

Pathwork™ Steps

THE IDEALISED SELF-IMAGE

Quotes from Pathwork Guide Lectures #83

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I would like to discuss the most important countermeasure man resorts to in the false belief that it will circumvent unhappiness, unpleasure, death, never realising that this very countermeasure not only does not avoid, but brings on the very thing that is most dreaded and fought against. This common, universal pseudoprotection is the creation of the idealised self-image.

It is supposed to be a means of avoiding unhappiness. Since unhappiness automatically robs the child of security, self-confidence is diminished according to the unhappiness and ensuing lack of security. This unhappiness cannot be measured objectively. What one personality may be able to cope with quite well and does not experience as drastic unhappiness, another temperament and character feels as dismal woe. At any rate, unhappiness and lack of belief in oneself are interconnected. Hence, the creation of the idealised self-image serves the purpose of obtaining the missing self-confidence. Thereby pleasure supreme can be gained. This is the unconscious reasoning process. It is not altogether different from the truth. In truth and reality, healthy and genuine self-confidence is peace of mind. It is security and healthy independence. It also achieves a maximum of happiness through developing one's inherent talents, leading a constructive life, and having fruitful human relationships in healthy interdependence. But since the self-confidence established through the idealised self is artificial and not genuine, the result cannot possibly be what was expected.

I have occasionally used the term mask self in the past. The mask self and the idealised self-image are really one and the same. The idealised self masks the real self. It pretends to be something you are not. As a child, regardless of what your particular circumstances were, you were indoctrinated with admonitions on the importance of being good, holy, perfect. When you were not so, you were often punished in one way or another. Perhaps the worst punishment was that your parents withdrew their affection from you, they were angry, and you had the impression you were no longer loved. No wonder that "badness" associated itself with punishment and unhappiness; "goodness" with reward and happiness. Hence, the need to be "good" and "perfect" became an absolute must; it became literally a question of life or death for you. On the other hand, you knew perfectly well that you were not as good and as perfect as the world seemed to expect you to be. This truth had to be hidden as a guilty secret, and you started to build up a false self. This, you thought, was your protection and your means of attaining what you desperately want -- life, happiness, security, self-confidence. Slowly the awareness of this false front began to vanish, but you were and are permanently permeated with the guilt of pretending to be something you are not. You strain harder and harder to become this false self, this idealised self. You were, and unconsciously still are, convinced that if you strain hard enough, one day you will be it. But this artificial squeezing-into-something-you-are-not process can never attain genuine self-improvement, self-purification, and growth because you start building on an unreal self and leave your real self out of commission. In fact, you are desperately hiding it.

The idealised self-image may have many forms and facets. It does not always dictate standards of recognised perfection. Oh yes, much of the idealised self-image dictates highly moral standards, making it all the more difficult to question its validity. "But isn't it right to want to be always decent, loving, understanding; never to be angry; not wanting to have any faults; trying to attain perfection? Isn't this what we are supposed to do?" Such considerations will make it difficult for you to discover the compulsive attitude that excludes the present

imperfection, the pride and lack of humility in which you cannot accept yourself as you are now, and, above all, the pretence with its resulting shame, fear of exposure, secretiveness, tension, strain, guilt, anxiety.

Since the standards and dictates of the idealised self are impossible to realise, yet never giving up the attempt, you keep and cultivate within yourself an inner tyranny of the worst order. But since you do not realise the impossibility of being as perfect as your idealised self demands, you never give up whipping yourself, castigating yourself, and feeling yourself a complete failure whenever it is proven that you cannot do so. The sense of abject worthlessness comes over you whenever you fall short of these fantastic demands, and engulfs you in misery. This misery may at times be conscious, but most of the time it is not. Even if it is, you do not realise the entire significance, the impossibility of your demands. And when you try to hide your reactions to your own "failure," you take to special means in order not to become aware of your "failure." One of the most common devices is projection into the outer world, onto others, onto life. This we have discussed at length in the past, but you will now understand the deepest reason of such projections.

