

Submissions

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

The September 2011 topic will be **Cheating**. Submissions are due by the second Friday of the 2011-2012 school year. If you are interested in sharing your story, a submission form can be found online at www.lhsaletheia.org/submit.

Mission

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

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

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

Student Staff: Austin Yu, Daniel Kao, David Lu, Eileen Bang, Erica Yin, Frances Guo, Frank Wang, Gloria Lin, Helen Jun, Jane Jun, Jocelyn Wu, Jordan Day, Kirstie Yu, Lucy Matveeva, William Chiu

Advisers: Cindy Wen & Miko Otoshi

Oh man, this year is almost over, and I feel like I'm waking up from a daydream now. That's right, I sleepwalked my way through junior year. Stress? Grades? What's that? I'll prop my feet up in class and stare out the windows, stare at the grey skies and grey roofs and think about the past and the future. I feel dazed. What's changed since I fell asleep last August? I've stopped caring...about grades. I've started caring...about my happiness.

"The retrospective glance is a relatively easy gesture for us to make."

-George Crumb

This year was a big year for me. The year I realized that trying hard doesn't really lead to success. I've always been a slacker thinking to myself, that if I tried hard to do something, I could do it no matter what. It wasn't until this year that doing well requires working hard for years and years. I had big expectations for this year, but right now I only have regret and pain. My goals I had to set my life straight and make my parents proud all died. But I'm happy I realized this. I am going to try again and smile again. Fall down and stand. I'll work harder for my dream and make sure that next year, I won't have those regrets.

"The problem is when you are writing something in retrospective, it needs a lot of courage not to change, or you will forget a certain reality, and you will just take in consideration your view today."

-Boutros Boutros-Ghali

Just because you are best friends doesn't mean they want to hear everything. Just because you are best friends doesn't mean they want to know all your secrets. I wish I knew that at the beginning of this school year. I was a needy downer: low self-esteem, low self-confidence, socially awkward. Friendship is about giving, not receiving. Sometime throughout the year, I

lost her, or she replaced me. I always thought "friends were forever" while boyfriends weren't. This year has taught me that friendship isn't that stable. It doesn't always fade away; two people can become strangers in a short amount of time as well. It's especially painful when they don't even give a warning, not to mention I was already in a semi-depressed stage. What didn't help was that we were reading *The Catcher in the Rye* in class; after the incident, I thought everyone was a phony. How could I trust people if I couldn't even trust my best friend? How can people have such a happy life, good grades, many good friends and a pretty face? Once they've found happiness, they don't need their past. I was her past. Reading her words on her tumblr kind of hurt me, yet I knew most of it was true. I wish I could tell her my side of the story, but I knew it wouldn't do anything. After all, what could I do if it wasn't a fight that broke us apart, it was me, myself? I started verbally attacking myself in other aspects of my life as well... horrible daughter, horrible friend, horrible human being. Everything I did led to some kind of guilt; I felt like I didn't deserve anything. Long story short, I realized that telling other people my problems wouldn't solve anything; sometimes, it would create more problems. Sometimes, I would look back at this incident in regret, but I am thankful that it has taught me many things and brought me closer to God. After all, despite the past feelings of worthlessness, Jesus still died on the cross for my sins. That is the kind of unconditional love I don't need to search for in people, but give to others.

"There are no retrospective penalties in the game's regulations."

-Greg Thomas

One month left of school. I can't begin to explain what I'm feeling. I survived high school! I'm going to miss so much. I'm obviously going to miss my friends, homecoming, rallies, and just the random fun activities that go on throughout the year. I'm definitely going to miss class of 2011, I probably won't see more than half of the people ever again, which is a little sad. I mean I know I say I'm tired of being in this little Lynbrook bubble, but in the end, it's been with me for four years, and as much as I hate it...I will miss the same faces I see every day when I go class to class. I'm

glad though at the same time. High school is so stressful and filled with drama all around. Senior year drama decreases and it's just stress all year round. You know you don't want to pick fights even when you disagree because you know you have only one month to put up with it, and we don't want any tension. High school has really helped shape into the person I am today, but I know going off to college that it will have a bigger impact on me.

"Travel is glamorous only in retrospect."

