



MAY 2019

VOLUME 2: JUDGMENT

a l e t h e i a

TRUTH BE TOLD



a l e t h e i a

[A-LEY-THEE-A]

(greek) the state of not being hidden,
a fundamental and sincere reality; truth

Aletheia is 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.

Every year, the Aletheia staff chooses topics that pertain to the realities of our high school community. The issues are comprised of firsthand experiences submitted anonymously by Lynbrook students and alumni, among many other components as described on the *contents* page. 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.

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staff

LYNBROOK HIGH SCHOOL

Advisors

Lovely Choubey & Preeti Rani

Medha Gelli	Senior
Selina Li	Senior
Abdullah Ashiq	Junior
Megan Xu	Junior
Raghav Ganesh	Junior
Cassie Yu	Sophomore
Isaac Yoon	Sophomore
Sophie Guan	Sophomore
Vijaya Kukutla	Sophomore



letter from the advisors

This is our first year being the parent advisors for Aletheia. We were not sure what we were getting into in the beginning of the school year, but the experience has been enriching and enlightening for us. The Aletheia staff members have helped us become better humans and parents.

Since we got such a positive response for the year-end compilation last year, the staff members worked hard to put together this edition. This edition has brought together the two topics of acceptance and approval, and insecurities. These are issues that high school students deal with on a regular basis and still can't talk about. With social media and the need to fit in, each and every individual feels lonely in the crowd. Amidst all this, Aletheia's anonymous submissions give students the space to vent. And also for the readers, it provides the sense that they are not alone.

We were amazed to see the level of compassion each staff member showed during our meetings and discussions. All the staff members have been hardworking and responsible. We as parent advisors feel very proud when we look at what these kids have achieved in the 2018-2019 school year. They try to show the school that no topic is taboo and every issue should be discussed.

We would also like to thank all those students who took the initiative and shared their experiences with the whole community. It takes a lot of courage and helps other students who are suffering in silence. It took a lot of hard work and collective effort to come up this compilation. We hope you appreciate it.

Sincerely,
Lovely Choubey & Preeti Rani
Parent Advisors

insecurities

guiding questions

these prompts served as starting points; submissions were not required to answer them

1. What are your insecurities? What are you most insecure about?
2. How did those insecurities develop?
3. In what ways have your insecurities shown in your daily life and decisions?
4. How have your insecurities affected your views?
5. How do you cope with your insecurities?

insecurities

I've always been insecure about my body... my mom keeps telling me that I'd be so pretty if I lost weight. My dad makes really mean comments and calls me disgusting. My sister says all fat people don't deserve to live - "they're more disgusting than even murderers". I experienced some bullying in elementary and middle school but luckily Lynbrook has been pretty nice to me. My mom's constant reminders of my inferiority and restrictions on any exposing clothing (shorts/skirts/swim suits/sleeveless tops) made me start hating summer. I loved fall/winter because that was the only time I could feel comfortable in my clothes/body. This has been happening even before elementary school. I remember my family making such rude comments about me when I was only 125 lbs. Looking back at pics of that time, I actually looked thin.. almost skinny since I'm pretty tall. Lately I've tried to ignore my family and love myself but it's really hard when my mom/dad/sister call me disgusting almost everyday. Due to my insecurities.. I'm only applying to colleges far away from my family and far away from hot weather. So, I can feel good about myself and not worry about having to go to the beach/pool/wear summer clothing. I hope I can one day get over the ingrained inferiority and self-loathing but for now... I just want to get away from all the criticism and just live my life.



My insecurities are pretty straightforward and typical. I don't like the way my face looks, or the way my body looks. It isn't something that affects how I feel around other people because I've become pretty apathetic towards people in general. It's just that because it's ME who doesn't like how I look, I can't get away from that. It's pretty strange, right? It's funny, because insecurity is typically defined as "lacking self-confidence," so I'm lacking self-confidence in my face and body although it doesn't matter how other people perceive me, which is essentially appearance. It's so strange to put that into words. I don't know, maybe I just hate my self-image. I look myself in the mirror and stare at it for, say, maybe ten minutes, feel sad for a bit, then move on with my life. It's just a simple, yet strange thing that I derive bits of sadness and occasional laughs from. It's definitely not something that permeates my thoughts, and I don't dwell on it for long. Somehow, I feel as if my feelings about how I have insecurities at all should be invalidated. I don't know if they can even be considered as such ;; I have no reason to feel like crap because I don't like my body or face;; like I'm pretty fit and have a nice face. Again, it's really weird lol.

My insecurities are plenty, looks, awkwardness, intelligence, race, masculinity, and a whole host of other things. These anxieties developed through bad experiences, most of them being when I was younger, but some of them are newer as a result of high school life. When I was younger, I was never a smart kid in terms of knowledge of my class subject and had always been behind, also humiliation and belittling from parents had to do with some of it as well since it was a household where I couldn't do anything right. The fear of being mentally inferior to everyone is still there, especially in such a competitive environment despite having solid grades, especially compared to the grades I used to get.

Another one developed from an early age is awkwardness, the start of middle school was quite terrible since I had been new, this was also around the time I had started developing feelings for girls so that didn't exactly pan out well, it eventually grew into a general fear of everyone although in recent years it has died down. The recent ones, (looks, race, and masculinity) have obviously developed as apart of puberty. I'm not sure how my masculinity insecurities developed, but it was after I stepped foot into the gym, I guess it projected an ultra-masculine ideal onto myself and it's simply something that isn't even attainable despite how many days in the gym are spent.

In everyday life, it certainly prevents me from speaking to the people I'd like to, or asking out someone, or even asking for help, it's a thing that prevents a person from being themselves. I don't really have effective coping methods other than CBT, which is basically correcting negative thoughts and turning them into positive ones, very hard to turn that into a habit. Anyways, my apologies to whatever poor soul that has to read these, just wanted to vent, to be honest.



I'm insecure about my looks, and in particular, my "skinniness". It has come to a point where I only wear full-sleeved t-shirts and long jeans to hide my arms and legs that apparently "look like twigs and branches". I feel ashamed looking at my body in the mirror because when I look at myself and my lack of flesh, the comments that people make about my body start racing through my mind. As I've gotten older, I've learned to pay less attention to my thinness, but when someone points it out, my entire progress towards self-acceptance resets, and I'm back to square one. Nevertheless, I continue to tell myself that it doesn't matter what people think, my thinness is something that I'm eventually going to have to own and use it to boost my own confidence.

1. I am most insecure about my looks. I also want everything to be perfect and not make any mistakes

2. My insecurity probably developed because of my mom and the fact that I am a Korean girl. Not being sexist, but beauty is more based on females not males, and as a girl, Korean beauty standards were looked more upon me. Koreans have the most plastic surgeries in the world and looks are very important. In Korea, having double eyelid is a necessary thing, and if you don't have it, you are considered ugly. Some parents give their high school daughters a double eyelid surgery as a graduation gift. My mother has always told me that my nose is low, my forehead and my face is big, and that I am ugly because I look like my dad. She hasn't said the exact words "you are ugly" but she has commented multiple times about my nose and my forehead and since I was four, she has told me that I should get a nose job. If it was just once that she told me to get a nose job, I would have ignored it but at 14, she has told me again. (Not related to insecurities but I feel that beauty is an opinion chosen by society. Society just thinks that big eyes and high nose and straight teeth are thigh gaps are pretty but we don't have to listen to society. Small eyes and Big eyes are pretty. High nose and low nose are pretty. Straight teeth and crooked teeth are pretty. Thigh gaps and Touching Thighs are beautiful.) My insecurity about not being perfect also comes from my mom because whenever I do something little wrong, she always yells at me. I always feel that she wants me to be her perfect little barbie doll.

