

REJECTION

SPRING ISSUE

ALETHEIA



"It's not just about disappointment; it can challenge your sense of identity, belonging, and self-worth."





Aletheia

[A-LAY-THEE-UH]

(n.) truth , disclosure

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 on 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.

You can find our archive of issues at lhsaletheia.com/archive

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Some things I'd recommend about handling rejection, whether it be from a recent separation to maybe troubles with a test result, is that for one, remember that it isn't the end of the world. What I think is the hardest thing to accept during rejection is that it doesn't last forever. It's important to remember that there will always be more opportunities and people in the future, and dwelling on the past does nothing but make it harder to recover. Another thing I'd recommend is remembering that you do have people who care about you and are here to support and listen to how you are feeling. It could be your family, friends, or even Lynbrook's Guidance Counselors. From my personal experience, the worst thing you can do is tell yourself that you don't matter. Remember to love yourself above all, and that just because you are not loved by a singular person does not mean the entire world hates you. Rejection isn't forever, so don't make it out to be.

When I think of rejection, the picture that first comes to mind is an ending that is swift and final. When it's over, it's over, and the brutality of the aftermath is derived from a deep-

rooted sense that the world simply does not care about you. Yet, I believe that rejection leaves its greatest impression on me during the apprehension that precedes it. When we place ourselves in the position to be rejected, we are subconsciously accepting both of the two alternate universes in which you are rejected and you are not—simultaneously, like Schrödinger's rejection.



Credit: leb1990, Flickr

**“When it’s over, it’s over,
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I had liked a guy back when I was an underclassman and I genuinely have no idea if he liked me back -- he would send SO many mixed signals for like a year. Then he just got a girlfriend out of the blue all of a sudden while he was still sending me mixed signals. Regrettably i still liked him at the time despite him being taken i think its because he would still be all romantic over text and in person WHILE HE HAD A GIRLFRIEND which is crazy so i confronted him about this and told him that i still had feelings for him (which was so stupid now that i look back) and hes like youre crazy i only see you as a friend what. so yeah rejection sucks but my friends had a great time making fun of him so maybe there was some benefits??



Credit : Harry Benson, Getty Images

Lol college rejections

WAAAAAAAAAH. Me sad.



Credit : Piranka, Getty Images

rejection hurts when your hours of hard work amount to nothing rejection hurts when you are the one rejecting others, taking away their opportunities rejection hurts when the ones rejecting you are your thought-to-be close friends rejection hurts most when you know the person you want will never like you back the way you like them, the way you smile at their every text, the way you savor every moment you have with them, without even needing to ask If only rejection didn't exist

Like many of my overanxious peers, I walk myself through every step of the rejected world, as if imagining every detail hard enough will prepare me for its actualization. I used to view these rumination sessions as a form of self-care. It's funny that I am kindest to myself in worst-case scenarios, only hold my own hand in theoretical space. It is also kind of sad.



Credit: 4com, Flickr

Thankfully, on the flip side, a two-pronged impasse forces me to confront the other branch as well: acceptance. No matter how small the chances, to set myself up for the opportunity to be rejected means that I have to imagine a world where the best-case scenario is reality, then believe in it. Even if I am rejected in the end, that imaginary world did exist in my head, even just for a moment. I still gain a sense of

personal value no matter the outcome. I think this is what they mean when they say that taking risks makes you stronger—to take those risks, you have to acknowledge in a world in which you are strong enough to surpass them. After the impact, responding to rejection forces me to craft myself a personalized definition of self-worth when external factors fail to. If this other source of validation rejects me, what reason do I have to not reject myself? How do I justify believing in myself when the world does not? On the most existential level, why am I still alive? It's usually not that serious, but I am just too serious of a chalant person at heart who wants all the questions answered all the time. Even if my little thought exercises don't always provide me with an answer, it's a small act of defiance when I decide that I am worthy all on my own. In a way, I have to care about myself, whether I like it or not.



Credit: Fortana Alberto, Flickr

I am really afraid of rejection. Whether it be academic, romantic, or something else, it really scares me. I am afraid of being embarrassed or even ridiculed. I think this is due in part to my anxiety, and I am trying to combat it the best I can. People tell me that to overcome a fear, you have to expose yourself to it more, but I don't know how. I think that the best thing I can do is work on my confidence, but I don't know how long that will take.

“Even if I am rejected in the end, that imaginary world did exist in my head, even just for a moment.”



Credit: Jose Moutinho, Flickr



Credit: David Bernard, Flickr

Been rejected by too many colleges holy crap like how was I not good enough for uc Davis it's actually crazy omg holy crap like seriously. Whatever. Their loss honestly I'm so smart so talented and gonna be so successful these stupid universities all ejecting me don't know my potential but it's their loss. They'll regret not accepting me in 10 years when I'm on the cover of Forbes magazine I'm calling it.

