



Secrets September 2010

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:

- *Why do students keep secrets? Is it imminent? Is it necessary?*
- *Why do students disclose secrets? How do others justify sharing confided secrets?*
- *Who do students share secrets with?*
- *Can divulging another's secret help a situation?*

Student Submissions

“OMG DID YOU KNOW SHE SLEPT WITH HIM.” Those are the types of things you hear about after a long weekend. A friend always tells other people that who and who slept together and blah blah blah. Even though people talked about that stuff and those things were never true secret, my boyfriend kept a really big secret from me. I found out almost 3 months later after it had happened and surprisingly all his friends kept it from me. I had been going out with this guy since my freshmen year. We told each other everything but as senior year rolled around he kept to himself more and stopped informing as much about his life. Its amazing how he had kept the secret of him sleeping with other girls at parties from me for so long. And as

for his friends, they disgust me. I guess some secrets are just secrets but not forever.

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“Secrets are made to be found out with time.”

~ Charles Sanford  
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I'll never tell anyone, because I care about you too much, and because it's not your fault. But you're pretty. And smart. And funny. And no one hates you, no one I know even dislikes you. You're a private, kind of quiet person, but also the kind of person who, when someone gets to know you, is loud and funny and fun. Sometimes I don't even know why you stick with me. It is SO UPSETTING and I really envy you for being you

and for having what you have. It keeps me up at night all the time. You're my best friend, I'm not supposed to feel this way. But I do.

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"What is man? A miserable little pile of secrets."

~Andre Malroux  
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It's pretty bad when you have someone you love but you're too embarrassed to share it with the world. For example, my girlfriend of three years. Secrets like that, are really annoying to keep. She's beautiful as a gem and I smell the scent of sweet peas when her hair blows in the wind. When I hear her laugh it's like the whole world just lights up. She has her tough side where she punches me for doing stupid things. I remember that it's always my left arm. I don't know why it was always there, but coincidentally it always was. We have lots of photos of us just hanging out, but we both don't put it on our facebook because our friends might find out. We definitely didn't put "in a relationship" because that would attract a lot of attention. I thought it was actually kind of funny when people said, "Nope, I can't see you being with a girl." I just laughed it off, of course. I mean, what did they know? But life is life and I knew at one point, that it would have to end. Who believes that high school relationships are everlasting these days? I didn't believe it. I didn't WANT to believe it, but I knew it was the truth. At one point, I was talking with my close friend. She asked me if I've ever went out with someone. I denied it. Unfortunately, I'm a really bad liar. Or maybe she can read people easily. I don't know. But in the end, my friend found out. Though it's awkward and I've been pestered to give more information, it's relieving at the same time. I feel like a giant weight of stupid lies have been lifted off my chest. Somehow or another, five more people end up listening to me and my past relationship. What was weirder though, was that when I talked about it that time with the group. That's because that day was two weeks after I broke up with her. Only later did I find out she was moving away and that was the only reason she broke up with me. I hated to admit it but again, I knew she was right. Long distance relationships would never last. We agreed to keep in touch online though, so that we could still exchange words from time to time. We text each other pretty often now. Sure, I still miss those old times of holding her soft, pale hands and walking down the street with a smile on both of our faces. We had this favorite place

we'd take walks in. The trees line the path and they all lean toward the left a little. I don't remember the details other than windy breeze, making the trees rustle as my girlfriend smiles with a playful twinkle in her eyes. Did we have our first kiss that day? Well, that I'm not going to get into. Haha. So many memories I shared with her on so many of our walks. But when I walk along that same path today, tears fall down my cheeks. However, I can't help but smile at the same time. We've all heard that line before, "I guess it's better to have fallen in love, than to never have fallen in love at all." I suppose the quote's right. It's kind of weird though, having a relationship as a secret. It was as if all of our countless hours spent together, is only hidden in our minds and no one else's. It's our little secret. It's our little love. And it's no one else's.

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"It is wise to disclose what cannot be concealed."

