

We're taking a close look at the "Five Demons of Couples' Communication." They are *withdrawal, blaming, whining, resentful compliance and confusion*. Fear contributes to all of these behaviors.

In my last blog post we considered the purpose of fear, its protective function to stop pain or reduce a threat—the old "fight or flight" urge. But we also have other internal competing interests.

One part of you wants to:

- Eat what you want now vs. lose those extra pounds
- Exercise vs. stay on the couch
- Save for the future vs. buy something now
- Take it easy vs. work hard for a future goal
- Procrastinate vs. get it over with
- Speak up vs. keep the peace
- Be self disclosing vs. play it safe and be silent
- Spend time with spouse vs. find precious time to be alone
- Respond to needs of kids vs. respond to your own rest and relaxation needs
- Express resentments vs. try to let them pass
- Express what I want from my partner vs. hope they will figure it out

And the grand champion of all internal conflicts: the spectacular number of new year's resolutions that are broken by now or will be in the next 30 days.

These kinds of internal conflicts are normal. The vast majority of people have these push-pull conflicts in many areas of their lives. We feel neurotic because neither side feels satisfied when we can't seem to break this internal logjam.

Each side of us is afraid the other side will gain the upper hand. Each side is afraid it will be discounted, dismissed, or rejected. We all have these splits within us and each side believes it has the virtue of righteousness behind its voice. There is always a positive intent embedded in each perspective. But too often we don't slow down enough to understand each voice. Instead

we just feel crazy.

*What internal conflicts are you struggling with, and what are the positive intents of each side?* Click the comment link under the title at the top of this article to share your comments with me and other readers.

Until next time,

Pete

P.S. My next couples' workshop takes place in one month. It is on Saturday and Sunday, February 27-28 in Santa Clara, California. For more information including an audio clip from a past workshop or to register, visit the [couples' workshop](#) page of my website.