teachers, and my colleagues. They were like, "This is an opportunity for you and you should take it." And they're like you're going to be great. We're going to miss you but we're so happy for you. It was like every time we'd do anything it would be like my last time and we'd all be crying and saying goodbye. But great decision. I do still miss it there sometimes and it's very different here. But the opportunities that I have here, and I feel like the professionalism, the way I'm treated professionally here is just very different and it's harder to work here. I feel like I work harder. I feel like I drive longer, I work harder, I prep more. It's more intense but I think it's where I'm supposed to be. I'm just kind of rambling.

SELINA: WHAT SORT OF CHALLENGING DECISIONS DO YOU THINK LYNBROOK STUDENTS FACE AND WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THEM?

Mrs. Rollins: This might not be like the most popular thing to say. Because I think as a high school teacher we're always geared towards getting your students ready for college. I'm in a certain boat where I do believe that college is not for everyone. And I think that's kind of somewhat sad that we don't have different opportunities for students after high school that are equally as respectable as getting into Yale or Harvard. I don't know if other people feel this way. But sometimes when I'm hearing from my students what schools they're getting into, it's this extended popularity contest of who's getting into what school. For me I know whatever school you go to is going to be great. Some of them cost more.

Some of them have better programs for certain things you're interested in. But I think that I try to talk to kids here about like that, you know. Just because you get into Yale doesn't mean that your life is going to be perfect, and you might not even like it there. And so I think there's a misconception in our society that [if you go to] the best college your life is going to be amazing and I feel like what you guys sometimes don't understand is it's just the beginning of your life. It's not the end; it's the very beginning, but whatever you do there is what I think is the most important. And it's like that even at my old school where many of the kids will go to Cabrillo, the junior college there. They have an honors program. They have excellent teachers there. So it's a fabulous junior college, but when kids talk about it, it's this like weepy "yeah... I didn't get in" you know. And then I look at them and I'm like, "Well you're probably saving yourself like 50 thousand dollars because honestly I still have student loans that I'm paying and I've been graduated from college for 20 years."

So part of that is me. But the other part of it too is just, it's so much pressure for you guys. And I know that because I have freshmen now and they're already talking about what college they're going to get into. Kids start talking about it in middle school. I just feel like it's such a big pressure and I kind of wish that that pressure could be spread out a little bit so that you could see that there are also other opportunities. I think college and going to university is a great opportunity too, don't get me wrong, but sometimes when I give advice to kids that are going to a junior college or they say, "I didn't get into any of my schools, I'm gonna take a gap year." And I'm like you might learn more about yourself in that year, doing things that you love and exploring new things, than you [would otherwise, but] right now you're feeling bad about yourself because you didn't get into the best school that you applied to. So sometimes I want to just give them a reality check of "I don't remember much from college except for the relationships that I built with people." I remember the relationships, and I remember some of my professors, and I remember learning how to grow up and be on my own more than anything.

SELINA: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SENIORS WHO MAY CURRENTLY BE AT A CROSSROADS WITH THEIR FUTURE IN TERMS OF COLLEGE DECISIONS, CAREER PATHS, ETC?