- Paul Theroux

This year has been so conflicting for so many reasons. I met one of the coolest people this year. He was one of my best friends in the few months we were able to hang out, until he told me that he would be moving halfway across the state. We still keep in contact, but I have only a couple of friends that can be even as close a friend as he had been. He would totally be my best friend hands down right now if he were in Lynbrook. One of the few people I could really trust and talk to, even though I only knew him for about 3 months. A new friend no doubt, but a great friend, who I still remember all the good times through the short span of time we hung out with, whether it was when we'd be hanging out at school, or on the weekends when we'd just chill and do everything from buying video games to freestyling while walking randomly in the area. I've been getting closer to someone I've had feelings for for a while now. The closest thing to perfect that I can describe. Seeing as I don't have the guts to ask em' out (and was too slow to ask for any major dances), I've been trying to develop our friendship since that's the most important thing, even if there are short spans of time that we don't speak because of the social differences between us, which are probably the times I'm most miserable, it's been working. Only time will tell if we ever develop a relationship, which I hope would happen. This year.... I've been able to realize how much certain people really give a damn about me and if they really want to spend their time hanging out with me. Maybe I'm over-critical, but the patterns are too obvious. They are cool people, but whether they think the same about me is something I've been trying to grapple with for a long time. This year has just been a mixed bag. I used to take loads of crap from

people all the time, but now that's watered down and I'm just being treated like I'm invisible. I still can't tell which one is worse. I miss the first semester of this year, and there isn't much to miss about the 2nd half of this year, except for some of the friends I might not see for 3 months, and maybe even for most of next year, depending on how things turn out. But again, only time will tell.

"Complacency is a state of mind that exists only in retrospective: it has to be shattered before being ascertained."

- Vladimir Nabokov

Hey you. Yes, you, whose submissions I have been reading. You, who hates Lynbrook and all its f***ed up 4.0 GPA nerds with no social life whatsoever. You, who believes that you will never fit in or be accepted. I'm talking to you. We have not been kind to each other. Because frankly, I'm one of those f***ed up dorks who sit around and finish their 9 hours of AP homework in a little under 3 just so that we'll have time to play Starcraft 2 during the 6 hours we just saved ourselves. We pass each other in the hall, and as you think "I hate you so much" as you glance at me, I think back "this kid will never survive at Lynbrook" as I return your stare. But you know what? We're bigger than this. We can overcome these barriers that high school cliques have so kindly built up for us. I know this, because I have seen you, and you are beautiful. Trust me. I have this terrible habit of judging people. If someone cannot hold intelligent conversation for longer than two minutes what is the point of talking to them? Their shallowness will only drag me down. Their simplicity is beneath me. Right? Wrong. You are your own person, you have your individual value. Okay fine, you're not as good as I am at test taking -- heck, you suck at multiple choice tests, and you hate the entire school system for setting up standardized testing so that they can rank me above you. But you know what? I'm not above you. You are not defined by your scores or your grades, or how good you are at sucking up to your teachers. No. Anyone who tells you that is either a superficial a**hole, have crazy parents who whip them whenever they get less than 100%, or have some other sort of problem which I really pity

them for. Look, don't listen to them. You have your own value, and you have to find it and embrace it. It doesn't have to be in academics, and it certainly doesn't have to be in how well you can cheat your way into a better college. Because the kids up here are the ones that lie the most and step on each other to get on top. But you don't need that, because you are greater than us, you have seen the hatred and deprecation and felt it for yourself. You know better than we do. So it's time to stop the hatred, okay? I'm not saying I'm a good person for writing this, because sometimes I'm just like the rest. I can cheat and sabotage other people's scores and shun people from our circle... I've done it too, and I'm not proud. But I'm trying to change, and I want to get to know you. I want to see your side, hear your story. Because you are my regret this year, and if I could change anything, I would change how I've treated you. I'm sorry. After this, nothing will change. We will continue to pass one another in the hall and think negative thoughts. But know this: you have so much potential. You are your own beautiful self, and don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Especially not me.

"It is the mark of a good action that it appears inevitable in retrospect."

