

# **The Pathway to Healthy Anger**

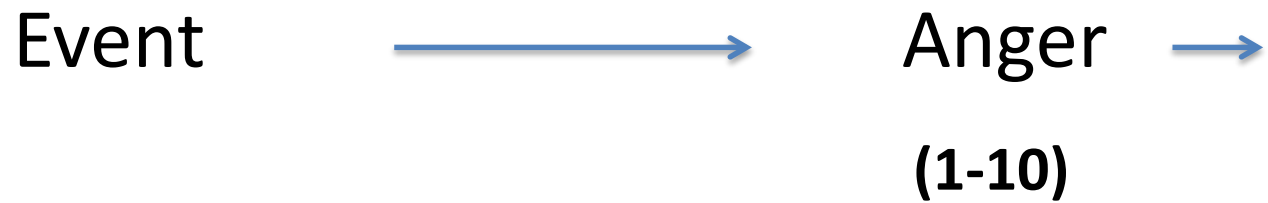
**March 13, 2015**

**Bernard Golden, PhD**

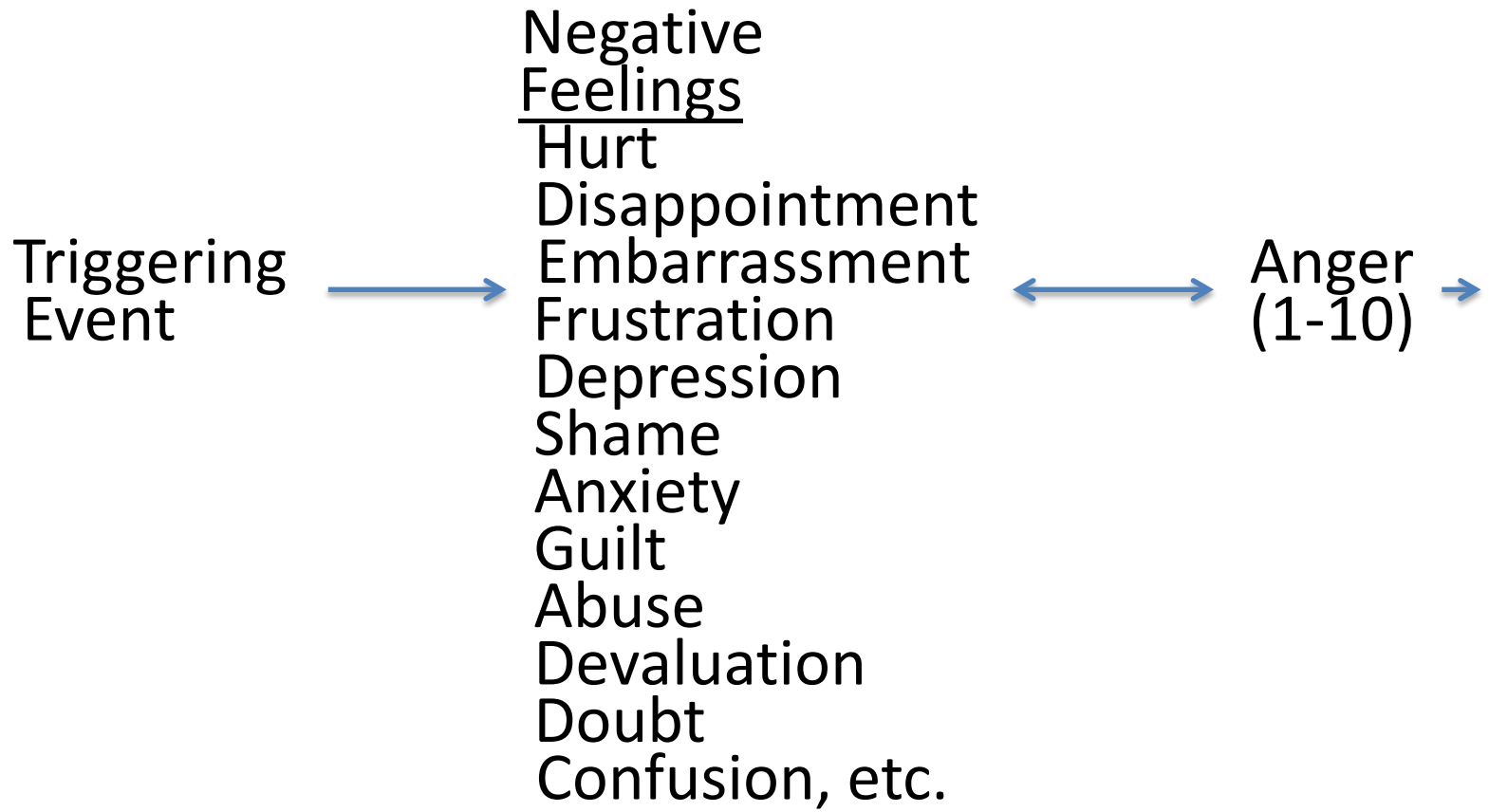
*The Pathway to Healthy Anger* encompasses skills from three broad areas of theoretical understanding and practice:

