

*Psychotherapy and Creativity: Caring for Physicians*

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This presentation focuses on the psychotherapy of physicians. “Creativity” is used in the sense that psychotherapy may free physicians, releasing traits locked inside them so that they can achieve their life goals more effectively. Literature about developing medical professionalism notes that the process of becoming a physician requires more than acquiring knowledge and skills. It also involves *re-socialization*, a process of acquiring *values* consistent with the demands on physicians and also to take their place in the *culture* of medicine. Erik Erikson wrote at length about acquiring *ego identity* as a critical task of adolescent and young adult life. By this he meant both the intrapsychic phenomenon with conscious and unconscious components and an interpersonal phenomenon, relying on corroboration by the social group. Erikson believed that identity is continually reworked throughout the life cycle. This presentation focuses particularly on the challenges to trainees in medicine as they attempt to accomplish the personal transformation that is required to develop the identity of being a physician. Given that young adulthood is a time when many serious psychiatric disorders first make their appearance, the psychodynamic psychiatrist who treats these individuals encounters complex combinations of normal development and psychopathology, all experienced in the pressure cooker of the training period. Identity issues which come up in the psychotherapy of older physicians will be discussed as well. Working with physicians as a psychodynamic psychiatrist is intensely rewarding work which permits the clinician to benefit not only the physicians and their families but the many patients the physicians will treat over their lifetime.