



BURN OUT

aletheia
MAY 2024

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aletheia

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(n.) truth , disclosure

(greek)

ABOUT US

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 online at 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.

STUDENT STAFF:

Manasa Gudapti
Shannon Tai
Chloe Min
Sangie Wu
Quincy Wu
Jenny Suh

Irene Hwang
Ivy Hoo
Grace Zhu
Irene Chung
Rayna Kumar
Charlie Dai
Hao Gu

ADVISORS:

Sylvia Leong
Anna Kirsh



Student 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



Twelve years of my life were spent towards a common goal of college. That goal was always so ambiguous, yet it was all people would talk about.

Even as a freshman, I felt so motivated to join a bunch of extracurriculars and take the hardest classes possible, in hopes of pleasing my parents and working towards the "college" goal. As a junior, this dream has since fizzled out and I don't even know what is genuine anymore. I feel like everything I do is fake and find no enjoyment or fulfillment in my life.

While earlier, my fulfillment was found in my parents happiness, I simply don't care anymore. I don't know if it's that I don't care or if they're just used to it now, but anything I work hard towards and accomplish feels expected. I hate it. I hate how I feel like I'm on autopilot. I just do, do, do, but there is no break. And I don't even know why I am doing.

Burnout sucks. I have lost all sight of why I am doing what I am doing. I used to find purpose in what I did, but I am out a point where it's like, why am I even doing this, it feels pointless. My only motivation at this point is my future and that i am setting myself up for success. I don't know to what extent that's true, but at least it's keeping me going.

“...I hate it. I hate how I feel like I'm on autopilot. I just do, do, do, but there is no break.”

Sometimes I wonder what it would be like if I didn't go to Lynbrook, because honestly it destroyed my self-esteem and well being. I wish teachers understood that students are not just robots that make straight As, even with 10 hours of homework a day. Life as a teenager isn't just about grades or what college you go to. So to whoever is reading this, please find something that you enjoy doing that isn't work related. Whether that's exercising, hanging out with friends, doing art, cooking. I find that burnout gets easier to manage when you allow yourself to find joy in small things throughout the day.



i am scared of burnout. i've heard some things and, it seems never ending. i don't know how I will make it.

I don't think many people talk about how rough senior year actually is. During college app season I had brain fog, stomachaches, and skipped class like every month. Burnout, to me, is like this weird out-of-body experience. You don't feel like yourself anymore and struggle with the motivation to do even the most basic of tasks. It's like my brain is either stuck on autopilot or screaming at me to get my shit together.



i guess my sense of motivation comes from trying to set a good future up for myself. but along the way, i've lost sight of these goals. Lynbrook culture surrounding grades and extracurriculars and college, is SO TOXIC and i've realized now i'm just motivated to be better than my peers. I know I am contributing to that toxic environment, and I wish i didn't feel this way, but it is the way in which we've grown up.

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I've never really dealt with burnout, despite being a senior. My motivation has always been, perform well now, and you'll be grateful later. Additionally, what's keeping me going now is the fact that I'm leaving soon and going off to college. I'm sure there I can use what i've learned through Lynbrook culture (rigor, motivation, dedication) and it will help me. I have also heard a lot of people say that compared to Lynbrook, college is easy, so that definitely helps ease my nerves and helps keep me motivated.



Outside of school, feeling burnt out affects everything in life. It makes it hard to enjoy spending time with my friends and family, and it takes away the excitement from things i used to love doing like beading. I started feeling really tired, not caring about stuff, and not finding joy in things that made me happy before. I realized I needed to deal with the issue because it wasn't sustainable for me. For me, dealing with it started with taking care of myself better. I made sure to do things like exercise, relaxing my mind by recognizing it was okay to take breaks, and doing the activities I enjoyed. These things gave me a break from all the stress, and when i would work again, my stress was diverted.

