

LAURENCE GREEN

Confessions of a Former Idealizing Analyst

For many years I idealized psychoanalysts. In this paper I tell the story of my idealization. My idealization toward analysts started when I began therapy and continued through my psychoanalytic training. I believed analysts were wise and well-balanced people who had worked through most of their pettiness, infantile conflicts, blind spots, etc. It was this idealization that fueled my interest in becoming a psychoanalyst.

My propensity to idealize did not fade away until my second analysis. I speculate that my analyst's humble attitude toward her own power, her own openness, and her confrontations of my ego ideal, finally broke the spell.

I refer to it as a spell because I feel a great relief in no longer idealizing. I paid a high price for my idealizations, that price came in the form of an over-demanding ego ideal. I always needed to be better like I imagined others were. Now I am more relaxed because I understand that all analysts, no matter how revered, are very far from perfect.

My change has come along with a much more humble attitude toward the profession of psychoanalysis. I think idealization plays a large role in many psychotherapists motivation to attend a psychoanalytic training institute. I conclude by encouraging a group discussion about idealization and asking "What if the idealizing mystique of becoming a psychoanalyst could somehow be removed, in what way might it impact the future of psychoanalytic training?"

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