- Robert Louis Stevenson

I wish I hadn't have had that stupid relationship with you. I feel like that whole thing I had with you just cheapened me as a person. You were a friend, and you should have stayed a friend. I think it was just the fact that you are of the opposite gender and we talked a lot. We thought we liked each other because of that. But no, we were just friends. Nothing more. We were so stupid to think that it was anything more. You were stupid to pursue it and I was stupid to accept your advances.

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

- Jesse Jackson

What I wish I knew? That when people said senior year was going to be the most easiest, most relaxing out of your high school years, it was basically a lie....to cover up what is really going on. It's

been stressful, this entire year. It's also been a lot about growing up. Through the application season, keeping grades up, working on the things you want to do like extracurriculars that are important to you, just making this year seem memorable, I found that it's necessary to have people around you. Did I know that friendships would break and that future plans would turn out different? Of course not, but I knew that with my friends supporting me and teachers aiding me each step of the way, I would be okay. I think I've learned enough on my own to know that it's going to be hard to face the world out there. But whether it's been my parents or siblings, or just the classmates I sit with everyday, somehow I feel ready. Ready because I actually took chances and became more aggressive this year. I searched for what I wanted and tried my hardest to grab it. No, I didn't get the job I applied to and some schools rejected me. But I faced it, knowing that I should believe in positive outcomes. Ready because I no longer can rely solely on my parents for help (financially and emotionally). I'm older, which means I have a lot more responsibility on my shoulders and worries for me to figure out. Yes, when I'm hurt I'll run to my mom or my sister or my best friends, but there's times when I'm going to learn by myself. Ready because teachers gave me the preparation I need to head to another four-year institution. Projects, essays, tests, books, homework, all of it was meant for something. Yes at the time it seems pointless but I think I understood what it was for. Possibly learning the information inside, but mostly about how to manage your time and how to prioritize or schedule. Something that I know I will run into in the future. Ready because I've been surrounded by love. By best friends who appreciate me and laugh at my jokes even when they're unbelievably cheesy. But they help me understand who I am. Yell at me, if I'm being unreasonable. Sit me down and talk to me when I'm insanely stressed. Chat on the phone for ours about nothing but it eventually eases everyone of our souls. I've learned a lot this year because of every situation I've stumbled upon. Uncertainty rose when I didn't know the answer to a question, but it had to be solved in the end. Ready because I'm me.

"No endeavor that is worthwhile is simple in prospect; if it is right, it will be simple in retrospect."

- Edward Teller

If I had a choice, I wouldn't tell my 9-month-younger-self anything about what this 2010-2011 school year would have brought. Not knowing the future but persevering and growing throughout a process is worth more than any shortcut I could've given myself. As the year ends, I sit here on my computer, "in retrospect", and all I feel is gratitude. I remember at the beginning of the year, every day "it" brought me worry. I felt as if I was sinking in a sea of my own inadequacy and I didn't know why I had been placed in the environment that I was in. I had no idea how I would survive; I had no faith in my capabilities; even in my dreams I never thought I would go as far as I have. Now I look back and I feel inspired. I have most certainly come a long way, and though the growth seems gradual, it has been exponential. There truly had been a reason for everything that happened this year. A new sort of confidence is hatching in me, and I'm embracing it, like a breath of fresh air, a curious and liberating thing.

"I never do, I don't even go to the retrospectives."

-Walter Hill

I wish I knew at the beginning of the year not to take everything so seriously. I stress out so much like the worrier and perfectionist I am, and I constantly live with a schedule that must be followed: I can't relax until the next item on my to-do list is crossed off. I think I realized this year that first and foremost, my happiness should be my first priority. If I'm not satisfied with my life, then what's the point? I mean, we study and strive to be good to do ultimately what? Be happy. Maybe this is flawed logic. But this is how I see it: people study to get into good colleges (come on, there is truth in that around here), which would lead to stable jobs, which would lead to wealth, which would allegedly lead to happiness. Well then, what's the point of stressing out about grades and getting everything perfect to the point of being completely unhappy? If the main purpose is happiness, well then, the main purpose in my life today should be happiness. I also learned the values of speaking out. I'm naturally quiet. I like to think this is because I lived a large chunk of my life in Asia, and my entire life under Asian parents. Asian culture (well, at least in my nation) values thoughtfulness, listening, and pretty much

not standing out. This contributed to my speaking out and being weird only near the closest of closest friends and family. Heck, even around my relatives beyond my immediate family, I find it uncomfortable to be improper. Maybe that's just because they live across the ocean, but that's not the point. The point is that there is so much practicality in speaking out, voicing my thoughts, especially when working in a group setting. There's no point in being worried about saying the wrong thing, because what's worse than saying the wrong thing is being viewed as not contributing at all.