- Self-awareness
- Mindfulness and Mindful Meditation
- Self-compassion (Compassion Focused Therapy and Theory)

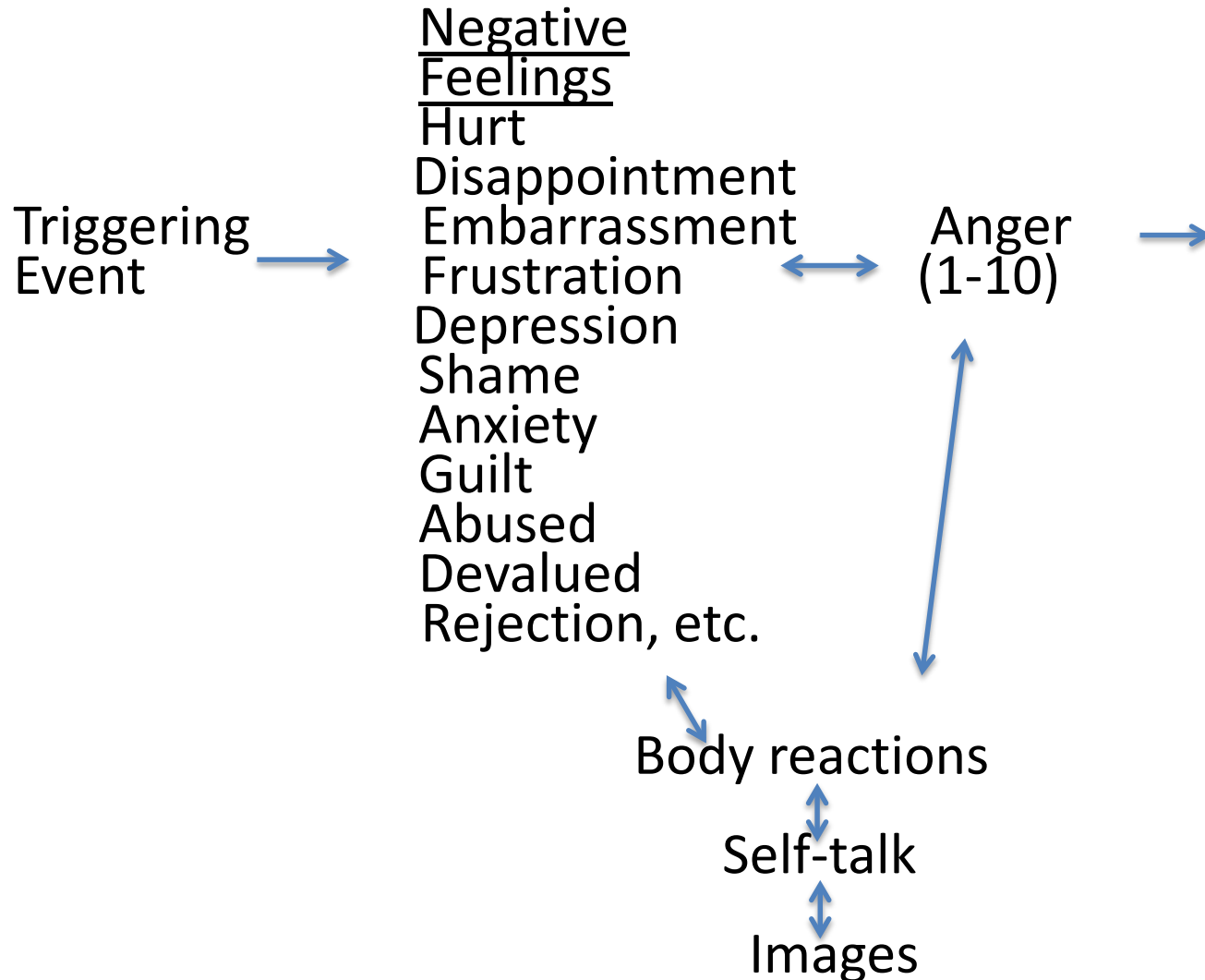
