

verdadera

MORALS AND VALUES NOVEMBER 2011

The Verdadera staff encourages you to discuss and explore the issues and stories, as the publication aims not only to offer an outlet for expression, but to improve our lives. Keep in mind that the emotions that flow through the text and the feelings behind the words could be those of your child, your classmate, or your best friend.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- What factors influence your morals and values? Do they define you?
- What are your family's values? How do they differ from your own?
- How do you respond when your morals or values are compromised?

STUDENT SUBMISSIONS

MMy parents think I have no morals because I'm so "Americanized". They think that since I wear short shorts and I've gone to formal dances with guys and I listen to music all the time that I must be sleeping around and getting drunk and high all the time. But I do have morals, and they are strong. I know that I would never let myself get pressured into doing something that I am not comfortable doing. I know that I'm okay with sex before marriage as long as I am in love with the guy. I know I'm okay with drinking but only after we've made sure there's a designated driver. I know that I am absolutely not okay with any hardcore drugs like cocaine or meth. Maybe my morals are different than my parents but these are all normal teenage things to do and they need to be reasonable and realistic about it. I know what my limits are, and they are stricter than a lot of teenagers out there. My parents can think what they want of me.

"Morality is not respectability."

-George Bernard Shaw

When I was fourteen, my parents got divorced. It was long overdue- my father had had a long term affair and lost his job, and my mom was drinking heavily and picked fights all the time. I've never had a healthy or close relationship with my parents. They should have been preachers for how much they loved to lecture me. I was and am a good kid- that's not to say that I don't have a boyfriend or that I don't occasionally drink, but I do well in school and I have my priorities straight. Still my parents have always loved to yell at me, criticize the way I dress, the things I do, my grades, etc. They tell me that I have no morals because I once came home drunk and that I am the kind of girl who gets herself knocked up because she's trash and has no values. It's typical Asian family fare, but I despise them for their hypocrisy. It drives me insane. I am a teenager. I am not perfect, and I make mistakes. I should be ALLOWED to make mistakes. I would respect my parents and listen to what they were saying if they actually acted like parents, but they don't, so I'm not afraid to point out their flaws when they make completely irrational conclusions about mine. It makes

taken 7 periods of classes each year. In sophomore year I had “8” because I refused to give up yearbook, and dedicated afterschool to be part of it. Thus, academics became more stressed when I was compressing more activities in the limited amount of time I had. I would come home and discover that APUSH needs to be read, essay to be written, math problems understood for that test coming Friday, SAT words studied, etc. Yet, I enjoyed all my classes and I liked to study. I admired my teachers and would have rather interacted in a classroom than anywhere else in school. I did not slack off.

My only concern was when I got worried about my performances. It would make me doubt if I had enough “smarts” to be in certain subjects. When my grades started dropping, my doubts would increase and I would lose the fun in learning and instead gain the pressure of doing a good job. This would prolong in a long, slow week of worry. Academic stress would be the worst on me when I became less determined. It is a big disappointment when your class performance don’t meet your expectations. I needed resilience. So as the school year went by I became better at studying and threw away the pressure of the grades. I thought more of the “things I could do to be better” rather than the “what in the world could have gone wrong?” and gave myself up for the learning experience. Academics, no matter how stressful, will always be very important to me. Academic stress would eventually become my friend, and someone who would help me in the long run. It would be so boring if it weren’t for school.

“The difference between school and life? In school, you're taught a lesson and then given a test. In life, you're given a test that teaches you a lesson.”

—Tom Bodett

The only thing I’ve been stressing out about lately is how it’s been three days and my mom still hasn’t bought a new box of chips from Costco.

Work? Tests? Stress? Those are things that people put on themselves. I have taken five periods of classes since sophomore year, all of which are ones you would consider “slacker” classes. I choose to enjoy my teenage years, not be ruined by them. In the end, we’re all going to college, we’re all going to have children, and we’re all going to grow pot bellies and go through midyear crisis. As I heard one teacher (NOT mine) say about life: life is hard, and then you die. No children, no dependent, aged parents, no income tax or bills to pay: high school years are the easy years my friends. I live them while I can.