~Johann Friedrich Von Schiller  
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When I was young about four or five my father had a plan that giving my mom a box of chocolates would be a sweet valentines gift. He bought the chocolates and gave them to me in another room where my mom wasn't, he then told me to bring them to her. I then preceded to hid behind a wall and scarf down the entire box of chocolates not caring about what got on my face. I then went back to my father saying she loved it and wanted more, so he gave me more chocolate and realizing something was up (due to the chocolate on my face that I did not notice) he followed me and both him and my mother caught me eating my mother's valentines gift.

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"Secrets are things we give to others to keep for us."

~Elbert Hubbard  
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My boyfriend and I recently had some severe problems within our relationship and it's very likely that we'll split up within the next week or so, which is okay since I know that we'll still be very close friends, but the problem is that I'm still secretly in love with him - so this has been somewhat difficult for me to cope with.

If my life wasn't messed up enough, I have another male friend who is going out with my best friend. I've been infatuated with him for a year now (yes, he knows and he is flattered) and he told me recently that they are having serious relationship problems themselves - my best friend didn't confide

this to me, just him. So now I'm torn - I know even if they split, we'd never end up together because it would be way too awkward for me to handle...but...I had the chance to get together with him around Christmas last year - and didn't do it because I couldn't be unfaithful to my boyfriend at the time, no matter how tempting my friend was. I've always regretted it - and if the chance presented itself again - I knew I'd take it, regardless of the potential consequences. And that's exactly what I did right after school ended this year. Yikes I know...My best friend still has no idea, and I do somewhat regret hurting her and her relationship, but at the time I was in a confused state of mind and didn't know what I wanted.

This secret has been wearing me down for a while now and I know that at any time it's just going to blurt out of my mouth like word vomit. I just hope things will still remain all right between all of us...

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"The man who can keep a secret may be wise, but he is not half as wise as the man with no secrets to keep."  
~Edgar Watson Howe

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What are secrets? I find that secrets are things I shouldn't tell anyone. Why? Because I don't think anyone is trustworthy enough to actually delve deep within my conscious and discover all these bits of personal information. Ironically, people tell me secrets, or at least what I presume to be their secrets. I still don't think it's right to reveal secrets about other people either.

But as always, information has a way of revealing itself. I think I'm weak when I tell other people about my life. That's only because once I think that once you open yourself up to someone, you always have an increasing amount of moments of vulnerability.

One time, I told my friend a secret. Obviously since I have some trust issues, I gave a little snippet of information that wasn't relatively blackmail material, though that person still promised not to tell anybody. Of course, then she told her best friend, because "Oh, she's an exception! She's my best friend!", who then told the rest of her friends, and pretty soon, a web of people knew my secret. Not exactly my best moment.

Sure, that was a small example. And it probably happened to everyone once. But what I see as a secret is really a symbol of trust. And I'm not going to just trust someone just to have them break me.

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"If you reveal your secrets to the wind you should not blame the wind for revealing them to the trees."

~Kahlil Gibran

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Secrets. According to the dictionary, the word secret means something that is kept unknown to others. It's funny how such a powerful word has such a small meaning. That's all it has taken for many sleepless nights, broken friendships, broken hearts; but for that matter, secrets are also the reason for nights where I would fall asleep instantly, amazing lifelong friendships, and the days nothing could stop the smile on my face from showing everyone my shiny braces.

I have stared for one complete hour at the computer screen thinking about what to write. But through that one hour of staring, my mind was running through memories, thinking of which story to tell. I couldn't possibly choose one. So maybe I'll make a mesh of it all and at the end something great will come out of it.

And of course, like everything else in this world; secrets come in all shapes, sizes and forms. There are the big life changing one's, and there are the tiny small ones like stealing an eraser from the dollar store with your best friend when you were five. Along time ago, maybe in elementary school or my early days of middle school, my friends used to joke around that the reason I had such big frizzy hair in the morning was because it was full of secrets. Yes, they did get that from the movie Mean Girl's.

But now that I think about it, it might even be true. Not the frizzy hair part, but the part that I knew too many secrets about to many people then healthy. And, being me; knowing all these things about different people, just sitting there knowing that if only one person knew this about the other person then everything would be amazing; I couldn't just sit there like another person in the audience.

I had to do something.

