

Mission

Aletheia (ah-LAY-thee-uh), which means “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.

About

At the beginning of the school year, the *Aletheia* staff designates a list of monthly topics pertaining to the realities of high school. Each issue comprises of firsthand experiences submitted anonymously by Lynbrook students and alumni, professional articles relating to that month’s theme, and resources compiled by the student staff. Finalized newsletters are uploaded online and emailed to Lynbrook families. Back issues can be found on our website, www.lhsaletheia.org, under Archives.

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

This is the fifth issue of *Aletheia* for the 2011-12 school year.

Submissions

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

Our March topic is Controlled Substances; stories are due by February 10. If you are interested in contributing, a submission box and a suggestion form for future topics are both available online.

*Expressing what often
remains unspoken*

Student Staff: Aishwarya Nene,
Austin Yu, Daniel Kao, David Lu,
Eileen Bang, Erica Yin, Frances Guo,
Gloria Lin, Hana Zait, Helen Jun,
Kimberly Vaz, Jane Jun,
Jessica Cao, Steven Chao,
Varshaya Visvanathan

Advisers: Cindy Wen, Miko Otoshi

As a boy, I sometimes feel pressured that I should have some intimacy in my life. I always see my friends cuddling with their girlfriends, but I, I remain single and have never even had my first kiss. Sometimes I feel left out of the sexual relationships people have, envious even. I feel like if I were to engage in a sexual relationship with a girl, I would not tell my parents because it would be kind of embarrassing. My parents don't think high school relationships are real and think they are stupid since they either go two ways: marriage or break up.

~ ~ ~

I've never had sex before. In fact I've never been kissed before. I've never had a boyfriend before. Honestly, I'm not ashamed about this. I feel like the rest of the students at Lynbrook never pressure anyone into doing that sort of thing.

My parents are strictly against dating, like most Asian parents. Which means they're probably against sex, though we've never talked about it before. It's hard for me to talk to my parents about boys in a romantic way, but not difficult with my friends.

I don't think I'm ready for anything like that, and I'm not sure I ever will be. I don't like intimacy. I don't like hugs or kisses (even on the cheek). I prefer to stand alone in the corner. I think a part of that comes from my family, who aren't so big on physical expressions of love.

Emotionally, I'm insane. I have high highs and low lows. I don't think it would be fair for me to burden my craziness over some guy right now. So dating is definitely out of the question. Not that I've ever really had to make that choice.

The idea of sex though... A part of me thinks that I should abstain until marriage, but who knows what will happen from now until then. It's a long way to go, and I don't want to make any promises I can't keep.

All I know is that I want it to be with someone special.

I have a friend who lost her virginity at the age of 17. She was telling me about how I should have sex with someone I don't know because it's a painful experience. She was glad that she hadn't done it with someone she'd known because she wouldn't ever be able to look that person in the eye.

I don't know if I could be like her. I don't know if I could be so intimate with a random person. I doubt that I could.

I've talked to some of my friends about this. Some say they will wait until marriage, and if the guy isn't

willing to, then he's not the right one. Others say that they'll probably have sex before they get married.

I think I'm the only undecided one.

Another one of my friends has sex regularly with her boyfriend. I really like how she's so open about it. Her relationship with her boyfriend is amazing! They can talk about anything. She says that it wasn't like that before they had sex.

I don't know what to say on that one. Does having sex bring people closer together? Do you need to have sex for that?

Some say yes, some say no.

Personally, I don't know.

But I haven't had to make that decision yet, and hopefully, when the time comes, I will know.

"Sex is a big question mark. It is something people will talk about forever."

- Catherine Deneuve

"How far do you want to take this?" she once asked. I understood what she meant and pulled her into my arms, embracing both the person and the idea. I loved her and she loved me, and so we loved. Sex felt like a natural extension of the deep relationship we had.

My friends and parents would probably be surprised if they knew. But could they really condemn it? I understand that it's often done at the wrong time, for the wrong reasons. But we loved each other. We planned it, prepared for it, and used it as a way to deepen our connection. Our act hurt no-one; how could one begrudge us an act of love?

Even though things ultimately didn't work out between us, I have no regrets. Sex never defined our relationship; it only added to the experiences that I'll always treasure between us.

~ ~ ~

I feel a lot of pressure daily to have sex. My parents, however, are extremely against the idea of premarital sex. Sex is all my friends and I talk about. My decision to not have sex in high school is, I feel, an extremely positive and nurturing one. My desire to not be a father at age 17 is the primary motivator for abstinence.

I can't talk about sex with any of the people who know me from school, or my family. That's why I talk about sex with people I know outside of school. They're much less judgmental about me, and I'm way more comfortable revealing this side of me to them. If people from school knew the kinds of thoughts I harbor [especially toward men much, much older than me], I'm not sure what they would think of me. I know that at school, people tend to think of me as young and innocent. But really, I'm not. I think sexual thoughts. I masturbate. I have to hide this side of me from my school friends. But I'm thankful for my outside-of-school friends, because they understand what I'm going through. They're a bit older than me, so they often experience the same feelings and know where I'm coming from. If I had to keep these thoughts bottled inside of me with no one to discuss them with, I don't know what I'd do.