FROM A PROFESSIONAL:

UNDERSTANDING REJECTION: A Guide for High School Students in High-Pressure Environments

By: Jacqueline Leong-Abad



Credit: Ben Chapman, Flickr

Rejection is something we all face—it's part of life. But for some high school students, especially those attending highly competitive schools with high expectations from parents whose cultures emphasize perfection, rejection can feel like a reflection of personal failure rather than a normal human experience. Whether it's a missed opportunity like the college of your dreams, a lost friendship or romance, or not making the team, the sting of rejection can be amplified by the pressure to be perfect.

Why Rejection Hurts So Much

Rejection triggers the same part of the brain as physical pain, so it literally hurts. Add to that the social and academic pressure many students face—especially those with parents who hold high standards as a form of love and protection—and rejection can feel overwhelming.

It's not just about disappointment; it can challenge your sense of identity, belonging, and self-worth. In highly competitive schools, especially with peers striving for top grades, Ivy League admissions, and elite extracurriculars, rejection might feel like falling behind. And for some students, rejection can trigger fear of disappointing their families—parents who have sacrificed a lot and often express love through expectations of excellence.



Credit: Andreas Schalk, Flickr

How to Handle Rejection in a Healthy Way

When rejection happens, having healthy coping strategies to navigate these experiences are important to your well-being. By using Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) techniques, techniques, a researched framework for managing intense emotions and

challenging situations, you can gain personal strength after a tangible loss

1. Validate Your Emotions

It's normal to feel sad, frustrated, or embarrassed after being rejected. You don't have to pretend you're okay. Naming what you feel is powerful. Use tools like the "How We Feel" app to identify your emotions and give yourself permission to feel them.

2. Separate the Rejection from Your Identity

One setback does not define you. Missing a spot on the team doesn't mean you're not talented. Failing a test doesn't mean you're not smart. In DBT, the "Ride the Wave" skill teaches you to allow painful emotions to pass without letting them control your self-worth.



Credit: Artus Rugajs, Flickr

3. Challenge Negative Thoughts

Rejection can lead to automatic thoughts like “I’ll never be good enough.” Use the DBT skill “Check the Facts” to question those thoughts:

- Is it really true?
- Could there be another explanation?
- What’s the evidence against that belief?

If you weren’t invited to a group hangout, it might have been logistics—not a personal slight.



Credit: leb1990, Flickr

4. Learn from the Experience

Rejection can be a teacher. The DBT skill “Build Mastery” encourages small, realistic goals to grow from your setbacks. Didn’t get into a club? Ask what you can improve and try again. A Growth matters more than instant perfection.



Credit: Alexander Mazilkin, Flickr

5. Focus on What You Can Control

You can’t control others’ choices or the outcomes, but you can control how you respond. Dialectical thinking helps hold two truths: “This hurts and I can still move forward.” You didn’t make the honor society? That’s hard, but it doesn’t erase your worth or potential.

6. Build a Support System

You don’t have to go through this alone. Connect with friends, mentors or trusted adults who support you without conditions. The DBT skill “GIVE” (Gentle, Interested, Validated,

Easy manner) helps build strong relationships you can lean on when rejection hits.



Credit: Richard Heyes, Flickr

7. Practice Self-Compassion

In high-pressure environments, students often speak to themselves more harshly than they would to anyone else. Use DBT “Cheerleading Statements” to shift that inner dialogue:

- “Every ‘no’ is one step closer to a better ‘yes.’”
- “I’m allowed to fail and still be worthy.”
- “Perfection isn’t the goal—growth is.”

For Students Facing Family and Cultural Pressures

If you’re the child of parents who are first-generation or parents with high, goal-oriented expectations that command perfection and have a set standard of what “success” looks like, rejection may feel like dishonoring their sacrifices and/or disappointing them.

Many parents, often those who immigrate to the United States, push for success out of love and a desire for stability. But that doesn’t mean your worth is based on perfect outcomes. You’re allowed to make mistakes and still be loved. Communicating your feelings respectfully and possibly seeking support outside of your family—like from counselors or friends—can help you navigate this pressure.



Credit: Andreas Schalk, Flickr

Moving Forward

Rejection isn't the end. It's part of growing, learning, and becoming resilient. It doesn't mean you're not good enough—it means you're human. Whether you're facing cultural and familial expectations, academic pressure, or social setbacks, know this: You are enough, exactly as you are. And every time you rise after a rejection, you're building strength through self-reflection, problem-solving and refinement of your approach that will carry you far beyond high school.