3. I have very low self-esteem and confidence. I like to talk to my close friends but I don't really like meeting new people. I hate presentation because I feel like when I am in front of the class, people are judging me the way my mother does. I always try to stop being shy and reach out to others but no matter how hard I try, sometimes it doesn't and I just find myself trembling and stuttering when I have more than 3 eyes on me.



4. I feel like they have actually helped me become a better person. Not better personality, I have low self-esteem and confidence, but a better person as in I reflected about my mom's comments and learned that I shouldn't judge others based on looks. I sometimes do think like my mom, like "what is she wearing" or "she's not that pretty" but then I think back to how I felt from my mother's comments and think "no they should have the right to wear what they want" or "that's just who she is, she can't choose her looks".

5. I love listening to songs and some songs really help me think and reflect. There's this one song about insecurities I really like called "Dear Insecurities" by Gnash.

I'm insecure b/c I'm gay as f*ck and I can't wait to get the f*ck away from you judgemental thots. I don't stan any of you whores who decided that it's worth making me uncomfy with who I am daily. Maybe if you could get your head out of your own *ss and realize I'm not attracted to you because I'm attracted to men I wouldn't be this way.



As long as I have remembered, I had trouble making friends. It was partly because I had nothing in common with other people; while other people were talking about what their favorite celebrity did or their favorite sports team or other mentally unstimulating things, I learned about Saddam Hussein and the Gulf War, how nuclear weapons and railguns worked, and I thought about how I could store a significant amount of energy in the space of my hand. Sure, I know that many people like history and science, but all they do is learn historical dates and events by heart and recite them by rote, knowing exactly when this battle or that was fought, when a general was born, or even when a monarch (usually a very insignificant one) came into the crown of his forefathers.

They don't understand that to learn history, one needs to remember the essentials and forget what is not essential, one needs to learn about the forces which are the causes leading to those effects which we subsequently perceive as historical events. Even though I tried to be funny, my jokes flew right over other people's heads; they didn't know enough about the things I cared about.

This is why I've been insecure since 5th grade about my lack of friends and my unpopularity; I never had a friend until I was in 10th grade, when I met a girl I liked. I finally found someone who shared the same interests as me, and not someone who saw me as "that nerd over there."

For a while, I thought my insecurities were over, as I finally had a trustworthy friend; and we got along quite well. I helped her on her various projects by buying her parts, and even though everyone at school made fun of me because I'm a male, accusing me of being in a relationship, I felt fulfilled, as I was finally able to find someone who saw me as the nice person that I am and someone who could understand my ideas, unlike everyone else I talk to, including some teachers, who would just give me a blank stare or call me *r/iamverysmart*.

But now I feel insecure again, as everyone else seems to be jealous of our friendship; a month ago, some people spread a rumor that my friend was secretly videotaping me on her smartphone even though I saw that she was checking reddit the entire time, and because of those unfounded rumors, I have become more unpopular at my school.

Because of those rumors, I think someone removed me from the email lists of many clubs at our school; this further increased the insecurities that I felt about being unpopular. In fact, I think the rumors are starting to take a toll on our friendship; last week, I was talking to her about my theories about Saddam Hussein, and she compared me to flat-earthers. Normally she acts nice to me, so I was taken aback by this remark; I think these two events must be correlated in some way. Because of this event, I've become more insecure, I now fear that she is leaving me. So far, my insecurities have manifested themselves in my hospitality towards my friend, I try to be more caring of her and I try to help her more with her projects. To cope with my insecurities, I usually try to assure myself that she won't leave me, but only time will tell.

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.

"INSECURITY IS LIKE A TOWER OF BRICKS...SELF-WORTH WEAKENS THE MORTAR."

When I was younger I was pretty insecure about my body. I was generally a chubby kid, and got bullied a lot for it. What hurt most was that it seemed to come from everywhere. It came from strangers, other kids, family members, and even close friends. I felt as if I had no one to talk to, no one to go for help. I kept myself socially isolated, I only had one or two friends, and even hid from them at times. It was a dark place for me at the time, and it was only exacerbated by issues at home, worries, over school, and toxic friendships.

My health started declining and soon what was once a minor issue put my life at risk. I realized that my self-worth relies on how I think of myself, not others. I realized that if I was in touch with my emotions I could control them. Over the summer, I made changes. I trained hard and lost a lot of weight. My health started improving and with it my self-esteem. I got new friends and learned to forgive my old ones. A challenge that seemed impossible was being fixed within the blink of an eye.

Insecurity is like a tower of bricks. Each intrusive thought or snide comment serves as one brick in an insurmountable tower that crushes one's hopes and spirit, leaving sad remnants behind. You can not simply break a brick. They are tough and weigh heavy on one's soul. But you can control the mortar, the substance that ties the bricks together. The mortar is self-hate, if its strong it melds the bricks into a tower that casts a shadow on life. But if the mortar is weak, a simple push can topple the tower.

Self-worth weakens the mortar, and it is only through the belief in oneself that real change can be accomplished. Self-worth is not an easy ideal to maintain, of course, especially if one deals with depression or social anxiety. I was lucky to have neither of those, but at Aletheia we often reach out to social workers or therapists about what resources people with those issues can access, and have published these resources in previous editions. I still have other insecurities, but with confidence in myself I feel like I can be strong today and look with hope towards tomorrow.

mr. seike



MEGAN: WHAT WERE SOME INSECURITIES THAT YOU FACED AS A TEENAGER?

Mr. Seike: Being both Japanese and Chinese from immigrant parents, I felt out of place not only among Japanese and Chinese people but from my peers. For example I was disheartened to hear from Chinese adults how I “wasn’t Chinese because I was Japanese” or how I didn’t speak their native language immediately making me an outsider. I never was good enough for them.

Being a minority in my school, I felt insignificant and unimportant. I was far from popular with a very small circle of friends. People would mistake me for other Asian boys because we were indiscernible. This became a running joke with my friends, many who were not Asian.

I never felt smart, good looking or in any way special. Although my mother did her best to alleviate my insecurities, my father and my environment perpetuated my insecurities. I felt I had to live up to a certain standard and that I was failing in this endeavor constantly. The fear of failure was a significant problem even though I had experienced many failures. I would stop myself from challenging myself because of this fear and it is one of my greatest regrets.

MEGAN: FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE, WHAT DO YOU THINK LYNBROOK STUDENTS ARE MOST INSECURE ABOUT?

Mr. Seike: I feel Lynbrook students are afraid to show their true identities. They are afraid to show any weakness, failures, problems and insecurities. I believe many hold themselves to a very high standard or feel they cannot meet this standard causing them to be depressed and unhappy. Many show a façade of happiness but feel they are not living up to their own expectations or of those imposed upon them. Many are extremely stressed at maintaining this level of high expectations.