“An educational system isn't worth a great deal if it teaches young people how to make a living but doesn't teach them how to make a life.”

—Anonymous

Iwoke up on Wednesday morning to find out that there was no school because of the shooting. No school? Shooting? I turned on the TV and heard a report about a family crying in hysterics when they found out it was indeed their family member who had been one of the victims killed at the quarry. My throat hurt from keeping my tear ducts from exploding. I checked Facebook, expecting to see the same reaction from people in their statuses, and although some people were sad about the situation, I saw way too many variations of “YAY no school today!” in my newsfeed. I was shocked at these reactions. I left the house to stay at my friend's and get some homework done and relax, when I realized, “maybe this isn't so bad...”

I felt absolutely horrible for enjoying my day. I didn't post anything obnoxious online about what a great day I had, since I felt disrespectful, but I truly did have a great day. I was thinking about what made this day so great; we have days off all the time, and I don't usually have as good of a time... but I decided it was because I *really* needed a break. And I think that's what a lot of other people at Monta Vista were feeling too when they found out

school was cancelled. Regardless of how we felt about the shooting, we all need a break.

And what did many of us do once we got that break? Many of us got ahead and did more homework! I bet that if I went to another school, I'd spend my day off going on a mini-road trip or something more exciting, but I go to Monta Vista. And I'm stressed out.

I would never want another shooting to happen, just so I could get another day off... but right now I'm really wishing it could snow. I'm wishing it could snow so hard that the school would have to announce a Snow Day, and we'd all go outside and throw snowballs at each other like in the movies.

But I know I'd consider staying inside and working on homework...

"The only person you compete against is yourself."
—Ed Harris

7 classes. 7 grades. 7 hopes and wishes. 7 chances. 7 times where the luck of the draw determines my fate. It has been 3 years that my life, my well being has been determined by those 7 names of those 7 teachers that appear on my annual schedule. I hate that the teachers we get ultimately determine all the stress, the late nights, and the hard work, we students have to endure. I hate how competition is still seen by the outside world as if we all are on a level playing field. But in reality our teachers essentially determine if we sink or swim: not our wit or our intellect. Stressful? What do you think.

"Competition brings out the best in products and the worst in people."
—David Sarnoff

My parents liked Cupertino because you had a clear view of the hills on all sides. I think the particular topography of the hills just symbolize my problem with this place. See everyone here is so focused on grades. I know it is said way too much

but they are. they are focused on attaining a result regardless of the work to put in. El Estoque published a couple of articles on the cheating- and that is just one example of the disregard for actually learning anything. I personally used to LOVE school. and now my love for it is fading. I LOVE to learn. I don't however love to regurgitate my chem notes on a quiz the next day. And I DONT like what i have become after moving to cupertino caring so much about school that i forgot that there is a whole other world, and i have my whole life ahead of me. so when i look at the hills i dont feel liberated. I feel like 'oh, crap, it's a long way up' and i live at the bottom of the bowl, barely keeping my head above water. And i wonder if there is something wrong in that- in feeling that any move short of perfection will destroy you and all that you have lived for?

"Of all human powers operating on the affairs of mankind, none is greater than that of competition."
—Henry Clay

Can I say that there I've felt no academic competition at Monta Vista? Would I get in trouble for that? It's been three years at Monta Vista, and I've felt no academic competition. Yes, people certainly care about their grades. I do too. But if you work hard and do your best, what is there to be ashamed of? I remember realizing this sometime sophomore year. I simply tried my very best to study for a test, to the extent of my intelligence, and I still did poorly. The thing is, I can't do anything about it! At MV, this competitive culture comes from people who're trying to find the easy way out. People who simply aren't satisfied with who they are. Rather than reach a level of personal improvement, they strive to bring down other people. But I say, as someone who knows themselves extremely well, doing my best is good enough for me.