If rejection feels overwhelming or you are struggling with a negative feeling, it's okay to reach out for support. A school counselor, therapist, or trusted adult can help guide you through tough times and help you develop the tools to manage your emotions in a healthy way. You are not alone in this journey and with time, rejection can become a stepping stone toward growth rather than a setback.



Credit: Chris s, flickr

About the Professional:



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Jacqueline Leong-Abad

Jacqueline Leong-Abad, LMFT, has been dedicated to supporting children, teens, adults, and families since 2009. With a career that began in women's domestic violence and homeless shelters, Jacqueline has since gained extensive experience across a variety of settings. Jacqueline works with individuals and families to build coping skills, enhance emotional regulation, and foster meaningful connections. Jacqueline is committed to supporting the mental health and well-being of those navigating challenging life experiences. Contact:

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TEACHER

INTERVIEW: MRS. WILLSON

Q: What is rejection and what does it mean to you?

When you're when you aren't able to get the thing that you want, when you're denied something, when you're hoping for something and it doesn't happen.

Q: Have you ever experienced rejection? How did you handle it? What did you learn?

Oh, I have experienced rejection, for sure. I would say so one of the most obvious is college rejection. I was accepted to most of the schools that I wanted to go to, but I was rejected from Berkeley and UCLA. And that did not make me feel terrible. I was anticipating that. I'd say romantic rejections were the biggest thing in high school, and yes, I was rejected by a boy who I had hoped to date, and he did not want to date me, so it made me feel crushed.

How I handled it, not well. I think it affected my self confidence quite a bit. But outwardly, I tried to appear like everything was fine.



Credit: Mia F, flickr

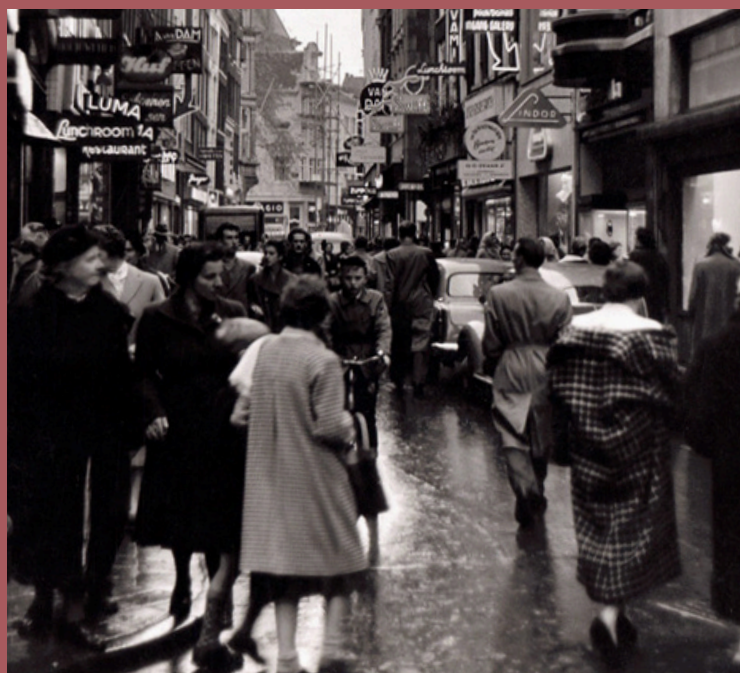
I learned that everything is not going to go the way I hope it will, that things will be okay. You will get over it, like sometimes hard things happen, and you just need to keep going.

Q: Do you think a fear of rejection is healthy? Why or why not?

Yes and no. I think that nobody likes to be rejected. And I think we all, I think everybody fears that. I think that it's unhealthy when it when it when you have unrealistic expectations, and when it prohibits you from trying things or putting yourself out there, I think then it's unhealthy.

Q: How have you seen students handle rejection?

Not well, specifically college acceptances. Since I teach a lot of seniors, I think some students have very unrealistic expectations, and it shatters their self confidence. These are the most extreme cases. A lot of students deal with rejection better than that, but I've had some students apply to Ivy League schools and not get in and feel like it's a personal attack or failing on their part, when it's just very hard to get into.



Credit: d.loop, flickr

Q: How has the way you view rejection changed over the years?

I think just with more life experience, it becomes less devastating, and you're more willing to I am more willing to take risks and risk rejection than I was as a high schooler.

Q: Do you think it's important for students to learn how to handle rejection?

Absolutely, yes. I think they definitely need to to learn how to accept it, because we're not going to be accepted all the time, right? We will be rejected.

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