MEGAN: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO STUDENTS WHO ARE FACING INSECURITIES?

Mr. Seike: I would want them to realize that these lofty goals are all self-imposed ideas of grandeur set at an unreasonable scale compared to the world. Facing and embracing failure and problems knowing that material accolades and rewards are not the essence of humanity but the love, relationships you form between people are the most important things that should be governing their decisions.

MEGAN: DO THE INSECURITIES TEENAGERS FACED WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG COMPARE TO THE INSECURITIES TEENAGERS FACE NOW? HOW HAVE THE INSECURITIES YOU USED TO FACE EVOLVED AS YOU HAVE BECOME AN ADULT?

Mr. Seike: The condition of not living up to a standard and feeling out of place is often universal but the cause of these insecurities is different.

(cont...)



"Face and embrace failure and problems knowing that material accolades and rewards are not the essence of humanity but love, the relationships you form between people are the most important things that should be governing your decisions."

(cont...)

Lynbrook is an affluent, top ten school in California with students who feel a B is a failure. Many are extremely stressed and insecure about meeting these standards they feel they need to live up to. Many feel they are barely clinging on to their idea of success and they are failing. I learned the lesson of failure early in my life and have learned to embrace it. Often times you never really understand yourself unless you fail and you then redefine yourself through the journey of rebuilding yourself or how you grow from this failure. The earlier students realize it is absolutely fine to not be perfect, the happier they will be. Are material goals the only thing they value? What about friendship, love and just spending time with each other?

MEGAN: HOW DID YOU HANDLE INSECURITIES AS A TEENAGER?

Mr. Seike: My situation was so much different than a Lynbrook student who has an image to uphold at all costs. Many families had significant problems in our socioeconomic average to low income environment. I went to my friends and had deep conversations with them. I knew instinctively that this was the best and often times only solution for my problems even though they could not rectify them. Just speaking with them and sharing my hardships was enough.

MEGAN: HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH INSECURITIES NOW?

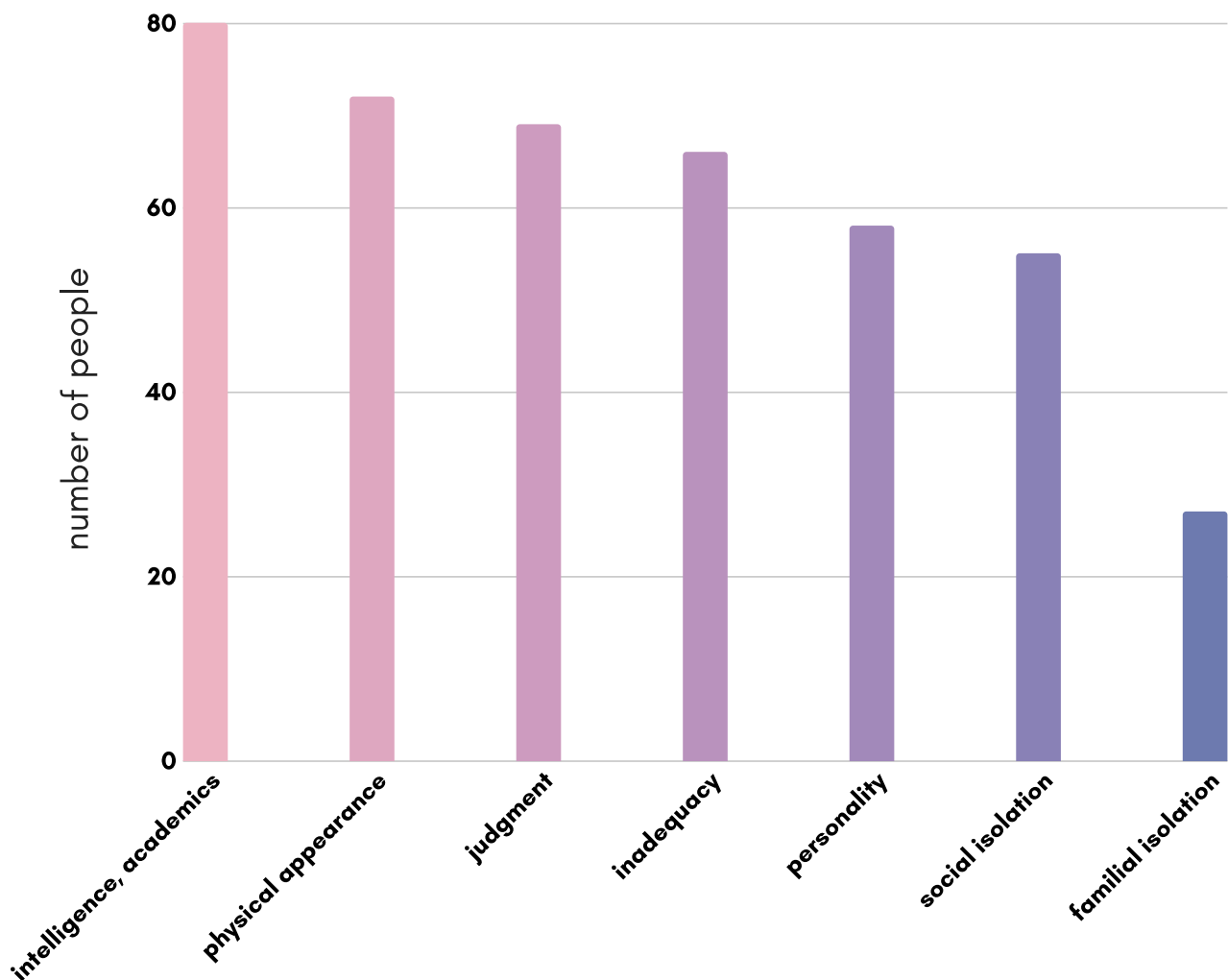
Mr. Seike: I have learned to accept my faults and my failures. I learned to accept myself and that I am not alone in my struggles. Seeing how fortunate I am and appreciating what I have and not creating unreasonable expectations have helped with my insecurities. Unfortunately insecurities will always be a part of life but knowing to accept yourself and your failures will snap you out of the trap of having unreasonable expectations. Truly appreciating the greatness of life is what alleviates these insecurities.



survey results

INSECURITIES

Which insecurities do you believe affect your life the most?