It is really hard to stay motivated all the time. I feel like it is super important to take breaks. I am super volatile in being motivated and being lazy and my behavior, but I try to stay consistent with my work ethic. There are periods of time where I notice that I get lazy and I don't focus on school as much as I should. I do think that people at my school contribute to over working and burning out and I don't think its worth the stress. Now that I am a little older in my high school years, I realize that its better to focus on what you are good at and have guaranteed success that will make you feel better, rather than going through the stress of burnout.

“...there wasn't anything i did to even cope. I genuinely felt like a robot.”



I don't have any external motivation. I just do what i am told to by my parents. In a sense it's very draining, but it also lays out a clear path for me. And while I know it is very controlling, at least I know there is an end in sight.



As a senior, I have been losing motivation to keep up with school work, attend classes, and even socialize with my peers. I definitely think that it's especially difficult to stay motivated due to my realization that any effort I may put in will not make a significant impact anymore (ex: second semester grades don't necessarily impact college decisions, will be leaving my friends soon). I cope with this burnout by spending time with myself at home, like listening to music and draw. The major thing that is keeping me going is my fear of getting rescinded from colleges.



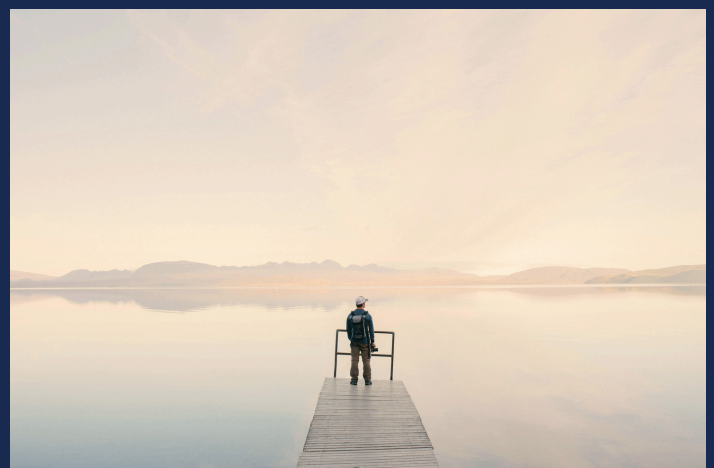
As a second semester senior, Burnout. Is. So. Real. I can't even get myself to show up to school anymore, questioning what is the point of anything anymore. I know this is the worst time to be acting this way, considering I am graduating soon, but I can't help feel this way. I have no motivation or reason to do anything like my schoolwork and I think it's because i have exerted all my energy the last 17.5 years of my life.

I believe I deserve a break because soon I will be off to college, and I know i won't be getting one there either. Because of this, I am taking my "break" in life right now.. it could bite me in the back, but I just want to do the least amount of work possible to not get rescinded by any colleges.

Everyone tells you to dread your junior year, especially the second semester. And yes, while it is tough, it is not like you lose all sense of motivation. You feel like there is something around the corner, college apps, and are motivated to do well for yourself. What really isn't talked about is the burnout from senior year. I am in a sense of "what is the point" and "i don't care."

“...I realized I needed to deal with the issue because it wasn't sustainable for me. For me, dealing with it started with taking care of myself better.”

I confidently can say that the first semester of senior year, is easily the hardest semester in highschool. Not only are you dealing with school, but you have to apply to colleges on top of that. coming off of junior year, staying motivated through that process was like hell. there wasn't anything i did to even cope. I genuinely felt like a robot. goodluck to everyone applying to colleges next semester, you will get through it soon enough.