So I told. I told someone, someone else's secret. It was for their own benefit. I swore to myself never to do something like that, and betray someone's trust again. And I haven't since. It did work out, and both of them are happy now. But because of the one time I betrayed that person's trust; he hasn't talked to me since.

But, I guess that's life.

If it's two things secrets really make me think about, it's trust and faith. You have to trust yourself to keep the secret. You have to trust someone you tell the secret to. But sometimes in circumstances, you have to trust yourself enough, to have faith in the person to tell them the secret. It's like testing their worth, of how trustworthy they really are.

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"How can we expect another to keep a secret if we have been unable to keep it ourselves?"

~Francis de La Rochefoucauld  
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It seems like when people keep secrets or tell other people's secrets it just creates rumors and drama. I've never been a part of drama, either because I try not to keep secrets or because no one thinks my secrets are interesting enough to start rumors about. Either way I'm fine with it because people involved in drama never stop talking about how horrible and confusing it is. I used to feel weird and left out because I wasn't a part of the rumors but after a while I decided it really didn't sound all that great. I can never wrap my head around all the gossip going on at school so I just don't even try anymore.

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"The easiest way to keep a secret is without help."

~Author Unknown  
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1. I have a thing for guys who play the piano.
2. Dolls scare the bejesus out of me.
3. So does the dark.
4. Spiders scare me the most.
5. I have stolen \$57 dollars from my mom and she never found out.
6. Most of the time I don't know why I do the things I do, and I feel guilty because I know people look up to me because I'm supposedly one of the most driven and passionate people they have encountered in their lives.
7. I've never had my first kiss.
8. I round up my height.

These aren't really that secret – heck, most people I know guess these facts and tease me for them. I don't really have a deep, dark secret. But I'm sure that that will change. One day, in some unconventional situation, I'll choose to do something that will change the rest of my life. It may not be something bad. It may be that I get to be a spy or that I go to Hogwarts. WHICH WOULD BE AWESOME. But I'm not at that point yet. But don't worry, I'm coming.

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"Nothing weighs on us so heavily as a secret."

~Jean de La Fontaine  
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In seventh grade, I had a best friend, someone I practically worshipped, followed around, tried to act like, wanted to be like. We did everything together, when something was wrong, she was the first one I went to, we were practically family, our mom's were good friends as well. When our parents fought, we went to each other's houses, she had a way with words of course, but she never meant any harm. We passed notes in class, and talked about cute boys, and wondered together about where life would take us, and what kind of people we'd meet. She was the sister I never had. Towards the end of the year, our class had to do a science project, and she had various lies ranging from her getting married to her parents getting divorced. At the time of course, I didn't know everything was a lie and I kept her secrets, but then she started to miss a lot of meetings that we had as a group, and everyone was wondering why, so I told one girl in our group, and she spotted the flaw in my best friend's story immediately. Then, the girl I was talking to told me that my best friend had been bad-mouthing me behind my back the entire year. I was shocked. Hurt. I felt betrayed. I loved the girl like she was my sister, and she just abused me behind my back, and made people think I was the bad one in our friendship. I had never told anyone anything she told me, but she had spilled all my secrets, but I thank god it was not to the wrong people, it was to the people who I have become close to. Thinking back on it now, I would have kept getting used, if I hadn't told this girl. In a way, she was my savior, she showed me there was no right and wrong, but there is always a choice, and what you chose, defines you and shows who you are. That was the day I learned, friendship isn't about striving to be like the other person, it was being yourself and getting accepted. That friendship is more about correcting each other, telling each other what they needed to do, to become a better person. That's true friendship.

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"Three may keep a secret, if two of them are dead."

~Ben Franklin  
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It's hard to keep a secret. Forget about other people's secrets – it's difficult enough keeping your own secrets to yourself. Confiding in someone creates a

bond so strong it can only be broken by breaking that confidence – telling someone a secret is telling them, “I trust you. I trust you not to break my heart. I trust you not to break our friendship. I trust you not to lose my trust. I trust that you’ll know what to do with this secret.”

