



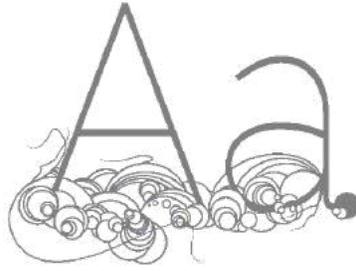
MORE THAN MEETS THE EYES

# ***aletheia***



TRUTH BE TOLD

VOL 3 | MAY 2020



# 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](http://lhsaletheia.com/archive).

Note that 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 & Sylvia Leong

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Abdullah Ashiq	Senior
Raghav Ganesh	Senior
Janvi Ramchandra	Senior
Megan Xu	Senior
Navya Bhakta	Junior
Sophie Guan	Junior
Evan Hwang	Junior
Vijaya Kukutla	Junior
Nancy Qi	Junior
Isaac Yoon	Junior
Cassie Yu	Junior



## letter from the advisors

As the 2019-2020 school year draws to an end, we are all being etched in history and will never be forgotten. These are unprecedented times. The coming generations will study the challenges we faced and what we had to go through.

This is new to all of us. Most of us have never seen a situation like this before. Just like every consequential event, we will see a post COVID-19 world. As we prepare ourselves for these challenges we must rise above the fixed and rigid mindset.

During these challenging times, we all should come together and remember that deep down we are all humans, we all have the same needs, fears, secrets, and insecurities.

The Alethia staff has shown us that even though we are confined in our own spaces, we are so deeply connected because of the issues we are all dealing with. In these times of isolation and solitude, it is all the more important to practice kindness, empathy, and compassion. The Alethia staff has been striving to communicate with each other and work from home to make this compilation happen.

Their wisdom and commitment, their sense of belonging to this community, and their endeavors to make it a better place is remarkable. I admire how deeply they understand that in helping others, we truly help ourselves. After all we are what happened to us, we are the experiences we have gone through, and we are

the stories. The ability to tell our stories and the willingness to listen to someone else's narrative will bring us together.

No matter what gender, race, ethnicity we belong to, we are the passion we feel when in love and the burden of secrets we carry.

Hope you enjoy this issue of Alethia and it brings us together in these extraordinary times.

Sincerely,  
Lovely Choubey & Sylvia Leong  
Parent Advisors

# drugs / drinking

## guiding questions

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

1. What are your opinions on drugs and drinking?
2. What was your first exposure to drugs/drinking? What were the
3. circumstances?
4. Why do/don't you choose to partake in drugs or drinking? How does it affect other parts of your life?
5. Do you think that school prevention techniques are beneficial/effective?
6. What is a stereotype surrounding drug use/drinking that you feel strongly about/want to discuss?

# drugs/drinking

## submissions

When I first got to High school, I didn't really think about drugs/drinking. It didn't seem like a big deal on Lynbrook's extremely academic focused environment. I honestly just didn't know that people were doing any types of drugs. I didn't even know how easily minors were able to get them. I knew there were a few kids in middle school who would go to Rainbow Park after school and smoke weed or some sh\*t. But I never thought I would be anywhere near close to friends with them. Towards the end of first semester freshman year, the girl who sat next to me in a class started vaping, drinking, taking her friends' prescriptions, etc. and was getting close to those people. She would come to class after lunch on god knows what. I could see that she wasn't completely there and she wasn't who she used to be. I promised myself that I would never in a billion years ever put something in my body that would f\*ck with it that way. I feel really bad for her because she was so genuinely nice and really smart, but she doesn't try academically anymore so people just think she's all looks and no brain.

Towards the end of freshman year and that summer, I had a lot of external influences that were surrounded by drugs and alcohol. I think the people I followed on social media were a big factor in my shift in mentality about that stuff. They portrayed things like underage drinking as a major part of their teen years and that was something I didn't want to miss out on. FOMO played a huge role in why I wanted to start drinking: I didn't even want to seem cool or anything. I just wanted to have the same stupid stories about screwing up as a teenager that I heard from adults for myself.

\*all submissions were submitted anonymously. Note that the views of the submissions do not necessarily reflect the views of Aletheia or of Lynbrook High School.

I drank alcohol a few times and went to a few parties starting in sophomore year. But I've never done drugs. I don't want to go into detail cause my friends might know. :/

I haven't had the same urge to party and get drunk after I started junior year. It's not worth it at all. I had a friend that was really into drinking and partying. But I stopped talking to him because he had no life outside of it. Eventually he moved away and I'm so glad I got that negative influence out of my life. If you have genuine friends and interests there are so many better things to do with yourself. It's also so much more fun to experience high school memories sober, and not have to miss out on your education to go juul in the bathroom cause you need your nicotine fix. Now that I'm a senior, I'm really glad I never got addicted and caught because colleges see that, and it can affect your future. I know people working on college apps that have to tell admissions officers about their "infractions." So to all the underclassmen out there, it might seem cool in the moment, but you life is longer than 4 years, think about the rest of it.

Drinking is an escape. That escape is not real, and just an illusion. An illusion that's just a false sense of pride. But even that is enough to console me. All my life, I've lived with an inferiority complex. I could never match my father's expectations and that was the one thing I wanted so bad. His acknowledgment. Do you know what it's like to not be able to make your own decisions? I mean you're given the freedom and choice to make one, but you always care about what the other person is going to think of you if you make the wrong choice. And that's my problem. I always think about what the other person thinks about me. I do it all the time and I can't help it. It's a habit. Sometimes, I do it so much that I start to cry. But I don't want to show anyone my vulnerable side because I won't meet their expectations then. I cry silently. Holding it inside. Pressing my palms into my eyes, and breathing in all the cries. Sometimes I even hear my head thumping and beating as though it's my heart. It's like I'm sick, and it's not even an understatement. The stress can drive me to such a point that I actually start to jitter and I breathe heavily, from my mouth and I feel cold. I feel alone and crazy. Drinking. It calms me. It makes me feel superior. It makes me feel like I'm rebelling while not being seen by anyone. It's quiet. It's desolate. And it makes me clumsy. It lets me be content with how I am. No, it's not even that, it just doesn't let me think about those things. I just take in the scent. I taste the different flavors. Sometimes mahogany, sometimes oak. I just want to let go. Drinking helps me let go.