The more you try to identify with your idealised self-image, the harder is the disillusionment whenever life brings you into a position when this masquerade can no longer be maintained. Many a personal crisis is based on this factor, and much less on the outer difficulties. But these difficulties then become an added menace, beyond their objective hardship. The existence of the difficulties is a proof to you that you are not your idealised self, and that robs you of the false self-confidence you tried to establish with the idealised self.

Sense of failure, frustration, and compulsion, as well as guilt and shame, are the most outstanding indications of your idealised self being at work. These are the consciously felt emotions of all that lies hidden underneath.

The idealised self has been called into existence in order to attain self-confidence and therefore, finally, happiness, pleasure supreme. The stronger its existence or presence, the more genuine self-confidence or remnants of it fade away. Since you cannot live up to these standards, you think even less of yourself than you originally did. It is therefore obvious that genuine self-confidence can only be established when you remove the superstructure of this merciless tyrant of your idealised self.

Yes, you could have self-confidence if, on the one hand, the idealised self were really you and if, on the other, you could live up to these standards. But since this is impossible and since deep down you know perfectly well you are not anything like what you think you are supposed to be with this "super self," you build up an additional insecurity. Thereby, further vicious circles come into existence. ... A further and most drastic result of this problem is the constantly increasing estrangement from the real self. The idealised self, as I said, is a falsity. It is a rigidly, artificially constructed imitation of a live human being. ... But the more you take out of that live-center in order to invest into the robot you have created, the more estranged you become from the real self, and the more you weaken and impoverish it.

In the course of this work, you have sometimes come upon the puzzling and often frightening question: "Who am I really?" This is the result of the discrepancy and struggle between the real and the false self.

So, as you proceed in this particular phase of the work, you will come to understand the exact nature of your idealised self, your demands, your requirements of self and others in order to maintain the illusion. Once you fully see that that which you regarded as commendable is really pride and pretence, you will have gained a most substantial insight that enables you to weaken the impact of the idealised self. Then and then only will you realise the tremendous self-punishment you inflict upon yourself.

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The Idealized Self Image PL83

Explore your understanding of the concepts

Actor's Studio / Inside the Actor's Studio Season 6 Ep 2 1999 Mary Tyler Moore talks about how her personal life was very different from the 'girl next door' persona she played. Season 12 Ep 4 2004 Michael J. Fox talks about how Parkinsons Disease affects his career and his personal life.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXVAv9htB9k>

Cast Away (2000) A plane crash strands an airfreight exec on a deserted isle in the Pacific for more than four years Tom Hanks, Helen Hunt. Director Robert Zemeckis

Keep breathing: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaA_fSYfmTQ

The Incredible Shrinking Man (1957) Scott Carey (Grant Williams) encounters a mysterious radioactive mist on a boating trip and soon finds his life taking a bizarre and frightening twist. His physical size begins to diminish as he shrinks to a mere two inches. Turns oddly philosophical / existential in the last few moments:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bp3iHjGBfT4> Director Jack Arnold. BW 81 mins

The Matrix (1999) Fun to watch and intellectually stimulating, this mesmerizing blend of hyperspeed and slow-motion flourish will keep you dazzled. Directed and written by Larry and Andy Wachowski.

Red pill / blue pill: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFhn_GUAhGU

Construct scenes: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGZiLMGdCE0>

There is no spoon: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAXtO5dMqEI>

A great example of how different people interpret things in a completely different way:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMf9GILXouA>

Running on Empty (1988) Tomorrow it will be a new town, a new house, a new hair color, a new identity. Knowing they would lose custody of their two-year-old son, Danny, if they surrendered to the authorities, the Popes became fugitives, living "underground" in order to keep the family together. The Popes have sacrificed a "normal" life together for their political beliefs. Now, those beliefs have led them down a dead end street. Director: Sidney Lumet. Judd Hirsch, Chrisine Lahti, River Phoenix, Martha Plimpton. 15 min segment:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnZlqwwna9I>

Tootsie (1982) Dustin Hoffman stars as a struggling actor who finds soap-opera success dressed as a woman in this cross-dressing hit comedy featuring Jessica Lange in an Oscar-winning performance. Directed by Sydney Pollack

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FIXE1Yq0AnQ>

Treacher Collins Syndrome This is a disease that continuously ravages facial features throughout one's lifetime, shifting the essence of our sense of physical identification. Its victims must seek an inner sense of self-worth.