Very rarely, perhaps only once in a lifetime, perhaps multiple times if you’re lucky, you’ll find a secret-keeper. A secret-keeper is often quiet, but not withdrawn. To sum up a secret keeper in terms of a cliché, a secret-keeper is, or tries their absolute hardest to be, wise beyond their years. They know when to talk, but more importantly, when to sit still and listen. They know better than to offer the easy escape of “It’ll all be okay”, which is only the coward’s way out. They invest themselves in being there for people and people invest their secrets into them. Far from a fair exchange.

It’s difficult being a secret-keeper. When people tell you their secrets, they are asking for a shoulder to lean on, someone to share their thoughts with without judgment or pity. And, for me, the without judgment or pity can often be the hardest part, even harder than keeping the secret. It’s hard to refrain from judging a friend who has just told you that they got drunk last weekend, or that they “slept over” at their significant other’s house while the parents were away. And it’s even harder to come back to school the next day and act normal when you find out that the girl you worked with every day dealt with suicidal thoughts for the past year.

But knowing that people trust you and confide in you is the best gift a friend can give. It creates a bond, that, as long as you keep that secret, with their best interests in mind, means so much more than going out for a movie or talking between classes. They are telling you, “I trust you. I trust you not to break my heart. I trust you not to break our friendship. I trust you not to lose my trust. I trust that you’ll know what to do with this secret.”

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“Tell your friend a lie. If he keeps it secret, then tell him the truth.”

~Author Unknown

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Secrets. I told her not to tell anyone. Secrets. She told someone. Secrets. Three can keep one if two are dead. It’s no big deal, I guess, but my trust for her is not the same. All the big things start out small. I simply confided in my best friend who I had a crush on. I’m not

even one of those people who freak out if a guy knows I like him, but I was really shocked when she told her other friend my secret. I let it pass. The next secret I told her was about my family. I was really upset so I decided I should vent out my feelings. However, somehow my other friends found out about it. I learned not to tell her anything after that. I love her so much, but I know not to tell her anything anymore. What a broken friendship.

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“We dance round in a ring and suppose, while the secret sits in the middle and knows.”

~Robert Frost

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They’re all across the hallways. They spread faster than we can imagine. And often they ruin people’s lives. No, I’m not talking about germs, but they can be just as harmful, secrets.

I’ll be completely honest with you; I have my fair share of them. My parents have absolutely no idea what goes on in my life, and quite frankly they never have. Whenever I need to leave the house to get away from them, I simply tell them that I’m going to go to a friend’s house to work on a project and for them to not wait up for me. In my sophomore year, I had a friend almost commit suicide. In, my junior year, I fell into depression myself. And my parents had no idea about any of these.

If I wanted to, I could be an absolute crazy teenager, going out to parties every weekend, drinking alcohol, having sex, and they would never even see it coming. I’ve become so good at being the sweet, innocent, younger child that I have them at the palm of my hands. They still think of me as their 5-year old daughter, but I’ve grown a lot since then.

They are completely unaware about my lifestyle, my friends, my interests, everything. If you were to ask them to name at least two of my friends, they’d only be able to name one who I haven’t spoken to for about three years now. That’s how out of it they are. Sometimes it feels like I’m being all secretive about my life, but it’s just that they never actually spend the time to learn anything about me so everything that they discover comes as a surprise to them.

I walk around school everyday and it’s as if we’re all hiding something about our lives that we’re not brave enough to tell anyone else about. For example, one day I went out to lunch with one of my friends and we had a heart-to-heart conversation about

our lives, friends, and family. I came to realize that her problems at home were just as precarious as mine. Her parents haven't been getting along for a while now and she believes that the only reason they're still together is because of her and her brother. I'd never expected her to have any troubles of her own since she's always very bubbly and excited about life, but I guess it goes to show that all of us have our own dirty, little secrets.

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"When a secret is revealed, it is the fault of the man who confided it."

~Author Unknown

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I have a secret. You wanna know what it is? Okay, I'll tell you. When I went to my cousins graduation this summer, we snuck into a club. We all got drinks, asked the DJ to play our music and then left. Oh yeah, and we lied. We said that it was my sister bachelorette party (even though she's only 17) and that we were out of town (even though my cousin lived there). Whew! I feel so much better after telling you.

