



OCTOBER 2018

WHO I'VE BECOME

A L E T H E I A



ABOUT US

The Aletheia staff chooses topics that pertain to the realities of our high school community. Each issue comprises of: firsthand experiences submitted anonymously by Lynbrook students and alumni; a professional article relating to the theme; and resources compiled by the student staff. Finalized issues are distributed in Lynbrook High School, uploaded online, and emailed to our subscribers. Past issues can be found on lhsaletheia.com/archive. The content in Aletheia is composed by the students of Lynbrook High School. Ideas and opinions expressed within the publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Aletheia staff or the school administration.

OUR MISSION

Aletheia (a-lay-thee-uh) means "truth" in Greek. We are a student outreach publication that strives to provide a voice for all students at Lynbrook High School in San Jose, California. Aletheia was created to facilitate communication and overcome stigmas concerning prevalent and taboo issues within Lynbrook.

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OCTOBER 2018: WHO I'VE BECOME

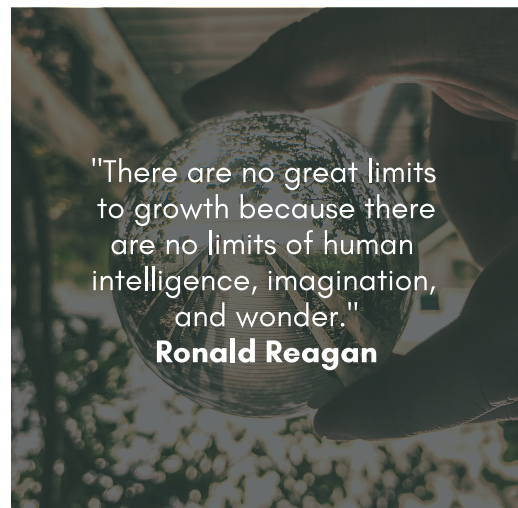
Well, it's senior year. I'm looking back, and I've changed so much since I walked into this place, a bright eyed naive freshman with a bunch of *sshholes for friends and a hilarious sense of optimism in their head.

I hated my friends but stuck with them because I didn't have a choice, but I had a 4.0. That was the year when I learned some self value. Which I'd later lose but anyway, I realized I deserved to be treated like a human being and no grades in the world were worth being treated like the dumbest loser at Lynbrook. It still took me a year. And I never confronted them. It remains a source of my pride and shame today, that I never exploded, just healed and moved on to people who value and respect me on my own. I learned patience in the healing process.

And my self worth took many plunges. My heart broke repeatedly. I spent ages being terrified and hurt and I couldn't stand to be around myself. Which can get really tough. Sophomore year was endless turmoil and misery and I could barely stand on my own two feet. But I learned my own strength when I stood tall and aced my SAT after all that. Isn't that such a Lynbrook thing to say? I think so too.

Junior year was keeping my head down and finding who I really was. Who am I? The answer would shock all of you if you know who I am versus who I was and who I planned to be and what really happened. But I stand proud. I learned that I am valid. I am okay. I am me and none of your judgemental *sses can stop that. I hope I never see any of you again for the pain the fear and reality of being judged by you brought. I'm talking to almost everyone at this d*mn school.

And here I am, senior year, still working too hard to be this imperfect and still unable to appreciate an amount of work that's left others speechless about me. I'm not perfect, but I've grown and I'll never stop growing. That's my journey.



OCTOBER 2018: WHO I'VE BECOME

when I was in sixth grade, I never felt weird settled in my own skin, never wanted to be anyone else, never thought about who I would be. i was never worried about who I was. sixth grade was a time of hot red dust coating my fingers, pre-algebra, and just living my best life. days, weeks and years started to pass, and I lost all sense of ignorance and became so self aware. i started to notice everything wrong about me and started to notice others more. i wanted to be loud like the girl with the pink sweater, laidback like the boy in the hoodie, patient like the teacher with glasses, intelligent like the girl with adidas- I wanted to be everything and I felt like I was nothing.

currently, I'm somewhere near feeling like I'm nothing and not knowing who I am- and honestly, it makes me frustrated, frustrated that I'm not who I want to be, frustrated I don't know who I am, frustrated that I keep changing. frustrated.

i guess I'm just waiting on time to make me who I'm supposed to be and help me figure out who I am.



