

Submissions

All Lynbrook students and alumni are eligible to submit stories to *Aletheia*. We publish every submission that adheres to our guidelines, which may be found on the website. The *Aletheia* staff is committed to preserving the integrity of your submission and will not make any changes, with exception to basic spelling and certain profanity (which will be asterisked-out). We do not edit stories for grammar or syntax.

The June topic will be ***In Retrospect***. Submissions are due by May 13. If you are interested in sharing your story, a submission form can be found online at www.lhsaletheia.org/submit.

Mission

Aletheia, “truth” in Greek, is a student outreach publication that strives to provide a voice for all students at Lynbrook High School. Inspired by Los Gatos High’s *Reality Check* and Monta Vista’s *Verdadera*, *Aletheia* was created to facilitate communication and overcome stigmas concerning prevalent and taboo issues within the Lynbrook community. At the beginning of the school year, the staff designates a list of monthly topics pertaining to the realities of high school. Each issue of the publication comprises of firsthand experiences submitted anonymously by Lynbrook students and alumni, a professional article relating to that month’s theme, and resources compiled by the student staff. Finalized newsletters are published into a PDF format and distributed on our website. Back issues may be found on our website, under Archives.

The content in *Aletheia* is composed by the students at Lynbrook High School in San Jose, California. Ideas and thoughts expressed within the publication are not necessarily reflected by the school administration or staff.

This is the fourth issue of *Aletheia*. Out of respect for the environment, it was not published in paper form.

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My parents and I don't really talk that much. I'm too busy locked up in my room most of the time doing work or lazing around on the computer (like what I'm doing right now) to talk to them. They encourage me to get out of my room and interact with them, but my relationship with my parents has gotten to the point where I just can't be myself around them. Normally, I'm a fun and outgoing person, but around my parents I'm quiet and dull. I think this all started back around eighth grade, when my parents told me something that flipped my world. It made me realize that my parents weren't the ideal American parents that I learned to love in sitcoms. Rather, I realized that they expected me to abide by the standards and values that they grew up with. I guess I realized that they weren't Americans, and they didn't want me to be one either. I sort of wish that I could be more open with my parents, but I guess that that I've had to adopt this façade.

"Parents must get across the idea that 'I love you always, but sometimes I do not love your behavior.'"

- Amy Vanderbilt

My relationship with my parents hasn't always been easy. It took time to develop and establish a relationship with each of them and I'm still working at it now. It's normal, I believe, to have different views from your parents. I know I certainly do for specific issues and topics. But sometimes I wish I had more support. I know I'm emotionally stable most of the time and I have people to talk to, my mom's like one of my best friends. But I worry that I use them to my advantage too much. Almost like one day they're just going to stop caring because they can't handle it anymore. I feel it sometimes. I know that like they love me and that they want what's best for me but it just doesn't always go that way.

My mom and I's relationship has been up and down for years. We're like an old married couple in a way. We argue then forget afterwards... but there's never someone forgiving the other. I've learned to take a step back these days because I'm just too stubborn for my own good. I argue and fight and talk back, not realizing the consequences, and it bites me in the end. I get so caught up in the moment and realize that I am wrong afterwards but sometimes it's too late. Why didn't I just

keep my mouth shut? Why was I so furious and caught up within myself? Why was I so inconsiderate and just self-absorbent at the time? College is coming around the corner and it's difficult. My mom is annoyed with me and just so upset that I'm so under-prepared. I'm not organized and responsible and everything just seems to be so last-minute. My attitude and personality... or working-habit has always been this way. I've known for a long time that this has to change but I'm naturally a procrastinator. But I feel like I do try really hard to make myself as adult as possible. I feel in my heart that I am trying. And she always says to prove it to her. "Don't be all talk and show me." She wants to see the results. I want to show her but it's so difficult to put it all on paper. These things aren't something visually considered but it needs to be. But this kind of proof thing, I mean what will it define? That I listen to my parents?

In the end, I know that what they're doing is good for me. Making sure that I handle all the adult situations on my own is right because at least for now, if I make a mistake, they'll be there to help me even if I must sit through hours of yelling and tears with tissues flying everywhere. I've got to hear them and make decisions now and start being proactive. I've sat behind their steering wheel for so many years and they're not that patient anymore. Stepping up to the plate's gonna be difficult. But I guess that's the only way I'll become stronger and my own individual. I just want them to know that I appreciate them even though sometimes I put them through so much work and stress and frustration. I love my parents. I hope the feeling's mutual.