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

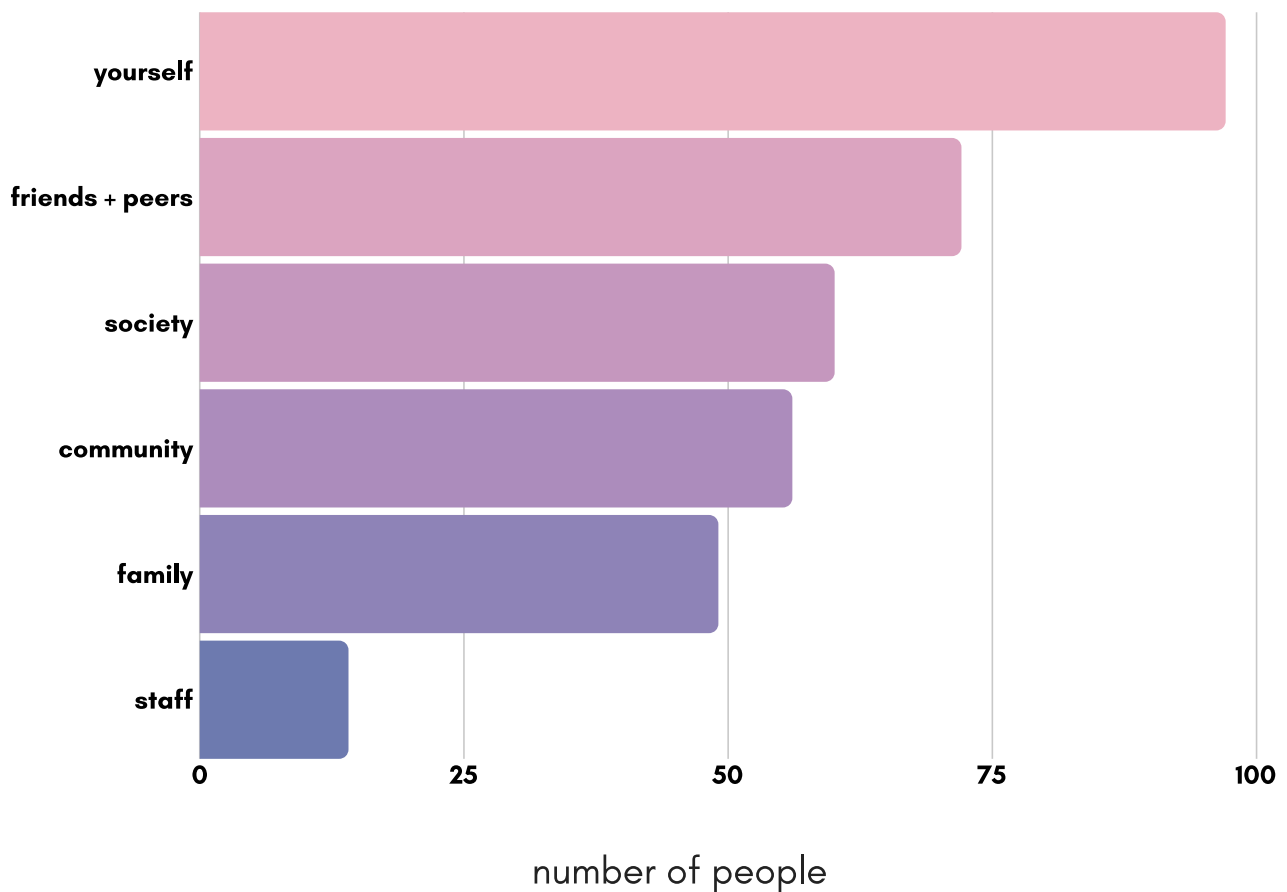
****survey results gathered via Google form:
a huge thank you from the Aletheia staff to the 104 participants in our survey;
this couldn't have been crafted without you!*



survey results

INSECURITIES

Where do your insecurities stem from?



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

****survey results gathered via Google form:*

*a huge thank you from the Aletheia staff to the 104 participants in our survey;
this couldn't have been crafted without you!*

insecurities

G E E T H A N A R A Y A N A N , L M F T

Growing up as a teen is an arduous process by itself with hormonal changes, body changes, and social pressures. Over the last 20 years, a lot of research and studies have been done to bring awareness to young adult issues and construct a perspective for parents and teens. Feelings of insecurity are common at this phase of our lives. Given the fast-paced, insta-fix environment we are in, we try for quick answers to resolve this also – unfortunately, the solution is not just a search on Google. This article defines about what insecurity is among teens and it also includes some tips for parents and teens.

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, bisexual, 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.

B I O G R A P H Y

Geetha Narayanan is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. She is currently working at Momentum for Mental Health and also has a Private Practice in San Jose, California. Her speciality is working with adults, teens and parents to provide an empathic and non-judgmental environment for processing emotions. She also has experience in treating anxiety, depression and life transition issues.

Geetha is a first generation immigrant and a parent. Prior to being a therapist, she worked in the high-tech industry for several years, which helped her understand the demands of corporate life, especially in the fast-paced Silicon Valley culture.

Aside from English, she is fluent in South Asian languages like Hindi and Tamil.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/geetha-narayanan-san-jose-ca/385548>

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TIPS FOR PARENTS

Be open:

Teenage years are hard, especially for this generation. If the atmosphere at home is curious and open, teens do like to engage in a conversation with their parent (s). Providing a safe and non-judgmental environment allows them to share their interests and frustrations as well.

Validate their feelings:

Being empathic allows the teen to process their struggles in the presence of a parent. In most situations, parents don't need to solve their problems but just provide a listening ear or be their sounding board. How you talk to your teen becomes their inner voice or their inner critic.

Don't compare:

This is a damaging behavior that, sometimes, parents indulge in unconsciously. As an example – a parent may excessively laud the success of a teen of another family. When your teen continuously hears that, it devalues your teen's experience and can cause insecurity and anxiety.

Provide positive affirmations:

As our toddlers become teens, we somehow feel that they don't need our cheerleading anymore. Teens still like/crave small doses of appropriate encouragement and appreciation. Hearing affirmations from parents, whether they seem to acknowledge it or not, helps build a teen's self-esteem.

Institute a structure:

Believe it or not, teens also love structure. A predictable environment that they can rely upon and support from home and their family members gives a sense of control in their already overcrowded, over-scheduled day.

Give them a Toolbox:

As parents, we want our teens to be college ready with academics and activities. It is imperative to also provide them with a toolbox. This is not in about developing another showcase towards building a portfolio for college. The toolbox should contain their hobbies and interests that they can start developing in high school or earlier and, hopefully, utilize them in college and beyond. Sometimes they may remember that they used to enjoy baking during their elementary and middle school but that is now replaced by their homework and scheduled activities. If they have no inclination to continue their earlier hobbies, parents can assist in creating/developing new ones. This could be an opportunity to bond and strengthen your relationship with your teen.

Seek professional assistance:

When you notice any change in behavior for 1-2 weeks, (Eating/sleeping habits, irregular menstrual cycles, mood) please talk to your teen and also seek professional assistance. In certain cultures, seeking support for mental health is stigmatized and it is important that parents don't let those societal pressures prevent them from doing what is right for their teen. Encourage your teen to seek support and also tell them it is normal and easier to open up to an outsider. You do not hesitate to take your child with a cold or flu to the doctor – at this stage in your teen's life, their mental health needs more attention than their physical.

TIPS FOR TEENS

Acknowledge your feelings:

Recognize where it is coming from – stop and see if it is from home, parents, siblings or from friends or a combination of both – this is the first step. And label these feelings – sad, anxious, frustrated, helpless. Minimizing or ignoring your experience is not healthy.

Build Perspective:

At this age, everything – an insult, a poor grade, an embarrassing situation – seems like the end of the world! It is not. Looking back in a month, an year or 5 years, you will regret the amount of time and stress you wasted worrying about it. We all have an inner critic that keeps helicoptering our mind that saps our energy and we feel incapable and powerless. Try to avoid dwelling on past failures/embarrassments and focus on what/how you can plan for future.