These are perfectly natural feelings. Why are these feelings, especially in females, considered so taboo in our society? Why can't we be more open about them? I don't understand what's so wrong with being frank and honest about all this. Why can't we just accept that the majority of us are sexual beings and not judge people based on their sexuality?

*"A sex symbol becomes a thing.
I just hate to be a thing."*

- Marilyn Monroe

I do feel the need to abstain from having it, because if I ever did something like that I know my parents would probably disown me and I would probably have to move to a different country. I know that other teenagers feel that way because their parents are Asian and almost all Asians are pressured by their parents to not have it. No it is not easy to talk to my friends about this subject, probably because it makes us all uncomfortable and it's just plain awkward. Other people make jokes that refer to it, but we don't like to. I know that I would never do it with any person, especially during high school, because it would probably ruin my future, and it's just wrong. Other people may have different opinions, but I personally believe that it is wrong to do it during high school, or during your teen years. I'm motivated by the fact that I don't want to be remembered as the sh*t, or the wh*r* that did it with everyone. I want to be remembered as someone who got good grades, and was a good child. I don't want people

to have a bad impression on me. People are always saying that they won't judge you on whatever you do, but truth it that they will and that this topic is probably one the most that they will judge you on.

~ ~ ~

I often hear people saying that people who have sex are bad or immoral. Having sex is a choice. and it's up to you whether you want to or not. All of my life I heard from other kids that sex is bad but luckily I never believed it. My parents have always told me that it was something that only I could decide if I was ready for. They told me that if I decided to do it, to just use protection. When I did decide to have sex, I did it with someone I loved very much and someone I had known for a very long time. It was my best friend. We weren't going out at the time for some really complicated reasons, but we loved each other more than anything. I have heard people say that they have sex with all these people and that they've done all these sexual things and they didn't mean anything. and from my experience I've heard a lot of teens saying they had meaningless sex. But when we had sex it was nothing like that. It was a way of being close to each other and sharing something very special. And I think that's what sex should be. Right now I'm in a relationship with someone else and I have sex with them for the same reason. to be together sharing a special moment when we are the only two people in the world. And that first person I had sex with is still my best friend and we still love each other but like best friend love. I'm not saying you should or shouldn't have sex. I'm saying that you are the ONLY person who can tell you that. Not your parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, boyfriends/girlfriends, friends or ANYONE. ONLY YOU can make that decision. And I believe it should be with someone you love, or at least someone you know really well. And if you decide that you want to, then you should use protection. It's your body. It's your choice.

~ ~ ~

My parents can't handle the topic correctly and I could tell by how they haven't spoke to me about it at all in my 17 years of living. They haven't attended high school this nation and are too serious. Because they don't even talk about it, I have no sort of idea from them, so my views are from my buddies and others. Whenever I talk to some girl on chat or just socialize with them, they think its weird. No, they are the ones who seem like that to me. They take every

d*mn idea to the extreme, and take everything I do against me. I stopped caring about what they think. I still focus more on school and sports...I had to learn my own morality on this. I never even wanted to talk to them about that topic (sex), but I did one day. They just think I am weird and it's a stupid question. I prefer to handle everything and my friends aren't that useful either. Every d*mn one of them is out for themselves. They mislead, slander, and don't know what is right. Let's look at one situation with my parents again. They think I am too American and I am interested in white women. That's odd. O.o. That's their understanding of me. It's odd, and at the moment I am not. They don't even talk about sex, its stupid according to them.

~ ~ ~

Sex. Sex. Sex. It's all around us. My friends talk about sex and it's just continuously adding pressure on me. I'm kind of a goodie-good as a guy you can say, but I'm starting to succumb to this pressure. I hate it. Nowadays, sexual frustration is sometimes the first thing on my mind, even ahead of school, SAT's, and extracurriculars. I admit to going as far as what is coined as 3rd base, but really never had sex (intercourse). It frustrates me. I don't want to do something stupid that could change my life (at least not yet), but constant pressure, from myself, peers, everything.

I guess the only thing holding me back from sex is probably the risks, but I'll probably overlook the risks. Sometimes occasionally I see things from Tumblr and Facebook, people talking about sex, posting about sex. God. I wish sex wasn't such taboo in our lives. I've had people tell me sex is great. It's one of the best feelings in the world. D*mn, how am I supposed to know? It's so tempting, but shall I succumb to this pressure?

No I won't. I'm stronger than that. Come time, when things are right, when I'm with the right person and there is no judgment, I'll have sex. It's completely natural, but sex ain't something you do with just any random person you meet, it's something that should be sacred. Nonetheless I feel so tempted. At school dances there's grinding. What's that? It's basically dry humping. People's genitalia are basically rubbed against each other with clothes being a barrier. It makes sex even more tempting. I don't know how much longer I can hold onto this and stray away from temptation. This enigma, this aggravation, this taboo will eventually take hold of me. Thanks Society. Thanks for making me the monster that I say I would never be.

Peace.

I lost my virginity at 14 and I regret it ever since. Yeah, it was with my boyfriend, but I could have made a better decision. My parents fully support me having a boyfriend, but they discourage sex, as they are Christian. Its tremendously hard to talk to other people about it, because I fear they'll judge me and treat me like a wh*re. I wish I hadn't lost my virginity as young as I did, because I feel I definitely wasn't ready.