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i mean its obvious why i wouldn't do drugs right? I'm scared. Not only are they harmful, but they're also addictive. I'm scared that I'd get so addicted that I'd lose sense of what is happening around me. I get it. Life is stressful, and it sucks. But I mean I still have to deal with it because I don't think its worth throwing away. I've heard people say that drugs are like an escape from reality and stuff. But what if you escape so far that you never return? Reality's like a jail. It's horrible but at least your safe. Escaping from it, you may feel free, but you'll never be able to sleep comfortably because every moment you'd be scared of being caught.



lynbrook is so contradicting in regards to drugs. i've heard many students talk about how "they don't care who does drugs" because it's their personal preference, but i also hear about kids getting kicked from their friend groups because of their choices. although i understand that under some circumstances, kids can get uncomfortable, it's inconsiderate to just abandon someone when they start using drugs/drinking. nobody does those things simply because they want to. there's always more to it.

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# staff comment

\*written by an Aletheia staff member

I used to wonder why my parents would get these gifts of wine from individuals and just put it on top of the refrigerator, never opening it. As naive as it may sound, till I was in freshman year I never really thought that my family had any history of issues when it came to addiction. For my mom especially, irresponsible drinking was all too real; she grew up in a turbulent home due to her father's nighttime drinking. In my mom's mind it was like seeing one of those monsters from a horror movie come to life, darkness coming after her and her older brother. My uncle mirrored my grandfather's actions and abused alcohol in a similar manner, and ended up passing away in his early thirties. My mom's view on alcohol is inherently that it took so much away from her.

The one thing that was common in my uncle and grandfather was the fact that they viewed alcohol as being an escape, to forget whatever had scarred them. As it is for many others, there is a dependability formed with drugs and alcohol that makes everything seem easier. The fact that my uncle may have passed away due to his dependability on alcohol erased all his good in the eyes of many people. I've never had a conversation with my grandma about what he was like when he was younger or how he was as an older brother. Alcohol became a poison that ran through my family's lineage slowly breaking it apart.

One of the memories I still think about from elementary school is when there was a week where the school would arrange talks about drug and alcohol usage. There would usually be some type of animal mascot associated with it, and if I remember correctly it was an owl. To be educated from a young age on such a serious topic is important. For most of my classmates and I, the alcohol and drug talks were a time to joke around and never focus but we didn't realize the significance these talks could hold. Sometimes in high school, temptations can draw an individual in and there lays the choice to follow its pull or resist.

The thing I've realized is that it isn't so easy to judge someone's choice. In the case of alcohol and drugs, it's about perspective; you don't know what someone is going through. It could be peer pressure or something more lighthearted like experimentation and fun, but sometimes, it's something more complex and undefinable.

teacher interview

\*unlike normal interviews, the interviewed teacher is not disclosed.



HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT DRINKING?

Teacher: My take on drinking is that I'm okay with it as long as it's done in moderation. I grew up in a family where people consumed beer and wine and it wasn't frowned upon. So, personally, I'm okay with it. Do I think there should be limits as to what you're allowed to do? And at what age? Sure. I don't know if you want to have 15 year olds getting drunk. So it makes sense. Some of the laws make sense in regards to say, like a drinking age, or a minimum age, but that's similar to any substance that is technically is doing harm to you.

WHAT DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE THE LEGAL AGE?

Teacher: I think it comes down to a social element. In some cultures, you see more drinking and some you don't. I found that those that have been repressed and not allowed to drink, at least when they were older and allowed to drink, tend to drink more so than if they had been allowed to drink at a younger age. If you're introduced that alcohol consumption is acceptable at a relatively young age, and you might have a glass of wine with dinner when you're 15, your propensity to want to drink excessively might be different later on. So because you've been exposed, and it's become a part of the society, or accepted norms, you don't tend to drink as much. Or, at least anecdotally, I've noticed that you don't tend to drink in excess because it's always been there.

WHAT WAS THE DRUG AND DRINKING CULTURE LIKE DURING YOUR TIME IN HIGH SCHOOL?

Teacher: There was a lot of drinking and a lot of marijuana use. It was popular when I was in school. So drinking culture has always kind of been there. It tends to ebb and flow in terms of the amount but it's always kind of there. Marijuana use is the same thing. After I was out of high school, you did see a shift towards arguably harder substances being used at the high school level. But that was after I was here.

(cont...)

*Teacher (cont.):* In the more affluent areas, you might see hard narcotics being used and more people having things like cocaine, etc. with them. There were some people when I was in school that were doing LSD, acid, Mushrooms, and ecstasy. That was coming in when I was in high school, and then became more popular after I was out of high school. People were doing methamphetamines at one point late after I was out of out of high school.

### **WOULD YOU ADVOCATE FOR NO DRUGS/ALCOHOL OR WOULD YOU ADVOCATE FOR A MODERATE LEVEL?**

*Teacher:* There should be some sort of drinking regulation criteria because it's a proven fact that alcohol is not good for you. You're creating a social situation where those that choose to do it and or do it in excess, create a burden to some degree on those that do not or choose not to, or do it in moderation. There should always be some sort of penalty for that. For example, you have drunk-driving deaths. You have the medical expenses as a result of having to take care of people that drank in excess. Liver damage, kidney damage, just general alcoholism. All of that stuff is stuff that the people doing it should probably be the ones paying for it to some degree. So increased taxation on it regulation of the substance makes sense. I would be okay more with moderate levels. Banning things doesn't always tends to be the best bet. Outright bans tend to not work. You see that with drug culture today. You banned narcotics, people who want narcotics will get them. So it creates just a black market for it.

### **THERE'S A LOT OF PREJUDICES ON DRINKING AND DRUGS, ESPECIALLY FOR PEOPLE AT A YOUNG AGE, HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL. THERE'S AN ASSUMPTION THAT IT'S KIND OF JUST TO HAVE FUN. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT IT'S MORE THAN THAT, OR IT CAN BE MORE THAN THAT?**

*Teacher:* Some of that. There's a whole litany of reasons. Want to fit in with your peers? Have a form of self-medication to reduce stress? Because it's illegal, doing it solely in defiance of your adult overlords, whatever you want to call us.



### **DURING YOUR CHILDHOOD, WERE YOU EXPOSED TO ANY SCHOOL PREVENTION OF ALCOHOL OR DRUG USE? DID IT HELP?**

*Teacher:* They did that all through the 80s. It was called the D.A.R.E program. I would argue that it did very little to really steer anybody doing anything they shouldn't. It was very expensive. They spent a lot of money to promote it. But to some degree, just being exposed to the information is arguably beneficial. For example, vaping if you want a modern example. You should know your facts before you go jumping into things that you don't know. The data indicates, or at least the the way it's being presented, is that it's probably not a good thing to be smoking or drinking.