The first time I remember feeling self-conscious about the way others perceived me was in middle school, when my friends didn't invite me to go trick-or-treating with them. Frankly, I was shocked. These were people I knew since I was five or six, and I considered them my best friends. They wouldn't tell me why, either. My memory has forsaken a lot of details, but I remember being in the car with all of them and my mom asking them why they didn't invite me. They finally said something along the lines of "she's kind of annoying" or "she complains too much." At that time I was really hurt by the fact that my closest friends didn't actually like me as much as I thought. But I also thought, wow, am I that unlikable of a person?

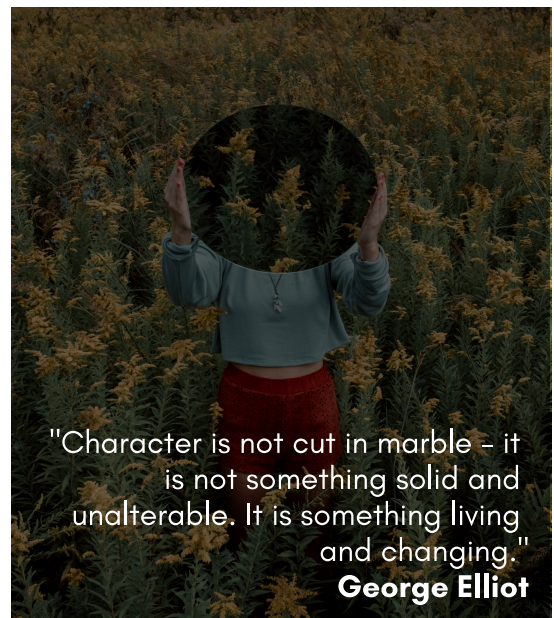
Things got worse from there. I've always been pretty close with my mom and comfortable enough to talk with her about my life and problems. But during the past few years, whenever I went to her for consolation, she always made some sort of remark like "maybe you need to change the way you talk to people, the way you talk can make people feel uncomfortable." I'll admit that my speaking style is more blunt and maybe not as positive as some people would like, but being told by your mother over and over that every social conflict you have is probably your fault really ends up wearing down your self-confidence.

OCTOBER 2018: WHO I'VE BECOME

I wish my mom could have seen things from my perspective and been more empathetic - maybe then I wouldn't blame myself for everything.

I'm not sure how I got here. Maybe it's partly the things people like my mom have told me over the years, maybe it's a genetic predisposition. There are periods of time in which I feel extremely self-conscious or hyperaware of other people's judgment, and there are other times that I feel pretty confident about myself. Junior year I thought my confidence was going up, but this year it's taken a dip again. Every time someone reacts negatively to me, I start overanalyzing - did I say something wrong, what if they don't like me, am I being annoying? I just wish I could stop caring about what other people thought of me, but obviously that's not going to happen. I'm overly critical of myself, to the point that I made the decision to start seeing a therapist to change the way I talk to myself. I'm just tired of feeling so negative about myself and others all the time.

A piece of advice for my fellow teenagers: you don't need to have a mental illness to get help and use your resources. There are plenty of people at Lynbrook who are in bad mental health, even if they don't have depression or anxiety. Like me - I don't have a mental illness (I think), but I feel better after starting to talk to a therapist and learning methods for how to change the way I think.