“Competition is such a virtue, and everybody's so busy competing, they have no time for compassion.”

—Major Owens

On the first day of high school,
my teachers gave to me
torture that lasted til three.

On the second day of high school,
my teachers gave to me
two writing prompts,
and torture that lasted til three.

On the third day of high school,
my teachers gave to me
three pop quizzes,
two writing prompts,
and torture that lasted til three.

On the fourth day of high school,
my teachers gave to me
four group projects,
three pop quizzes,
two writing prompts,
and torture that lasted til three.

On the fifth day of high school,
my teachers gave to me
five hours of sleep,
four group projects,
three pop quizzes,
two writing prompts,
and torture that lasted til three.

“Thankfully, it became clear to me that when I compete, I lose my connection to the passion I have for my work.”

—Olympia Dukakis

Academic stress.... It's funny because when I was approached to write about this topic I thought, “The people who are academically stressed are too

busy or stressed to write about it...” But regardless here I am putting in my two cents. Academic stress at Monta Vista is hardly a joke, everyone knows that. I myself have taken 7 periods these past 3 years to get into a good college and to live a happy and fulfilled life of opportunities and self confidence. It's always stressful, balancing everything, and still getting a Homecoming date. I think the stupid part is how teachers try to minimize the stress, but they don't realize that an hour of homework for each class amounts to at least 5 hours of homework ever day. I hate those days where 3 or 4 tests just pile up in one day. Academic stress isn't necessarily a bad thing though. It pressured me into being good at time management, and it really will better my future to some extent. But its how MUCH academic pressure there is, and how you deal with it, right? The pressure comes from my parents and myself, as well as peer pressure. But I deal with it by just hanging out with friends and studying with friends. It's not always easy, but I'm sure as hell going to be glad to get out of Monta Vista. I heard some colleges are easier than MV, or some say its about the same. Whatever the case, I'll just be glad I won't have to be at school from 7:30 am – 3:00 pm 5 days a week anymore. P.S. Although rallies and school activities are supposed to relieve stress... those poor class officers who pour hours and days into the 30 minute rally... thats not really relieving stress for them. I wonder if they'll do what some of my friends have done; move to go to an easier school. Academic stress ruins my sleep, which ruins my day, which ruins my happiness. The end.

“The ultimate victory in competition is derived from the inner satisfaction of knowing that you have done your best and that you have gotten the most out of what you had to give.”

—Howard Cosell

Competition rules our world. In Charles Darwin's “The Origin of Species” he talks about how the world runs on survival of the fittest and

competition. At first I was doubtful of this theory. I was amazed that the human species, as caring and loving as we would believe in such a theory that practically encouraged forgetting the weak and only caring for the fit. But as I grew up through every day events I learned how our world truly is run by competition. My friends and I are very alike, that's probably why we are friends; anyways since we're alike we want to run for the same things. My two best friends and I all ran to become president of a club at school. We all wanted the position really badly and all thought we were the best for the job. Until this time we were all really good friends and looked out for each other but at this time our relationships were tense...we all did whatever we could to give ourselves an advantage over the others. One of my friends ended up becoming president, I became vice president, and the third one didn't get an officer position. Even though we were friends I was jealous of my friend who had become president I even hated him for some time. Even in class my friends and I strive to get higher grades than the other even if it is just 1%. That's when I started thinking between a 96% and a 97% there would be no change of grade, I would have an A regardless....then why did I try so hard to beat my friends and get that 97%? Because of competition. It rules all of us, it might make us do our best but at what cost? We turn against everyone because in the end life is one big competition against every other human being on this world.

"It is impossible to enjoy idling thoroughly unless one has plenty of work to do."

—Jerome K.