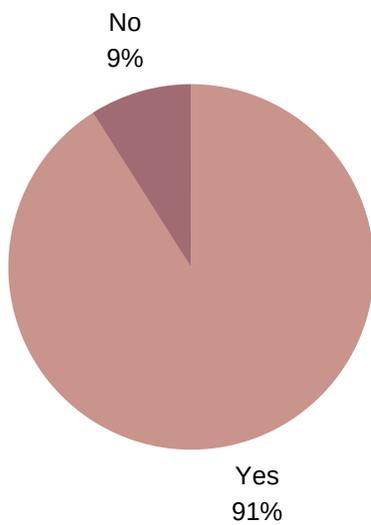


# statistics

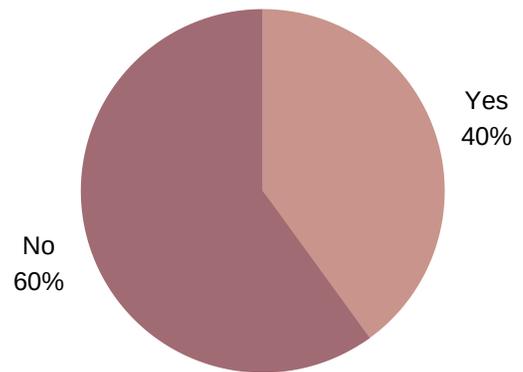
## DRUGS/DRINKING

### SUBSTANCES THAT STUDENTS HAVE TRIED (AT LEAST ONCE) BEFORE THE AGE OF 18:

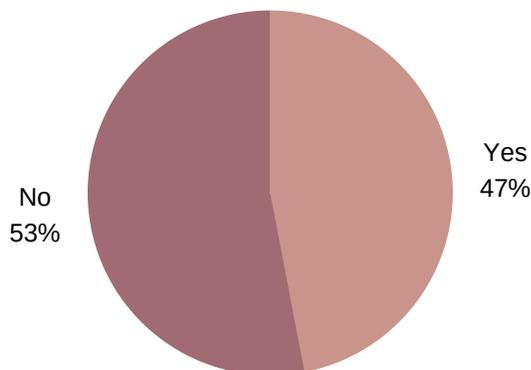
#### Alcohol



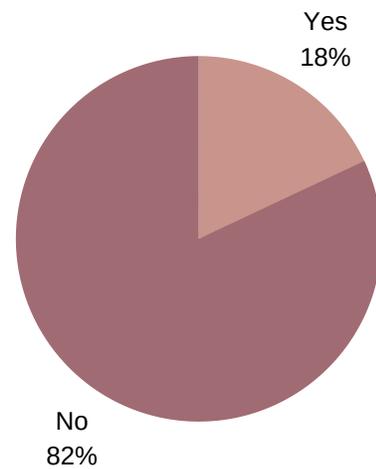
#### Tobacco



#### Marijuana



#### Prescription Drugs



Tricia Mlnarik

Learn something new over the holidays? Watching Marie Kondo on Netflix, I recently learned a new strategy for folding clothes that has been a revolution for organizing my wardrobe. We all learn helpful and unhelpful behaviors—many times outside of our awareness—by observing what others model for us. In media and social media, models often depict that drinking is safe and exciting. Yet, these models fail to represent ways in which drug and alcohol use can interfere with relationships, health, or achieving our goals. In our American culture, we see widely displayed ads for beer and spirits alongside sporting events where athletes perform at peak levels of physical capability. And in colleges, along with being known for higher learning and academic rigor, many institutions have a reputation for binge-drinking parties or fraternities or sororities that promote frequent alcohol intake as a “normal” part of the college lifestyle. Overall, we may get the message that drugs and alcohol are acceptable and widespread methods to cope, relax, socialize, and have fun.

We may also observe a message that substance use can be a way to solve our problems: the “liquid courage” to talk to a love interest, a bit of marijuana to help with pain, anxiety or difficulty sleeping. And with the progression from middle to high school, not only do academic challenges become more complex, but the personal—the social and emotional hurdles—get higher. It is tempting to find a quick fix for some of these problems and hurdles; using substances to resolve unwanted feelings or uncomfortable social situations.

When you are immersed in your own Netflix binge-watching, or a social media or real-life equivalent, I encourage you to actively consider and evaluate what you observe to reach a decision that is aligned with your goals and values. Also, as a therapist and a mom, I hope for more visible and active role models that demonstrate healthier means of coping with the emotional and social factors that contribute to drug use. Talking about feelings with friends or trusted adults, engaging one’s playful and carefree side, connecting with nature, and developing self compassion are some ideas to start approaching problems in a manner with fewer negative outcomes.

As we have seen from the student submissions here, some have chosen to participate in substance use as an escape from painful emotions or as a remedy for FOMO—a guarantee they do not leave any stone unturned in the breadth of high school experiences. Yet we’ve also heard that for some, they are aware that stakes are high when using drugs or alcohol. Specifically, risks that assumptions are made about a person who uses drugs or alcohol or that friendships may be lost if choices do not align with one’s friend group. What I believe is important is discernment and critical thinking about this part of one’s life rather than doing what is modeled without consideration of one’s personal beliefs, values, and goals. We know that the behaviors and habits that are formed early in life may form a mold that is difficult or seems impossible to break later in life. Decisions made by teens have the potential to impact them for years to come.

When we actively engage in reflection of the role we want drugs and alcohol to play in our lives and we look beyond the feel good messages we see in media, we notice there are a variety of ways we can approach problems without resorting to substance use.

## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

### BIOGRAPHY

*Tricia Mlnarik is a co-founder of DBT Center of Silicon Valley, a private-practice therapy clinic specializing in Dialectical Behavior Therapy for adults and adolescents.*

*Tricia is a DBT-Linehan Board of Certification Certified DBT Clinician and frequently uses DBT to help clients heal from trauma. She enjoys working collaboratively with clients as experts of their own experiences and goals.*

*She holds dual licensure as both a Marriage and Family Therapist and a Professional Clinical Counselor. She began training in Dialectical Behavior therapy in 2007 and holds a Master's degree in Counseling Psychology from Santa Clara University. When not at work, Tricia likes to hike, dance and spend time with her daughters.*

#### **Substance Abuse Assessment & Treatment:**

- Adolescent Substance Abuse Program (ASAP) and Teen Intervene programs at TherapyWorks:  
[mytherapyworks.com/asap](http://mytherapyworks.com/asap)

#### **Substance Abuse Case Management:**

- Scott Henrywestwood, MA, LAADC, CADC-II, NCAC-II, SAP, CEAP, CIP, WTS-E: (408) 203-0964  
Accredited Counseling & Intervention Services, Inc.  
[1190 Park Ave Unit B San Jose, CA 95126]  
[www.counselingandintervention.com](http://www.counselingandintervention.com)