"Virginity can be lost by a thought."

- St. Jerome

My best friend goes to a school very different from (and yet very close to) Lynbrook. She often tells me stories about her friends having sex and brags about how she almost got there, but "wanted to wait" because she wasn't sure if it was really worth it.

A month later, she would come to me and causally mention that her friends were pregnant, had dropped out of high school (or run away) and were trying to secure a job. (And no worries; they had all promised to come back & visit).

My best friend's crazy, absolutely traumatizing, stories and attitude towards sex have pretty much set me in stone about abstinence. I mean, I certainly don't condemn others for having sex. It's their choice and their life decisions I guess. And yet, on the other hand, I want to grab them by the shoulders and show them the society that they're creating. I mean take a good look around.

We live in the bay area; one of the greatest places in America where opportunities are abundant & just waiting to be ours for the taking. Why would you even want to risk throwing that all away? It just doesn't make sense to me.

At Lynbrook, I hear about stuff like this going on; you know the rare so-called "scandals" which brand stereotypical names onto the hearts of "faulty" teenagers. And I really do sympathize with the victims because they really don't deserve so much hate after everything they've been through.

I guess what I'm just trying to say is that we're all just teenagers "living" together for four years. We may make mistakes along the way but that shouldn't determine our potentials. So we also really shouldn't set ourselves up for error and risk screwing up our lives.

Personally, I have less than four years to go. There's just no time to worry about sex.

Trigger Warning: Rape

I wonder how many people know I've had sex? I am part of that group where sex is truly the last thing anyone really expects to have, what if they knew I lost my virginity before I had turned fourteen? I have sex only about once a month now but it still is too much, I hate it. I love the feeling hate the people, they attach things to sex that I don't want. They develop feelings from supposed one-night stands, they gain emotions when all there was supposed to be was two bodies and a quick parting. Most people want emotions that spark and ignite a passion, I know I'm not able to develop that spark no matter what fire burns within them. I was raised and molded into a broken child, my heart doesn't catch on the contours of another regardless of whether or not another's catches on mine. I know I don't have this and one day I may get it but I just don't right now and no one seems to listen to me when I explain it. I have never gone to a high school party and I sit at a table with other kids like me and we play silly little games that everyone makes fun of. I am the nerd in the back of the class that is completely ignored when it comes to sex, but I've had sex more times than I care to admit and with more partners than I should. But I feel I should really address what forced me to come here. The reason I have sex, I went on a trip to the south, it was a nice trip I explored had fun and generally had a good time. I was angry though, I had gotten into a fight and my moral compass was strongly against what it had turned out into. So wandered the streets and looked through parks and stared into the heavily polluted river. Everything looked sad so I went to return to the hotel. I passed a bar with a couple of guys out front, one of them stopped me, and talked to me. Soon I was at his house trying to stop him from going any further. I did not like this loss of control, this, this, violation. He quickly started and pinned and weak I couldn't stop it, he finished and I went home feeling sick. I told no one about what happened. I smelt him all over my body I wanted to throw up, and the worse part was that I enjoyed it. I hated myself more and more, no one noticed. Got back from the trip and no one saw a thing and since then I just couldn't stop. That day tore something from me that I had been holding close to myself, I had weathered so much in my life and I lost yet another thing. Maybe that is the reason I just can't stand the emotions within sex because of what I felt, yet I crave the emotions too. I will always wish for someone to just go up and hug me close and not want to have sex, to just

kiss me and want nothing more, to sleep with me and simply dream. If I find that then maybe I will finally be able to reciprocate these alien emotions.

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I feel the pressure to abstain from sex and to have sex at the same time. My mother is very strict and wishes that I abstain from sex till marriage or at least until I am older. This doesn't influence me though because I still make my own decisions. I don't talk to my friends from Lynbrook about sex mainly because they haven't gone through the same experiences that I have. I usually talk to my friends outside of my school, or my friends who are in older grades and are more mature about the subject. There have been times where I have been pressured into having sex and where I have felt miserable after and other times where I have had no regrets. So far I am fine with my decision about being sexually active I don't think that there is anything wrong with it. There is no motivation behind having sex for me, it comes naturally.

"Sex. In America, an obsession. In other parts of the world, a fact."

- Marlene Dietrich

I've never had sex, though I do see it quite often, flickering on the computer screen at home. It first started a while ago, to an age I'm embarrassed even to reveal anonymously—you can make your own judgments. I was curious, and it satisfied me. But now, it has simply become an addiction. Yes, I'm addicted to pornography and masturbation. By an addict, I don't mean that I am thinking about sex every second of my life, but I realized I was an addict when I tried to take a break from watching scandalous things online and realized I couldn't. This longing inside of me just forced my hands to click and type certain words on my browser. If people had to guess who this was, I would be one of the least likely candidates. I have had been in awkward situation where this particular topic came to surface, and people would say "Oh, _____, nah, he wouldn't watch porn." But sadly, I do, and it has become something I can't get rid of.

I don't want to anymore. I want to be able to control myself. But sadly, I can't. What I'd encourage you to do if you do engage yourself in this type of behavior is to see if you can stop for a week or two. If you can, good for you—teach me your ways. If you don't engage in this type of behavior, don't start.