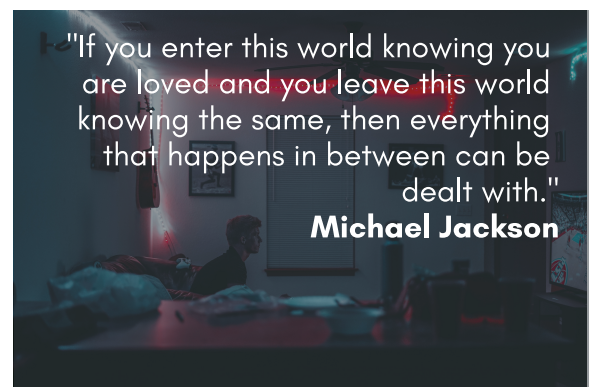
OCTOBER 2018: WHO I'VE BECOME

I think I've become someone who's really adaptable, because of moving to and from different cities. Every 5 years, my family has moved to a different city (in India and in the US), and I have had to adjust to a different environment, people, language, culture each time. It's given me the trait of adaptability, something that has helped me relate to people more easily. Since there is always the need for social interaction, no matter where I am, I'm able to find something in common and start a conversation. I have also learned to read people pretty well, and I've developed empathy.

The downside to this is that I feel like I am conforming to the environment. I'll change my style of fashion, my accent, my music taste, my likes and dislikes pretty easily, all just to be able to fit in and make myself feel comfortable. And that's also what makes me a push-over: to try to make friends and get them to like me, I try my best to please them, which usually means letting them have their way.

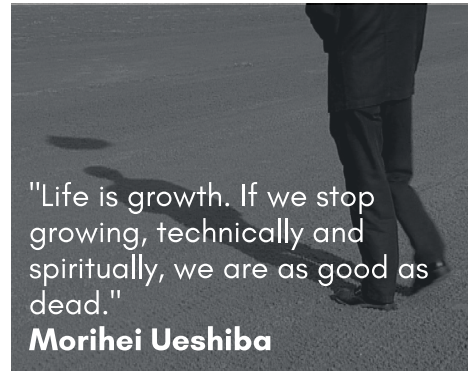
I wish to become someone who is confident and isn't afraid of accepting loneliness and solitude, and stays true to their original self and values by not conforming just to fit in. I wish to become someone who is able to relate to people without having to try so much, and is able to find happiness in doing things by themselves. I wish to just discover my own morals and values so that I can stay true to them no matter what.

if my child self met me now, i hope that they would like me. i dont know what ive become but i know that ive changed, and maybe thats enough.



OCTOBER 2018: WHO I'VE BECOME

I used to think I was selfless and put others before myself. That was until I had gotten a boyfriend. I was peer pressured and my feelings for him were artificial. I sincerely thought I did love him, but I was still young. I didn't know what real love was like, or what a real relationship required. His neediness and selfishness exhausted me, and my relationship with my best friend worsened. I felt completely lost, worthless, and played with. I did try my best to balance my relationship with my ex and my ex best friend. There was a night where I was close to committing suicide. Luckily, a part of me wanted to get better and give myself a chance. Though I wondered, was it all my fault? But the fact is, my best friend always avoided the problem, while I tried to confront it. It was always up to me that had to fix every single problem. That's when I realized that I really was never happy. It was all superficial. And so, the end of 8th grade has been hell for me. I couldn't wait to leave. Summer was when I started getting better. I traveled out of state with my family and started to appreciate the things I didn't before. I was at a state of epiphany. When freshman year started, I only had one friend at the same school (it went from 6th grade to 10th). He stood by my side everytime and I'm very grateful for that. We eventually expanded our group, where I found my true friends.

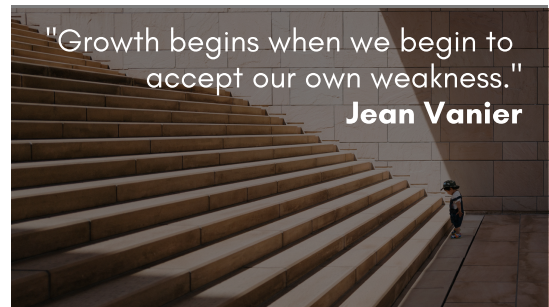


I was genuinely happy with them and I realized, this is it. This is the future that was awaiting for me. They influenced me into become a much more open minded and better person. Despite the depressing episodes I still experience and my eating disorder, I've never been this happy and woke. I've become more appreciative and learned that relationships aren't everything. I have my friends and family that love me. People will disagree on me with this, but, this is my story and this is what I believe. When I look at the snaps of two years ago and see how they progressed to this day, I see a new and bright me. If I were to go back to the 8th grade me, I would've told her, "You have great things awaiting for you, trust me on this. Don't give up and learn to love yourself." Self-love can be difficult to acquire, but it doesn't have to be perfect. Whatever makes you happy, go for it. Just like how music, sports, and my loved ones (can't forget food and sleep lol) make me happy and passionate.