#### **Substance Use Hotlines & Support Meetings:**

- SAMHSA, 24/7, free and confidential Alcohol/Drug Abuse Hotline: 800-662-HELP  
- Santa Clara County Assessment & Referral for Alcohol and drug treatment: (800) 488-9919  
- Marijuana Anonymous Hotline: (408) 450-0796;  
[madistrict3.org](http://madistrict3.org)  
- Narcotics Anonymous [Clean Teens & Young People Meetings]: [sjna.org](http://sjna.org)  
- Local AA groups for youth 24 hour helpline:  
(408) 374-8511  
[aasanjose.org/young-people](http://aasanjose.org/young-people)

#### **Therapists Specializing in Substance Abuse:**

- Melissa E Miller LMFT: 4010 Moorpark Ave #118 San Jose CA 95117  
(408) 576-8333; [memillerlmft.com](http://memillerlmft.com)  
- Alicia Hess, LCSW 60529 Counseling for Youth & Families: (408) 597-4959; [aliciahesscounseling.com](http://aliciahesscounseling.com)

# rumors / secret

## guiding questions

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

1. Have people spread rumors about you? Have you spread rumors about others and why? How do they affect you or others?
2. What secrets do you hide? What do your friends or family not know about you?
3. Have you been hurt by secrets/rumors? When is it better to keep a secret?
4. Who do you trust enough to share your secrets with? Has sharing your secret impacted you or others?

# rumors/secrets

## submissions

\*all submissions were submitted anonymously. Note that the views of the submissions do not necessarily reflect the views of Aletheia or of Lynbrook High School.

what secrets do I hide? Although I've had much more supportive, respectful counselors, that sweet voice in my head that echoes "you are not good enough" is hard to let go. it doesn't serve me, and yet I cling on to it.

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I used to start rumors a lot. I was really good at it. My rumors were believable, yet interesting. Let's say this boy dated a girl last year. I can't just spread a rumor that he still has a thing for her since that's bland. This is the perfect rumor: "He went to her house last Friday, forced his way in, her dad called the police, and he got arrested. I don't know what happened after that." Adding in the "I don't know what happened after that" line makes you look honest enough not to keep speaking beyond what you know, which makes you look reliable. This is an example of an actual rumor I spread about someone, not because I had anything against him, but because I had nothing better to talk about. Once you have started an interesting believable rumor, just sit back and let it spread like wildfire. You'll be amazed at how much people talk about it and how many different versions come up. it truly is a wild butterfly effect. No one has ever really spread any rumors about me that I know of. Part of this might be that no one cares enough to spread anything about me. Rumors are a perk of being popular since everyone likes to talk about the cool kids. I recently decided I needed to stop with this. When I really thought about it, this meant I was in a horrible state of mind. I had nothing else to talk about so I started making up hurtful garbage about others? That's pathetic. I haven't started a rumor in at least 2 months, but I have been very hurtful in the damage I have caused. I won't apologize to them, since then they'll know I started the rumor, and I'm too much of a coward to reveal my identity. All I can do is stop doing it and hope for the best moving forward.

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All my life people have spread rumors about me. "Oh, I heard that he likes her", etc. I assume you are all familiar with the childish rhyme, Blank and Blank sitting in a tree. . . Anyways, I hated that and so did the person who was usually paired with me, although we did like each other as friends, since we were in 1st grade, and at that age, no one goes further than best friends. This childish behavior always annoys me to this day if I hear it even if the victim isn't me. As a high schooler, I find rumors to be harmful. I have never spread rumors because I would hate to hurt someone's feelings. I have always hidden secrets and through Alethia, I think I can reveal one of them anonymously. One of them is that I hate some people because of the way they act. It is always better to keep a secret than to betray someone's trust and start a rumor about them. I don't trust most people with any of my secrets, and if you are one of the lucky few, know that I must trust you a lot to tell you these things and to pour myself out to you. All my secrets contain part of my soul, so if you betray my trust and start a rumor, you have ruined someone's soul and that you are a jerk if you betray anyone's secrets. I can't even anymore. I fear death like nothing else except having someone betray a secret I told them about myself.

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As an asian, the best thing about New Year, especially Chinese New Year, is that you get red packets. Growing up, my parents usually stuff them with fresh bills from the bank. I love them, the way they only have one single fold on the middle hamburger style and the fact that their edges are always sharp like stiff paper, Money was, and still is, power, but I don't get to keep it. As soon as the red packets had their brief stay on my desk for a few days, my parents would take it away and "deposit it at the bank" so that I could get it "when you're an adult". I was no more than 8 back then, and I really found it hard to believe that one day I would be an adult. And I needed the money *now*, not "next week", or "when you behave", and certainly not "when you're an adult." The thing about being a child is that you have no worries, about anything at all. There's the concept of right and wrong, but the concept of law does not exist. As a child from a good family growing up in a nice fancy neighborhood, my only concern was myself. If I wanted something my parents wouldn't get for me and the desire of it exceeds morality, I would get it; money wasn't a problem because it wasn't *my* money.

Back at home, we have a basket in the kitchen, a tiny green basket with holes on the side and a flat bottom, and we use it to hold coins and every now and then dollar bills or fivers. It was enough spare change from my parents for me to run down to the store and buy a bag of seaweed or a bottle of drinks for myself and friends. I love food, you can't fault a child for that and my parents didn't. Every time the basket got lighter, a few more bills or coins would miraculously appear. I wasn't good at controlling myself; I don't ask myself if I really need it (as I do now). If something catches my eyes, I need to get it. there was no *want* to get it, there was just need. If I don't get it, I will die from agitations. Sometimes it was stationery, other times they were notebooks and fancy toys. They were cheap, cheap enough to be bought with the green basket money if I buy them at different times.

And then I got into comic books and that was one of the worst addictions I ever fell into as a child. I was partially influenced because the comic was famous among the school. Each one was ten bucks and I started from the very first one (internet wasn't really a plausible solution back then). I bought every single one of them as soon as they arrived in stores, and each time I told myself it was just ten bucks. If I must be honest, I didn't tell myself at all; I just bought it because "why not?" was my thought. I didn't have the money and I took from the green basket. Then the green basket started getting lighter without refills. There was a month during which all I could do is to go to the store every day and then sigh in relief as I saw that there were still some left. But I knew that if I didn't get it soon, it'd be gone and then I'd be missing some in the series. You can't read a book by skipping thirty chapters.