# A Framework of Anger



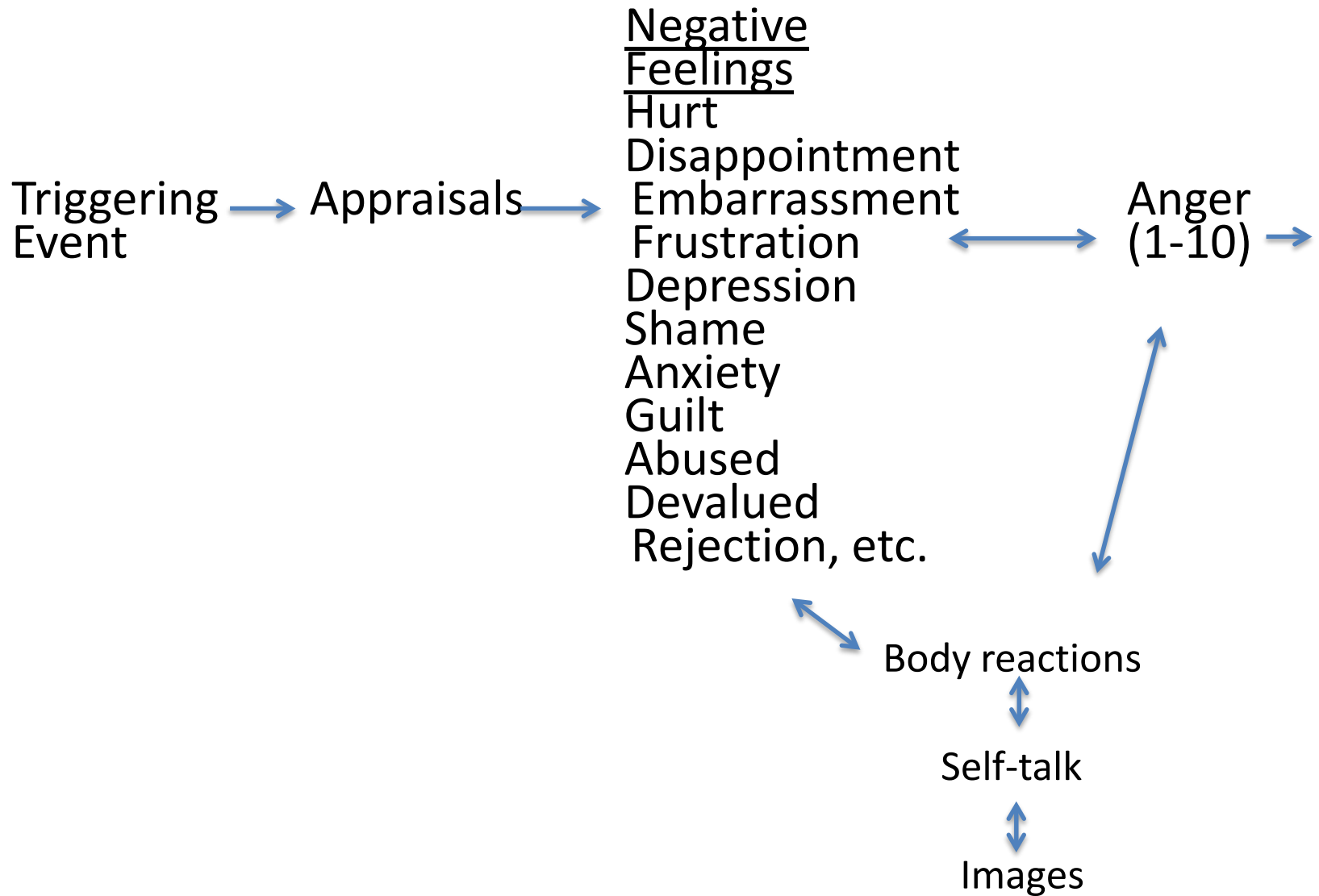
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