OCTOBER 2018: WHO I'VE BECOME

I am an alum of Lynbrook High. I graduated a few years ago, but some of my most passionate words ever recorded are archived here on this website and I only just yesterday remembered this website exists. What better prompt to come back to than "Who I've become", right? Lynbrook was cool-- I didn't really have a problem with the schooling and the teachers. The problem I had in my high school years was all the shame. As a girl, I was ashamed for wanting sex. I was slut shamed when the boys I hooked up with told everyone about how good I was in the sack. I was ashamed of the amount of weed I smoked and hid it from literally everybody, including my therapist of the time. I was ashamed about being polyamorous, and as a result I had a long streak of cheating before I even knew what polyamory was. I was in a sh*tty place. If you're a Lynbrook student and you relate to this on even remotely, let me give you a teeny little nugget of knowledge: once you graduate, you will never see over 99% of the Lynbrook population ever again (unless, of course, you're actively seeking them out). I'm dead serious-- ask any alumni ever. You may see a small handful of peers on campus, but I go to school less than 20 miles from Lynbrook and I've only seen maybe 5 or 6 people I recognized.

Once college rolls around, you'll be able to hit restart. The slut shaming disappears because the people you go to school with are adults. You find your identity more, learn about different lifestyles, and you can truly be anyone that you want to be. Chin up, buttercup!

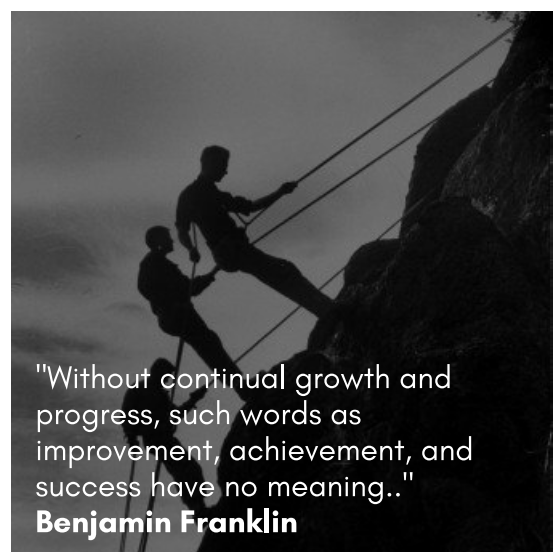


When I was 11 and living, just living was a misery, I would write letters to my future 15 year old self. I would write about my hopes, my fears and dreams. I would tell her about my mother's illness, my grandfather's problems with cancer, my dad suddenly losing his job. When there was no one else I could talk to, I would just write down the hurricane of thoughts swirling through my head. Sometimes I would write asking about the future. Asking if I became more confident, responsible, and if my mother and grandfather was feeling better. Other times, I would just write about other things; trivial, but no less important to me. Have I become more open? Can I talk to people without making the conversation awkward? Am I still single? (Spoiler alert: you single AF)

OCTOBER 2018: WHO I'VE BECOME

At the time, those letters were my only hope that things would get better. That my future self would be strong and capable and would know how to handle the problems that overwhelmed me at the time. But as the years gradually passed by, and I wrote more letters, and just hoped some more. I didn't actively try to be the person that I wanted to be... I just sat back, and hoped that I one day I would get around to it. One day after endless waiting and hoping, I eventually saw it on my calendar. My 15th birthday. It was only a few months away. And I realized that I was still facing the same problems that I had years and years ago. The same mistakes. The same. The same. The same. I-I should have figured out what to do by now... I shouldn't have been facing these same problems... my life should have been better by now, right? And I beat myself up about it for months. That I did nothing and that my life was passing by and that I did nothing. Nothing. absolutely nothing... And I felt that way for so long. But I would eventually see the truth, that I had CHANGED little by little. I became more compassionate after seeing my family members suffer, and I became more humble after my dad lost his job. And I became a little more confident in my own skin after knowing that I had experienced that much hurt, but I had survived. I did it. The most difficult years of my life so far, and I survived it.