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"I'm not good at secrets, so don't tell me any."

~AJ McLean

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It was a tough time for me; I had been lied to for two years straight by someone I thought was close to me. All her "secrets" turned out to be complete and utter bullshit—and all my secrets were at her mercy, I prayed she wouldn't completely ruin my life blackmailing me with them. Now that I look back, I shouldn't be complaining I got off easy compared to that girl's best friend, lets call her Lexi and the lying bitch can be Penny. So I guess one may wonder what she lied about—so lets just say that after I found out everything was a lie, there wasn't one thing I really knew about her. Lexi and I finally broke off all ties with Penny, when she insisted that her dead mother had come back to life.

I had always thought Lexi was the one who was untrustworthy but it turns out I was wrong. Because of that experience we bonded really fast and became best friends, but life took a turn as she moved away one month after our friendship bloomed. As soon as Lexi arrived in at her new home she went into a state of depression. She told me all her secrets, and some were too devastating and heavy for a kid to cope with. I was told of her dysfunctional family, her frequent talks with

suspected rapists, and her growing intense love for Penny's ex-boyfriend who she was secretly dating.

Ah, Penny's ex-boyfriend and Lexi's new one, lets call him Aaron. He was quite older than us, and Lexi and Aaron had only met once, and that was at Penny's birthday party. Lexi visited often, coming back to visit almost every 2 months. Frequent and passionate meetings with Aaron interrupted her short visits. They barely knew each other but yet they were getting "close" very fast. She called it love—I called it stupid and naïve.

Lexi depended on me for everything, she could never make her own decisions and I was weighed down by the severity of her actions and the danger of her secrets. I didn't know whom to turn to, so I let this mountain of hurt, pain, and worry concentrate within me. But when she wrote me a suicide letter was when I became really panicked. She was fed up with her life and decided to just give up, I didn't know how to contact her and I couldn't do anything. So I just waited and I prayed that she'd turn around and she what she was doing was wrong. It turns out she didn't think her actions were rash, she didn't apologize later on for what she put me through—she was acting as bad as Penny, and I began to realize that I barely knew her.

Tangled in mess of her secrets and lies to her friends and parents, Lexi became more dependent of me. Her and Aaron broke up when he became completely psychotic and was determined to whisk her away make a life with her high school. Soon after the breakup, he began talking to me about her, but I didn't want to have anything to do with it—but Lexi didn't give me a choice, she got me involved, and soon I was inevitably trapped in the middle of their relationship.

Soon, Aaron started threatening Lexi's life via email. And when she would come and talk to me--fearful for her well being, I knew that I couldn't keep this secret for any longer. I forced her to talk to her parents, and though they were disappointed, they were happy she came to them for help. He was put into juvy for a couple of days, and then he was sentenced to therapy—and if Lexi pressed charges I would've been a witness on the stand because of how involved they made me.

Till this day, Aaron still preys on girls from our school asking about Lexi's newest boyfriend and his details. Though I tell these hopeless girls that he's deranged, they are overcome by his good looks and seniority.

I bet you are wondering about what happened to Lexi. Well after the Aaron fiasco, her parents decided it would be better for her to move back to Cupertino—all her secrets were out. She moved back on the condition that I went everywhere with her, but I knew I couldn't keep making her decisions for her, after all I'm not her mother and not her babysitter. I was supposed to be her best friend, but I knew that we had a lot to learn about each other and we were too different. All of Lexi's secrets left me no time to deal with my own. I couldn't deal with all the responsibility it took to take care of her and still find time to take care of myself. So I told her I couldn't deal with it any longer, and just like Penny, I let Lexi and all her secrets go.

I've kept this secret for 3 years, and every time I see her in the hallway, I remember. And that mountain of secrets within me aches with worry, hurt, and pain.

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"Of course I can keep secrets. It's the people I tell them to that can't keep them."