Various documentary clips on YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=treacher+collins&eq=treacher+collins&gs_l=youtube.3..35i39l2j0l6i0i5l2.3784.7697.0.7988.16.16.0.0.0.138.1324.13i3.16.0.0...1ac.1.11.youtube.AjM0-qJzI4E

Witness Protection (1999) Tom Sizemore is marked for extermination by his "business associates," so he turns in evidence and is put -- along with his wife (Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio) and kids (River Phoenix) into the Federal Witness Protection Program. The film is an exhaustive, gripping look at the sacrifices witnesses and their families make, and how painful it is to give up one's identity. Forest Whitaker. Trailer

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2Vj3PTdbfQ>

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The Idealized Self Image PL83

Explore your understanding of the concepts

Notes below are from an interview with Mr. Hoffman:

Dustin Hoffman has described how dressing as a woman for 1982 film *Tootsie* made him realize he is 'brainwashed' about the typical notion of female beauty.

In a 2012 interview that has resurfaced this week, the 75-year-old said that the movie opened his eyes to the unrealistically high expectations placed on women's physical appearance.

Mr Hoffman told the **American Film Institute** that transforming into a woman who was not conventionally attractive made him realize he had spent a lifetime judging women by their looks.

'I thought if I was going to be a woman, I would want to be as beautiful as possible'

The father-of-six, who has been married to his attorney wife Lisa for 32 years, said that he asked to do a make-up test before signing onto the film, because he wanted to make sure he could make for a convincing woman. When Columbia Pictures transformed him into the role, he confessed that he was 'shocked' to see that he wasn't more attractive.

'I said "Now you have me looking like a woman, now make me beautiful," he recounts in the interview.

'I thought I should be beautiful if I was going to be a woman, I would want to be as beautiful as possible.'

When the make-up artists told him they couldn't make him any more conventionally attractive than they already had, that's when the actor had his epiphany.

His voice trembles as he says that for that reason, the lighthearted movie was 'never a comedy for me'.

'I went home and started crying,' he recounted, explaining that he told his wife that he knew then that he had to make this movie.

When she asked why, he responded: 'Because I think I am an interesting woman when I look at myself on screen. And I know that if I met myself at a party, I would never talk to that character,' he confessed.

'Because she doesn't fulfill physically the demands that we're brought up to think women have to have in order to ask them out.'

'There's too many interesting women I have not had the experience to know because I have been brainwashed'

The actor then choked back tears as he recounted the realization that he had at that time.

'There's too many interesting women I have. . . not had the experience to know in this life because I have been brainwashed,' he says he told his wife.

Mr Hoffman was nominated for an Oscar for Best Actor for his role in the film.

Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2358988/Dustin-Hoffman-chokes-tears-says-dressing-woman-Tootsie-realize-brainwashed-female-beauty.html>

What is the Idealized Self Image?

By Kim Rosen

Based upon Pathwork Guide Lecture 83 and the research of Bert and Moira Shaw

ISI is a false self designed to insure happiness, security, and self-confidence.

ISI can hide OR glorify negativities – or both.

ISI can be aloof, invulnerable, and/or ‘good’.

ISI makes tyrannical demands that we believe our lives depend upon fulfilling.

Causes feelings of failure, frustration, compulsion, false guilt, false shame, false needs.