"In retrospect there were failures enough to go around. There were failures before the storm and failures after the storm."

- Jeff Sessions

I wish we can hear "that's what she said" and wonder what that means. I wish we can hear "i love children!" and not think "you pedophile!" Because of this, I wish I could erase those images, erase those words, erase those meanings that I associate with those seemingly innocent words -- I don't want to grow up, but too late now. get your mind out of the gutter, Lynbrook to those younger - don't get your mind in the gutter.

"One day, in retrospect, the years of struggle will strike you as the most beautiful."

- Sigmund Freud

When we first met, it was in that one class. At that time, I really had no idea what kind of person you were. You were just a face that I saw everyday but never associated with anything. Then we got seated near each other and started talking. You started joking around with me, and we just started to notice each other around school more. We bumped into each other in random places. You asked me why you'd never seen me around school, as if you had seen me you'd definitely have noticed me (which was quite flattering) and I said we just must've never crossed paths. Then it all happened so fast. I gave you my number, we started texting, chatting online, and you suddenly became

a big part of my life. I did things with you in mind. Looking back, you made it pretty damn obvious that you're a player. All those lines that you fed me. You told me that you'd wasted too much time on girls in the past. You told me that all the other girls you dated before were so boring, and that I was sooooo interesting. Really...why did I find that so hard to believe? And then you said how I must have had a ton of guys after me. I remember thinking "uh, no" and then my insecurities kicked in. I realized you had a misconception that I was this popular, cute girl, who had tons of boyfriends, but I'm really just an awkward, hopeless romantic with zero guy experience. My insecurities got the best of me, and I could not open up to you. I knew a guy like you wouldn't normally be interested in girls like me, and if it weren't for my looks, you wouldn't have looked twice. You suddenly wanted to know more about me. You facebook stalked me (I'm pretty sure), you started asking me a bunch of questions, and I clammed up. I gave you flippant replies, which ironically made you decide that I was "mysterious" and made you want to know more. But honestly, I was just scared you'd reject me if you knew the real me. I told myself I'd rather keep you at a distance and have you think I was someone I was not than to have you get to know me and possibly reject me. But during the moments we were together, you made me feel made me forget all this. I was hooked by your smile, your playful nudging, poking, the way you made me feel. God I sound so dumb when I talk about it, but it's the f*cking truth, and it's probably also what you've used on so many other girls before me. For a brief, fleeting moment in my life, you made me feel so happy. Then it all ended when I realized you had a girlfriend. What the f*ck. You played me. You f*cked with my feelings. The memory of you calling me babe or cutie pie when you texted me still hurts. Is that just the way you are with all girls or something? And now, months later, our relationship is so screwed up. You still try your old games, invading my space, nudging me underneath the table, but I'm unresponsive. I can't believe you can still act like that as if nothing had happened. That just shows how dumb I was to believe that we actually had something serious. And then the next moment you're calling me a loser or a nerd, because you finally figured it out. But looking back, you definitely did not have the right to call me that when you didn't really even know me, since I never actually opened up to you. I really don't know what to do with you. Part of me still likes you, the other part of me wants you to go to hell. I des-

perately want to shout back at you "LEAVE ME THE F*CK ALONE YOU F*CKIN' PLAYER!! STOP MESSING WITH MY HEAD!!" But whenever I see you, all the conflicting feelings just swell up inside of me and swirl around and around, leaving me at an impasse, and all I can do is look at you and shake my head. No words can describe how I feel. You've made me feel so happy, and then so bad, there's no longer any middle ground. I can't act normal around you, or act like none of that happened. I've spent so many hours analyzing what went wrong, and replaying so many moments over in my head. I finally realized why I was so mad. I wasn't as mad at him as I was with myself. Had I any self-respect, I would have told him off years ago and been done with it. But no, I put up with his crap, which showed to him that I was okay with the way he treated me. I learned that my self-respect comes before any guy. Thank you for being the jerk that allowed me to realize that.