“Oh you go to Monta Vista? Oh wow isn't that place a pressure cooker?” “Hahaha you go to MV? All of you guys are Asians and nerds!” Once can imagine that a school with such high praise would have a lot of academic stress and competition. There is a group of people who believe

there is no such thing as academic stress, well I am most definitely not one of them. I was one of those kids who was super smart in middle school and elementary school but when I came to high school...not so much. Why? I blame academic stress. At our school there is so much importance based on academics. Academics are important sure but is it really everything? Let me answer that for you: NO!!!!. There's much more to life! Friends, family, and just having a good time! With all the academic stress I ignored the fun things in life and only studied my first two years of high school. But I was always mad about the things I was missing out and in the end didn't study too well. Junior year I was like “F*ck studying” and then I did too many fun things. It might be a little too late but now in senior year I finally found the perfect balance of both but if it wasn't for that damned academic stress I would have found this balance out loooong time ago! Maybe freshman year! I'd probably be going to a good college if I had but no academic stress got in the way. The worst part of this academic stress is that it's not just by parents and teachers. The students are doing it too! My friends made me feel bad if I got bad grades, even I started putting myself under academic stress. I don't know what the cure to academic stress is but I do know that we need one cause this stuff sucks.

“Competition is a process or variety of habitual behavior that grows out of a habit of mind.”

—Willard Beecher

I know a lot of people seem to get stressed out by their parents and their parents seem to be the ones driving them to do well. For me, my parents are pretty lax about these kinds of things. Obviously, they want me to do well, but it isn't a big deal if I don't get a 4.0 or if I get a couple c's here and there. Honestly, that never happens because I am pressured so much to do well. I am pressured by my peers. I feel really embarrassed if I don't do well

or if I don't take that extra AP class. I honestly don't know ANY student at MV that doesn't take AP classes. I mean aren't they supposed to be ADVANCED for people who are in a higher level? Is there no higher level at MV since everyone takes AP's? Idk, but I always study hard and make myself do well, because well, everyone else works hard and does well too. You can't really slack off and just chill with your friends if all your friends are at home studying...

"A competitor will find a way to win. Competitors take bad breaks and use them to drive themselves just that much harder. Quitters take bad breaks and use them as reasons to give up. It's all a matter of pride."

—Nancy Lopez

I don't really get a lot of academic pressure from my parents, but I can't help but to feel like I am constantly compared to my brother. I don't feel any competition between my brother and I, but my mom just keeps bringing up how well my brother did in school and life in general. I don't know why, but she REALLY romanticizes him. He isn't even all that great. I remember in middle school, I thought he was SO smart, but in reality, when I look at his grades and achievements, they aren't all that fancy. He brought some solid 3.7 report cards maybe a couple 4.0's but so do I! I also bring home 4.0's! My mom found some random ribbon that he won at a track meet YEARS ago that says "Second Place" on it, and she said, "wow this is good, right". That ribbon was probably won at some middle school track meet where there was maybe one other person against my brother. Anyways, I feel like I should get as much praise as my brother sometimes.

"A competitive world offers two possibilities. You can lose. Or, if you want to win, you can change."

—Lester Thurow

Honestly, i want to kill about every person and teacher at monta vista. okay, that's a little extreme. how about every single person who values grades more than actual people. i remember once freshman year started, it became a total hell. how all my friends would complain about their "low" grades which were actually like 93.99999% and how they would start skipping out on me to go study or go to their tutor or start stressing about college which was still freaking 4 years away then. and the thing is i couldn't really blame them. i was doing the exact same thing. ranting when a teacher took away one point on a test, crying when i got an "unacceptable score" on a test which would actually be anything below a 85%. quite honestly, i am now sick of it. sick of how our lives are so warped by this ideas that if we "fail" in high school, we're going to fail in life. my parents don't help any either. always telling me how if i keep doing the way i'm doing (which is one freaking b right now out of my 7 classes), that i will fail life and that i will fail in the future, like my brother who is what they consider "doomed for the future" seriously parents of mine, lay off. i have a life. i have stresses beyond school which are probably silly and when i look back i'll laugh at, but right now are pretty important. like friends, like finding something i like, like actually finding time to breathe and relax. breathing and relaxing. you guys won't even let me do one fun thing outside of school, like those vocal lessons i really want, which would take up ONE HOUR of my goddamn ONE WEEK. i hate this school. if anything, i wish i could transfer out of here or leave early. just anything.