Don't Compare:

This is a toxic self-commentary that we engage in unconsciously in this connected world. Social media users compare themselves to other users and feel as if they can't measure up to the "ideal" lives that their connections depict. Don't compare your inside to someone's outside; everybody goes through periods of insecurity.

Communicate:

It is important to sit and discuss with the person/family member who has been hurtful to you. They may have the best of intentions, but if their comments cause stress and anxiety in you, they should know. Most families are understanding and supportive of that. Almost

all parents mean well when they say things and it could hurt you even more from people near and dear. These comments become our (self-critical) inner voice that is hurtful and keeps lurking in the psyche. And before you know it, you end up like a hamster in a wheel ruminating these negative and helpless thoughts. It's always good to converse and put it out in the universe.

Journal:

Expressing your thoughts and feelings in writing – poem, story or bullet journaling, creating your own blog are some of the normal ways to process your experiences. Avoiding it, overriding/medicating it would only make it worse. It is healthy to express what is in your mind – (good and bad), so, instead of brooding over it, put it on paper and get it out of your system.

Start your day with a positive activity:

You could start your day by posting an inspirational sticky note to your bathroom mirror or play your favorite song to energize your day. Make your bed after waking up – it will give you the satisfaction of completing a task first thing in the morning.

Seek help:

Other than your parents, it is healthy and normal to reach out for help to your favorite teacher or a professional counselor. You don't have to do this alone and there is no shame in seeking help – on the contrary, it shows your strength and readiness to do what is required to lead a resilient and happy life.

TOOLKIT FOR TEENS

1. Build a self-care kit: *It is a kit that you can reach into to relax and recharge – bubble bath, head massage, going for a run, swimming, listening to music. (Keep adding as and when you discover new things).*

2. Create a hobbies list: *Choose one or more activities in which you have an inherent talent and enjoy – and it does not have to do anything with building your resume or portfolio. Actually, if there is any pressure to perform or complete, it will not qualify as a hobby. Engaging in these can be therapeutic and calming – knitting, singing, dancing, pottery etc..*

3. Know your positive traits: *Ask your friends as to what they think about your character and personality. It could be such as kind, honest, helpful etc. Keep a list or make a bookmark and carry it with you or keep it in a visible place in your room.*

All of us deal have to deal with insecurities and there is a need to build our own toolbox to ensure that we are not a slave to feelings of inadequacy, There is no one-size-fits-all solution and the ability to recognize negative thoughts and address them swiftly will be a skill every teen needs to cultivate.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

For teens:

Anxiety Sucks! a Teen Survival Guide
Natasha Daniels

My Anxious Mind: A Teen's Guide to Managing Anxiety and Panic
Katherine Martinez & Michael Tompkins

The Self-Esteem Habit for Teens: 50 Simple Ways to Build Your Confidence Every Day
Lisa Schab

www.selfesteem.dove.com

For parents:

Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain
Daniel Siegel

The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind
Daniel Siegel

Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ
Daniel Coleman

www.selfesteem.dove.com

acceptance and approval

guiding questions

these prompts served as starting points; submissions were not required to answer them

1. What was the most impactful acceptance or rejection in your life?
2. How does acceptance/rejection affect you? What are some ways you cope with rejection and denial?
3. What are your experiences with self-perception?
4. How does external approval or denial affect your self-acceptance?
5. How have you accepted/rejected someone/thing? What was the outcome?

acceptance & approval



Wow I'm sitting in bed at 3 am writing this right not. Honestly at this point in my life everything is pretty f*cked up. I've been rejected and rejected by dad completely from my life. Although I have made attempts to talk to him, I've gotten to the point where I have given up. Now I don't want to sound like some brat that isn't grateful for what she has, but it sometimes gets to the point where I want to end my life. But then I think about my mom and how much she loves me and how I couldn't see her be upset and I realize I have to live on for her sake. But there are still days where all I want to do is cry and I still find myself crying myself to bed every night. I guess I'm really bad at expressing my emotions but I've always been like this. Ever since I was little my dad always told me that emotions were for the weak and I was hit whenever I would cry.

I lived up in a pretty sh*tty home environment. My dad would physically and mentally abuse my mother when I was a kid, and from me trying to protect my mom, he started to abuse me too. The worst instance was last year, when I broke a bone but wasn't able to get myself to go the hospital out of fear. After that my mom threatened to call the police and ever since he hasn't abused us. But I still am haunted by the thoughts daily and honestly I don't know what to do. My family is together still rn because I don't want to burden my mom with having to pay for my college tuition on her own, but everyday I see how much she is suffering being with my dad. Sometimes I think that if I die, then my mom will be free from the burden. But I feel in debt to her as well, and I'm just really lost. Again I'm really bad at expressing my emotions since my life is a huge f*cking mess. I can't go talk to anyone in fear they will call the police on my dad. Well all in all I have rejected my dad in my life and I don't know what to do.



A bit childish but the most impactful acceptance in my life was when my crush, one of my best friends, in fourth grade liked me back. It changed the way I look at the world because I used to think that my feelings are always one-sided but his telling me that he likes me as well made me realize that things are kinda exactly the way they are most of the times. If you enjoy spending time with somebody else and they seem to reciprocate the feeling, that means the feeling is mutual which sounds so stupid and simple. Not everybody is a two-faced evil backstabber. I think I overcomplicated things when I was younger and dumber and I still do.

dear my parents, you never accepted me for being gay. youve tried so hard to force it out of me, but to no avail. you said that the internet and my lgbt friends turned me gay. they didnt turn me gay, but they gave me acceptance which was supposed to your job.



I used to be really self-conscious. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but I think I took things a little too far. In either 6th or 7th grade, I was standing on the field during PE class when I overheard a group of people that I knew (and, to some extent, still know today, but only in name) talking. They were looking roughly in my direction and said something along the lines of "he bullied me" and "he bullies me sometimes too." I must've gone cold.

Up to that point, I had believed that I was something of a nice person. But this apparent rejection, whether valid or not (I still don't know if they were referring to me or someone else), sort of resulted in a sea change in my personality. I went from being more outspoken to being more inward, and I more frequently considered my words before I said them. This may not sound like much, and it's probably a good thing that I became more thoughtful to an extent, but it's something I took and went with, a persona that I adopted because I thought that was what I ought to do. It was sort of like "well, if I couldn't tell when I was 'bullying' someone, what else was I missing?"

So then 8th grade came and went and high school began. By now I was nothing more than a shell, having played this persona for a while and expanded to fill it in its entirety. I would apologize profusely for every self-perceived slight against someone else. I became obsessed with what people would say behind my back. I was withdrawn, distrustful, and miserable. Not a good way to live, I must say.

But then I got fed up with cowering. There's only so long you can play a persona before you start itching for another. So what if people turn their noses up at whatever I do? That's their problem, not mine, and I ought to live my life how I see fit.

Nowadays, I allow myself a greater degree of spontaneity and have stopped caring so much of what others might think about me. I still have some ways to go, of course, but sometimes you just need to do rather than think.