"It is a simple but sometimes forgotten truth that the greatest enemy to present joy and high hopes is the cultivation of retrospective bitterness."

- Robert G Menzies

I wish I knew you were my best friends, no matter what happens. It was true, sure, but there were times I was so afraid, what would happen if anyone knew more about me. I wish I didn't take so long to pour out my heart and mind, to those I trust. There was a reason I trusted you in the first place; I shouldn't have locked up inside - but thanks for staying with me, gently prodding me for the reasons why I stopped smiling with my eyes, why my usually happy replies sounded forced and hollow. There's a reason, if you trust someone blindly, why you do so in the first place. There's a reason they trust you back, with their back turned, eyes closed, and in the middle of their scariest nightmare. However ugly the nightmare turns out, they're here for me, I'm there for them. We'll break the laws of physics if need be. There is a reason why you think they are infallible, the best buds you can have. They probably are. While still I do not know the reason, the reason why I trust them, why they can see through my robotic masks that fools the world, why

they are the ones who catch me when I drop from my sporadic clouds of bliss... while I do not know the reason, I wish I knew before, that they will be here for me. To not be afraid to share some of myself with others; the ones who I trust, I trust for a reason.

"I have never heard anyone say This is it. I know right now is the high point of my life. It will never get any better. Only in retrospect do we recognize the best times and of course then it is too late."

- Jonathan Carroll

I wish I knew to be less judgmental. I've never been a forgiving person, and it doesn't help when I hold grudges as well. I try to not show it, to smile and wave, but it only makes things worse. I'm sorry I lied to you, when I told you your dress was pretty. I'm sorry I faked a smile when you walked by. I'm sorry it didn't occur to me, to slap you like I wanted to, like I repeated fifty times in my head... per day. But everything I'm saying, I say with guilt. I don't want to hate you, but I judge too easily. You're the one who always gets perfects. You're the one who doesn't have to try. You're the one, although I know you study from night to day, who I label as a genius, and pretend you know everything already. You're the one who already took my spot at Stanford. I wish I knew to be less judgmental. After reasoning it out, you were always my friend. Your smiles were genuine, from wide open lips to glittering eyes. You don't try to hide those bags beneath your eyes, of silent studious studying. My label seemed to get in the way, of me and you and everything we knew. You're just like me, trying to get through life. You're just like me, except in your world, you don't cover the people who walk by you every day with big fat ugly neon labels, smack across their forehead, where everyone can see it, but the labeled people themselves. I sometimes wonder if I've had any labels on my forehead, and whether they'd be orange, green or blue. I wish I knew, once I tried to get less judgmental, people ARE people and not mindless, perfect, crushing robots on a one-way street to Stanford. Who knows, they could be on the path to Harvard instead.

There's no special recipe for success. There's no such thing as a packaged, ready-to-go college application, one you throw in the oven for 15-20 minutes at 315 degrees Fahrenheit, or until it turns a "light golden brown." Forecast: High atmospheric pressure, and expect some heavy brainstorming - we may get a sprinkle of sunshine by the end of this week, but it's highly unlikely. "It's a jungle out there" - It's a big unsorted, unlabeled kitchen, with SATs and APs and even an expired box of last year's school dance. Finding the balance you need for school and friends, and every hobby in between (Why is my research report jammed between the piano keys?) is an impossible task. All we need to do, is cook up the recipe for success. It's a bumpy road, we all make mistakes. Sometimes, they're small - a little too much icing on that Bûche de Noel; sometimes, it seems like the end of your cooking career - that was salt, not sugar?! But no worries. Make a couple new labels, so you don't confuse the sugar and salt again. We have four years to get down the recipe. Four years is a lot of time; it's way too cramped to be hard at work all day. Bake a cake, and invite a couple friends over. Taste test a slice to make sure it's sugar (a little extra cake never killed anyone), and watch as your excited friends show up bringing their newly whipped up chocolate chip cookies. Sooner or later, you won't need your labels. Recipes would be a joke; every dish you make is going to be unique, different - eating the same thing for four years is pretty dull (even if you get down all the different roots possible, and even memorize all of them, they're just roots. Try a couple stems.) Exploring the world, you may discover that the slow simmered taste of biology suits you better than the active, explosive chemistry. Or perhaps, you have quite a knack for making Japanese cuisine. Your musical dishes may end up looking like the Picasso's work, only edible. While it is a jungle in this kitchen you land in, it's a fun jungle, once you get the hang of it. After learning how to handle the knife without cutting yourself, after getting the difference between soy sauce and vinegar (it's not just sour, but acidic as well!?), after mastering the midnight masterpiece and the last minute epic smoothie (at the same time!)... I wish I knew, that this would be fun. There's no set recipe for success... but that's the fun part. We get to be ourselves.