"Parents can only give good advice or put them on the right paths, but the final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands."

- Anne Frank

Once upon a long time ago, my parents and I had a good healthy relationship. Now, basically everything I tell them is a lie. This all changed just because of one event, one person, one thing. I wish I could have an open relationship with my parents, one where I could tell them mostly everything about my social life, one where they could accept me and my boyfriend, and one where they could understand me. My parents are viewed as very nice, understanding,

and adorable parents. All of my friends that meet them fall in love with them, they have wonderful first impressions. That's why whenever I tell people about what they do, they're surprised. They give off the image that they understand what they're going through and that they would be extremely "chill" parents. My parents have put me through hell, hell and back I should say. I have even gone to the point where I have just given up. They have a mindset where "I am a piece of clay that God has given them to mold, so they can mold me however they want." Basically saying that I'm not my own person. I'm theirs to control. My relationship with my parents is not a healthy one and I realize that. I go to my friend's house, I hear about them talking about how much they love their parents, how much they respect them. I can trick myself between fights that I'm like that. But once I fight with them, all hell breaks loose. I realize that my relationship with them is not like others. They've made me lose all my respect for them. That's why it's so easy for me to lie to them. I don't feel any regret for doing it to them. I keep on telling me one day it'll get better, maybe one day when I'm grown up I can tell them about my life in high school and they'll understand. There's nothing I can do until wait for that time. Live with the worst and hope for the better.

*"Let parents bequeath
to their children not riches,
but the spirit of reverence."*

- Plato

My parents and I are different. Very different. And that is why I appreciate them so much. They've gone through so many more years of life and experienced so much more. While they still aren't perfect, they're my parents. They take care of me, they keep me safe, what else could I ask for?

I understand that we've grown up in different cultures, in different historical areas, with different technology, different languages, but nothing is going to change the fact that they are my biological parents.

They fill a role that no one else could fill, and I thank God for that.

And honestly, as I sit here and write this, I realize how much further my parents actually go to not only have me survive, but thrive. Everyday, they go above and beyond what is required to keep me alive, but yet

often don't get many words from me about how I am doing.

My parents are amazing. So a shout out to my awesome-amazing-faithful-caring-present-loving-hard-working-sacrificing-funny parents, I love you guys.

*"To bring up a child in the
way he should go, travel that
way yourself once in a while."*

- Josh Billings

I've always had an easier time talking to my mom than my dad. I've always found her to be more compassionate, more understanding, and more willing to pause the business of life to listen. Furthermore, she introduced me to Christianity when she first found it for herself. That has caused many of our values to parallel each others'. My dad, on the other hand, has seemed distant. For much of my life I saw him as being either at work or watching television. I found it difficult to get his attention when I wanted to talk about something, and difficult to retain it when I happened to. Furthermore, he did not accept the Christianity that my mother brought to the family. While that brought my siblings, my mother, and myself closer together, his choice gradually separated him from us. There became two sets of value systems in the family: the religious one of the mother and children, and the atheistic one of the father. Then the teenage rebellious phase added to the mess. My youthful pride and I looked started to look down upon the godless aging man. The advice he threw at me had trouble making it to my head that I held so high above him. How did I manage to raise my ego-filled head so high above him? By standing on a very thick Bible. Ironically, the Bible that I stood on and used to make myself feel morally superior to my dad came to show me my own hypocrisy, shamed me to myself, and convicted me to ask my father to forgive me for my disrespectfulness. That happened the summer of last year. Since the Bible revealed to me my own hypocrisy and popped my large teenage ego, it's been much easier to understand the type of wisdom that years have brought my father. As oppose to my mom, who is eloquent and expresses her wisdom through words well, he is far beyond awkward with his fluent English. He displays his wisdom not through words, but through the way he serves his family. Looking

back on my high school life, I wish that I had realized that the wisdom behind each individual's advice is expressed in a different language. He took out the trash (for years on end). He washed the dishes (for years on end). He drove me to school when I was almost late for class (for years on end). The list of small things such as these that my dad does for the family goes on. If I ever did try make a complete list, I would be writing this submission for years on end. I regret to have to overlooked so many years of the subtle love language of my father. With the path of communication cleared of debris of my pride (mostly, cleared, anyway), I've realized that it is I, the son, that has broken the bridge to my father; likewise, it is I that must repair it. He's done his best to be a good father, and until last summer, I only pushed him away. My view on the disconnect between parents their teenagers should be evident by now: we've got to make the first move toward reconciliation. They've done all they can to raise their children well; all we've given them return is "you don't understand me." In the stalemate of misunderstanding, I propose that we try to understand them. Obviously easier said than done, but aren't the SAT prep books intimidating too? Yet, with persistence, they get done anyway. We at Lynbrook strive to do well in grades, athletics, extracurricular activities, and such; yes, that striving to do well is associated with stress and depression, but what if that striving to do well is applied to relationships with parents? Would it add to stress and depression? Or could parents help reverse it?