~Anthony Haden-Guest

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I lost my best friend starting freshmen year to a stupid secret. As stupid as it sounds, it was over a guy. Our 5 year friendship vanished in merely a week and till this day I still think what had happened was pathetic. She had liked this guy for over a year but never talked to him. So I thought it would be cute to ask him to dance with her. Somehow in the process of all that, I managed to slip out to him how she was obsessed and in love with him. I know it was my fault to let her secret out but liking someone and letting them know is honestly not a big deal.

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"Whoever wishes to keep a secret must hide the fact that he possesses one."

~Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

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I asked a girl to a dance and everyone knew I was going to ask her—it was no big secret or anything. She agrees to go. However, at the dance, she dances with the another guy. I become depressed and even more so when I find out that she was planning to humiliate me in front of the world from the beginning. And everyone knew—they all kept this huge secret from me. Then, after all the drama, she sends me an email that implies that it was somehow my fault. This definitely calls for an "FML."

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"To keep your secret is wisdom, but to expect others to keep it is folly."

~Samuel Johnson

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I was watching Wizards of Waverly Place the other day. One of the main characters, Justin Russo, mentioned that ""secrets are for people who have something to hide."" While this makes sense to me, it also makes me think. I guess it's just my literature class brain being overactive, but I decided to look into the positive and negative connotations of secrets. I'll start with the positive: secrets are good when it comes to surprise birthday parties or surprise gifts or anything else that can be classified as ""pleasant"" or ""happy."" When it comes to the other end of the spectrum, though, secrets are downright awful. Bad test grades, rejection, eating disorders, and even suicidal thoughts are kept secret. These can be devastating, and one can lead to another. Which makes me think, is it worth keeping everything bottled up? I feel like if people shared information more frequently, less bad things would happen, because one would have a confidant(e) of sorts. And, since that person is a confidant(e), he or she would not tell anybody, so the secret would not spread like wildfire.

Of course, there are many people who disagree with this thought, some of them being middle-aged parents looking out for their child's future. I first noticed this at a gathering of family friends at the start of my freshman year. All of the people my age were either sick or at sporting events, so I had a choice between interacting with hyperactive four year olds or sitting in a corner by myself, quietly observing the parental units interact. Many of these parents mentioned, in some way or another, that it is bad to share one's progress with others. Doing so makes one vulnerable to not being unique; others can participate in the same activities and ""take away one's spotlight,"" so to speak. It makes sense to me, but I think it's a depressing thought. By not sharing experiences with friends, one lives life as a loner, which in all honesty, doesn't sound like it's worth it at all. Would keeping news of progress and activities bottled up fall on the ""bad"" end of the secret spectrum, because it could lead to depression or worse? Or would it be the ""good end"" because it could lead to better college admissions? I wonder...

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“No one keeps a secret so well as a child.”  
~Victor Hugo  
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The day I found out my best friend was homosexual was the day I fully understood the haunting impression that secrets leave on friendships. I didn't even intend to discover this; I found out by accident and to this day she still doesn't have any idea that I know about this.

After that, nothing was quite the same. I wondered frequently, what if she just told me her secret from the start? What if I never found out and kept being ignorant? What if this secret did not exist?

I suppose secrets can be good or bad- people can see a new perspective of you and understand you better. Or they can use it to judge you, and destroy you. Because they know exactly what nerve to hit.

This is why she didn't tell me. I'm a Christian. She's aware that I supported Prop 8 and I've let slip a few homophobic comments to her before. I don't anymore; the fact that I once did disgusts me. I guess it

took something like this to make me turn into a somewhat decent person.

In the end, I am glad that I know her secret. I just wish I knew how to handle it better. Whenever we hang out, I feel awkward because of everything we are hiding from each other. She has a secret that she is homosexual (perhaps there are more). And my secret is that, well, I know her secret.

I wish I could be honest with her but telling secrets is hard. The words just won't come. I think telling someone your secret is the biggest blind leap of faith you can subject yourself to. It's scary.