"Righteousness is easy in retrospect."

- Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.

Junior year is really nothing less than what people describe it to be. It'll be brutal, but you'll do well if you don't procrastinate, if you manage your time wisely. But face it. How many of us really do that? In the end, it's a cycle of procrastinating, staying up late, finally catching up on work, and then procrastinating again. If I had known, if I were aware that people really do have a limit on how much self control they have, I wouldn't have bitten off so much more than I can chew. It's really not worth it, taking AP courses for the sake of raising your GPA, joining extracurricular activities that you're not passionate about, because in the end, you'll be crying yourself to sleep at night, stressed, regretting those decisions, and wishing that everything would be over. Sure, sometimes you'll feel on top of it all, but we all know that those moments are rare. Why do we do this? Why do we choose to slave away in high school, then enroll in a college where we continue to do the same thing? So we can graduate and then slave away at a high-paying job, not have enough time for our family, and then die? Damn, what ideals our society has. Another thing? You really do find out who your friends are, or at least you who want to stay friends with. What I've realized is that those you're truly close with, you can have not talked to them for weeks, yet when you do, it'll feel as if nothing's changed, and that you're able to confront them about things, because you know that they'll understand. It makes me wonder who I'll still be friends with during college, and who I'll end up losing touch with. It makes me wonder how much I'll miss everything and everyone, if at all. I wonder how everyone will be like at high school reunions, how I'll be like. Have the ones who cheated their way to a 4.0 finally gotten what they deserve? I guess these thoughts are going to recur more and more often as senior year begins and ends. I'm just glad that this year's ending, and summer's beginning. There's nothing I want more than a fresh start.

"The Past - the dark unfathomed retrospect! The teeming gulf - the sleepers and the shadows! The past! the infinite greatness of the past! For what is the present after all but a growth out of the past?"

- Walt Whitman

While sitting on the Caltrain late one Monday afternoon with two old friends I hadn't spoken to much in a while, I learned much about myself I hadn't thought of before. What I realized was for much of this year, I indulged in the feeling of new experiences and let myself fall to the temptation of exploring life for the sake of "being more worldly." I spent more time looking for new things to do and new books to read than I did dusting off and putting my old things to use, and talked to new friends more than old. I thought these new books would be "good for me," my new friends "were better anyway," and that this was all so I'd become wiser and more used to the ways of the world. What I wasn't considering was that my attempts at becoming more worldly were actually making me more foolish. This year, I neglected many of my old friends. An old near best friendship became nothing more than a bitter rivalry, and acquaintances met at new extracurriculars I'd taken up became my fresh new hip "besties." I held my nose up high when walking past the people I used to eat lunch with and thought about all their flaws as I chatted with people I'd only met a month ago and made myself believe we were close. I spent my time after school making small talk with these people, always feeling that there was something missing and never being able to put my finger on exactly what it was. And as I sat on that cramped seat next to two very old friends, watching city after city blur into one before my very eyes, it came into my head that perhaps, if I could do this year over, I wouldn't do it to fix my grades or establish better relationships with my relatives or even done more in extracurricular activities to guarantee leadership positions. If I could pick just one thing to change, I would apologize to those old friends and pick things up right where they'd been left off, I would be ever so grateful. If only, if only.