*"When you teach your son,
you teach your son's son."*

- The Talmud

I wish my parents supported me more. I never talk to my mom about my problems, because she always tells me all the things I am doing wrong and never takes my side. I confide to her, "Mom, I have so much homework and I'm completely stressed out." She usually says, "Everyone has stress. Stop complaining." or "This is the real world, so deal with it" or "Why are you so lazy?" Can you imagine if I tried to talk about my worries deep deep down, like my emotional insecurities or paranoia about grades and tests or my frequent thoughts of "Why even bother living? What's the point?" I have no siblings to talk to either. As a result it always feels like it's me against the entire world.

Parents, you're not supposed to point out all of my flaws, I already have that done to me every single day by anything that moves. Maybe sometimes when I tell you I'm worried about my grades or just life in general, you don't need to freak out and yell at me to try harder, or point out how everything's partially my fault. Maybe you just need to listen, nod, and remind your kid that he or she doesn't have to face the world alone.

*"Your children need your presence
more than your presents."*

- Jesse Jackson

Someone once said to me and some other people, "How could anyone stop you from being a part of something so positive in your life?" This I've continuously asked myself, but am afraid to ask my parents.

My desire to partake in extracurriculars isn't understood, see, as I know a lot of people's aren't. My grades had been slipping near the beginning of the semester, so my mom threatened to not let me be a part of my favorite activity next year if I didn't get straight As this time around. But that's impossible. Ever since having a very low D in chem I've worked and worked harder and I've raised it nearly twenty percent since, but even then I won't be able to get an A. For someone of my skill level in science, or lack thereof, it's impossible. I cannot achieve excellence in a subject I don't even understand. On top of that, I don't understand why my mother will consequentially hold me from extracurriculars in order to "get into college"--wouldn't you think extracurriculars are rather important for applying to college?

I have a difficult time talking to and even tolerating my two very close-minded parents. I guess it's just a teenager thing, but I hate the idea of having to deal with it for at least a few years more or so before we get some distance and mellow out. I also hate that Chinese insults sound so harsh, especially coming from my parents' mouths. You'd never hear someone telling a child in English that they should just beat you half to death so everything would straighten out, or "I'll cut your head off with a knife, you idiot." I still love my parents, but I can't forget hours of horrible words coming from my mother's mouth and how my dad never stepped in except to throw in the occasional insult to me. I still remember how once after another yelling session I was crying still and he offered me a tissue. I cried more

because that was the only time it happened.

Last year I flew back from Washington D.C. and when I came home I just started sobbing, for undisclosed reasons. My parents both comforted me then almost the entire time, but that had never happened before and for some reason all I could think was how uncomfortable it was and how I wanted them to leave me alone. I would've thought I'd have wanted the opposite, but I guess that's their influence on me. I don't talk to anyone about my problems now, nor have I ever.

"It is one thing to show your child the way, and a harder thing to then stand out of it."

- Robert Brault

When I look in the mirror, it's easy to see that I am my parents' daughter. Physically, I closely resemble both of them--I'm frequently told that I look exactly as my mother did when she was young, or that it is easy to pinpoint my father in the crowd during school events because we look so similar. But physique, as the cliché goes, is only skin deep. While I'm pleased that these physical manifestations serve as reminders of the bond we have, I find it more interesting to think about the other aspects of our relationship, ones that were not set in stone from my birth but gradually developed as I've gotten older.

My parents and I don't talk much beyond the basic interaction that comes with living in the same home. We rarely sit down for meals together, which may sound strange to some families but is perfectly normal for ours. Family vacations are also uncommon (the last one we took was four years ago), and it's practically unheard of for us to spend time together on the weekends. I can't remember the last time we sat down to watch TV, or played a board game together. Perhaps our lack of intimacy and familiarity would strike some as unhealthy, but I don't think it's something we've ever particularly desired or found lacking. We've always been comfortable where we stand, and oftentimes simply too busy to try something new.