Dissolving the Idealized Self-Image

1. Recognize in detail the ISI’s demands.
2. Understand what it was designed to insure – your particular type of happiness:

Reason Type *

Being accepted
Being aloof
Being in control

Will Type

Being seen
Being powerful
Being invulnerable

Emotion Type

Being loved
Being in harmony
Being “good”

Understand what it was designed to avoid – your particular type of Unhappiness:

Reason Type

Being rejected
Feeling pain
Experiencing chaos

Will Type

Being dismissed
Feeling helplessness
Experiencing defeat

Emotion Type

Being unloved
Feeling rage
Experiencing badness

3. Recognize in detail the damage it’s done: that is creates exactly the experience it is designed to avoid.
4. Welcome opportunities to let False Self die; opportunities to let go of being aloof, invulnerable, “good”.
5. Risk feeling all feelings especially your own particular unhappiness:

Reason Type

Pain of rejection
Hurt / chaos

Will Type

Defeat and helplessness
Being dismissed, unseen
feelings, being unloved

Emotion Type

Rage and badness
Having negative

* Referencing Three Personality Types: Reason, Will and Emotion Pgl 43
Full text of all Pathwork Guide Lectures may be downloaded at www.pathwork.org

Vicious Circle of Images

A worksheet for looking at clues to personality type: page 1 of 2

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Personality Type:	REASON	WILL	EMOTION
EXPERIENCE: Initial shock impression (examples)	When I expressed need for a baby sister, I was rejected emotionally	I wanted to be an artist. My parents said artists don't make money	Parents look upon what gives me pleasure with disapproval.
FEELING: universal emotional experience is that of FEAR, as in	Agonizing pain, rage, helplessness.	Absolute helplessness, rage, pain.	Frustration and rage, pain, helplessness.
GENERALIZATION: thoughts which form wrong conclusion.	Expressing emotional needs brings rejection.	The need to express one's real self brings defeat.	Expressing need for pleasure means you're bad.
IMAGE: thoughts + feelings = form that becomes increasingly rigid.	Life is painful and hopeless if you express your real needs for feelings- but ok if you don't express them.	Life defeats you if you try to express your real self- but can be ok if you hide your real self.	Life is frustrating if you express your need for pleasure, but can be ok if you hide your needs or submit to others.
REPRESSED NEED:	To experience and express real feelings with others.	To be seen, heard, trusted, be creative and believed, in relation to my real self.	to assert and express all feelings- and my need for pleasure.
MAIN IMAGE (these beliefs and their opposites sink into the unconscious, no longer accessible to logic)	I have to put my emotional needs and experience aside and seek approval in order to be loved / accepted.	I have to be successful and powerful, in order to be loved and seen.	I have to be good, in order to be loved and have pleasure.
PSEUDOSOLUTIONS forcing currents, idealized self images.	aloofness / withdrawal from feelings masked as 'Serenity'.	Aggression masked as 'Power' and competitiveness	Submission masked as 'Love'
RECREATION of the original experience comes about through-	Aloofness cuts me off from happiness that comes from emotional commitment and involvement with others. Aloofness also rejects and creates more rejection.	Aggression keeps me on top, separates me from people, and keeps me from being seen for who I am.	Submission brings frustration and negative emotions through not having the integrity and dignity that comes from self-assertion. Negative emotions bring disapproval.
RECREATION of the thought process =	life is painful and hopeless because real needs for feeling interaction with others don't get met.	Life defeats me. I am never seen for who I really am.	Life is frustrating because there is no pleasure through self-assertion, expression.
RECREATION of the feelings become emotional reactions =	I feel PAIN. I feel FEAR. 100%/100%	I feel HELPLESS. I feel FEAR. 100%/100%	I feel RAGE and FRUSTRATION. I feel FEAR. 100%/100%
BREAKING POINT of the vicious circle = be in reality (50%/50%)	I will not always have my emotional needs met. I'll sometimes feel rejected, hurt, in conflict.	I will not always be seen, understood or appreciated.	I will sometimes be frustrated in regard to pleasure and being loved.