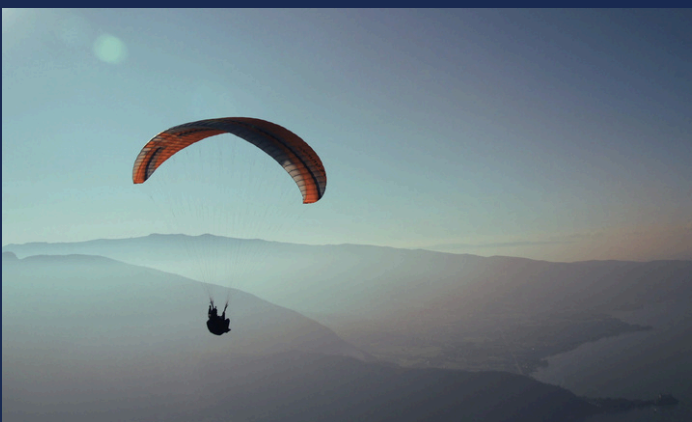


il don't know if i was burnt out or straight out depressed. i know the term "depressed" is used quite loosely these days, but i was diagnosed with it. as a result of my depression, i wouldn't get out of bed. i wouldn't do any work and my grades started falling. i went from a straight A, academic sweat, to a Cs and Ds student. my wakeup call was junior year, when everyone was taking the SAT and i scored well below the average. while i didn't think this bothered me, it really did. my grades were excusable, but the score just put a number on me. a number of how "stupid" i was.

looking back, i know i wasn't stupid and the SAT is not a way of determining that, but that's just what it felt like. recognizing i didn't practice enough, i redirected my energy and began focusing on school again. and to answer the question "How do you bounce back from burnout?" I don't know. I did have a therapist to help me deal with a lot of what i was internally, and this allowed me to put more attention on school again. so in a way, just being able to talk to someone and figure out my internal conflicts helped me deal with the "burnout" i faced.



“...I don't think its worth the stress. Now that I am a little older in my high school years, I realize that its better to focus on what you are good at and have guaranteed success that will make you feel better, rather than going through the stress of burnout.”



TEACHER INTERVIEW

With Ms. Blazek

Have you ever reached a point of burnout ?

I definitely have. I think I reach burnout almost every year. And I think it happens when my students are also dealing with burnout. It always happens towards the end of the year, end of the semester. I find it hard when students get burnt out from academics. And I like to think that PE would help get people out of that rut, so I try to plan these fun interactive activities to try and rejuvenate my students, but if they're already burnt out, it burns me out to not have the buy in from the students. So when my students feel burnt out, teachers feel it as well.

What are some stress management strategies that have been helpful to you?

Exercise and going outside are always my two things. Exercising outside is even better. But you know, going for walks just anytime the sunshine is out and moving your body really helps to bring down my stress. Currently, my son and I like to go on walks...he likes to go in his stroller. I also do my HIT workouts with my friends in the morning and that tends to really help me out.

How can teachers and students work together to navigate this phenomena?

The important thing is communication, because sometimes teachers don't know what's going on in students lives or other classes. And I think that a lot of teachers here would be pretty flexible with working with students to manage that kind of stress and move things around.

What do you notice about academic pressure in Lynbrook? (advice, managing workload)



Yeah. You know, I've been working here for as long as I have I understand it now. When I first came here, it was a shock to me for sure. I've never been to a school where there was that much academic pressure. I think it's excellent that students want to be their very best, and I believe that grades are really important—but I don't think they're the most important thing. I think that high school is a time for you to find yourself, start to develop your identity, and develop healthy habits. And if your habits right now are having your face in a book until you literally pass out in your bed, wake up and get to school, and you're all stressed because you didn't do anything for yourself— those habits are going to follow you throughout the rest of your life.

So yes, of course, focus on your grades, but focus on developing healthy lifestyles and things that make you feel good because going to college is only going to add more pressure. It doesn't automatically make everything easier. And the focus needs to be not so much on getting everything perfect, but making sure that everything is okay. Because if it's just your grades and nothing else that is good in your life, that's not good. And then, you're not going to be healthy in your mind or body. I really believe that taking care of yourself and building healthy habits is more important than any of the grades or academic work that you can do in high school. Balance is so important because if you don't understand how to do that now, when you move on to college when things get even harder (or especially when you move out of your parents house), there's going to be more responsibilities. It is so important to take care of yourself, and it going to get more challenging to figure that out later down the road.

When I was a senior, I definitely felt senioritis. I think it's a very natural tendency for high schoolers, especially when they have already been accepted into their colleges, or they know what they're doing the next year and it's kind of everything getting wrapped up. If you're doing well in your classes, it doesn't seem like there's "that much push to get to the edge" because all the hard work is done. So I totally understand it. And you know, it's it's a fun time for seniors and I personally don't think it's the worst thing in the world. I think it's a very natural thing.