"So much of our time is spent in preparation, so much in routine, and so much in retrospect, that the amount of each person's genius is confined to a very few hours."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Life moves on, they say. You'll get over it, they tell you. In the end, it won't even matter, they claim. It's funny how in that initial moment, though, it seems like the world to everyone. I've never been the kid people wanted to talk to when in need. Loud, chipper, and with just the right amount of craziness, I don't normally come off as the trustworthy type to most people who meet me. Oddly enough, I've done a lot more listening this year than talking, and have learned much about people in the process. First, not everyone shares my natural optimism. Based on events of this year, I'm not sure if being optimistic is all that great, because always being happy means I'm constantly in denial about how bad things really are. My grades have been terrible (to say the least) because I'm convinced they'll improve, even though they never do. All the same, I still wake up with a smile on my face every morning, and it's terrible because I just can't get a hold of reality no matter what I do. I've also learned that when it comes to situations, whether bad or good, everyone tends to overreact and act like the way the event will turn out will determine the fate of the planet. While helping people through major fights with parents, break-ups, etc., I've often been tempted to tell people to calm down, not because I'm a coldhearted bitch, but because it's never really as bad or good as you think it is. In a decade, give or take 15 or so years, you're barely going to remember what happened. Overall, I've learned a lot about people and myself in general from being everyone's shoulder to cry on and ear to whisper in, and I'm glad for the experience. I just wish for once that I could tell someone it'll all be okay in the end and have them actually believe it.

"When we recall the past, we usually find that it is the simplest things - not the great occasions - that in retrospect give off the greatest glow of happiness."

- Bob Hope

Kathy White, MFT

Kathy White is in private practice in San Jose where she provides counseling services to a variety of clients including teens and their families. For more information visit www.kathywhitemft.com.

1685 Westwood Drive, #11

San Jose, CA 95125

408-979-1030

kwhite@kathywhitemft.com

For more information visit www.kathywhitemft.com.

The end of the school year is fast approaching. And with it comes an opportunity to look back, or to retrospect. Retrospection is a gift we give ourselves. Taking the time to write about it or talk about it is like putting a big bow on it. That's what I saw as I read the submissions to this edition of *Aletheia*.

Seriously, don't wait until you're older to look back in retrospect. You will have missed so many opportunities for growth. Retrospect is defined as contemplation of things past, to look back upon or remember, and it is an essential ingredient of development. This is especially helpful during high school. According to Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, each stage of development presents a challenge and the choices we make effect who we become. In the high school years the challenge presented, according to Erikson's theory, is Identity versus Role Confusion. It's figuring out who we are.

Retrospection. Think about it like cleaning out your closet, well maybe that's not such a good example. Okay, let's call it taking an inventory of our skills. I'm talking about skills in the broadest sense, relationship skills, social skills, academic skills, leadership skills, work skills and even happiness skills. In taking this inventory, or taking the time to engage in a little retrospection, we also have the opportunity to make a conscious choice to either hold on to something or let it go. It's an opportunity for change, if you like.

A word of caution, this process can look and feel like judgment. And judgment can be both a blessing and a curse. When we talk about retrospection, or contemplating the past, we make observations. So far, so good. As we look further at these observations we begin to evaluate. Still, okay. At some point however we engage our judgment, which itself is not a bad thing. One definition of judgment is the cognitive process of reaching a decision or drawing conclusions. That's a good thing. Another definition of judgment or what we might call being judgmental, is condemning. And that can be harmful. I don't know about you, but when it comes judging I am harder on myself than I am on others. As I read the submissions, it sounded like that might be a familiar feeling around Lynbrook. I will say more about this later.

So let's see what it might be like to take an inventory of our skills, beginning with social skills. Think about what kinds of social skills you have acquired. You might consider skills such as meeting new people, participating, cooperating and accepting differences to start with. You can add more to your own list. Now is the time for an honest evaluation. How are you doing with these skills? How are you different at the end of this school year than you were at the beginning of the year? Do you like the changes you see? Are there areas that need work? This is retrospection, and the bonus is the opportunity to grow. So maybe you took some risks this year and participated in a new area, and it paid off. You might want to invest further to continue to increase your level of participation in new areas. Maybe you didn't meet as many new people as you thought, and so you might want to reconsider your approach and challenge yourself to make a new choice when the opportunity arises.