Unfortunately, now I'm afraid I've become too cavalier. There's a girl I'm interested in, and she's tried talking to me a few times. But sometimes I don't notice that she's saying hello until she's walked past me and too far away for me to respond, and sometimes I don't notice that she's sitting down next to me and I wait too long to say something so I end up saying nothing at all. And then she leaves. That's what I'm afraid of. I'm afraid that I'm inadvertently rejecting someone, and I'm afraid that I don't care enough anymore to set things straight with her, and I'm afraid that she's lost interest and moved on already.

I'm still trying to figure it out. But I feel as though I'm running out of time.

Dear The College of My Dreams,

I am not extraordinary.

Throughout my four years of high school, I played the cello. I've won a handful of local awards, but most of all, I kept playing because there's something beautiful about your hands climbing strings, your fingers working their way through a piece of music. I volunteered at a local elementary school, taught the kids there English. In my free time, I loved to swim, listen to music, and learn about different cultures and religions.

Six years ago, when I first stepped onto your sun-drenched campus, I became breathless by its beauty. Over the years, I fell in love with your school culture and the opportunities that attending your school held for my future (especially your Music and Sociology programs), and you became my number one.

In all honesty, I'm nowhere near your perfect applicant. I'm not entirely sure what I want to do in the future. But I've spent four years dreaming of your school, and if given the opportunity to attend, I'll continue working hard, setting goals, and finding ways to achieve them.



Dear Applicant #185302,

You're right, you're not extraordinary.

We regret to inform you that we could not offer you a spot among our 6000 accepted applicants in the Class of 2023. Here are people more dedicated and driven than you, people who won national awards and placed at top competitions-- something you could have dreamed to do but never did. These applicants have the potential that we couldn't find in your application.

You're 17 already, and you don't seem to have a dream. Your interests seem scattered, and your commitments don't seem to line up with your major. Unfortunately, we have a hard time seeing what kind of student you would be at our university. We wish you the best of luck with your future endeavors.



Dear The College of My Dreams,

Perhaps I don't need to be extraordinary.

It's been a while, and I've stopped thinking about what I could have done differently in high school. What went wrong when I thought I had a shot at getting in. Looking back over my four years in high school, I don't regret the choices I've made. I know that if I'd done what would have made me a competitive applicant, that if I'd spent these four years fitting myself into one field instead of exploring, I wouldn't have been happy.

I loved your school-- and I still do. I imagined myself being happy there, finding my place among the rest of the students. But perhaps it isn't the right place for me.

Through this journey-- three years of high school and a semester of application after application telling me to say something meaningful about myself-- perhaps I've learned that I still need time to form my dreams. That the college experience is what you make of it, and it's possible to find happiness no matter what option you choose. That the only thing I need now is to move forward and have trust in myself.



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.

"THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO REMEMBER ABOUT REJECTION...IS THAT IT IS MALLEABLE ... I AM THE ONE WHO SHAPES MY VIEW OF THE WORLD."

A cceptance and approval is a driving force in our world today. With the competitive environment of Silicon Valley on our backs, every decision we make, every criticism we receive, is magnified to the extent that we are afraid of failure. One wrong move and apparently our whole lives will be ruined. But isn't high school a time to explore our interests and discover our passions? We should be allowed to ask questions and make mistakes in our own time, yet we are subject to the ever-present pressure of our future approval, based on which college we attend, what job we land, and where we end up.

We are still kids, and just like every other human being, our innate desire is to be accepted by our family, friends, and peers. All we want is love and for others to understand us and our struggles. So for the reader, whoever you may be, sometimes that means leaving behind society's judgment and just helping your friend with whatever they need. Similar to how the impact of our work as Aletheia's staff is not always explicit, the impact you have had on this person may not be overtly visible, but I promise that your time and energy is appreciated.

But, as with all things in life, the happiness of acceptance and approval comes with the sorrow of rejection, an ongoing cycle of emotion. However, the most important thing to remember about rejection, and negative feelings in general, is that it is malleable. Taking a step back, after all the rejections I have faced, I learned that I am the one who shapes my view of the world. You have the choice to either let those emotions take over or to use your power, your internal voice, to rebuild your heart and make yourself a stronger person. No doubt it is a hard, tumultuous journey, especially when the rejection is from someone close to you and the relationship is deeply meaningful. Rejection is not representative of who you are, it is placed upon you, and you have the ability to interpret it as a sign leading you to a better, happier path, one with self-acceptance.

ms. m c c o w n



RAGHAV: WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ACCEPTANCES OR REJECTIONS IN YOUR LIFE?

Ms. McCown: Probably, as far as acceptances go, being accepted to the colleges. I eventually actually attended both – Stanford and Berkeley. As far as rejections, I later applied to law schools. I was first accepted when I first applied. Then I took time off and I got married. I thought I would apply again and then I applied. I think it was UCLA and I was not accepted. I ended up going into teaching anyway.

I think I can commiserate with kids at least to some extent and that once you've had some acceptances and you feel that you've been successful then to not be accepted at some point. You have to look at the whole picture and figure it out. I think I was a little surprised when I didn't get into UCLA thinking, "Well, I got into other schools before for my BA." You know, it didn't break me. I decided not to go to law school for several reasons. I don't regret having decided to get a Master's in English at Stanford.

I know Mr Richmond and I both were quite surprised and put off some years ago before we came here. Because my children were in private schools and I had some very close friends, one who is the headmaster of a private school. They suggested that when we apply for schools in the Bay Area, when we move, that we also apply to private schools. There's a network of them and they have a big conference. You go to the conference. It's like a hiring fair and you sign up to have interviews.

And then the schools all look and decide who they will interview. They have a big book of your resume and everything else. During that day we were both surprised, just because it was all very public. You could see all the resumes in this book. It was accessible to everybody. You could see who the schools decided to interview that day. Mr. Richmond and I only got two interviews the whole day because they were only interviewing people with very little or no experience and people who had been to prep schools themselves and then had gone on to a certain caliber of colleges. They weren't interested in interviewing teachers who had taught public school.

So we couldn't get even an interview to teach at a private school because we had taught in public schools. That was definitely like a rejection. I think in a way it was a rather large rejection because it kind of rejected our whole careers. We'd already been teaching for many years to begin with.

RAGHAV: HOW DO YOU THINK LYNBROOK STUDENTS DEAL WITH ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION?

Ms. McCown: I think that differs from year to year. My experience from what I see and my experience is limited in saying that. I've realized that in the last few years I feel like kids have handled it well. People have come in to talk with me.

And while they've expressed disappointment, the kids tend to focus on where they have been accepted, when they have choices to make. Several years ago, though, some of the kids didn't handle it so well. I had kids coming in, some in tears, and then some who came in very angry and made it very personal and actually mentioned names. "So and so was accepted there and I wasn't!" That's ridiculous. "I'm so much better than 'that person'." I mean they were handling it in a very immature way that was hurtful to others. I haven't seen that in several years though. I feel like kids have been handling it better.

RAGHAV: HOW DID OTHERS' ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL AFFECT YOU, WHEN YOU WERE OUR AGE?

Ms. McCown: I think it's very hard for you guys. It's a whole different world, when I look at how kind of circumscribed my teenage world was as compared to yours. It was so much less public. In the high school I went to, no one talked about his or her grades. That simply wasn't a topic. We only had one class of honor students. AP didn't exist then. Even in our honors classes, we just did our work and whatever grades we got were private. Nobody talked about them. I knew kids were smart who spoke up in class. But I didn't even realize how accomplished some of my classmates were until we were seniors and college acceptances came in and we start talking about, "Oh you get to go there, tell me about that." It wasn't a bragging culture and it wasn't a competitive culture.