Something that may contribute to the natural distance we keep is our distinct personalities. My mother is expressive, assertive and lively; she laughs easily but is also quick to display other emotions. Dad is reserved

and disciplined; he seldom expresses his emotions (although he's terrifying when angry) and is often preoccupied with work. Mom is a people-person, Dad is technically skilled and scholarly. I'd like to say that I've inherited a bit of the best in both parents, probably leaning more towards my father's reservedness, but I'm pretty sure that my personality and habits are mostly of my own making. The only two similarities we possess that come to mind immediately are confidence and independence. Maybe that's why we live such separate lives.

Sometimes I wonder what it would be like to know my parents better, or to tell them more about myself. Occasionally I'll glance over at Mom or Dad's face on the car, and I imagine learning more about what runs through their minds during the day, their likes and dislikes. I do appreciate the freedom they've given me in deciding the paths I travel in life and the hands-off attitude they've taken to my extracurricular activities, interests, and social interactions with friends. They've allowed me to be my own person, and that's what I want most right now. I believe that someday I'll wake up and realize all I've missed these years, and hope we will grow closer as our separate lives begin to entwine. Until then, I am satisfied with the knowledge that my parents and I can comfortably remain warm strangers.

My parents are unique. Not in a sense that they're my parents, but I find them to be really accepting and open, and they want me to live out my hopes and dreams, not theirs.

Our relationship has always been a bumpy road, with the occasional fight and sometimes yelling throughout the house. Luckily, we're also a very forgiving bunch, and usually it's fine in a day - I always feel bad when I say something rash and I used to refuse to apologize. However, after high school I've noticed how my parents would always admit their mistakes and comfort me the best they could; I wasn't living up to my part as their kid - although it may be hard at times, I force myself to apologize now when I know I did or said anything rash and stupid to my parents. We all love each other, but it really helps with a good night sleep when we know for sure the other party isn't angry anymore.

I love them even through the occasional fight, which ironically is usually about them worrying about me. It's part of their job-description, I guess, and they're doing an awfully good job at it!

My parents. Where do I start? They both love me, that's for sure. When I'm sick, my mom nurses me and her love is so clear it makes me want to cry. My dad quietly works hard to support the family.

When I was in middle school, I was rebellious, which is probably a phase a lot of us go through. I wouldn't look at my parents without glaring, and nothing I said was out of respect. I would go whole days without saying more than a few words to them.

But in 8th grade, I knew it was wrong: I was supposed to honor my parents. At my church program I read Proverbs 30:17, and it was a slap in my face. I read the words and thought, "hey... that's me!" I knew I had to change, but my disrespect had been accumulating over the years, and it was deeply engraved in my lifestyle.

So I prayed. And slowly, very slowly, I started to change. Now, 2 years later, I know I love them. They both live for the family. And whether it be small gestures, like writing a note for them out of the blue or through harder ones, like staying quiet when they rebuke me, I'm learning to mend the way I acted in the past.

Are we the perfect family? Not exactly. But I've learned that it's okay. Despite the painful moments, we love each other and we're trying. And over the past few years, we've improved so much. I know I won't give up trying to be a better daughter to them. I lack, but if God's changed me this much the past 2 years, I know he won't stop.

"The best inheritance a parent can give his children is a few minutes of his time each day."

- O. A. Battista

Parents. Where do I begin. I love my parents, and I know that everything they do is for my own benefit but sometimes... it's too much. They still treat me like I'm 8 years old when I'm 18. They don't understand that I'm a teenager and I like having my own privacy. Asking who I'm texting, staring at my computer screen, and constantly asking me questions. Its annoying. They ask to know every detail about anything I'm talking about. When I tell them something personal they make a big deal out of it and tell my grandparents, and on and on. And then when I don't tell them something they make a big deal on why I don't trust

them. It's because they don't know how to keep secrets, and are really close-minded. Sometimes I wish I had a friendship-mother or friendship-father bond with my parents. Where I could tell them everything and anything I wanted to. But. Sadly. No.

"Parents often talk about the younger generation as if they didn't have anything to do with it."

- Haim Ginott

Ever since I was little, I never asked for much from them. I grew up with the impression that I should never ask for things and refuse them when offered out of courtesy—even from my own parents. Now, as I got older, this suppressed side of me is getting harder to control. I think somehow, amidst my constant tendency to keep my thoughts and wants to myself, it morphed into an uncontrollable want to do things for myself and not succumb to others out of courtesy. Suddenly I'm aware of all the things I want and how they aren't what my parents want. When I developed a passion for music and the number of CDs began rapidly filling my shelves, they said to themselves, "It's just a phase; she'll get over it." When I began to ask to go to concerts, they made me promise it was a one-time thing. When I told them I didn't want to be a doctor, my mom kept telling me, "You were so good at Bio though..." When I came home from shopping with bags of new things, she would laugh and tell me to stop buying so much because my closet wouldn't fit anymore. They always insist on paying for whatever unnecessary article of clothing that catches my eye even though I earn my own money because they keep telling me I spend too much. They've even dubbed me the "princess" of the house.