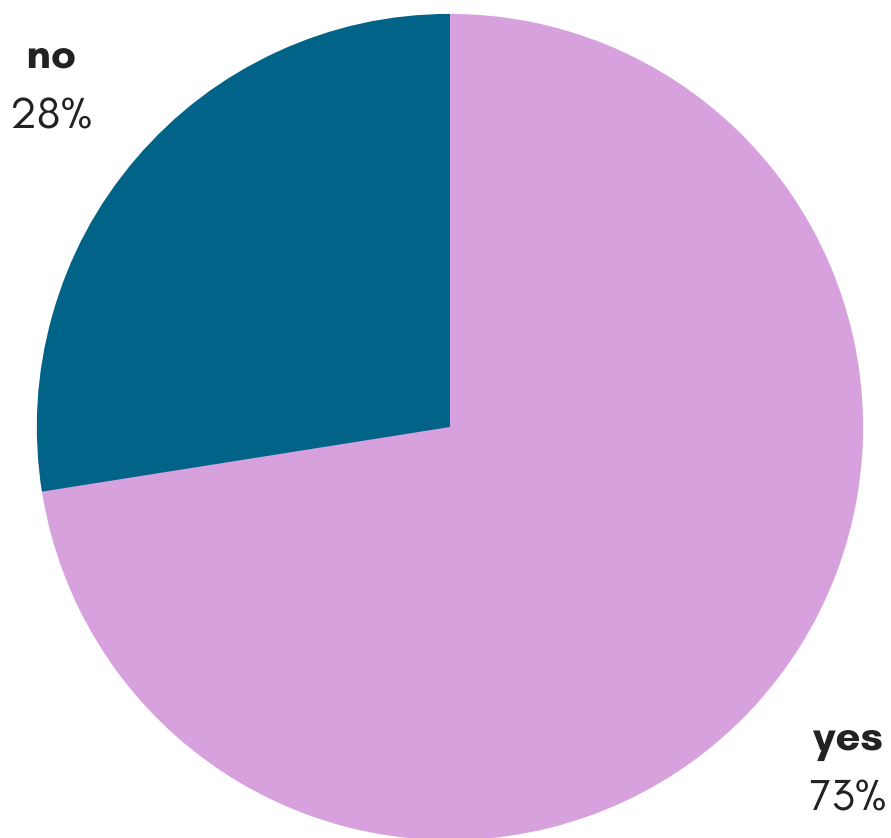
Mrs. Rollins: I would just like to say this: I really don't believe that anyone who is 18 knows exactly what they want to do with the whole rest of their life. And I think that it's ridiculous that we expect that of people. I was a baby when I was 18 years old. I really didn't figure out what I wanted to do until I had the confidence and the sort of adult experiences, and that I had experienced different things. I graduated from college; I've done some different jobs. I lived in different cities and that, I think, shaped me. And I went through that experience with my mom. And I wanted to be an actress and singer before that. After that experience I just felt like it was lacking what I needed. I wanted to do something that was more fulfilling than just like acting and auditioning in front of people. And so it helped me make a decision to be a teacher. I didn't get right to that. But it was something that helped me veer towards that.

I wish kids would take more classes in high school and try different things. We're reading Shakespeare or something in class and I'm like, "Usually you read so well, you should take my drama class" and they'll be like "I don't do drama" and I'm like "What do you mean you don't do drama? You're 14 or 15 years old. Why are you saying you don't do something? You have your whole life to experience things." I think when we're in high school we put ourselves in boxes. So for seniors that are at a crossroads, and they're looking at their other friends that know exactly what they want to do (they're going to be a scientist or they're going to be an engineer), just be open to the fact that you might change your mind once you leave high school and start experiencing what life is like in the real world—and I think that's OK. I just think there's a lot of pressure to know exactly what [you're] going to do and to take all these classes to get there. I sort of wish that it could be more a smorgasbord of choices for you and then you're like, "Wow, I didn't realize that I actually liked doing costume design!"

survey results

AT A CROSSROADS

Do you feel as if you are at a crossroads in your life?