Logically, as any child would do, I started stealing. My mom's wallet was always filled with tens or twenties; I didn't dare to take the fifties or hundred because my parents aren't dumb and I was still sane enough to know that. I also knew better than to take the last few remaining tens because even an idiot knows that when a stack of tens becomes a stack of nothing, something's afoot. Two good things came out of stealing: I satisfied my need for the comics and the comic book store owner loved me. When I've collected twenty of the books, I started putting them on my shelf because the bindings of the books, when lined up, were so beautiful.

At some point, I stumbled across the drawer during a routine search for money when my parents were out. It was the red pockets drawer. And there was money in them. Tens. Twenties. Fifties. Hundreds. Some were empty. And I swear I was so happy I nearly busted out a dance right then. It was like an infinite fountain of gold because I've never seen that many bills together all at once.



So I let myself go. It was no longer comic books that I spent money on, it turned into game cards, robots, watches, shoes, shirts, *anything* that caught my eyes. It seems to me that my worry for money wasn't the only thing that disappeared because so did my conscience. I became the rich kid at school. I bought things for them. I became closer to my friends. I became popular and I loved it. You can't fault a kid for wanting attention.

In the span of the year, the comic book reached #31 in the series and I was on my second laser watch that cost thirty bucks. My parents still had no clue. My trip to the drawer became more frequent; sometimes, I would do it right as they were sleeping in the same room. I was quiet. I knew my way. I was so proud of myself. It was exciting as if I were a spy and had just successfully infiltrated the base. I thought I was so good, that I could actually be a thief one day. An infamous thief that nobody could catch.

My best friend lives in the apartment complex a little distance away from school. It has a balcony, from where you could overlook the whole complex. He also had a computer room, where we sometimes stayed to game. Like me, he was an avid buyer of game cards, each one costing from thirty bucks to a hundred. His father was the PE teacher at our school and money didn't seem to be a problem because, while I played the games and read my comics without my parents' knowing, he played and read his with financial support from his parents. Sometimes, I thought he was so spoiled and I was envious of him, of his family. He invited me to his house once and left me alone in the computer room as he went to get food from the kitchen. His small plastic box of game cards was lying on the table and I counted through them: there were eight. I took the first one and then excused myself, saying that I needed to go home because it was getting late.

He asked me if I wanted some food and I told him no. His father walked me to the door with a smile and told me to come often because my friend liked having me around. That night, I went home and used the game card. It was good. I did some upgrades on my game character and bought a mount and a title. The thought that ran across my mind was that I should've stolen another one.

The comic store owner who loved me was a nice lady who always tied her hair up and walks in a funny way. She and her husband ran the small store, which was frequently visited by students because it was stacked not only with comic books but also stationaries. The little store had everything trendy in terms of pens, pencils, erasers, and the such. I always get the latest ones even when the old ones I had were still perfectly fine simply because I got tired of them within the week. You can't fault a child for that. I was often browsing the store, looking for whatever that caught my eyes. One time, I came without money and I saw a box of erasers. *Everyone* had one, I thought to myself. I need it. But I didn't have money. But I *need* it. So I took it. They came in a box of ten or so and I took only one out of a box. I shove it in my pocket and walked along. The lady grabbed me not two seconds later because there were cameras installed in the store. She asked me if I stole something and I denied it. She then bent down and picked up the box that now had one less eraser and demanded that I empty my pocket. I did and she asked where I got that one eraser from. I told her it was a gift from a friend and she kind of laughed and grabbed it from me.

It was strange that my face didn't burn, despite the onlookers. I was just angry. I walked out of there, hands in pocket, and I went home. I didn't visit that store for a couple of weeks. A couple of weeks later, I came back and bought the next comic. The store owner smiled at me. We never mentioned it and I was still one of her favorite customers. It was after that I developed the habit of locating security cameras any time I went anywhere.

# staff comment

\*written by an Aletheia staff member

In every high school movie, there is a surplus of drama. Stereotypes fuel these films; cliques, mean girls, jocks, etc. However the one thing that connects most of these films is that there is that point, the tip of the iceberg, where the protagonist is humiliated by the antagonist's actions. These actions ultimately become known by everyone, yet by the end of the movie, half an hour to forty five minutes later, it's forgotten and there is a happy ending.

It may sound foolish but, in the back of my head this was a possibility for how high school was going to be. Though as I started stepping further and further into my Lynbrook years, I realized two things. One being that thoughts and words spread like wildfire and that oftentimes, an individual can become what is being said about them. And with that darkness comes a pit of loneliness that closes in rather fast.

Each person has had a moment where they make an oopsie like eating the last cookie or breaking a glass and they don't want anyone to find out, so they keep it a secret. Personally, I have trouble keeping my secrets because they burn a hole in my mind and are let out in the end. In a way, keeping secrets is a way to protect yourself, whether it be hiding your imperfections or not wanting to get in trouble. Often, being a high schooler means understanding that if you keep a secret, there is a risk of it being turned into a rumor. "The truth" becomes five versions of the truth. People say to turn away from the rumors, but that doesn't mean that it doesn't hurt. Knowing the truth and sheltering it with you is an arduous journey.

Mike Brown

Rumors and gossip seem to be as old as the spoken and certainly written language. In fact, there is evidence documented back to ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs depicting scandalous tales that appear to represent various indecent and disreputable stories at the time. What is the harm in spreading these often negative and unverified stories? Whether the stories are positive or negative, many people do not take the time to figure out if what they are telling others is true. As a result, rumors and gossip often spread misinformation quickly, especially in environments that do not discourage them.

What is the difference between Rumors and Gossip?

While the two terms are similar and often used interchangeably, there are some differences. Rumors are stories spread amongst people that are unverified and quite often false. They can be positive or negative, however usually they are negative and harmful. Rumors can be spread about individuals, groups, or various subject matters such as politics, religion, economics, etc... Gossip usually involves sharing personal and intimate details about individuals. Usually this is conveyed through negative judgment and disapproval. An example comparing Rumors and Gossip would be if two people were talking about a third person they know who appeared very underweight. One of the two might make a guess as to why and present it by stating to the other "I heard that she has anorexia and starves herself." This first person may have no actual knowledge that validates what she is saying, thus starting a Rumor. However, let's now say that one of these two people are more intimately familiar with the underweight individual and then discusses it with the other, sharing personal information that the subject of their discussion may not want shared. This is an example of Gossip.

So why do we spread Rumors and Gossip?

There are many reasons why people are quick to spread rumors and gossip. One reason is that our minds like to problem solve and try to make sense out of our environments. If we observe something happening and we do not know or understand the facts of what we are observing, our minds will try to fill in the gaps. For example, you see two people that you know are in romantic relationships with other people quietly whispering in the corner of a hallway. But when you approach they immediately stop and separate. You may think they were talking about something private, or talking about you, or maybe they are secret lovers. Your mind tries to come up with various possibilities. You may then go tell a friend about what you witnessed and the two of you may come up with a story that they are cheating on their current partners. Then one or both of you go tell other people your story and within a day or two it has gone all around the school.