Sex. The word still lingers on my heart and makes me stop for a moment and think back—can it really be that we... almost had it?

Sure, for some couples it's just normal. It's our home run, but their first base, or something they treat lightly. But for me, sex is....beyond serious. I think it's something only to be done after marriage when you've committed yourself to that person who will always love you (I also don't believe in divorce) and you can trust all of yourself to them. It's also spelled out in my religion, which I believe in.

We both believed that. But we almost went there.

It all started off with no marking of boundaries. And it went from simple hand holding, to hugs, to tighter hugs, to making sex jokes, to sexting, to unhooking bras and...you get the picture. Then it got onto the bed.

That's when it got scary.

Not that we really cared when we were in the moment, or even afterwards, but we almost went there, and there would have been no turning back. And it's scary because we came physically dependent on each other when the emotional was lacking, and the gap between us became bigger and bigger as we became less and less pure.

Scary to think about.

It was a shameful thing for us; we were considered strong believers of our faith, but we were tempted, and we fell. Not all the way, but enough. I can never look at him the same anymore.

"Sex is emotion in motion."

- Mae West

Quite simply, I did it because I was in love with him. It's always portrayed as something people rush into before they're ready, pressured by the other person or whatnot. He didn't pressure me. In fact, he asked me repeatedly if I was sure I wanted it. He wanted to wait. But I loved him and he loved me, and I was so consumed in the romantic ideal of our love that I wanted this additional thing we could share, this thing we could call ours. And so we did it. Everyone says it isn't magical, and it wasn't. But everyone also says the first time is never enjoyable, and it was. It was in a way both underwhelming and overwhelming; the physical aspects are kind of a "that's it?" while the emotional are unbelievably amazing if you're with the one you love. It isn't necessary in order to have a mean-

ingful relationship, and maybe we are too young to be giving ourselves away like this, but then again who really knows what love is, regardless of age? And who ever really knows what we should or shouldn't do? So in the end our only reliable judge is our own instincts and experiences, and if your instincts lead you to such decisions, just make sure you don't regret them. I don't regret mine.

"Sexual love is the most stupendous fact of the universe, and the most magical mystery our poor blind senses know."

- Amy Lowell

Yes, Sex is normal, but what's more important is to keep it classy. I cannot tell you how annoying it is to listen to people on the floor above you getting it on at 1am in the morning when you need to take an exam the next day. Also, that time when I went to do laundry at 2am? I didn't need to see you two doing things in there. Oh yeah, and that time you thought I was sleeping so you brought your boyfriend in and made love in the top bunk? I heard it. And I'd rather not hear it. My point is, it's fine to have sex, a lot of people do it, abstinence is your choice. However please be considerate of others when you're doing it.

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This month, my period was three weeks late. My boyfriend and I have messed around a bit, but nothing worried me on a rational level. I only felt a reflexive fear that the lateness might be a sign of pregnancy. But what happens behind closed doors or in people's rooms while their parents are away is secret. It's hard to know the truth or have a relevant standard to measure my personal experiences against. I guess that's what friends are for: to talk about sex and private things that my parents would never accept about me at this age. But in my particular circle of friends, and maybe even in this culture in general, no one has had a lot of experience. I feel almost like a trailblazer, and I know I'm going to make mistakes. I'm trying to be careful. I know better than to do anything irrevocably stupid like become a teenage mom, but there are subtler mistakes waiting for me. I don't know how far my boyfriend and I will go. All I can do is keep going and be as careful as I can.

I started making sexual innuendos and jokes in seventh grade, simply because everyone else was doing so and it was funny. I like to think that I've matured since then, though, and I make much fewer jokes and with a more familiar audience.

These jokes have had one important effect on me: I have become extremely comfortable talking about intimate and potentially awkward subjects, even with males. In fact, oftentimes I "out-awkward" them and they are the ones who become uncomfortable. It's rather easy to talk about sex, I would say, although it's not something that I'd consider engaging in for a while.

A few weeks ago, I was discussing sex with my boyfriend—in a perfectly mature way, mind you. He said that he'd respect my wishes to wait for as many years as I'd like, and he said it in a way that I wouldn't feel pressured at all to give into anything. I'm glad that he respects me enough to put my thoughts before his.

I've always grown up taught to wait until marriage. Even though I'm no longer an active member in my church, I still believe that pre-marital sex is taboo. Libido does soar occasionally, though, as I'm a teenager, and teenagers have these urges, but I put these desires behind me.

I think I'll wait.

"Sex without love is merely healthy exercise."

- Robert A. Heinlein

I honestly don't give a f*ck and I'm neither pressured to have or abstain from sex. The number one problem in Lynbrook is that people care too much about what other people think about them which leads them to be put in this either or situation. If you have a mind of your own, you wouldn't feel pressured to have or abstain from sex. However, you would just make your own choice as to what you want, and what feels right in your relationship instead of worrying about what your peers think. My dad tells me sex is totally fine as long as I use a condom. Sex is the human's natural way of showing your partner how much you love them, and if it isn't easy to talk to your friends about sex, you a flaming f*ggot.