Vicious Circle of Images

A worksheet for looking at clues to personality type: page 2 of 2

	<i>Describe how these elements show up in daily activities or relationships:</i>
EXPERIENCE: Initial shock impression (examples)	
FEELING: universal emotional experience is that of FEAR, as in	
GENERALIZATION: thoughts which form wrong conclusion.	
IMAGE: thoughts + feelings = form that becomes increasingly rigid.	
REPRESSED NEED:	
MAIN IMAGE (these beliefs and their opposites sink into the unconscious, no longer accessible to logic)	
PSEUDOSOLUTIONS forcing currents, idealized self images.	
RECREATION of the original experience comes about through-	
RECREATION of the thought process =	
RECREATION of the feelings become emotional reactions =	
BREAKING POINT of the vicious circle = be in reality (50%/50%)	

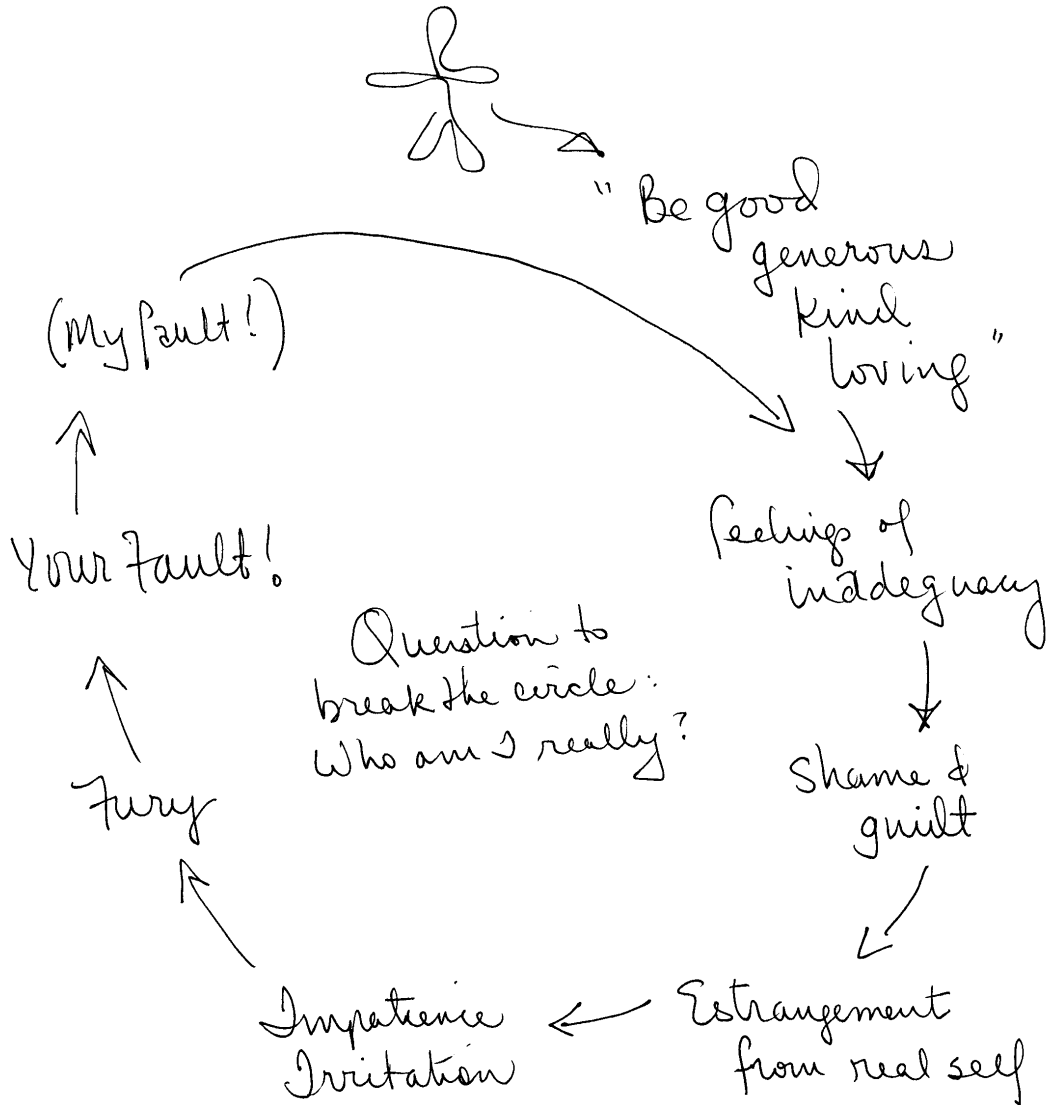
Personality Type these actions seem to describe
(circle after filling in this form and reviewing image worksheets):