Another reason we spread rumors and gossip is because it is a way that some people try to make themselves feel better about their life or life situation. Let's say in the story above that you are someone who desperately wants to be in a romantic relationship, however you have not found someone who wants to be in a romantic relationship with you. As a result, you find yourself feeling jealous of others who are in a romantic relationship. By spreading a rumor that the people who were whispering are cheating, you secretly hope it will result in their breaking up with their respective partners and they will once again be single as well.

Some people spread rumors just to get attention or try to fit in and impress others by appearing to know something they do not. Other times we may spread rumors just because we are bored.

Sometimes people spread rumors with the malicious intent of hurting someone else's reputation, maybe because they are a competitor and we want improve our own standing or maybe even to exact revenge for something the other person did or said from which we felt offended.

How does spreading rumors and gossip affect us?

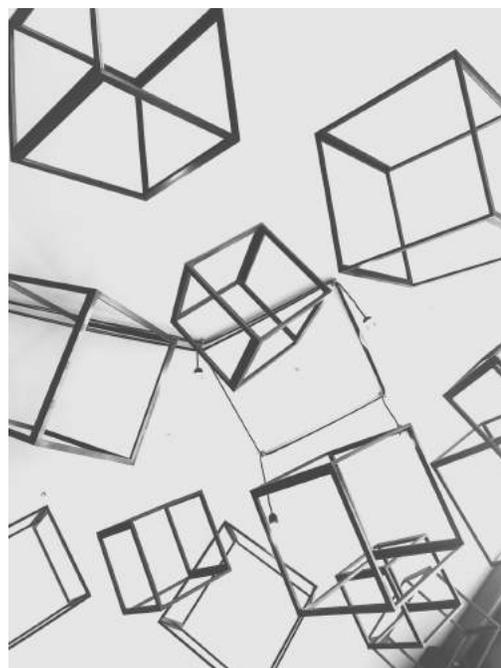
Rumors can have serious negative effects on our self esteem our confidence levels and even our overall physical health. Most people have the same basic underlying needs in life. Some of these are to feel safe, to feel joy, to feel confident, to feel connected with fellow humans, and many others. When these needs are violated, we often feel sadness, anger, guilt and more. Left unchecked these emotions can lead to chronic anxiety, panic attacks, anxiety related health issues, depression and even suicide.

So what can I do?

Don't listen to others when they attempt to spread rumors or gossip. If the rumor or gossip concerns another individual you can directly challenge the evidence of what is being shared. If the presenter cannot provide facts that substantiate what they are claiming then remind them that they are merely spreading rumors that may harm another person. If they are attempting to convey gossip, you can ask them if what they are sharing is something that they would want shared about his or her self and also ask them why they feel the need to tell it to others. Recognize that if you spend time around people who spread rumors and gossip, when you are not around, they are probably spreading things about you. Always remember that whenever you spread these personal details or unverified pieces of information, whether positive or negative, there are often consequences. As a general rule, don't say anything about another person that you would not say in front of them.

If you are the subject of the rumor or gossip, don't be afraid to confront those who may be spreading them. Especially if what they are saying is totally unfounded. The more confident you act the less people tend to believe the negative rumors or gossip. In some situations, you may even clarify by presenting actual facts about a situation. This leaves less to the imagination of others and tends to take away influence from the invented story. Most of all stay positive. Focus on what is going right in your life. Remember that the more we react and ruminate on problems, the more we feed our anxiety and the bigger it tends to become. Most rumors and gossip blow over in a few days or at most a couple of weeks. By that time, there are plenty of new rumors and gossip to go around and people soon forget what they heard about you.

If you find that you are having a difficult time managing your anxiety, developing distorted ways of thinking or believe you are becoming depressed, seek the help of a professional who can listen and help provide necessary tools and solutions.



## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

### BIOGRAPHY

*Mike Brown is a Marriage and Family Therapist who is the founder and co-owner of The Brown Therapy Group with locations in Campbell and Los Gatos, California.*

*He and other Psychotherapists at The Brown Therapy Group specialize in an extensive variety of issues and concerns that may affect individuals, couples and families. For more information on whom we are and how we may help you, please visit:*

*www.TheBrownTherapyGroup.com 197 E  
Hamilton Ave, Suite 203 Campbell, CA  
95008 (408) 679-2160*

**“The Self-Esteem Workbook for Teens: Activities to Help You Build Confidence and Achieve Your Goals”** by Lisa M. Schab

**“The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens Workbook”**  
by Sean Covey

**“Self-Compassion Workbook for Teens: Mindfulness and Compassion Skills to Overcome Self-Criticism and Embrace Who You Are”** by Karen Bluth

**“The Resilience Workbook for Teens: Activities to Help You Gain Confidence, Manage Stress, and Cultivate a Growth Mindset”** by Cheryl M. Bradshaw

**“The Secret to Teen Power”** by Paul Harrington

**For a list of common crisis numbers:**  
<http://www.thebrowntherapygroup.com/crisis-numbers/>

# sexuality

## guiding questions

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

1. Is your sexuality a major part of your identity?
2. How do others around you influence your orientation/your opinions about sexuality?
3. Do you believe media affects sexuality? What are some stereotypes involving sexuality that you have seen or personally faced?
4. What do you think is an ideal situation to come out about one's sexuality?
5. Do you see or treat people of a different sexual orientation differently? Have you been treated differently?

# sexuality

## submissions

\*all submissions were submitted anonymously. Note that the views of the submissions do not necessarily reflect the views of Aletheia or of Lynbrook High School.

!!!!!!!!!!!! i'm so bi !!!!!!!!!!!!! literally in love with every pretty girl/cute guy i see. but sometimes i feel like im not allowed to drool over girls bcs i cant tell if its society that tells me being gay is not totally accepted unless you're like **\*\*GAY\*\*** like you cant be lowkey gay you have to be GAYYY and not that im not ok with that its just its not my personality to be overly showy?? idk maybe thats even society telling me that i cant do something. ive been asked if im bi because i cant get enough attention with guys. absolutely incorrect. i cant get attention from either!!!! who i like is not affected by what type of person likes me!!! ideal situation to come out are so hard to find. i came out to my mom in the worst way possible when she was yelling at me and i was crying and everything was not good. people have such amazing coming out stories and i can barely remember the details of mine except that she was yelling and not happy. still doesn't accept it. it's ok ill give her time. time until i find a cute girl to date.