"The essence of competitiveness is liberated when we make people believe that what they think and do is important - and then get out of their way while they do it."

—Jack Welch

You can see the state of this school when I tell you this story. One day, I was doing my project and someone else was doing the same project. They

obviously thought they were going to kick my ass at it and humiliate me, so I was like ahahahahah no honey. i'm better. And then I did better! I got a better grade. I felt pretty damn smug. See what I mean? Our school isn't one that encourages playful competition, but legit straight out competition. Like the I-will-kill-you-if-you-f*ck-with-me kind. If you're not part of it, it's hella funny, but it sucks ass when you are part of it. Then it goes from amusing to deadly seriously in a milisecond. Bwahahha, I won that round though.

“Education aims to give you a boost up the ladder of knowledge. Too often, it just gives you a cramp on one of its rungs.”

—Martin H. Fischer

A WORD FROM THE PROFESSIONAL



Judith McFarland MFT is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in private practice in Campbell, CA. She has 17 years of experience, including education and counseling for parents of teens. Her primary focus is counseling couples and families to improve the quality of their relationships. Judith can be reached via her website, www.judithmcfarland.com, by email at jm@judithmcfarland.com, or by calling 408-566-3119.

How do high school age students think about morals and values? I was pleased to be invited to hear answers to that question in conjunction with this issue of *Verdadura*, and to be asked to write from a professional's point of view.

The dictionary lists some definitions of "Morals" as relating to principles of right and wrong in behavior, or conforming to a standard of right behavior. The verb to "value" is to consider with respect to worth, excellence, usefulness or importance.

The letters on these subjects addressed the conflict between the morals and values taught by parents and the family vs. the reality of what is actually practiced by those parents, by peers, and by society in general. I was impressed by the openness and vulnerability that was expressed.

We learn morals and values from birth onward. Every contact with parents and caregivers is an opportunity to teach through example. The media teaches values and morals, sometimes overtly, sometimes not so much. Learned through their daily encounters with important people, our next generation of leaders looks around and tries to make sense of beliefs they accepted in childhood as good, appropriate and right, but which now seem too rigid, too limiting, and too judgmental.

Early in life children accept that parents are right, and for the most part, they do not challenge the morals and values their parents profess. In adolescence however, the biggest change is psychological. Teenagers understand concepts and abstractions in a way they were not capable of before. A new and powerful voice rises inside.

Simply put, this new voice tells the teen to turn away

from childhood and childish feelings. Since childhood is dominated by parents and other authority figures, it follows that adolescents must at least evaluate the idea of turning away from certain aspects of those same people. Teens now want to experience themselves as independent, and as capable of independent thought and action.

Beliefs, thoughts, and ideals become a matter for serious contemplation. Actions taken as a result of

those same beliefs, thoughts, ideals, morals and values, have serious consequences.

Letters dealt with opinions about subjects such as using drugs and drinking, being sexually active, styles of dress, cheating at school, cheating on one's significant other, lying, going to parties, stealing, religion and rebelling against the professed values of parents. While some students wrote about being firmly grounded in a set of beliefs

they viewed as absolute, most found that while they made their own choices, and acknowledged those choices might be "wrong" to peers or parents, they did not want to be judged, nor to judge others.

For Parents:

Dealing with your son or daughter's demonstration of morals and values, which are different from yours, is a well-known subject of argument and cause of friction in the family. While it is a normal stage of development for teenagers to begin to view their parents as flawed, parents feel that as a personal attack (and sometimes it is expressed that way!).

