

# THE AUTHENTIC EDGE

Helping you to become who you are meant to be -- in your **personal life, relationships** and **career**.

August 12, 2025



## This Week's Focus: The Tug-of-War Inside Your Brain

I know inner conflict all too well—I've lived it. For years, I felt like I was driving with the brakes on, resisting my own progress through life. Part of me longed for connection, stability, and growth, while another part was scanning for the nearest exit, afraid of losing my freedom or individuality. I used to chalk it up to "just how I am," but once I understood the brain's Self-Protective and Self-Actualizing Systems—and how my own Striving Style's predominant need was going unmet—it all started to make sense.

In the Striving Styles Personality System, when our predominant need isn't met, our Self-Protective System takes over. Mine was working overtime, steering me away from anything that felt risky, even when it was exactly what I wanted. Meanwhile, my Self-Actualizing System—the part of me that thrives when I'm living authentically—was quietly urging me to move toward my potential. Without realizing it, I was stuck in a neurological tug-of-war that was draining my energy and eroding my confidence.

In this week's newsletter, I'm sharing how this push-pull works in the brain, why it impacts self-esteem and relationships, and how you can start integrating both systems so they work together instead of against each other. When you understand your Striving Style, you finally have the language—and the tools—to resolve the inner battles that keep you from becoming who you are meant to be.

Warm regards,

*Anne Dranitsaris*



Chronic inner conflict impairs executive function. When the brain is stuck in a cycle of emotional splitting—torn between the safety-driven Self-Protective System and the growth-oriented Self-Actualizing System—it burns significant cognitive energy just managing the tension. This constant internal negotiation leaves less capacity for decision-making, planning, and impulse control. The result is a kind of "brain drain" that shows up as decision paralysis, emotional fatigue, overthinking, second-guessing, and avoidance of risk or confrontation. Over time, this not only erodes self-trust but also limits performance, creativity, and the ability to lead effectively. Resolving inner conflict isn't simply emotionally freeing—it's neurologically essential for thriving in leadership, relationships, and life.

## In This Week's Newsletter

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**Feature Article:**  
**Struggling with Inner Conflict?**

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**Brain-Based Tip for Dealing with Inner Conflict**

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**Did You Know? Chronic Inner Conflict Impairs Executive Function**

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**Food for Thought: Inner Conflict & Our Brain's Competing Agendas**

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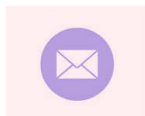
**Authentic Reflections: Relationship Roadblock**

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**Upcoming Events: Fall 2025**

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# Struggling with INNER CONFLICT?



## Tug-of-War Between Self-Protection & Self-Expression

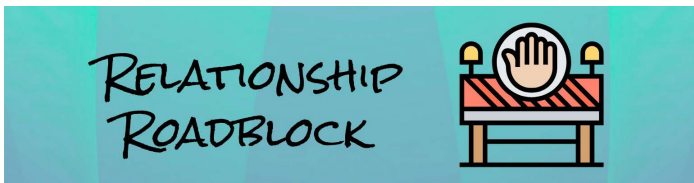
We often think of inner conflict as a purely mental struggle—a case of indecision, overthinking, or not knowing what we truly want. But the truth is deeper and far more physiological: inner conflict is neurological. It happens when two distinct systems in the brain—the Self-Protective System and the Self-Actualizing System—are sending opposing signals.

One is designed to keep us safe. The other is designed to help us grow. And when they clash, we feel it as tension, confusion, self-doubt, and paralysis.

You want connection but fear rejection. You crave success but avoid being seen. You long for rest but feel guilty taking it.

This push-pull is not a sign of weakness or failure. It's the result of developmental adaptations—protective wiring formed in childhood when we needed to survive emotionally and socially. These survival parts are not bad or broken. In fact, they once saved us. But when they're in charge as adults, they override the part of us that wants to live fully, authentically, and expansively.

[Read the Full Article](#)



## The Relationship Roadblock You Can't See or How I Mastered the Art of Running From Myself

I used to think I was brave. After all, I could start over anywhere. New job? Done. New city? Why not. Relationship not working? I was gone before the dust settled on the coffee table. I called it “being adventurous.” My therapist called it “running.”

We laughed about it—a lot. He would remark frequently that I lived life with a suitcase perpetually packed, like a spy ready for the next mission. The mission, of course, was to get away from anything that seemed like the trap of normal and mundane. And yes, he was right. I wasn't just running from bad situations. I was running from my own inner conflicts, from that unsettling feeling that maybe—just maybe—the problem wasn't out there.

### My Elaborate Distraction Toolkit

When you spend your life avoiding inner conflict, you become a black belt in distraction. My personal arsenal included:

[Read the Full Article](#)

## Inner Conflict & Our Brain's Competing Agendas

Most people don't realize that their brain runs on two primary systems with competing agendas—the Self-Protective System, which is wired for safety, and the Self-Actualizing System, which is wired for growth. Without this understanding, they have no language for what's really happening when these systems clash. Instead, they default to vague statements like, “A part of me wants to...” or “I feel torn,” without recognizing that this is a neurological tug-of-war, not a flaw in character or willpower.