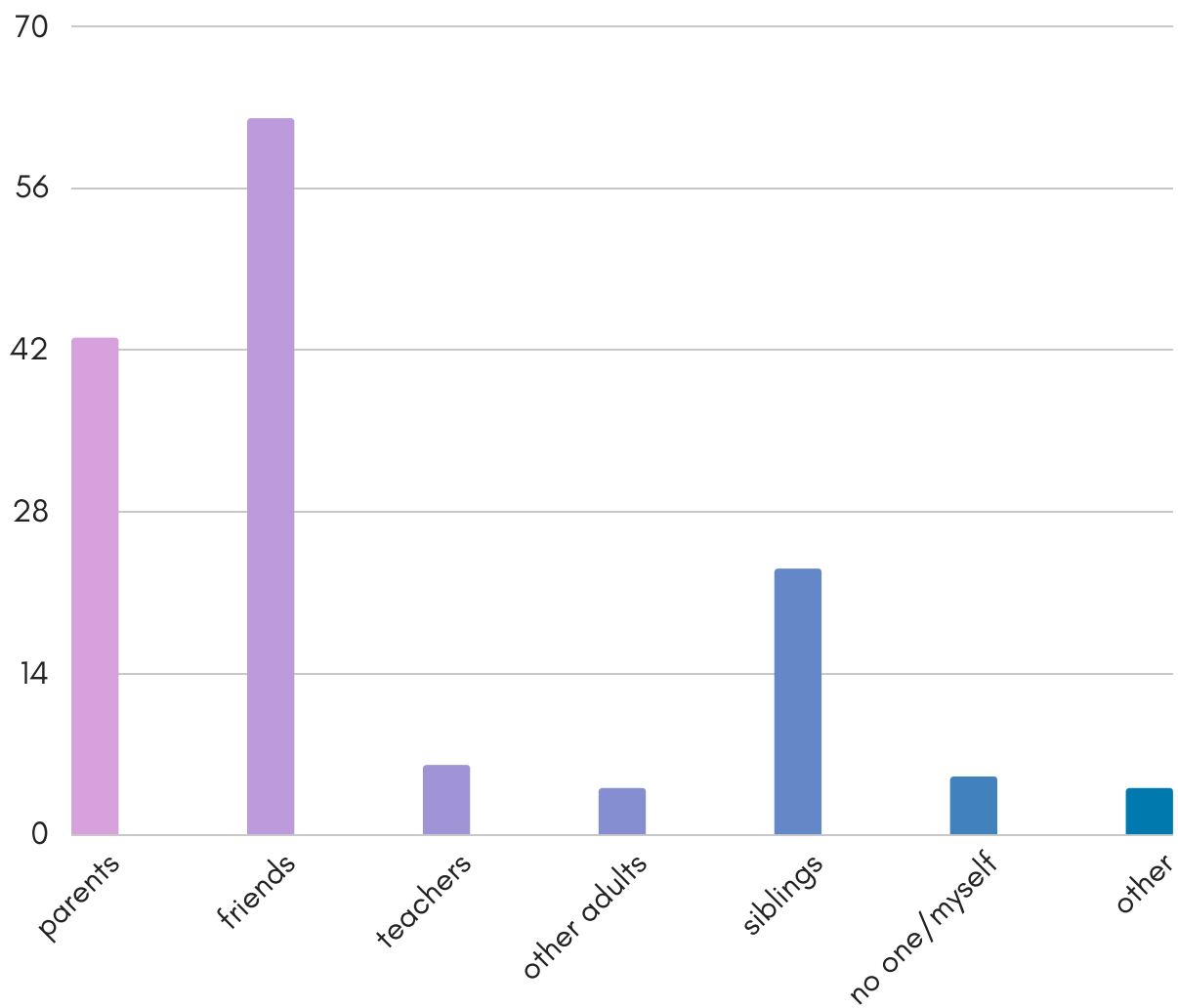


A note from the staff: Thank you to everyone who shared your experiences by participating in our survey! We truly appreciate your help in making our biggest project yet a reality. Survey results were gathered through the Lynbrook High School Facebook group.

survey results

AT A CROSSROADS

Who do you go to for help when making difficult decisions?