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“Everyone is like a moon, and has a dark side which he never shows to anybody.”  
~Mark Twain  
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Secrets

By Deborah Vanni, LMFT, Registered ATR

On my journey to becoming a Marriage and Family Therapist, I worked closely with World War II Veterans. , I worked closely with World War II Veterans. The focus of my thesis was helping veterans come to terms with the trauma they experienced fighting in a horrific war. Their deeply kept secrets, some as old as 50 years, had long since begun to take their toll. Not only was emotional pain surfacing, but physical and spiritual deterioration had set in as well. How could these men come to terms with the atrocities they witnessed and participated? When would they begin to tell their stories and whom would they trust? Although I sat before them with an empathic ear and a desire to help heal their ancient wounds, they were reluctant to share their secrets with me. Their internal questions were fair. How could I, a student of psychology, begin to understand the pain and torment of a WWII soldier? Who was I to sit before them, vowing to be the holder of their secrets, when I had lived such a comfortable life? Their fears were simple. There was no way a human being ever would understand the events that weighed so heavily upon them, unless they had similar combat experiences, and therefore in their eyes, I was unable to remain nonjudgmental.

Keeping secrets often stems simply from fear-fear of misunderstanding, danger, disappointments, anger, sadness, or changes in perception. Like WWII veterans, teens seek the same nonjudgmental base. Although the inner-workings of a teen are different than that of a soldier returning from war, the reality is that secrets can be just as important to an individual. To make things even more complex, teens are physically and emotionally changing all the time.

Often at the heart of teens is the work they must complete in becoming independent adults. According to the Psychosocial Developmental Stages of Erik Erikson, the teenage years are wrought with the task of discovering who one is as an individual. During these years, children are exploring their independence and developing a sense of self. A teen's psychosocial job is to separate from their family of origin and to become healthy and active members of society. Those who receive encouragement and reinforcement in exploring this independence will emerge as confident human beings. On the other hand, those whose separation is discouraged may become unsuccessful in navigating autonomy from their parents tending rather to remain unsure of themselves and confused about their future. In this way, adults who are active participants in an adolescent's life should encourage them to work toward leading independent lives. In this lies the fact that teens should have an opportunity to decide what they share with their parents and when. Of course this is not always a hard fast rule, but it is appropriate for a teen to want and have separate experiences with their peer groups.

In today's world, this is increasingly scary. As parents desire to keep their children safe in this generation of Facebook, cell phones, and instant texting, children historically pull away making it difficult for parents to keep track and know when to be concerned. The key is to develop a close but healthy relationship with their children.

For Parents Regarding Students:

Listen. Really listen. Teens want to know that they are heard, that an adult will take them seriously, and that parents have their best interests at heart.

Nonjudgmental. Teens often keep secrets because they are fearful of hostility from their parents, or they are too embarrassed to admit something they think mom or dad will not understand. It is important to remain nonjudgmental when listening. If your teen is certain your response will not embarrass or shame him, he may be more likely to share his thoughts and feelings.

Limit questions. Interrogation will never win points with a teen. Parents should be considerate about the kinds and number of questions they ask their child. Being a concerned parent is different than being nosy. Kids know the difference.

Respect their privacy. Teens will not reveal personal information if they believe their parents do not respect their privacy. This means your child is confident that you are not going through their room, personal belongings, emails, journals, or listening into their private conversations.

Reassure. Teens talk to parents when they feel safe. Let your teenager know that even if they have disappointed you, they have room to grow and make mistakes, and that you continue to love them.

For Students Regarding Parents:

Be fair. Try to meet your parents half way. If they have given you the respect and trust you have asked for, reward them by sharing some of your honest thoughts and feelings about school, friends, or issues.

Be understanding. It's no secret that parents can be really annoying. It might be helpful to remember that they are struggling with your newly found independence and may need some time to let the reins loosen.

Intention. Parents often come from a place of concern for your safety. They care and love you and want to see you become a healthy, successful and strong individual. This can drive them to be over protective. Reassure them that you can handle the independence they have granted you.

For Students Regarding Students:

Respect confidentiality. When a friend takes the time to share their inner thoughts and feelings in confidence, it is up to you to respect that confidence. Of course, there are times when confidentiality should be breached, but unless the secret meets the requirements for disclosure, don't. Your friend trusts you for a reason.

Take complaints seriously. Secrets can be a cry for help. If your friend shares something with you that sounds dangerous take it seriously. Often when a teen needs help, they will drop hints. As a listener, you may have more than one opportunity to understand the deeper meaning of their private metaphors.