~ ~ ~

Sex has a lot more to it than many people make it out to be. It is supposed to be shared between two people who are going to be together forever and ever. When someone has sex with someone else, they are

giving part of themselves to another person—essentially they become one. But when the two people separate from each other, as often is the case in modern relationships filled with one-night-stands or friends-with-benefits, they are hurting themselves because the bonds they have formed are continually being torn. It is not only a crime against other people, but also yourself. When the bonds between the two individuals who have come together through consummation are repeatedly broken, the result is not pretty.

Save your virginity as a gift for the one you want to be with forever, and I do believe that that person is out there for you. Treat your virginity as a trophy—the worth of the trophy is not based on its material value, but the work it took to obtain it. What I mean is that the more you fight to keep your virginity, the more valuable that gift is to the person you will be married to. It's not the sex itself that's important, it's the thought of you saving it for that special individual no matter what circumstances arise. Please wait until you are married to have sex. Save yourself some emotional turmoil, and save your virginity as a gift for that special someone you are going to spend the rest of your life with.

So stop telling people to F*ck Bitches, Get Money. It is not as glamorous as it sounds. And please get your mind out of the gutter. You know what I mean. That's not what sex is supposed to be about! You should want to give your everything to your future spouse, so save it for him or her.

As for a personal experience, I can say that I have not had sex, and I hope I do not. I understand the temptations that accompany life and I pray I do not give in to them. I hope you hold on strong as well, and even if you have already had sex, I'd encourage you to take this time to reevaluate your experiences. Is it worth it? I'm not judging you, but I am telling you this because I genuinely want the best for you. I believe that waiting is the best policy, and that's wish you believe so as well.

Well, God bless you and keep you.

"Love is a matter of chemistry, but sex is a matter of physics."

- Unknown

Barney Stinson has slept with hundreds of girls. In every single TV show, there is always that one guy who wants to sleep with every girl he sees. I have always wondered why sex isn't a big deal for guys. Is it

just because you can't get pregnant? The consequences are so underplayed in the media-you barely see anyone ending up with AIDS or HIV. As a single junior girl in high school, I honestly do not feel any pressure to have sex. Nobody wants me anyway. However, I do think it's a big deal and people don't seem to realize it until they are in a situation that requires actually making that decision.

*"Sex is controversial.
Not always, but it's certainly
something to be discussed."*

- Liam Neeson

I was surprised when I first heard about people at Lynbrook having sex. I know we all walked in our freshman years with that preconceived notion that, as a school full of Asian nerds, getting action would have to wait until college (or even later). Over the past few years, though, that notion has been shattered by the knowledge that sex is actually fairly commonplace among us Vikings, especially as you get older. As a senior, I can name a boatload of people who I know have had sex before, or have at least gotten very close to it but have avoided the actual act for fear of a pregnancy scandal or anything that could potentially be detrimental to their otherwise ordinary lives. I talk to my friends about sex all the time—well, we talk about THEIR sex lives. Sadly, I've only gotten a few bases in, but I'm certain that I'll bat that home-run sometime soon. Anyway, I digress. To get back on the main point, I just want to reiterate that a lot of people at our school have sex, believe it or not, and I think many of us virgins would as well, given the opportunity. (On a side note, I think a lot of students at Lynbrook feel sexually repressed - I'm looking at you, nerds.) It's not a question of morals at our school, I believe. It's just a matter of "can I get some or not?" I just want to end this off by saying to the underclassmen: f*ck bitches, get money.

~ ~ ~

I don't feel the pressure to have sex, but sometimes I feel the pressure to don't have it. I can't even count the number of times I've heard the people around me sl*t-shaming a girl just because she had sex. Even just dressing a certain way is enough to get a response. It makes me wonder what my friends who say stuff like

that would say if I had sex with someone. I don't see why other people should care so much about other people's personal lives. If it doesn't affect you, and it's consensual and safe and all that, then why should you care? And when you act like a girl has ruined herself by "giving away" her virginity, you make it sound like her only worth is sexuality. What interesting is that some people think two girls can't have sex, and nobody ever talks about safe sex for same-sex couples. I only found out this year that that even exists. What if I had had sex with a girl, and I had contracted an STI? I guess I'm just lucky.

If I found someone who I wanted to have sex with, I definitely would have shouldn't. I masturbate pretty regularly (and I'm a girl, so the idea that guys are obsessed with sex and girls don't like sex is completely wrong), and I'm not ashamed. At some point I kind of was, but then I realized that it's totally okay and completely natural.

After all, what's more natural than sex?

*"Love is the answer, but while you
are waiting for the answer, sex
raises some pretty good questions."*

- Woody Allen

I had a friend who bragged about how he met this girl (mind you, he did not even know her last name, nor did he care much about the girl in general), how he "did her till 2 AM", how she was older than him, and how he was proudly drinking alcohol that night.

He brags this to me, all the gruesome and appalling details, and at the end, looks at me as if I should give him some sort of reward, or maybe a gold medal, or the Nobel Peace Prize, for losing his virginity to a sl*t whom he will never see again.

He did not know anything about the girl, her interests, her past life, or her personality. But I'm pretty sure he knew her body pretty well, from the way he described it (but then again, he is the type to exaggerate, and he was fairly drunk, so I cannot be sure). And he cannot take back his virginity, his first time, and his first memories with sex.