Relationship skills are a little different than social skills. One way to think about relationship skills is how well we know others and how well we are known by others. Interestingly, that ties in directly with how well we know ourselves. So, in retrospect, you might begin by evaluating how honest you have been with yourself. You also might look at how real or authentic you have been with others, or how well you are known. And then consider how well you know others, which might have something to do with how well you listen. As you observe and evaluate these areas you might come to the

conclusion that you have done pretty well with getting to know others, and may have even been complimented for your listening skills. So you would likely choose to keep up what you've been doing. Or you might observe that while you know a lot about others, you have been kind of hiding from others and not letting them get to know you. You could decide to begin to show a little more vulnerability, letting others know a little more about what you think and feel. Or maybe you realize that you spread yourself too thin, and you ended up neglecting some of your relationships. In retrospect, you might make an adjustment to your time and emotional commitments.

And since we are talking about school, let's look at academic skills. I can already feel the pressure. Academic skills include study skills, time management, test taking and organization, to name just a few. In retrospect you might see that with long term projects, your efforts to plan more in advance were quite effective. Let's keep that one. Or, you might realize that you achieved the same or better results without putting as much pressure on yourself, and decide that there is such a thing as too much anxiety around test taking. (Anxiety is not necessarily bad, in fact there is an optimum level of anxiety that varies from person to person). You may also look back and see that having more conversations with your parents about college costs, helped you to feel content about your choice. You might consider that such conversations are really worth it, and decide to do it more often.

Speaking of parents, this process of retrospection during high school certainly applies. If you think back further, the idea of growing up is similar in that it's a life long exercise in holding on and letting go. And both you and your parents are feeling it. All this work, all the investment and love, facilitates your development toward adulthood. You started as completely dependent on your parents, I mean really, you couldn't even burp without a little help. And learning to get around meant holding on to their hands until you could do it on your own. Through holding on and letting go, and doing it over and over again in so many areas you have become increasingly prepared to be launched. As you reflect on these times of letting go, letting go of dependence or security, you might feel some sadness. That's so normal. These are real losses, and sometimes they can take us by surprise. Retrospection allows us to appreciate and honor what we have been given by our parents, families, school and community. It also gives us an opportunity to incorporate these experiences and values into our adult lives.

Let's go back to the warning about judgment. One way that judgment shows up is in our thoughts, especially those with the word "should." Retrospection can sometimes trigger thoughts such as "I should have done more" or "I shouldn't have said that." While these momentary thoughts race so quickly through our minds, they can become a habit that can turn to excessive self-criticism or judgment. One of my preferred therapy models is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and I find it particularly helpful for these "shoulds." These thoughts inform and influence our feelings and behaviors, and in the case of the overuse of "should," they can contribute to feelings related to anxiety or sometimes depression. It's like an added weight or pressure that does not necessarily result in an improved outcome. Thoughts like these are considered distorted, or not wholly true. Part of defeating such thoughts and replacing them with a more truthful thought is to recognize them. When you hear in your thoughts the word "should," double check if that indeed is the right word for the situation. If it's not the best word, consider another word you might use instead. For example, instead of "I should have studied more for that test" you might consider "I could have studied more for that test." Even that small change might remove some of the judgment or feeling of scolding. For more information, check out the book *Feeling Good* by Dr.

Additional Resources

Feeling Good

By David D. Burns, M.D.

Get Out of My Life, but first could you drive me and Cheryl to the mall?

By Anthony E. Wolf, PhD

How to Talk So Teens Will Listen and Listen So Teens Will Talk

By Adele Faber and Elaine
Mazlish

David Burns.

And then just when you think you have mastered it, something changes. So retrospection is a habit that can certainly be applied at just about anytime. It's about balance, and with the changes that are part of life and growth, it means adapting and rebalancing. Especially in Silicon Valley, we hear about the challenges of "Work Life Balance." We can also talk about "School Life Balance." When we were little kids, our parents were pretty much in charge of providing the balance. They told us when to go to bed, when and what to eat, and made us do our homework. As we grew older, we gradually were able to take on more responsibilities and manage more freedom. We are increasingly responsible for finding our own balance.

Make a place for retrospection in your life, someplace that is easily accessible so you can get to it when you need it. It can take just a minute, or if you like, a lifetime.