Reason Will Emotion

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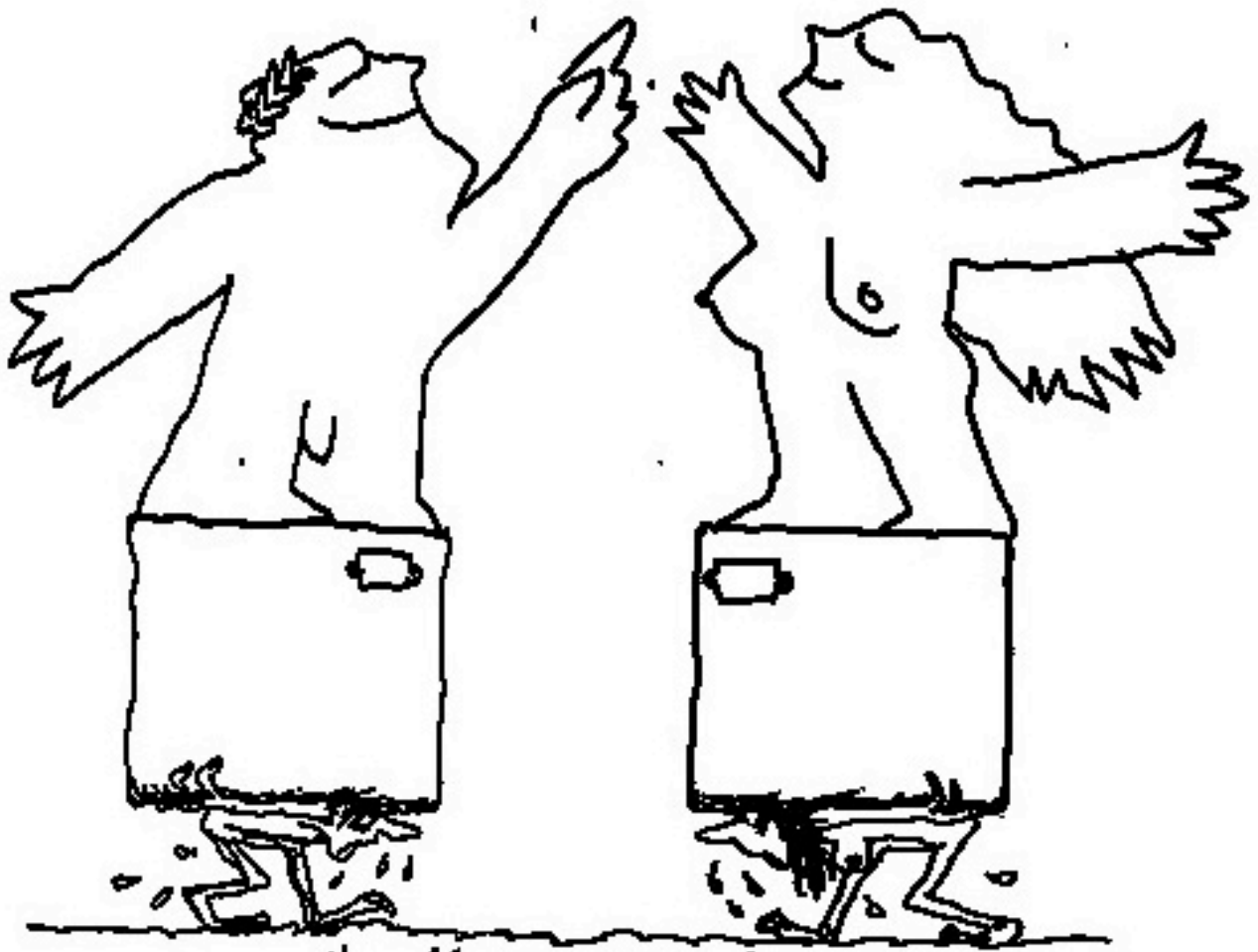
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The Vicious Circle of the Idealized Self Image #83



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the Idealized Self Image