You know why? Because they will always be with that random wh*re, somewhere in that tiny room, which reeked of alcohol, sweat, and cheap make-up.

It made me lose all the respect I ever had for him.

I feel as though sex has become much more easily discussed in public as compared to when I was younger. I mean, maybe people shielded me from hearing about it back then, and that's why I feel that way. But these days, a large part of conversation IS devoted to sex, and I'm not quite sure how I feel about that. Even as I type this, I feel uncomfortable constantly using the word sex.

Sometimes I laugh along with the sexual jokes and participate in the banter, but other times I just feel highly uncomfortable. No, I do not want to know the size of your penis. No, I do not want to talk about who you would have sex with. Just no.

It used to be that sex was a thing you would only do with the person you were committed to and in love with. Now, one night stands and casual sex is everywhere. It's fine. What you want to do is up to you. But the pressure for me to regard sex in that manner is high and I don't want to. I still want to have sex only with someone who I've been with for a long time, someone I trust very much. And I want to do it safely.

Which brings me to another point: sexual honesty. It is completely inappropriate to lie to someone else about whether or not you've been with someone else, or whether or not you have any STDs. When you have sex with someone, I urge you to get both of yourselves checked out first and get the all clear. And then use condoms or something. Teen pregnancy is quite a problem, and both of your futures would be much different if something happened to go wrong.

I know I'm saying this to Lynbrook, the school of nerds. You all know the consequences of such actions, and generally speaking, you're fairly safe about these things. But, if one night you go to a party and someone tries to pressure you into doing it, remember to be safe, and remember that it's your choice. You can say no. Actually, it'd probably be better if you say no and save it for a better occasion when you're both in better states of mind.

Feel free to have sex, but please, PLEASE, plan it out properly in advance.

"Sexiness wears thin after a while and beauty fades, but to be married to a man who makes you laugh every day—now that's a real treat."

- Joanne Woodward

"Sex is a part of nature. I go along with nature."

- Marilyn Monroe

It bothers me how many social stigmas there are about sex. For instance, anyone who brings up sex in conversation more than once a month (e.g. me) finds themselves being labeled as sex-obsessed or sick minded. I have heard really different and really irritating opinions about sex from people around me. People I know outside of Lynbrook are very surprised to hear me tell them about a girl I know from Lynbrook who had been with her boyfriend for two years and hasn't slept with him, and when I told them that I'd had a boyfriend for two months (and that we hadn't even kissed yet) they'd said "what? People are tapping by then!" On the other hand (and this bothers me even more, actually), people within Lynbrook often have some kind of prejudice toward the concept of teenagers having sex AT ALL.

There is a strange dichotomy in place where people are sorted into "people who don't have sex, ever" and "people who are dirty sl*ts because they have sex". It doesn't seem very fair to judge people simply based on whether or not they have sex. You don't know anything about them, why are you assuming they're worse than you just because they have made their own decisions about what to do with their own bodies? It's upsetting to see people do that, especially when I meet people who are completely decent and reasonable and then suddenly a person will come up in conversation and they'll start saying things like "oh she's such a sl*t".

I personally have never had sex, and have decided not to until college. At the moment, I don't want to - not that I don't have hormones, but I don't really feel like I need to. It's not a difficult decision to carry out (until a few months ago I was fairly positive I wouldn't have a boyfriend until college, either), and I don't think that my decision is very extreme in any way. I don't judge people who have had sex before or just generally have an active sex life, and I don't judge people who have decided to wait even longer than I have (e.g. until marriage), although if someone is waiting until marriage, I'm usually curious as to why. If their reason doesn't make any sense (such as "sex before marriage would make me a terrible person), THAT I do judge. Decisions made about your own body should stem from what you want, not from an arbitrary idea that someone, at some point, planted in your head.

*"Try not to shirk the facts:
mankind is kept alive by bestial acts."*

- Bertolt Brecht

I'm comfortable with my sexuality. I guess I've always been more... "sexual" than my peers. I mean I've been completely and totally comfortable with the idea of sex since like, third grade. And I first started experimenting in seventh, mainly out of curiosity, and in high school I experimented further (more so than other people my age have, from what I've heard).

And in all those years, I have come to the general consensus that I like sex. And I see absolutely no problem with it.

What I don't get is why everyone else does. It's so weird how sex is simultaneously glorified and stigmatized. If you have sex, you're a wh*re; if you don't, you're a prude. So no one really ever wins.

I've had sex. Multiple times. Happy sex, sad sex, rough sex, backseat-of-his-car sex, slow sex, drunk sex, bad sex. Do I regret any of them? No. To me it's sort of a stress-reliever. On top of all my AP's, honors, clubs, extracurriculars, and the general chaotic insanity that is junior year, a little sack session is a huge relief. Some people eat, some people exercise, some people sleep, some people listen to music, I have sex.

And because I don't really want to find a different partner every time, but I don't really want to commit to a time-consuming, hormonal, emotionally unstable, petty high school relationship, I have a sex buddy. It's quite convenient actually.