Maybe this nickname of theirs doesn't mean much and maybe I'm overanalyzing this, but you want the honest truth? I HATE IT. You know what it says to me? Being a f***ing PRINCESS means I'm spoiled and I, somehow, end up getting whatever the f*** I asked for. I don't mean to always be spending so much all the time; I'm sorry I'm a f***ing human and I have unnecessary desires at times. I'm sorry I'm not the perfect daughter you wanted. I'm sorry I grew the f*** up and realized I don't want to be a f***ing doctor like I said I wanted to be when I was f***ing six. I'm sorry I want to chase my dreams in an industry that is still struggling to break out of its stereotype of producing "starv-

ing artists”. I’m sorry I sound so ungrateful to you—maybe that’s exactly what I am and I’m just too blinded by the need to break out of this mold you’re trying to fit me back into to realize it. Maybe I am spoiled, I don’t know! But do you know what I do know? I know I want you to f***ing yell at me. Tell me all that just so I will stop wondering what you think of me. Why don’t you take away my privileges to punish me? Take away my earnings and allow me only a certain amount so I will learn the value of money—you don’t think I know its worth anyways. Well, guess what? Did you know that money and how we’re gonna pay for college has been all I can f***ing think about this whole year and it’s given me f***ing migraines because I honestly don’t know how I can make it happen so that you guys won’t have to pay so much because I know I’m not the only one in the family that’s gonna go to college? Are you gonna tell me that I don’t know money’s worth NOW? Why don’t you, for once, just f***ing point blank tell me what you want from me? Stop with the f***ing subtle hints you keep f***ing dropping everywhere and hope that I will remember my responsibilities as an obedient daughter to do as my parents please and drop my dreams to pursue your dreams for me. That’s the problem: We don’t communicate. At. All.

I know you have expectations for me, but you never tell me what. You never yell at me when I stay up too late—mention it in the morning, but it’s not like you blow a gasket when you’ve had too much of it. You never punish me for anything and for once, I just want something extreme to happen. Just so I know what you want from me, just so I’d know you’ve actually heard at least SOME of what I’ve been saying. But I know it never will—that’s just not either of you. I want all these assumptions and tacit expectations to stop. We can’t keep using the language barrier as an excuse anymore. I’m about to go off to college, for sh*t’s sake and I think we’re both starting to see that we’re clearly not on the same f***ng page. We think we understand the other, but we don’t. I’m sorry we don’t see eye to eye. I’m sorry I can’t be what you want me to be.

Note from the Aletheia staff: the following submission contains explicit material.

I was the princess, the first-born. Oh the whole family viewed me as smart, beautiful, INNO-CENT. And to preserve that innocence, I was not allowed to have a boyfriend. Mom, Dad, family, I love

him. We went to third base. I went to third base. I have been highly sexually active this year and it KILLS ME. At night, I contemplate my actions and I am disgusted with myself. Even worse, I blame HIM. But you MUST understand that I love him! Please, don’t ever find out. Please, Daddy don’t kill him. Please, Mommy still love me. I am just so sorry! It was a poorly made decision, I know... but you must also agree you suppressed me for too long. I wanted to live and I wanted to love. God... at times I look at them and think... “I’ve had a penis in my mouth. Daddy’s little girl has had a penis in her mouth. She has seen one, touched one, had one in her mouth.” Asian or white... or any ethnicity... I think they all respect the principle of pure innocence in a girl. That’s right, I am still a girl. A girl who can never take back her innocence... and for that, I hold onto my virginity tightly--for now. It’s all I have.

“Parents who are afraid to put their foot down usually have children who step on their toes.”

- Chinese Proverb

How would you feel if one of your parents passed away? What would you lose? The thought of my dad passing away one day bothers me. I don’t know if I’ll care enough to be sad about. Will I be sad enough to shed even a single tear? What if I really don’t care if he dies? Will I have to pretend to be sad, or should I just be honest and act indifferent from it? Do I tell people about it, or do I just pretend he was just a stranger uninvolved in my life? My mom, on the other hand, well, I will forever be grateful for her, even when I grow independent. My mom says that I do love him deep inside, I just haven’t realized it yet. But honestly, what is there to love about him? Don’t get me wrong, he’s not abusive or anything, he’s a good person, just a bit socially challenged (which can be extremely frustrating) and not father material.