"With every success, no matter how small it is, you gain more confidence, you know who you are, and you know that failure is a part of life."

At least the high school I went to was not competitive in that way. I was a musician so I played in orchestras. Some of them were professional orchestras, some of them were youth orchestras. It was competitive. There's no question about that. All the auditioning and whatnot. But even so it was somewhat private. I would say there weren't the avenues for everybody to know your business all the time and we didn't have the numbers of people applying to colleges that we have now.

RAGHAV: HOW DOES OTHERS' ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL AFFECT YOUR SELF-ACCEPTANCE NOW?

Ms. McCown: I think when you're young you take it so much more to heart. Because obviously you've had your experiences and you're still trying to figure out who you are, what your role is and what your place is, not just within your family, but you know within your social groups within society in general, within your community. And I think two things happen as you get older. With every success, no matter how small it is, you gain more confidence, you know who you are, and you know that failure is a part of life. Some things don't work out and you have a bigger context for it. It doesn't hurt you as much. Hopefully at some point it doesn't hurt you at all. You move on and I also think you begin to know yourself better, so you choose the things you're going to put yourself out on a limb for more carefully. You do what you truly want to do. If you're competitive, for instance, you apply at the level where you know you have a likelihood of succeeding or you try sports that you think you like and you can do well at.

You don't feel that you have to compete in everything. I think now because of the way things are for getting into colleges, kids, think they have to be competitive in such a wide variety of things. It's very difficult to be very good at everything and always be the winner and always be the successful one in everything, and as you grow older it just narrows down to what you care most about, what you already have some ability in, and where you think. You can do well. So you begin to self-select better.

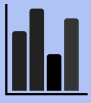
RAGHAV: DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR LYNBROOK STUDENTS FACING TOUGH EXTERNAL REJECTION, WHETHER SOCIAL OR COLLEGE RELATED?

Ms. McCown: I see the college-related a lot and I always tell my students I don't see it as rejection. I like to tell students to turn it around. You choose the schools that are a good match for you, that you would like, and if you choose a variety of schools that are reasonable for your likes and your abilities and your qualifications, you're probably going to get good news.

For the social things, I think that can be difficult too for Lynbrook kids. Sometimes the competitive nature of Lynbrook affects that too. I don't know that you can totally extricate the two. I think part of the social community here is influenced by the competitiveness. Everybody knows everybody else's business to a great extent and that can be difficult. When students have come to me though, when relationships haven't worked out, whether those are friendships or romantic relationships or just concerned with where they are socially, one of the things I always tell them is that everybody is in a process of growing up and figuring out who they are. Unfortunately sometimes people get left out, feelings get hurt. But the bottom line is everybody's just trying to figure out who they are and the more you figure out who you are, the more you will know and you'll be able to find friends who truly have things in common with you. Your social life gets better the older you get because you're not trying to be friends with people that you probably don't have a lot in common with.

RAGHAV: SO, THAT'S SELF-SELECTING.

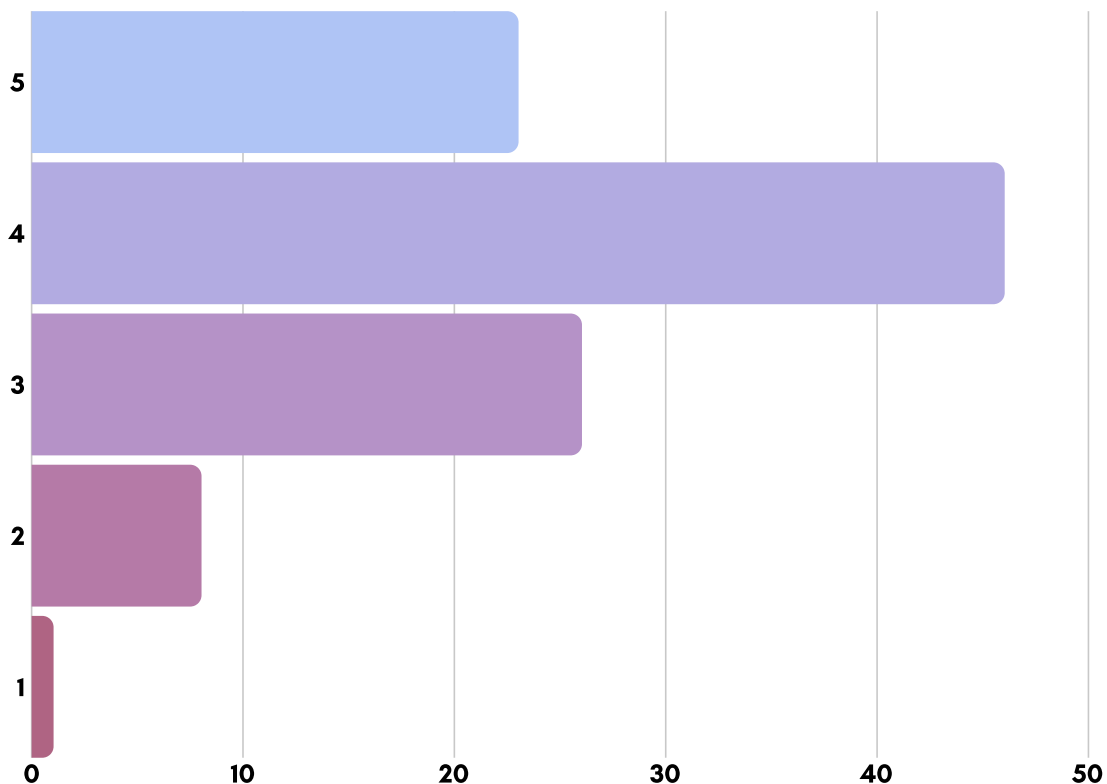
Ms. McCown: Right, the self selecting continues and you're not competitive because when you're in school you're almost told, "Well, here's the peer group." You get to go out as an adult and choose yours more according to your interests, so you get involved in things in the community or interests you have. Even your workplace usually has more people and it's not chosen for you as much. So life gets better that way.



survey results

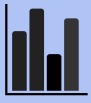
ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you think others' acceptance or approval of you affect your self perception?
(1 = not at all, 5 = very much)



number of answers

***survey results gathered via Google form:
a huge thank you from the Aletheia staff to the 104 participants in our survey;
this couldn't have been crafted without you!