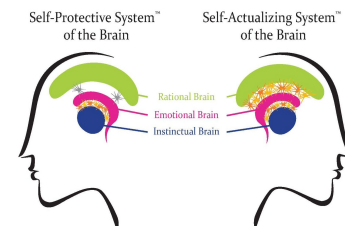
This lack of clarity has consequences for mental health. When we can't name or map what's happening inside, inner conflict becomes a silent drain on emotional energy. It fuels chronic self-doubt, indecision, and overthinking. It keeps the nervous system in a heightened state of vigilance, feeding anxiety and making it harder for the brain to access clear thinking.

Over time, unresolved conflict between these two systems erodes self-trust and contributes to depressive symptoms, as the protective system's dominance suppresses the desires and expressions of the self-actualizing system. People begin to feel stuck, unmotivated, or disconnected from joy—not because they lack ambition or discipline, but because they are caught in an unacknowledged internal battle that no one has taught them to resolve.

Without the tools to integrate these systems, the cost is both psychological—manifesting as anxiety, burnout, and low mood—and relational, as unspoken fear-driven choices shape the way we show up with others.

*“When your Striving Style's predominant need goes unmet, your Self-Protective System takes over—not to punish you, but to protect you. Development happens when you meet your need in healthy ways, so your Authentic Self can lead instead of your fears.”* from *Who Are You Meant to Be?*

## Brain Tip for Dealing with Inner Conflict



When you're caught in inner conflict, your brain is running two operating systems at the same time. The Self-Protective System—powered by the amygdala—floods you with stress chemicals like cortisol and adrenaline, keeping you hyper-focused on avoiding danger (real or imagined). Meanwhile, your Self-Actualizing System—centered in the prefrontal cortex—is trying to guide you toward growth, authenticity, and long-term fulfillment.

The amygdala shouts. The prefrontal cortex speaks quietly. If you don't slow down, the louder voice wins every time.

[Practice: The Two-Chair Dialogue](#)

Recent research confirms that ongoing inner conflict—such as when the brain's Self-Protective System consistently overrides the Self-Actualizing System—can significantly undermine self-esteem and confidence. Studies on cognitive dissonance show that when our actions or outcomes conflict with our values or expectations, the resulting psychological discomfort lowers self-worth and erodes trust in our own judgment (Frontiers in Psychology, 2023; JHSS, 2025). Over time, this misalignment trains us to second-guess our decisions, diminishes our belief in our abilities, and fosters a cycle of under-confidence that limits both achievement potential and social confidence. In effect, the longer we choose protection over authentic expression, the more we reinforce the belief that we're not capable—or worthy—of creating the life we truly want.

# Workshops for Women on the Path to Authentic Living

## Fall 2025

These workshops and groups are designed to support breaking free from the limitations of roles, beliefs and fears to get on YOUR path to individuating and achieving your authentic potential.

### - **60+ Women's Group: Continuing the Journey**

A soulful, supportive space for women 60 and older who are committed to deepening their journey of individuation. Share wisdom, reflect on purpose, and embrace the next chapter with intention.

### - **Imposter Syndrome Workshop: Reclaim Your Inner Authority**

Quiet the inner critic and step fully into your worth. This experiential workshop unpacks the root causes of imposter syndrome and provides brain-based strategies to rewrite your internal narrative.

### - **Breaking the Chains of Attachment: A Codependency Workshop**

Learn to identify unhealthy attachment patterns, understand emotional entanglements, and create boundaries that support freedom and authentic connection.

**More information about the sessions is coming soon. If any of the groups or workshops sound interesting to you, contact me at [anned@annedranitsaris.com](mailto:anned@annedranitsaris.com). Fall Sessions: October. Limited group size – secure your place early**



This isn't just a course on how to meditate—it's a training in how to live.

In this intimate, small-group setting (6–8 participants), you'll learn how to use mindfulness to shift out of autopilot, calm your reactive brain, and become more present in your everyday life—at work, at home, and in your relationships.

#### **Over 4 weeks, you'll:**

- Learn how mindfulness supports emotional regulation and brain function
- Practice simple, powerful techniques to anchor your attention
- Explore the patterns that keep you stuck in worry, distraction, or self-criticism
- Build habits of awareness, compassion, and presence you can use anytime, anywhere

Each 75-minute Zoom session includes group discussion, guided practice, and reflection to help you integrate what you learn—not just on the cushion, but in real life.

**October 15th & 17th, 2025 | \$195.00 plus HST.** Weekly home practice and workbook included.

For more information or to register, visit **Mindfulness in Everyday Life Workshop** on my website.

Give your mind the reset it's been craving—and learn to live fully in the moment.



**Anne Dranitsaris, Ph.D.**

If your mind never stops racing, if you're constantly bracing for what might go wrong, or if you struggle to be present no matter how hard you try—there's nothing wrong with you. Your brain is just stuck in a reactive loop. Hypervigilance is exhausting and won't go away without retraining the brain.

For decades, I've helped people break free from the autopilot patterns that keep them anxious, distracted, or disconnected. These patterns are often wired in childhood and reinforced by stress, expectations, and roles like the "caretaker," the "doer," or the one who "keeps it all together."

Mindfulness with me isn't about learning to meditate—it's about learning to wake up. I teach practical tools to calm your nervous system, sharpen your attention, and shift from reacting to responding. Whether you're dealing with burnout, emotional reactivity, or just want to feel more grounded and clear, I'll help you rewire your brain so you can live with presence and purpose.

If you're ready to stop running on survival mode and start experiencing your life as it's happening, visit [www.annedranitsaris.com](http://www.annedranitsaris.com). You're not here to just get through the day. You're here to be here.