You see, I was actually an accident. I come off as a normal teenage Asian chick, but inside, I feel like a living mistake. It doesn’t really bother me, it just kind of fascinates me that all these sob stories I’ve pitied for so long is actually my life, and it feels so normal. However, my mom wanted to take the responsibility of raising a child. My dad, however, was not ready. He never finished his share of responsibilities, never went all Asian on me about education, always came home

late at nights, and the year before the grand divorce, he was leeching off of my mom. Man, that year was pretty tense. They were yelling at each other, and my mom cried. My dad was even stupid enough to get the police involved because my mom was having a tantrum.

I was so glad my parents divorced. Yes, I feel weird about it, because I have only met one person who was actually happy that her parents divorced. Not that I know what's best for my parents, but things just got so much better now my dad's out of the picture. It feels like he's just my mom's friend. He's basically just a stranger, and he doesn't need us anymore. I always look at my friends and wonder if they have abnormal parents like mine. Only having one parents, and being alone. Being a mistake, an accident. I wonder how people would react if I ever confessed that I was an accident. That I basically don't have a father. It doesn't bother me, but I would feel sad when I ask myself, what does having a father feel like?

"Most American children suffer from too much mother and too little father."

- Gloria Steinem

Last year, my mom and I didn't get along at all. We would deliberately say hurtful things to one another and I would never apologize. My dad was a silent observer whose goal was to prevent me from interacting with my mom because he knew I would say hurtful things. Christmas was spent in separate rooms.

I went through a traumatic experience last year (which I won't disclose for personal reasons) but it was enough for me to stay up all night for a week or so, confused and in tears. What was most hurtful, however, was that my parents never approached me about it or checked up on me to see if I was okay. I relied, instead, on my sister and pastors to get me through. God was there for me, and with His love and providence, I got through. But I always had a grudge against my parents for not being there for me (which I now realize is ungrounded). It was so hard for me to forgive and forget though I knew that that's what God wanted me to do. He wanted to heal our family, and until I let go of the past, that wasn't going to happen.

But God changed it all this year. My dad became SOOOO patient and loving and SOOO supportive. My dad always put our family first this year- even before

telling me to get better grades, school work, his own work, and basically everything else. My mom and I started talking again and step by step, we're getting closer and closer. I can genuinely say right now that my parents are probably one of the best parents in the world and I love them very much. I had been too hard on my parents and I hadn't appreciated how much they love me, and that was greater than any misunderstanding, circumstance, and surface occurrences. Fellow teenagers, know that escaping to college isn't the solution to your problems with parents. Use the last years of high school (before you leave!) to get to know them and work things out between you all.

I love my parents. I could not have asked for a better set of individuals to raise me to be who I am today. Sure, we have differing opinions occasionally, but for the most part, my parents are open-minded about my views on things. Despite me being first generation American, my parents do a good job adapting to the Western culture evident here. Issues such as relationships, partying, education, sports etc. are things I discuss with them. I am definitely closer to my mother than I am to my father, but it's those small things my dad does in the background that make me appreciate him so much more, but I'll touch on that later. My mom, for the most part, is supportive of the choices I make. When I got my first boyfriend, I was hesitant to inform her of this information. However, I wanted to build a system of trust in our relationship, so eventually, I told her. At first, as predicted, she blew up at me, in Chinese of course. "It's junior year, why are you getting a boyfriend? You need to be focusing on your studies! You have SATs and schoolwork to do, what were you thinking?" But as I reasoned with her, she saw my points as valid, and switched to, "as long as this relationship doesn't affect your grades, I'll let you be in it." She let me go out with him occasionally and even, surprisingly, wanted me to get out more. She saw that I was having fun and encouraged me to maintain the fun-spirited relationship I was in. Pretty chill, huh?

As my mom and I talked about relationships and marriage, we encountered race as a huge roadblock in our opinions. "Whatever you do, do NOT marry anyone Indian, African American, Caucasian, Mexican, Japanese, Taiwanese, or Korean." Basically, marry someone Chinese. Being extremely against racism, I argued with my mom for the longest time about the issue of race. She listed reasons such as food, culture, appearance of babies (yes, I'm completely serious), language as main differences that I would have to face

in the marriage if I were to marry someone who is not Chinese. Her logic made sense, but a person is a person, and love is love. As time went on, and I reasoned with her more and more, she eased up to the idea of the possibility of her only child marrying someone of a different race. After all, this is America, the melting pot of ethnicities. I can't expect to be exposed to so many types of people and only be interested in Chinese people. I mean, sure, if I can find a suitable Chinese dude as my soul mate, all the better, right? Finally, she understood where I was coming from. Thank goodness.