I was still hurt, and experienced the same problems, but I was able to make it through. And that was enough for me, and I'm proud of myself for coming this far. I am not sure if the person who I am now is what my past self wanted me to be... but now I know better. I know I need to control my own life. I can't take a back seat anymore. If I was told to define myself, I would like to say that I am confident, brave, compassionate, and smart. I believe that I am some of those things, but for the most part, I'm undefined. I don't know how to define myself. I don't know who I'm at this moment. And I don't think I'll ever know who I will become. But I suppose there is some comfort in not knowing. Confident. Brave. Smart. Kind. I could be it all. And this time, I won't step back.



PROFESSIONAL ARTICLE

YOU WILL ALWAYS BE A WORK IN PROGRESS

Shirani M. Pathak, LCSW

Like a ship caught in the stormy seas, the adolescent years can be turbulent at worst and rocky at best. Flailing around, thrashing, and sometimes even crashing into things, getting knocked around in the process. School. Parents. Homework. Social Media. Extra-curriculars. Friends. Pressures abound from all areas and all directions, and as the years go by, the pressures and demands only rise.

Our youth today are faced with a very different set of challenges than any of us were ever faced with growing up. For those of us who are adults, our teen years may have felt turbulent, and when looking at it objectively, our teen years were nothing compared to what our youth today experience. Technological advancements have served as a blessing and a curse. What can now solve highly complex mathematical equations in a matter of nanoseconds, help diagnose cancer in its earliest stages, and create fancy apps to help keep people connected around the world, also serve as the same platforms and technology that lead to comparisonitis (a term I like to use when referring to the condition of comparing ourselves with others), feelings of not enoughness (a term I like to use when referring to our level of self-worth), and greater pressure to be part of the crowd.

Brene Brown, a renowned researcher on shame and vulnerability and author of bestselling books such as *Daring Greatly*, *Rising Strong*, and *Braving the Wilderness*, teaches us that as humans we are hardwired for connection and we all crave to belong.

The teenage years are all about trying to figure out who we are and who we have become so that we can determine where we belong. The teen years are an essential part of our development into happy, healthy adults.

As I sat with the Alethia staff listening to the stories being shared for the current "Who I've Become" issue, one theme stood out to me, and it's one we hear often with our teens here at the Center for Soulful Relationships: The theme of trying to piece together one's own identity based on an amalgamation of the identities of others. One submission read, "The downside to this is that I feel like I'm conforming to the environment. I'll change my style of fashion, my accent, my music tastes, my likes and dislikes pretty easily, all just to be able to fit in and make myself feel comfortable." Another submission read, "I wanted to be loud like the girl with the pink sweater, laidback like the boy in the hoodie, patient like the teacher with the classes, intelligent like the girl with the Adidas—I wanted to be everything and I felt like I was nothing."

The key piece here is the feeling of wanting to be everything and feeling like nothing. The teen years are all about a development of self-esteem, self-worth, and self-confidence.

Self-esteem and self-worth develop over time and are directly related to self-confidence. All three, self-esteem, self-worth, and self-confidence, contribute to creating healthy, well-adjusted adults. Remember, our youth today are our adults and leaders of tomorrow. I don't know about you, but I know I want to live in a world that is ran by healthy, well-adjusted, adults that carry with them an inner sense of esteem, worth, and confidence. Our leaders of tomorrow are here at Lynbrook today, looking back on who they were and who they've become.

The best way for teens to develop healthy self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-worth are by doing esteemable acts. Esteemable acts are those acts which allow a person to see things through to completion and feel the vibrant glow of worthiness that can only come from within. When someone sets a goal to do something, and accomplishes it because they want to do so, the glow that they have is one that can only come from within. As a teen, think about the last time you did something for you, because you said you were going to do it and not because someone else said you had to. Now, think about how good you felt when you accomplished it. That was an esteemable act.