But to be 100% honest, I think forming this friendship (or whatever you want to call it) is the best decision I've ever made. We treat each other well, there's no unnecessary drama, no unnecessary awkwardness, no one else is interfering, I get what I need, he gets what he needs, and overall I'm in a healthier, calmer state of mind. And there's no baggage, no emotions, no commitments.

It's amazing how much better I feel afterwards. No more grouchy, cranky, sexually-frustrated me. I get it all out with him; reach that state of euphoria, practically erase all stress from my body, give my self-esteem a little nudge up, just generally feel GOOD. So when I'm finally forced to face reality and get back work, I actually can, because I can finally f*cking concentrate.

And it's not out of social pressure or anything. In fact, no one even knows about my guy, besides a couple of friends. And no one really needs to know. Because it's really not a big deal. I do it solely for maintaining my sanity; not for anyone else. But I get the feeling that if people knew about my routine escapades, I'll become the Lynbrook's very own social pariah. Because I guess

by other people's standards, I would be considered a grade-A skank.

Even though I'm not.

The thing is, people have overhyped and over-romanticized and over-stigmatized sex to the point where no one even knows what to do anymore. On one hand you have the media and your peers talking about how amazing and cool or whatever it is, and on the other hand you have your parents and all those religious nuts going, "Don't have sex because you will get pregnant and die" (A+ if you get the reference).

So naturally that puts people my age at an awkward position.

But I get it; I finally understand that sex isn't as big a deal as everyone is making it out to be. Screw the media, screw the religious nuts. If it works for you, do it. If that's not the way you roll, don't. It's simple.

I've come to terms with my own sexuality, and no one will ever be able to convince me that it's wrong or dirty or sl*tty or immoral for me to use my body the way I want to.

I'm not pregnant, I don't have any STD's, I have no infections, I trust my partner(s), it's consensual, I'm on the pill, we use condoms, we respect each other's boundaries, I don't obsess over it, he respects me, I respect him, I respect myself, I've talked to my doctor, I've mentally prepared myself for any possible consequences of my actions. Basically, I'm being as responsible as I can about what I do. I don't see any reason why what I do is wrong when I've done everything in my power to make sure that I'm doing it properly.

So there. I like sex, sex likes me. And I will never, ever be ashamed of that.

"Sex is a discovery."

- Fannie Hurst

Mary-Stone Bowers

LMFT

Mary-Stone Bowers is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist with a private practice in Campbell. She has worked for several years with adult individuals, couples and children up through the teen years. Mary-Stone provides psychotherapy and support in the healing process for clients with depression, anxiety, trauma history, life transitions, sexual or gender concerns and relationship struggles.

Please contact Mary-Stone at:
therapist@marystonebowers.com

Confidential voice mail:
(408) 380-1223

For more information on
Mary-Stone's practice, visit:
www.marystonebowers.com

Mary-Stone Bowers, MA, MFT
2155 S. Bascom Ave., Suite 203
Campbell, CA 95008

Aletheia—Expressing what often remains unspoken. That is what you will find on the title page of the Lynbrook *Aletheia* website. We can understand the many ways this statement is applicable to the topic of choice for this month—SEX—and what is said in and between the lines by the writers of the many submissions. Sex is a challenging and complex word and idea to get our heads around. From the purely physical to the intricately emotional, the word sex catches most of us off guard.

When told that I would write an article about teen sexuality for the *Aletheia* publication, many of my colleagues and friends said, “Really, you want to tackle that?” I am certain that is how many feel—parents, educators and students as well. So what is it that we mean when we say sex? Why is it such a “hot” topic and what are teens saying and thinking about S-E-X?

WHAT IS SEX?

The New Oxford Dictionary's definition of sex is that which refers to sexual activity, including specifically sexual intercourse. Pretty cut and dry for such a complicated yet totally natural part of human life. Each person is a sexual being from the time of birth—and the adolescent and teen years are important developmentally for not only the physical aspects of one's body and sexuality, but values, opinions and behaviors. It is easy to see from the words of the many writers in *Aletheia*, that this development can feel wonderful or treacherous. Attitudes regarding sexuality swing from the very open and embracing, to the more moderate or conservative. What is most important is for each individual to consider and identify what his/her own morals, values and beliefs are regarding sex and to make a personal plan (more to come on that).

WHAT ARE TEENS SEEING AND HEARING?

This is probably ridiculously easy to answer. Sex is “sold” everywhere as the ticket to being wanted, desired, liked, loved. What we find out from some teens is it can also be a direct path to being judged, hated and maybe even disowned. Between magazines, TV, movies and music, there is no escaping it. Pictures and advertisers try to convince you that sex is what almost always happens between two partners (or even two people that hardly know each other) and they want you to believe it is perfect and effortless—and required! Something tells me teens are smarter than this.

We don't all look like the models with rock hard abs or perfect faces and hair. Humans vary as much as our ideas about what sex may or may not be like. What most media is also not telling you is that sexuality is as much about emotional intimacy as it is about physical connection.

David Schnarch, well-known author on sexuality, intimacy and relationships wrote the following:

“Sex can express the best that humans can be and also be a powerful vehicle for getting to that point of personal development. Sex can be ecstatic, self-realizing, and self-transcendent all at once. The great feelings of self-affirmation and declaration of our personhood can make our most powerful genital sensations seem like mere trifles. Experienced together, the physiological and the psychological make a very interesting concoction.”