As for partying, I am pretty split on this topic. After talking to my friend, who currently attends UCLA, about partying, I realized that whether I like it or not, I will be exposed to a large party scene in college. At one point or another, I will have a drink at a party and potentially get a bit tipsy. I always saw consuming alcohol as something immoral and wrong, but after a few talks with my peers, I became more liberal, *per se*, on the issue. Still, with a few mixed feelings, I turned to my mother for advice. I asked her if she had ever gotten wasted in her life. Surprisingly, she told me that she had, but only once. I asked her what the experience was like, and she told me that she remembers puking a lot and not being able to walk straight. I asked her about "hangovers" but due to our language barrier, I don't think she understood me. Anyways, I told her about my friend said about college parties and people getting drunk frequently and how she felt about me becoming involved in this next year. She told me that it was okay as long as I was responsible and didn't get too drunk. After that talk, I feel like my relationship with my mother grew much stronger. This was another topic that I was iffy with, but the fact that I was able to express my concerns with my mom makes me respect her that much more as a mother. I could only hope to do such a good job with my own kids in the future.

Now, onto my dad. He definitely lacks some common sense, but recently, I have found much more reason to love him. A few weeks ago, he went back to China for a business trip, and briefly visited my aunt on my mom's side of the family. I was talking to my aunt via Skype, and she told me that my dad was telling her how proud he was of me. Apparently, he mentioned my participation in sports, my "natural talent," and my innate determination to succeed, among many other things. A little side note, my dad and I don't talk that much at home. A few words here and there are as much as we ever talk on a daily basis. So for me to hear that he said these things about me truly touched me. I

guess he usually has a hard time expressing his feelings in our household, so I have never seen him express his opinion about anything at home. But looking back, he has always been there for me at every soccer game, even when my mom discouraged him from doing so; he never complained when I asked him for help on chemistry or calculus or physics homework at 11pm, right when he was about to sleep; financial aid documents for college as well, not a single complaint. He is always hand-washing the dishes after dinner, mowing the lawn and doing the laundry on Sundays, all without being asked. These little things that I have gotten accustomed to throughout the years are the things I will definitely miss when I go off to college.

After realizing all that he has done for me, I felt guilty about getting fed up with him and venting to him about trivial, nit-picky things, and always asking him for money when I go shopping with my friends. But I guess I make up for it by watching sports with him on TV, one thing only him and me share in our family. I'm so grateful to have such an amazing old man, and I'm glad I've realized this before heading off to college. I'm sure many of the other submissions are about how much students hate their parents for limiting their freedom etc., and I guess I can see that.

But honestly, think of how much your parents have to go through to raise you. They try to keep their children away from bad influences and corruption that is ubiquitous in today's society. Media, Internet, and social pressures are so evident these days, and they need to keep up with everything in order to prevent their children from going down the wrong path. Even in such a sheltered community as this one, drugs and alcohol, among other things, are readily available. And to keep up with the hormones as well. They also need to support us financially, and being a senior has definitely helped me realize this. The expenses of college (tuition, applications, food, etc.), proms, concerts, grad night, the senior picnic, going out to eat, shopping, AP tests, SATs, texting plans, Apple products, TI-89s--it all adds up to quite a bit of green stuff. I know it's cliché, but they were teenagers once, they've been around the block. They only want what's best for their children and hope that all the years spent raising them won't go to waste.

So here's to all you ungrateful children: the next time you want to yell at your mom for criticizing your grade in Calculus, think of what's going through her mind. I strongly believe that communication is key, so talk it out with her instead of slamming the door. It might work wonders!

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Each submission in this issue presents a window into the complexity inherent in parent-child relationships. All relationships are complex simply because they involve two distinct individuals trying to find common ground. However, parent-child relationships are unique in that they involve a level of unparalleled feeling and connection. No other relationship has quite the same flavor of investment in the other wrapped up in varied expectations. Unfortunately, expectations are not always made clear and differing values can feel like bridgeless expanses. The submissions speak of trust issues, disconnect, stress, depression, insults, need for support and understanding, anger, shame, acculturation and value differences and appreciation.