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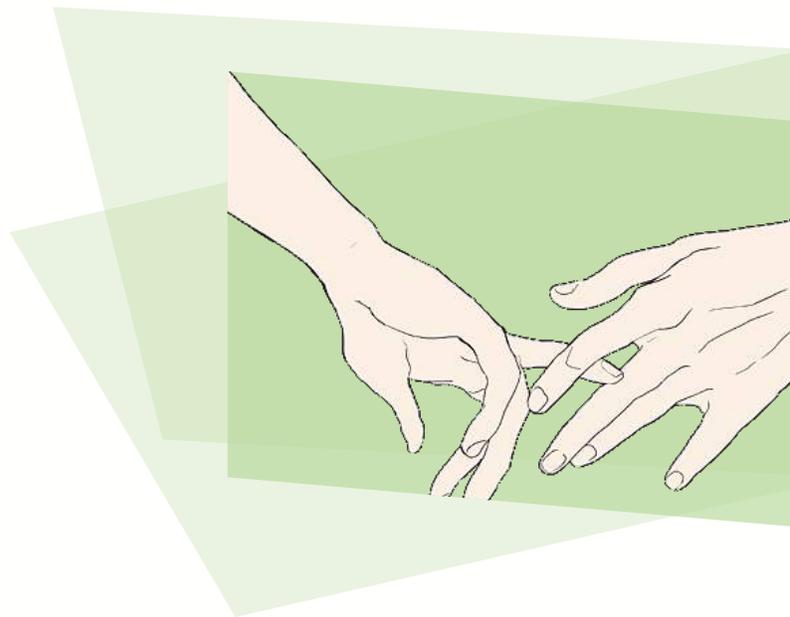
I considered pretending to change my sexuality or identify as gender non binary in order to gain an advantage while applying to summer programs. it feels like everyone here is so privileged, so i had to create something to show that i had difficulty in life on the other hand, i was talking with a friend the other day and we agreed that today's society pushes people toward not being straight. i don't think anyone is truly straight or gay or whatever, but society might bring out certain characteristics more than others depending on what people value.

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My sexuality is a very big part of who I am and I take much pride in being confident in expressing it. Even though it can be tough sometimes to be true to who I am in front of others, I always feel better when I am honest with myself and others about my sexuality. I don't treat people differently knowing their sexual orientation because we are all just human beings and I do not believe that people should be treated differently just because they identify as a different sexuality other than my own. When I am around others, sometimes I try to keep my sexuality to myself because in some cases, I am aware that it can be risky or uncomfortable to be open around others who aren't as open to other sexualities other than 'straight'. In my community, I am lucky to have more open friends and classmates, and friend groups at Lynbrook that are very much apart/advocates for the LGBTQIA+ community. I am very much aware of the harmful talk and slang being thrown around school, using terms like 'gay' with negative connotations, and I feel that this school as well as the community as a whole should try to teach everyone about the spectrum of sexuality and gender. It is extremely difficult growing up and not being taught that being gay or lesbian or transgender is ok. When I came to this school, I was still trying to figure out who I was, and my sexuality is a big part of who I am, so I was hurt when teachers and staff weren't acknowledging the problem openly going around the school; ignorance and homophobic language.

Why do I have to sit through two weeks of HG&D when they aren't teaching me how someone like me, a lesbian, should practice safe sex just like a guy should? It just doesn't seem fair and I am thankful for other groups and media sources that help teens like me feel 'normal'. Overall, I feel that the school should do a better job of addressing issues of homophobic language in the classroom and provide resources for students that are struggling or trying to figure out where they lie on the spectrum of sexuality and gender, because there is not just one sexuality or just two genders, and many don't know that unfortunately.

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My sexuality isn't a major part of my identity. I'm a gay woman and it's pretty clear, but I don't base my entire personality off of being gay. I don't like considering myself LGBT because in all honesty, the community that's supposed to accept everyone is the most toxic. If you disagree with their viewpoints, you'll be called homophobic, transphobic, and a shitty person. They make me more ashamed to be gay than most homophobic straight people do, and I wish I didn't have to be grouped with them, because it makes me feel worse about myself. They refuse to consider views outside of their own and make their sexuality their whole personality, and then wonder why so many gay people at Lynbrook refuse to join GSA. I hope they realize that they need to be kinder and more open and less pushy for people to start taking us all seriously.

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Realized I was bi through the internet. The media doesn't influence sexuality itself; you're born with that. It just makes it easier for you to figure yourself out. I'm in the closet because my parents are homophobic/people at school make gay jokes all the time and coming out right now would do more harm than good, I don't want to deal with bullshit at school and I need my parents to pay for my college tuition.

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# staff comment

\* written by an Aletheia staff member

Coming from a culture where traditional viewpoints are considered to be the “right” viewpoints doesn’t usually allow for much bandwidth when it comes to opinion. In high school, I realized that for some, LGBTQ+ rights bizarrely weren’t considered to be human rights. I used to believe that if someone came from a traditional background or was raised with certain religious values, their inability to accept individuals who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community was conceivable. However, I realized how wrong I was because while each person may be nurtured with certain mindsets, they also have the ability to educate themselves and change their view.

Sexuality is a personal journey; there is no handbook with instructions telling you how to discover yourself. In many cultures, it’s considered taboo to discuss your sexual orientation. From my point of view, that’s quite ironic because it’s the blunt way of telling someone to not be their authentic self. There was a time I felt uncomfortable, and sometimes I still do, having conversations with friends and family about sexuality. I have “what if” questions going through my head when I consider how my grandparents would react if I talked to them about this. However, not having these conversations isn’t an option because there are individuals out there who are continuing to fight the long fight just to be their truest selves.