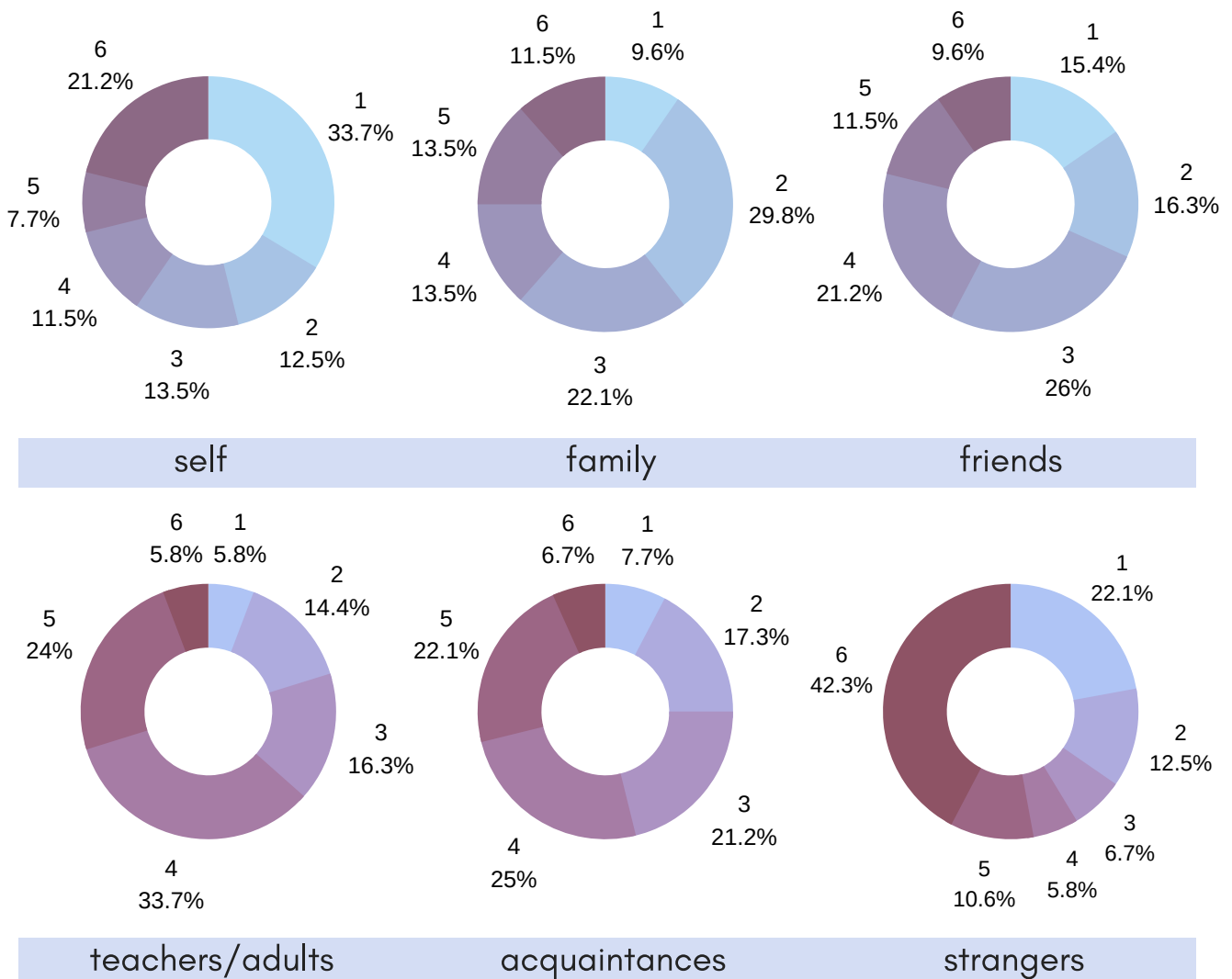


survey results

ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

Whose acceptance or approval matters the most to you?

(1 = highest priority, 6 = lowest priority)



***survey results gathered via Google form:
a huge thank you from the aletheia staff to the 104 participants in our survey;
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acceptance & approval

T A N D R A F R O E H L I C H C H I L D R E S S , A M F T , A T R - P

Rejection is a concept we become aware of from a very young age. If you are old enough to read this article, chances are you are well aware of what rejection feels like. It comes to us in many forms; being excluded on the playground, parents telling us that we have done something wrong, not being accepted by others for who we are or what we believe, not getting into that perfect college, or not getting a call back for that job. Each experience can feel just as harsh as the next. Rejection is painful, but the pain we experience from rejection is what helps us adapt, strengthen the skill of acceptance, and develop resilience.

In an article from Psychology Today it was stated that, "rejection comes from Latin, meaning thrown back. When we are rejected, we feel not only halted but pushed back in the opposite direction of which we were headed" (Harrison 2010). Thinking about rejection from this perspective highlights how frustrating rejection can feel. For teens who are trying to find their place in the world, and define themselves and their values, being thrown back can feel discouraging, confusing, and painful.

Perception of these frustrating feelings can either strengthen a person or hinder them. In a Ted Talk by Kelly McGonigal, she discusses the role that perception plays in health and how a person perceives stress. She explains how the belief that stress is bad for our health is what is actually bad for our health. This concept can be applied to rejection as well. Of course, we would love to move forward seamlessly, without being pushed back, but the reality is that rejection is a part of life. Accepting that rejection happens and using it to carve a new path is part of what makes people resilient.

There are two sides to the coin of rejection, being rejected and being the rejector. Rejection can be both painful and a powerful tool. The Webster Dictionary says that to reject is to refuse to accept, consider, submit to; to refuse to hear, receive, or admit. This definition highlights the power that the person doing the rejecting has over a person or situation. In looking at rejection from this perspective, I see rejection itself being another source of resilience.

Accepting that rejection is a part of life does not mean we have to let it guide our actions. Accepting that bad things happen, doesn't mean we have to continue letting them happen. It is at these crossroads that looking at your values as a compass can be most useful. We have the ability to reject letting rejection defeat us.

When sitting in the meeting for this month's article, I couldn't help but feel an overwhelming sense of pride in today's youth. The students who were brave enough to share their experiences, paired with the thoughtful responses from the Aletheia staff, highlighted the resilience the youth have even if they aren't aware of it yet.

Dear Youth,

Let those feelings of rejection drive you. Now is a time to discover who you are on a whole new level. You get to take what you have learned from your parents, your teachers, your peers, and apply it to who you become as an adult. The college you go to does not define you. You define you. Be true to yourself, accept disappointment but let it teach you, and stay true to your values to guide you through the difficult moments.

Sincerely,
A Proud Adult

BIOGRAPHY

Tandra Froehlich Childress is an Associate Marriage Family Therapist and Provisional Art Therapist working at Campbell Teen & Family Therapy, a private practice located in Campbell CA. She has worked with a wide range of clients but has found that her current passion is working with teens as they become empowered young adults. She provides individual therapy to children, teens, and young adults. Tandra works from an Acceptance and Commitment Therapy perspective while integrating Art Therapy, and EMDR into her sessions.

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REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/thriving101/201012/rejection-losers-guide>

https://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_mcgonigal_how_to_make_stress_your_friend?language=en

5 Steps to Define Your Core Values: A Compass for Navigating Life's Decisions:

<https://mindfulambition.net/values/>

Resilience Guide for Parents and Teachers: <https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/resilience>

For Situations of Abuse:

Safety Planning:

<https://www.loveisrespect.org/for-yourself/safety-planning/>

Reporting Abuse: <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/ssa/dfcs/abuse/Pages/cari.aspx>

https://www.sjpd.org/reportingcrime/child_abuse.html



(from left to right) **top:** isaac, raghav, abdullah, megan **bottom:** cassie, selina, vijaya, sophie, medha

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 2018-2019