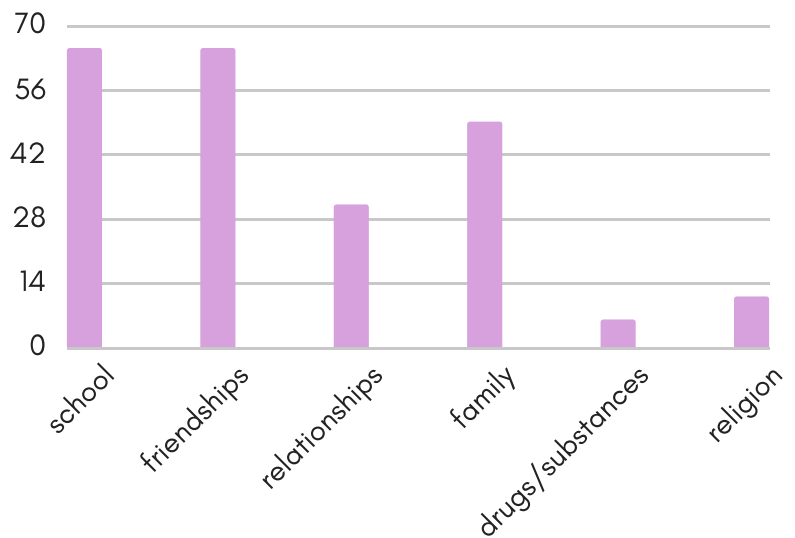


***respondents were allowed to choose more than one answer*

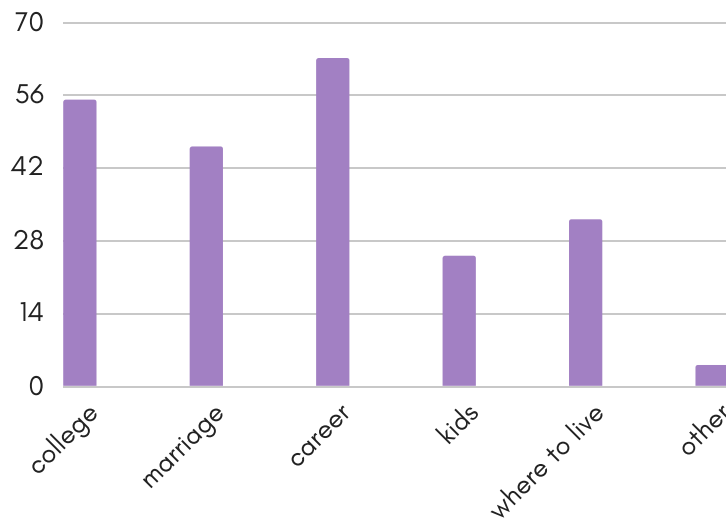
survey results

AT A CROSSROADS

Which kinds of choices do you think have impacted you the most?



What do you think are some of the most difficult choices you'll have to make in the future?



*** respondents were allowed to choose more than one answer*

choices

STEPHANIE CHASE, LMFT

A literal definition of a crossroads might be something like "the point where two roads meet." It is often used in a figurative way, to mean a situation that requires some important choice must be made (vocabulary.com).

While a crossroads can look different for each person, there are a few details each have in common. Each person comes to a pivotal moment where an important choice must be made. Each choice, whether small or large, will influence the person's life to a varying degree. Change will take place, whether the person is aware of it or not.

In the responses to the Aletheia prompt on this subject, many versions of a crossroads were shared. Students are stuck between how to be true to themselves and honest with friends. How do they preserve a friendship and still listen to their own needs? Some students are unsure of what choices to make to take care of themselves. They are stuck between the desire to pursue classes they are personally interested in, or pursue classes out of a desire to make others happy.

Students are at a crossroads with how much weight the outside world has on their thoughts about themselves. They are at a crossroads with whether or not to have conversations with their loved ones about difficult topics. They are even at a crossroads about who to live for, and for some even whether or not to live at all.

Perhaps, these sound familiar to what you have experienced, or continue to experience.

While each teen faces their own unique crossroads, they each experience one. There is unity in the struggle in this way. You each have something in common with your peer, regardless of your class level or cultural background. This reality, of unity in the struggle, has the power to remove a level of "intimidation." An intimidation that many of my teenage clients report, comes hand in hand with making decisions.

Often times teens avoid making choices because they believe they already know the outcome. They read the minds of their peers and know for certain that if they share their voice, that it will be reacted to negatively.

They "already know" how their parents will respond if they bring up a certain subject, so they just don't. They don't ask for help from a teacher, because they believe it won't help.

This strategy is called mind-reading and is common in moments of anxiety. We are trying to protect ourselves from experiencing inner turmoil. What can happen, however, is that mind-reading leads to avoidance.

Avoidance increases inner turmoil. The inner conflict arises between the push and pull of wanting to have a voice but being afraid to use it.

While some teens are struggling with how to make a decision, others are struggling with decisions being made for them. Maybe they are feeling forced by parents to take a certain class load, or maintain a specific GPA. Perhaps they are being forced to participate in therapy because of self-injurious behavior. Maybe they were forced to move away from friends when a parent got a new job. It seems like in these situations, that choice has been removed. In some ways, I agree. A large choice remains, however, and that is how you deal with the influence these choices create. How do you manage the academic work with a heavy AP course load and still practice self-care? While you may feel stress, you are the only one that can manage it. If you find yourself forced into therapy, at least you can choose what you do and don't share. At least you can trust your therapist to keep your confidence, within the limits of safety. Yes, it is unfortunate that you had no choice in moving away from all of your friends for your parents new job. Does it work for you to stay mad about it? Would you rather find some peace in your new life?