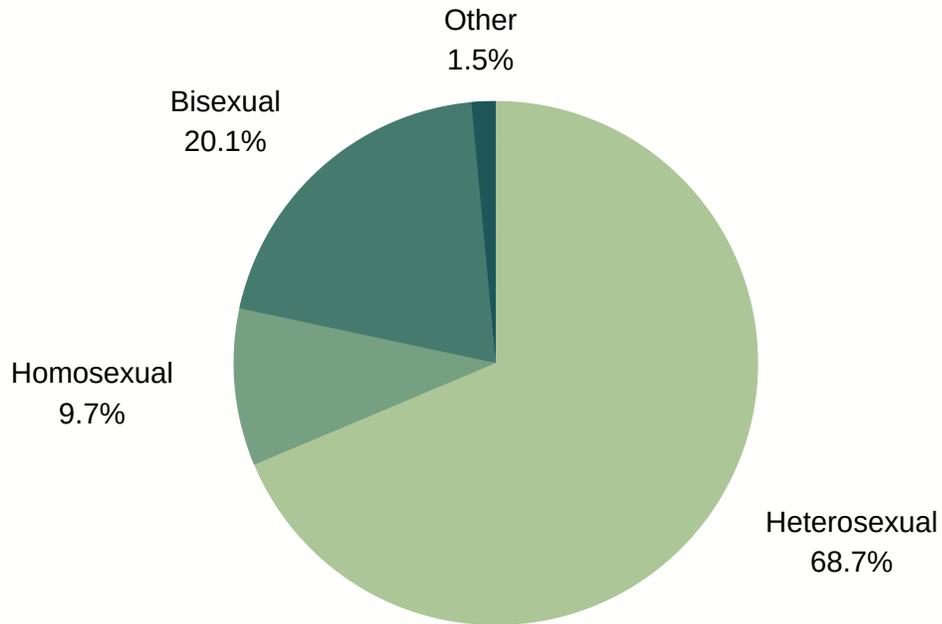
When I was young, teachers and adults would always say that you should treat someone the way you want to be treated yourself (the Golden Rule!). Why does that change when someone says that they identify as a gender different than that of what they were born as or that they like multiple genders? Love is love and Pride is about equality and recognizing that everybody should have the right to the pursuit of happiness. We are all human beings and the foundation of humanity should be based on love and kindness, not judgement.



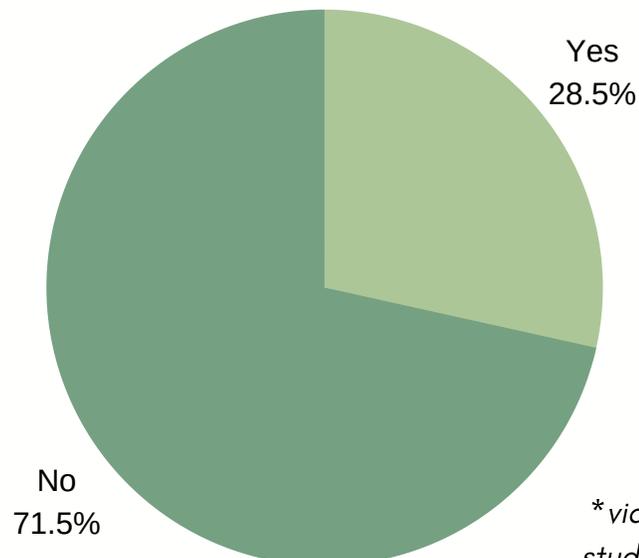
# statistics

## SEXUALITY

### STUDENT'S SEXUAL ORIENTATION AT LYNBROOK



### DO THESE STUDENTS EVER FEEL INSECURE ABOUT THEIR SEXUALITY?



*\*via a poll released to the student body completed by 152 Lynbrook students*

Lara Willing

I feel honored to contribute to this issue of the Aletheia publication. Sexuality is a vast subject, but the guiding questions that were posed refer to sexual orientation, which “loosely describes a person’s sexual, emotional, or romantic attraction, as well as the gender(s) of the people they are attracted to” (from [glaad.org](http://glaad.org)). Sexual orientation exists on a continuum, not in separate boxes. There is a glossary at the end with descriptions of some of the more common sexual orientations.

During adolescence, as hormones increase, it is normal and healthy for teens to have increasing sexual thoughts and feelings of attraction.

Adolescence is a natural time of exploration and experimentation. It is very common for teens to explore and experiment with attraction with people of all genders. Some people might already know what their sexual orientation is, while others might still be figuring it out well into adulthood.

A CDC survey found that approximately 8% of teens identify as gay, lesbian, bi, or pansexual, but I suspect the actual numbers are even higher, with young people afraid to admit it due to social stigma. Nonetheless, we are talking about a group of people who feel like they are “different” from society as a whole.

In my practice, I have worked with non-heterosexual individuals of all ages, many of whom felt misunderstood or unsupported by their peers and families when they were teenagers. The adolescent brain is growing and changing in important ways, which make experiences of shame and isolation particularly painful, and these feelings and experiences can affect people in long lasting ways.

Teens who don’t identify as straight are 2-3 times as likely to attempt suicide and have a 30% higher chance of being bullied. These are heartbreaking statistics.

Adolescence is a challenging enough time as it is. It is essential that we be unbiased and understanding, regardless of peoples’ sexual feelings or orientation. Schools in particular should be inclusive and respectful in their curriculum. For example, when discussing “safer sex,” sexual intercourse should not be the only focus. Non-straight and straight people engage in sexual behaviors other than intercourse that involve the exchange of fluids, and these should be addressed as well. In general, care should be taken to be inclusive of all sexual orientations.

“Coming out” refers to when individuals self-disclose their sexual orientation (or gender identity, see below) to family, friends, or community. Coming out can be extremely vulnerable and scary for some people. They might fear judgment or lack of acceptance. The best thing we can all do is to feel honored that they trust us enough to share this information with us. Sometimes a family member or friend’s coming out creates a cascade of new learning and awareness. What a gift!

I want to add that at times people confuse sexual orientation with gender identity, but they are very different. People are generally assigned a sex at birth, but people understand and express their gender identity through social roles, appearance and other characteristics. For example, people whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth are generally referred to as cisgender or “cis.” Transgender refers to individuals whose gender identity does not match the sex that was assigned to them at birth. Some people identify as non-binary, meaning that their gender identity is not “male” or “female.” Many people challenge the idea that gender exists as a binary but think of it more as a spectrum. It is up to all of us to be accepting of others and ourselves. We should treat everybody with dignity and respect. I want to always create a safe place for people to be themselves and tell the truth. I hope you do too.

## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

### BIOGRAPHY

*Lara Willing has a private practice in West San Jose, where she helps couples, individuals and teens navigate life's challenges. She believes our lives revolve around our relationships with ourselves and others. She particularly enjoy working with couples and people with non-mainstream sexual, gender, relationship and lifestyle expressions. She has advanced training and extensive experience working with members of the LGBTQ community. She also wrote a book called Mini 3 Things Journal, which is available on Amazon. It is a journal full of prompts, art, and quotes to inspire journaling. You can find more information about her and her practice at LaraWilling.com.*

**SuTeenshealth article about sexual attraction and orientation:** <http://tiny.cc/teenshealth>

**Planned Parenthood Page on Teens and Sexual Orientation:** <http://tiny.cc/PlannedParenthood>

**Quartz article about the CDC article mentioned above:** <http://tiny.cc/QuartzArticle>



# 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. we hope that the submission not only spoke to you but also help you understand our diverse community better and perhaps even help you find yourself. 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 2019-2020**