PROFESSIONAL ARTICLE

SASHA REIISIEH

In our current educational system, there is an intense focus on achieving high grades and gaining recognition, which has led to a widespread issue not often discussed openly. Many students are experiencing burnout, feeling overwhelmed by the constant pressure to excel. This issue goes beyond just school and reflects a deeper problem in our society. As a trauma and attachment-based therapist who specializes in understanding emotional connections, I have noticed that this stress often comes from a harmful culture that pushes us away from staying connected to who we really are amidst external pressures—our authenticity.

Burnout is more than just feeling extremely tired or disinterested; it is a serious issue that shows there is something wrong with the way our society operates. It is a warning sign that we are not in sync with what we really need versus what the world expects from us. Our constant chase for approval and success can seriously stress us out, setting the stage for burnout – and losing touch with who we truly are can hurt our mental well-being, trapping us in a cycle of frustration and feeling disconnected.

This whole situation signals a need to rethink how we value achievement and understand ourselves. It is not just about doing more; it is about recognizing what truly fulfills us and seeking that, even if it does not always align with societal (or parental) expectations.

Student stories highlight the intense pressure to meet a certain standard of success, showing the negative effects of feeling disconnected from what truly matters. Trying to always be the best and meet every expectation often feels like an endless struggle, leaving students worn out and unsure of their direction. Instead of encouraging a passion for learning and personal discovery, the competitive nature of our culture turns school (and home) into a place where students constantly feel like they are not good enough.

To tackle this widespread problem, we need to start by rethinking what we consider important in our culture. The constant push for productivity and success should be replaced with a broader definition of success that includes emotional health, creativity, and genuine relationships. Schools and homes play a crucial role in this change.

They should be places that focus more on the mental well-being and real interests of students than just their grades and achievements.

From the perspective of attachment and authenticity, it is crucial to create strong, supportive relationships in schools. Parents, teachers, and educators should be there to offer a safe space where students can share their feelings, explore what they are interested in, and learn that it is okay to make mistakes. This kind of supportive environment can lessen the impact of stress and help students face their challenges with more strength.

By learning about self-awareness and how to handle stress, you can find better balance in your lives. Techniques like mindfulness and being kind to oneself can give you the skills to stay calm and centered, even when things get tough. Having control over your life and taking care of yourself are key in beating burnout. It is important for you to do things that make you feel like yourself, not just what school or parents expect of you.

Ending burnout is not something we can do alone; it is something we all need to work on together. By changing how we view success and making sure our schools and homes are places where everyone can be themselves, we can build a kinder, stronger, and more compassionate world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Sasha is a licensed professional clinical counselor and supervisor at the Family Therapy Center of Silicon Valley.

For nearly 10 years, he has provided individual therapy for young children, teens, and adults, as well as family therapy and parent coaching. Dr. Sasha specializes in treating the wounds of early childhood trauma and attachment as they ripple into the present, while helping clients reconnect with their authentic selves to heal and repair the ruptures of their past.

When he is not supporting clients and families, you may find Dr. Sasha producing music for local and international musicians, doing voiceover work for cartoons, and writing children's books.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

1. California Youth Crisis Line: Youth ages 12-24 can call or text **800-843-5200** or chat online for 24/7 crisis support.
2. TEEN LINE: Teens can talk to another teen by texting "TEEN" to 839863 from 6pm – 9pm, or call 800-852-8336 from 6pm – 10pm.
3. Trevor Project: Call 1-866-488-7386 or text START to 678678 for 24/7 information and suicide prevention resources for LGBTQ youth.
4. Get connected: <https://www.covidnetworks.org> and <https://www.sjpl.org/teens>
5. Get moving with others: <https://www.rei.com/events/search>
6. Mindfulness for Loneliness: <https://www.headspace.com/meditation/loneliness>
8. Group therapy: <https://www.teentherapycentersv.com/group-therapy>