WHAT ARE TEENS SAYING AND THINKING ABOUT SEX?

Well, you’ve read the submissions! Teens are thinking and talking about sex and are in various camps regarding being sexually active—from engaging in sexual intercourse to being sexually active without intercourse to abstaining from it all. Teens may feel pressured to talk or joke about sex with peers. Others feel a strong influence from parents or their faith which advise (or dictate?) that they wait for marriage. Judgement coming from peers brings on feelings of shame. Judgment aimed at others might feel well deserved.

What is common to all of these vignettes in this edition of Aletheia is that each person has specific and individual opinions or attitudes about being sexually active during high school and wants to be understood, not criticized. At times, the judgement comes from a position of viewing some teens as hypocritical. One student writes that some are comfortable dressing provocatively and “freaking” at a dance, but then label others with pejorative names based on the belief or knowledge that the person is sexually active.

SO WHAT ABOUT YOU?

Let’s think together about what your thoughts and beliefs, values and ideals are regarding your own sexuality. In doing this—in really understanding who you are and what you want for yourself, you can create a personal plan for yourself. With self-respect and other-respect as foundational in this approach, you solidify what is right for you. If you want to engage sexually with another, perhaps you want it to be with someone you are in a long term relationship with. Maybe your plan includes remaining abstinent until later in college or until marriage. Or, there are a myriad of variations on this from one end of the spectrum to the other.

What is most important is that it feels right to you and for you. And why have a plan? Because making a decision about sex on the fly, in the heat of the moment is really difficult if not impossible. You are under the power of your surging hormones and maybe the influence of another, or at a minimum, with another. But having a plan set in your mind, thought about and considered in weeks and months (maybe years) ahead of that heated encounter, gives you a better shot at sticking to your plan. Remember, respect of self and the other is a cornerstone of feeling positive, engaged and fulfilled in a sexual relationship.

WHAT I DON’T HAVE TO REPEAT, BUT WILL

I could spend pages showering teen readers with facts about the risks and dangers of engaging in sexual relationships or practices. Teens have been taught time and time again about STD’s, HIV and AIDS, pregnancy and more. The bottom line for all involved is protecting yourself and your partner. Take responsibility for your actions and know and consider the possible consequences. This is where having a plan before things heat up is so important and helpful. And remember, if you are old enough to be sexually involved with someone, you are old enough to talk to your partner about all the ‘what ifs.’

I want to write briefly about three things you probably know, but may need to see in ink.

Masturbation: It’s normal, healthy (in most cases) and pretty common for both genders. Notice the “in most cases.” Masturbation to an extreme can be problematic—and brings me to the next topic.

Pornography: Yep, it is out there, everywhere and ripe for the picking. This isn’t your Dad’s playboy hidden in the closet. This is vivid, seemingly real, usually edgy and live from your own laptop. You can see anything

you want and as often as you want. So here is the issue: Pornography is usually not representative of a healthy adult sexual relationship. It can depict deviations, sometimes to the extreme, and sex detached from relationship, responsibility, meaning and intimacy. Repeated exposure can result in overstimulation and possibly addiction. This type of sex/porn addiction is similar to any other type of addiction—leading to a compulsion to view it and often seeking release through masturbation. The viewer becomes less sensitive to the material, needing more and also more often to get the same feeling or effect. This can have profound results for the sexual addict—including compulsion, isolation, shame and depression. And finally,

Sexting: The current law basically says that if you are distributing (like texting or with your cell or computer) explicit images or video featuring a minor, you could be found guilty of distributing child pornography. So, most of your friends are minors, and if you “sext” these pictures of you, your friend or just pass along something that happened to wind up on your phone, there could be big problems for you (charged, probation, registered as a sex offender...) Even though the state of California is considering a lesser and maybe more reasonable charge for minors involved in sexting (expelled, counseling) you know that it won’t be good—for you, your family and friends or your future. Think twice or three times before snapping the shot and hitting send!

PARENTS, WHAT ABOUT YOU?

Well, let’s face it. Talking about sexuality with your teen, or maybe anyone, could feel awkward. But teens want to know that they can talk to us—parents. Whether they speak with you directly about their own thoughts, desires and behaviors or they couch it in stories about their friends or peers, teens want to be heard, but not judged.

So parents, if you are talking to your teen about sexuality! Fabulous. If you haven’t yet, it is never too late to start! Approach it with an open and non-critical posture. The best thing is, as a parent, you don’t really even have to talk. JUST LISTEN! Of course you will want to offer your own opinions and may even feel the undeniable urge to lecture and warn of the dangers. Some of you may even forbid something or everything.

But see if you can take a deep breath and open the channels of communication between you and your child. If respect for their thoughts is apparent, the favor will be returned and your relationship with your son or daughter will strengthen and deepen. This then opens the space to discuss more about your own personal values including any that are influenced by your culture, faith or spirituality. Appreciating and supporting your teen’s development into becoming a sexually healthy adult will aid them in making informed, responsible and well thought out choices. And never forget, humor can go a long way in breaking into this subject. So take this *Aletheia* edition on sex and start the conversation with your son or daughter! Let what often remains unspoken, be expressed.