Adolescence can be a difficult time for teens and parents alike. Academic and social stressors take their toll on the whole family. All the while, developmentally, teens are in the throes of developing their sense of personal identity. Teens are struggling with the questions: Who am I? What do I believe? and What does the future hold for me? I believe, as stated in some of the submissions, that the key to maintaining a healthy parent-child relationship through the tumultuous teens lies in the quality of communication.

Parents can create an environment where mutual sharing of thoughts, feelings, and values is the norm. Teenagers need a safe, nonjudgemental place to discuss their concerns and doubts. They need an arena to explore options with a trusted adult who can help them make informed, responsible choices.

There are no quick fixes when it comes to adolescence. Parents can't protect teens from all the dangers in the world, spare them the emotional upheaval of adolescence, or get rid of the elements of popular culture that inundate teens with messages parents don't agree with. Although, if parents can create the kind of environment where their kids feel free to express their feelings, their kids will be more open to hearing their parents' feelings. Teens will be more willing to entertain adult perspectives, more able to accept parental limits and more likely to be protected by parental values.

Important in any form of communication is RESPECT. Parent-child communication is no exception. If parents and teenagers approach each other from a position of respect, interactions will progress much more smoothly. Instead of using some of the common forms of parent-child communication:

blaming and accusing
name-calling
threats
orders
lecturing and moralizing
martyrdom
comparisons
sarcasm
prophecy

Parents can seek to identify their teen's thoughts and feelings, acknowledge those thoughts and feelings and provide acceptance (and redirection

Recommendations are based on the book *How to Talk So Teens Will Listen & Listen So Teens Will Talk* by Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish

when necessary). Parents and teens will only begin to hear each other when communication is dominated by respectful attitudes and language. Parents must model this behavior for their kids for easiest adaptation.

My suggestion is to explore ways of talking and listening that can be helpful for the whole family. Parents want to keep their kids safe and protected from all the dangers in the world. But teens are curious and want and need a chance to explore their environment. Many parents want their teenagers to comply with their ideas of right and wrong. Some teens question their parents' ideas of right and wrong and want to do what they think or what their friends think. On top of all this, parents and teens are busier than ever and under more pressure than ever which adds to family tensions, irritation and annoyance.

An important component of this style of communication is looking at what we do with these feelings. Sometimes they erupt (i.e. Parents: "Why do you always do that?, You'll never learn., What's wrong with you?" Teens: "That's stupid, You're so unfair, Everyone else is allowed to..."). Rationally, we know this kind of communication only makes people more angry, more defensive and less likely/able to consider our point of view. As a result, sometimes we stuff our feelings to keep the peace. Unfortunately, our feelings will eventually come out and likely in a worse fashion after they have built up. Although, sometimes saying nothing is OK, especially if you're waiting until you're calm. When we find ourselves angry or annoyed with someone, we need to stop, take a deep breath, cool off and assess: How can I honestly express my feelings so that you will hear me and consider what I am saying? This means: not telling the person what's wrong with them, blaming and accusing, but talking only from your perspective: what you feel, what you want, what you don't want. We have a natural tendency to prove ourselves right and others wrong. This never leads to productive communication.

Adolescents who feel accepted and valued by their parents are more likely to accept and value themselves, more likely to make responsible choices and less likely to choose behaviors that preclude their own best interest or thwart their future.

Some important points for teens and parents:

- Feelings matter: Your own and those of people with whom you disagree
- Civility matters: Anger can be expressed without insult
- Words matter: You can choose ones that incite discord or lead to cooperation
- Differences do not mean defeat: Problems that seem to have no solution can lead to perspective taking through the use of respectful listening skills
- Everyone needs to feel valued: For who you are now and who you can become

I realize my suggestions require a whole lot of work for both parents and teens. Major changes in communication patterns can be very difficult to implement and take a great deal of commitment from both parties. That said, it may be too much to go it alone. Seek out the assistance of a professional (therapist, religious leader, school counselor, etc.) to guide you through this difficult process. While the ideal situation would include parent(s) and child(ren) working together, I'm aware this may not be possible or realistic at times. Either party, parent or teen, can seek to make changes on their own. We must remember to take personal responsibility for our behavior, which includes communication, and remember that our relationships with our parents lay the foundation for all future relationships.

Additional Resources

How to Talk So Teens Will Listen & Listen So Teens Will Talk
Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish

Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls
Mary Pipher & Ruth Ross

Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys
Dan Kindlon & Michael Thompson