It is important for teens to begin to view parents as flawed, because if they can see you as flawed and can

the **LOWDOWN** books for teens and parents

- Chicken Soup For The Teenage Soul* by Canfield, Hansen, Kirberger and Claspy
- The 6 Most Important Decisions You'll Ever Make: A Guide For Teens* by Sean Covey
- Life Strategies For Teens* by Jay McGraw
- Parenting Teens In A Confusing Culture* by Mark Gregston and Tim Kimmel
- Emotionally Intelligent Parenting* by Elias, Tobias, Friedlander and Goleman

see that you are successful anyway, they will believe that they also don't have to be perfect and can still survive in the world.

What can be most helpful will be having a real dialogue with your teen, where you all get to hear and understand more about what each family member feels and thinks. A common statement from teens is that parents just don't understand. Asking questions and listening to the answers does not mean agreement. It does imply respect for the speaker. A dialogue with a teen could go something like this:

The parent goes to the teen and asks if they could speak about something, "Is this a good time?" If the teen says it isn't a good time, the parent asks them to set another time and then makes sure to seek them out at that time. The talk happens in private without electronic interference, i.e. cell phones off, TV off, computer off, etc. Sometimes, with teens the best place is on a car ride.

Parent (P): I'd like to talk with you about why you want to go to Mary's party. Is this a good time?

Teen (T): Not really, I need to study for my history quiz.

P: Okay. When would be a better time?

T: I don't know. I'm really busy.

P: This is important. Please pick a time.

T: Okay (grudgingly, rolling eyes). Tonight at 9.

P: Okay, see you then.

At 9 PM, the parent goes to the teen and sits down. Asks them to close their laptop.

P: I'd like to understand why going to these parties is so important to you. I know we have argued about this many times. Could you explain?

T: All my friends will be there. You don't want me to have friends. People think I'm weird because I don't go.

P: I worry about the drinking. (And the drugs and sex, but I won't mention that)

T: I've told you and told you, I don't drink. (I might, but I can't say that. I'll be careful, and we always have a designated driver). You don't trust me and I've never done anything wrong!

P: That's true. And I appreciate how well you have been doing.

T: Then why won't you give me a chance to prove I can handle myself?

P: You know that in our family we don't approve of these parties.

T: Yes, but I'm grown up now and I want to make my own choices. Next year I'll be away at school. Don't you want me to learn how to manage my social life?

P: Yes. It's scary for me to think about that.

T: I guess.

P: Let me think about what you've said and I'll get back to you tomorrow evening. Is that okay?

T: Okay.

Is this perfect? No. Many things are left unsaid. However, the lines of communication are still somewhat open, and the dialogue can be continued. This is a very simplified version of a brief conversation with a 17 year old, regarding one possibly controversial topic.

In closing, it is normal for high school age teens to begin to express their own ideas about what is right, wrong, important, valuable, just and true. They are moving into a phase of life where they will act on these beliefs and have to deal with the consequences of those actions. Most parents are struggling with letting go. Teens struggle with some fears about growing up as well, and for parents and teens to be able to safely open the door to speak about these conflicts is useful and valuable.

2011-2012 ISSUES

AUGUST body image

SEPTEMBER letting go, moving on

OCTOBER competition & academic stress

NOVEMBER morals and values

JANUARY purpose in life

FEBRUARY betrayal

MARCH media influence

APRIL sexual identity

MAY encouragement

JUNE innocence and maturity

verdadera

OCTOBER: ACADEMIC STRESS

NOVEMBER: MORALS AND VALUES

Verdadera is a publication created by and for Monta Vista students for the purpose of instigating communication concerning the reality of high school within the community. Each month, an issue on a topic relevant to the lives of our students is sent home for reading by both parents and students. While we do not edit submissions, we aim to publish personal experiences, not opinion articles. Please utilize all the resources present and feel free to email comments and feedback.

2011-2012 Staff: Christina Aguila, Thomas Barber, Kevin Chang, Pooja Desai, Puja Iyer, Amy Kahng, Susan Kwon, Karishma Mehrotra, Tiffany Nguyen, Anushka Patil, Sanjeev Ranga, Kevin Tsukii, Emily Wong.

Advisers: Hung Wei, Carol Satterlee

To read more stories, or to submit, visit verdadera.tumblr.com