As you've read, a major event is not the only event that qualifies as a crossroads. All choices will have an impact on your future. In a relational way, in an emotional way or in an academic way. Not sharing your feelings about the divorce with your parents may create bitterness towards them or anger towards yourself later on. Cheating on the exam may make you seem equal to peers or satisfy a parent, but inside you are telling yourself that you are not enough. Inner shame is growing and its voice is becoming louder and louder with each choice to act outside of your value system.

On the other hand, maybe hearing your own self-criticism is better than listening to that of others. How do you weigh the pros and cons of each choice? How can you have inner peace, instead of inner turmoil?

The answers lie within self-awareness. Slow down the process of making a decision for yourself. From the big ones such as: which classes to take or college to apply for, to the smaller ones such as: whether or not to go to that party, or check your social media account. Ask yourself, "in a perfect situation, what do I want? What outcome am I hoping for?" Make your choice after you become aware of the answer. Even if you decide to go forward with a specific decision that could lead to more inner turmoil, at least you are beginning the process of tuning in to your voice. If you want to share your voice with others, you must first hear what it is saying to you. As you practice this more, your self-awareness will grow, then your self-confidence. Suddenly you will feel more empowered and will be able to have the difficult conversations or will be able to act with great courage and try something new.

I also encourage you towards unity with one another. No one crossroads is more significant than another, because each will influence the rest of your life in some way. Use the situation of being at a crossroads as a way to connect with your peers. Today is the day you can begin to practice the skill of validation. Validate your peer's struggles and the choices they are up against, this will bring you together. The sense of loneliness and anxiety that often accompany the intimidation of making choices will dissolve as you practice validating one another.

Each student works so diligently at self-preservation. You are working to preserve your relationships, your future, your grades, your job, your position on the sports team... the list goes on. Each of you works so hard, through a great deal of obstacles. It is important, therefore, to take care of yourself.

This can seem like an insurmountable task, or even feel like one more thing to do. Wise people understand, however, the importance of balance. If you don't fill your tank up through self-care, from where can you grasp for the mental/physical/emotional energy to make the daily choices you must?

My final advice is that each of you do something kind for yourself, daily. It can be a 5 minute break to go to the bathroom, get a snack or your favorite (healthier) drink. It can be going to sleep a few minutes earlier, taking a nap, saying no to a request to hang out with friends so you can be a couch potato and slow down for an evening. It can be doing your homework outside, or at a library, for a change of scenery. It could be chatting with a good friend, or family member for a few minutes. Think about the things that you enjoy, big things and small things. Make them a priority. If you can learn this lesson now, you'll be in good shape later on.

In review, we face crossroads throughout our lives. A crossroads can look different for each person but they all involve making a choice. Anytime we make a choice, there will be an outcome that involves change, unless we choose to remain the same. In order to decrease the intimidation of the change, we must slow down the process of making the decision. What do you hope the outcome will be? What is the risk, or the benefit of making this choice? When you come to the next crossroads, take a moment to give it some thought. Ask for help if you need it. Choose, your choice. This is the foundation to using your voice.

Stephanie Chase is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist who practices at the local therapy group, Campbell Teen and Family Therapy. She is passionate about supporting adolescents, young adults and families as they navigate life's adversities. She has been serving the community therapeutically since 2006.

For more information about Campbell Teen and Family Therapy, or Stephanie, please visit www.CampbellTeenFamilyTherapy.com



Top: Cassie, Elyssa, Megan, Selina **Bottom:** Zahra, Sarah, Medha, Aarushi **Not pictured:** Sophie

you've made it to the end!

thank you to all who took the time to submit to our publication -- we know that it can be hard to share such personal parts of your life, and we want to sincerely thank you for speaking out and starting a discussion on these topics. each and every one of your submissions spoke to us in ways we can't describe, and reminded us that while our journeys at lynbrook are all different, we can always find people fighting the same battles. we'd also like to thank everyone who had an integral part in creating this issue -- the professionals, the teachers, and our advisers. and last but not least, thank *you* for reading aletheia! we can't stress enough how important your support is to us.

stay tuned for next year!

aletheia staff 2017-2018