



American Expression E1306 On a pedestal

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The phrase "on a pedestal" is a common idiom used to describe the act of placing someone or something in an elevated, revered, or idealized position, often to an unrealistic degree. When someone or something is put "on a pedestal," they are seen as almost perfect or flawless, and their qualities or attributes are exaggerated and admired.

In its literal sense, a pedestal is a raised platform or base that is used to display statues, artworks, or other objects of significance. Placing something on a pedestal in this context highlights its importance and draws attention to its aesthetic or symbolic value. However, in the idiomatic use of the phrase, the pedestal represents an abstract place of high regard or admiration.

When someone is said to be "put on a pedestal," it means they are idealized or overly glorified in the eyes of others. This often occurs when people have a strong admiration or infatuation for someone, such as a romantic partner, a celebrity, a political figure, or a role model. In such cases, individuals may view the object of their admiration as possessing qualities or virtues beyond human capabilities.

Idealizing someone by putting them on a pedestal can have both positive and negative implications. On the positive side, it can lead to inspiration and motivation. For instance, a young aspiring athlete might place their sports idol on a pedestal, aiming to emulate their success and dedication. Similarly, people may look up to historical figures who have made significant contributions to society, using their achievements as a source of inspiration.

However, the negative consequences of placing someone on a pedestal can be more profound. It can lead to unrealistic expectations and disappointment. When people are perceived as perfect or infallible, any hint of imperfection or mistake can be shocking and disillusioning. This can create immense pressure on the individual being idealized, as they feel the need to live up to these unrealistic standards.

In relationships, putting a romantic partner on a pedestal can be problematic. It may lead to an unhealthy power dynamic where one person's needs and desires are consistently prioritized over the other's, ultimately straining the relationship. The pedestal can also prevent open communication, as individuals may fear revealing their flaws or vulnerabilities, fearing they will lose the admiration of their partner.

Moreover, when historical or political figures are placed on pedestals, it can obscure a more nuanced understanding of their actions and legacies. People may be hesitant to critique or question the actions of those they revere, hindering a society's ability to hold leaders accountable for their decisions.

In conclusion, "on a pedestal" is an idiom that describes the act of placing someone or something in an elevated, idealized position. While this can be a source of inspiration and motivation, it also carries the risk of unrealistic expectations and disappointment. It is important to recognize the humanity of individuals and the complexities of their actions, even as we acknowledge and celebrate their accomplishments and virtues. Balancing admiration with a realistic understanding of imperfections can lead to healthier relationships and a more nuanced view of the world around us.

Questions for Discussion

1. How can placing someone "on a pedestal" impact their sense of self-worth and well-being, and what are the potential consequences for relationships when idealizing a partner?
2. Can you provide examples from history or contemporary culture where public figures were put "on a pedestal," and how did this affect public perceptions and discussions about their actions and character?
3. In what ways does the act of putting someone "on a pedestal" relate to the concept of hero worship, and what are the potential drawbacks of viewing individuals as infallible heroes?
4. Have you ever experienced being placed "on a pedestal" by someone in your life? How did it make you feel, and what challenges or expectations did it create for you?
5. How can society strike a balance between acknowledging and celebrating the accomplishments and virtues of individuals while also recognizing their humanity and potential imperfections?