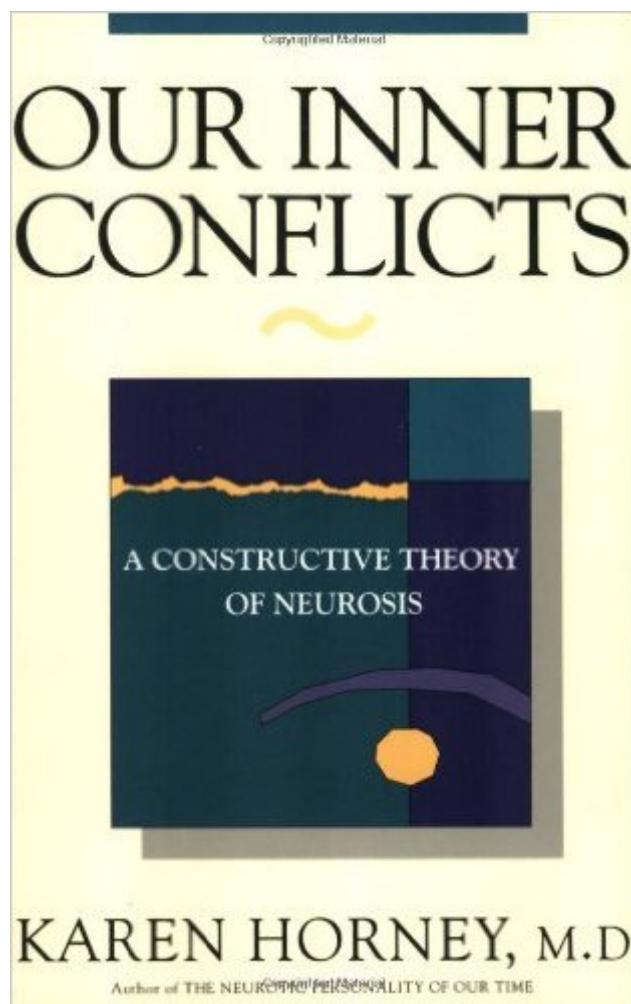


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# Our Inner Conflicts: A Constructive Theory Of Neurosis



## Synopsis

Here Karen Horney develops a dynamic theory of neurosis centered on the basic conflict among attitudes of "moving forward" "moving against," and "moving away from" people. Unlike Freud, Horney does not regard neurosis as rooted in instinct. In her words, her theory is constructive because "it allows us for the first time to tackle and resolve neurotic hopelessness. . . . Neurotic conflicts cannot be resolved by rational decision. . . . But [they] can be resolved by changing the conditions within the personality that brought them into being."

## Book Information

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As I understand it, the theory presented in this book runs as follows: There's a gap between our actual self and the image we have of our self (our idealized self) which causes an inner conflict which we tend to deny and make unconscious, but then shows its presence through symptoms (anxiety, unhappiness, health issues etc). The conflict is channeled into three types of personalities (Chap 3-5): Those who move towards, against or away from people. Those who move towards people tend to be compliant and want people to like them (pleasers, etc). Those who move against people tend to be aggressive, detest any sign of weakness and believe in the law of the jungle. Those who move away from people detach and seek for a form of self-sufficiency and to live in some kind of ivory tower with a "Do-Not-Disturb" sign on their doors. "Where the compliant looks at his fellow man with the silent question, 'Will he like me?' - and the aggressive type wants to know, 'How strong an adversary is he?' or 'Can he be useful to me?' - the detached person's first concern

is 'Will he interfere with me? Will he want to influence me or will he leave me alone?' (pg 80). All three types are considered neurotic due to their rigidity and compulsiveness. A healthier person can flexibly give and receive love, stand up for himself when needed and withdraw at times for needed rest and reflection. All three types also employ a variety of defenses to deal with this interior conflict. Completely repress the actual self and identify fully with the idealized self (Chap 6). Externalize the conflict (Chap 7 fully devoted to this).

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