As a parent or teacher, think about the last time you witnessed a teen seeing something through to completion because they wanted to, not because you told them to. I imagine you will agree, the glow that exudes from within is unmistakable.

The teenage years can be a turbulent time, and the more we allow teens the autonomy to do things because they want to, and see them learn their lessons on their own because they want to, and allow them the dignity and the respect to develop into who they have and will become, we will see a generation of leaders emerging from our youth that will lead our county in ways that we have never seen before. Your role as an adult during your teen's turbulent years is to be the safe harbor for them to come home to. And if you're a teen, know that the turbulent times will end, and you will have a safe place to call home in the end.

Tips for students who are working to develop who they are:

1. Know that you are a wonderful human being and your job right now is not to have it “all figured out” but rather to explore who you have been and work toward being a better version of you than you were yesterday.
2. You will never be perfect, you will always be a work in progress. So please, take the pressure off of yourself. Change is hard, and that’s all part of being a work in progress. Simply allow yourself to accept that you will always be a work in progress and this will allow you to flow better with the change.
3. As you are learning more about who you are and who you are becoming, it’s important to stay true to you. There is nobody on this planet who has the special gifts, talents, and abilities that you have, so embrace your uniqueness, and allow yourself to be truly you. :)

Tips for parents to support teens as they are working to develop who they are:

1. Your job is to be a sherpa, or a guide, to your teen. Your job is not to do the developmental tasks for your teen. That job is already taken, by your teen.
2. The best way to support your teen is to keep the lines of communication open: Be a loving witness, creating the space for your teen to be able to share openly and vulnerably what is going on for them, in a way that is free from judgment, blame, or shame.
3. Remember back to what it was like for you to be a teen, and remember, you turned out great, so trust that your teen will turn out great, too. If your teen triggers you more than you feel they should, perhaps it’s because they are triggering something within you that needs to heal. Get support of your own so you can parent from a place of compassion rather than from a place of your wounded teenage self.

Ways for parents and teens together to address the process of ever evolving and ever growing into the person they’re meant to become:

1. Always approach one another with openness, curiosity, and love, creating an environment that is free from judgment, shame, or blame.
2. Parents, trust that your teen is doing what teens are supposed to do, and teens, trust that your parents truly want the best for you. Both parents and teens need to remember this is true, even if it sometimes doesn’t feel like it. Remember, you’re all on the same team, you all want the same goal: To have a healthy, well-adjusted teen who grows into a well-adjusted adult.
3. It’s okay to disagree. That’s part of the developmental stage of being a teen and developmental stage of being the parent of a teen. This is the age where youth are exploring who they are and who they are becoming. It’s a time of exploration and each must trust that the other will turn out great, regardless of what it looks like right now.
4. It’s okay to get professional support. Sometimes no matter how much we are giving our best, we might need a little help. If that’s the case, feel free to reach out for the help of a professional who understands the unique needs of teens and families.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shirani M. Pathak is a relationship therapist and founder of the Center for Soulful Relationships in San Jose, CA. Ms. Pathak and her team work with individuals, couples, and families of teens to restore love, communication, and connection where it feels like love, communication, and connection have been lost. Ms. Pathak is a sought after relationship expert, having been quoted in Redbook, BestLife, Reader's Digest, and more. Ms. Pathak's Center offers a whole new way for individuals, couples, and families to live and love in a heart-centered, connected, authentic way. To learn more, please visit www.CenterforSoulfulRelationships.com

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

GAME

TALK ABOUT IT, A FUN AND ENGAGING BOARD GAME FOR TEENS AND FAMILIES
WWW.TALKABOUTITGAMES.COM

AUDIOBOOK

THE GIFTS OF IMPERFECT PARENTING: RAISING CHILDREN WITH COURAGE, COMPASSION AND CONNECTION, A TALK BY DR. BRENÉ BROWN

BOOK

PARENTING FROM THE INSIDE OUT BY DR. DAN SIEGEL