Care enough to tell. If you care enough to listen to a friend's secret, then you should care enough to disclose that secret if it is something that could place him or her in danger. You could be the difference in someone's life.

Assess for immediate danger. If someone is in immediate danger, the three-step process is:

- Stay with the person (unless there is a risk or harm to yourself).
- Listen and take them seriously.
- Get or call for help.

The Dynamic of Secrets Revealed

The truth of the matter is, secrets often weigh heavily upon people and are dying to be told. Frank Warren created a project of secrets back in 2004. He printed 3000 blank postcards and left them in books, libraries, and park benches. The directions were simple. Anonymously, people were to decorate the postcard and reveal a secret that was completely truthful, but had never been revealed before, then mail the postcard back to Warren. The results were staggering, and the project became infectious. Since its conception, Frank Warren has received over a half million postcards. His project's popularity has now spawned a community art project, several books, and a website where people post their secrets. What Warren discovered is that when anonymous, secrets are more apt to surface. "I knew that if I could earn people's trust and build a collection of creative and authentic secrets it would be very special for me. It's great to know so many others appreciate these extraordinary confessions..."

The burden of "holding in" can prevent people from dealing with their problems. Stress and anxiety increases, and the secret can become an obsession. But, research published in the *Journal of Personality*, shows that "the simple task of

writing down a secret, even if no one ever reads it, makes people feel better. Writing a secret down is cathartic - it reduces stress and anxiety.” Telling your secret to a stranger is safer because there are no consequences, and confessing can be therapeutic. Recognizing others’ secrets as your own, even those that you may be hiding from yourself, can create moments of revelation. It is in those moments that you begin to understand the importance of empathy for the common man.

Research:

“Is Keeping a Secret or Being a Secretive Person Linked to Psychological Symptoms?” Anita E. Kelly, Jonathan J. Yip, *Journal of Personality*, Volume 74, Issue 5, pages 1349–1370, October 2006.

Deborah Vanni has been teaching at Monta Vista High School in the English department for 20 years. She became a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in 2008. She continues to do agency work at a domestic violence center and specializes in art therapy. She can be reached at dvanni_therapy@att.net.

Resources from the Verdadera Staff and Professional

Websites to share your secrets anonymously:

PostSecrets.com
tellyoursecrets.com
<http://grouphug.us/>

Frank Warren's Books:

PostSecret: Extraordinary Confessions From Ordinary Lives (2005)
My Secret: A PostSecret Book (2006)
The Secret Lives of Men and Women: A PostSecret Book (Jan. 2007)
A Lifetime of Secrets: A PostSecret Book (Oct. 2007)
PostSecrets: Confessions on Life, Death, and God (2009)

Some helpful websites for parents and students:

www.aacap.org (click on facts for families)
www.psych.org
www.suicidology.org
www.yellowribbon.org
www.teen-depression.info
www.parentsmedguide.org

Upcoming Issues and Submission Deadlines

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
Dances	6pm, Saturday, September 4 th
Judgment	6pm, Saturday, October 2 nd
Loneliness	6pm, Saturday, November 6 th

Ways to Submit

1. Visit us at www.verdadera.org. You can submit stories here, learn more about Verdadera, and meet staff members.
2. Stories can be turned in to **any staff member** – hardcopies or emails, anything is welcomed. Staff members are also there to help answer your questions about issues, topics, anything.
3. Email it to verdadera.entries@gmail.com

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Want to receive Verdadera via email?

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- 1) Student(s)' and parents' full name.
- 2) Student(s)' year of graduation
- 3) Postal address
- 4) Student and parents' emails.

And voila! You've helped save a small part of the earth! We appreciate you for doing so.



Secrets

September 2010

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.

Staff: Christina Aguila, Thomas Barber, Jackie Barr, Kevin Chang, Kriti Garg, Puja Iyer, Amy Kahng, Karishma Mehrotra, Timur Mertol, Anushka Patil, Hadar Sachs, Kevin Tsukii, Shishi Wang, Emily Wong

Advisors: Hung Wei, Carol Satterlee

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