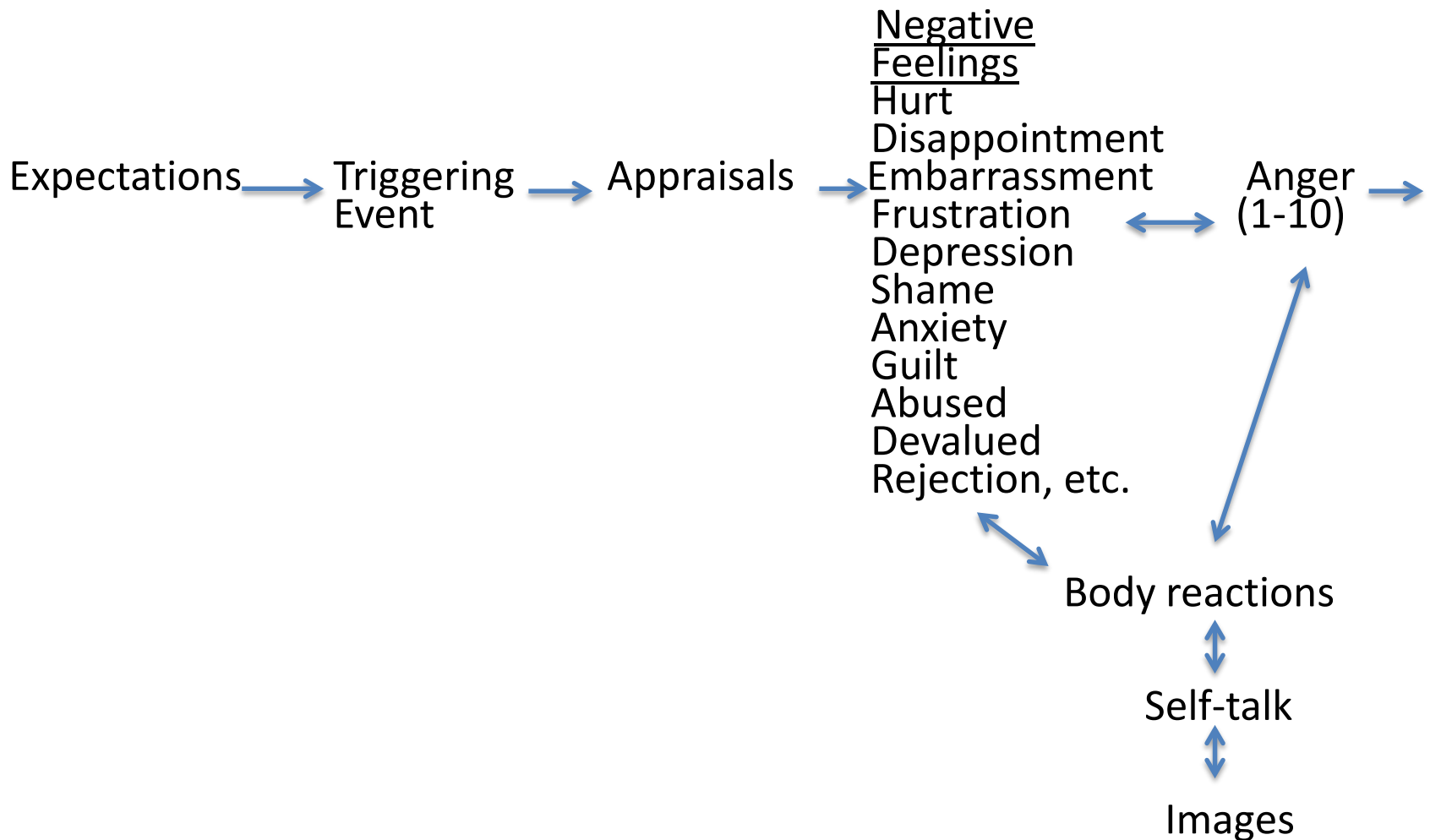
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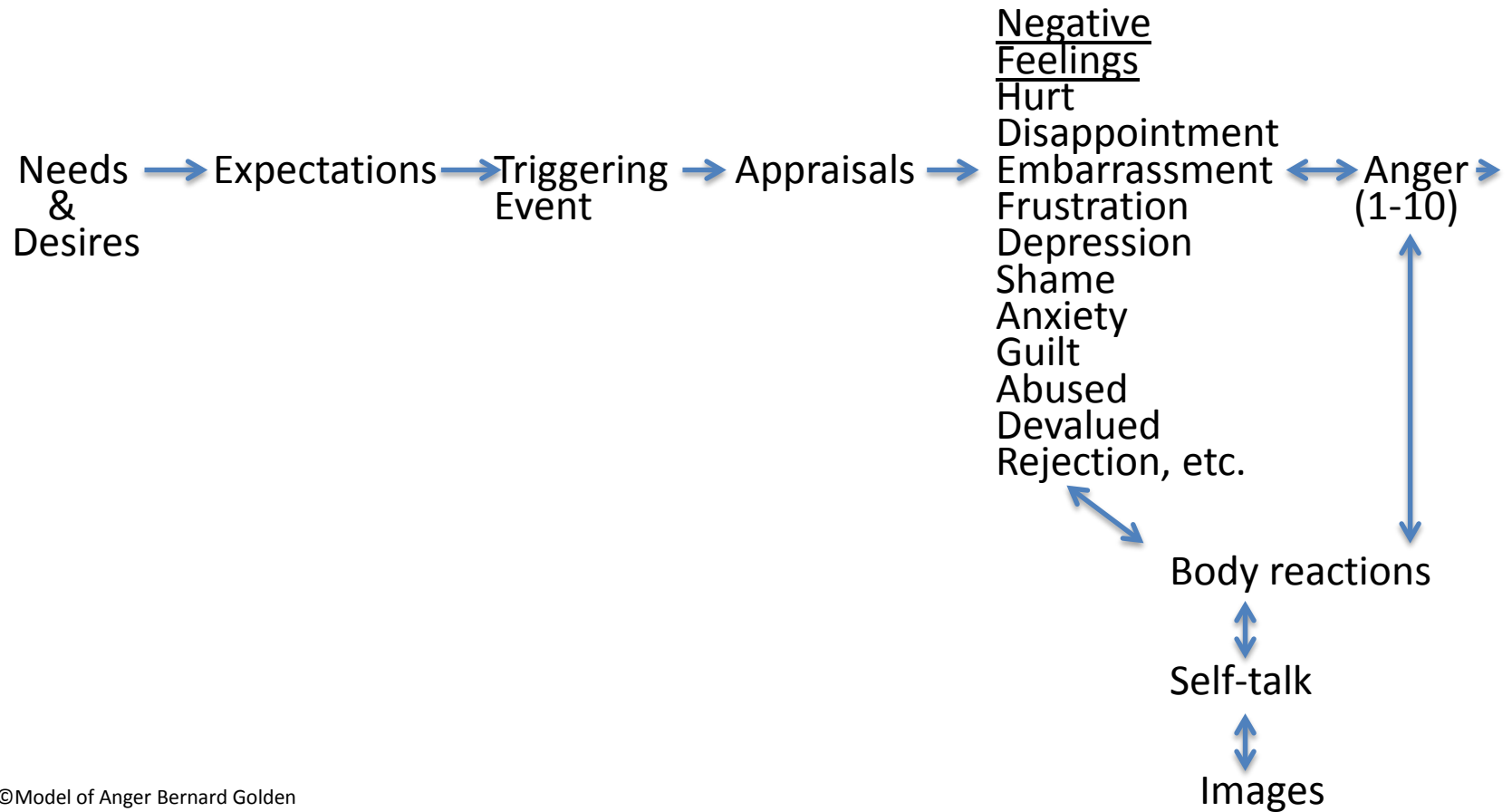
# A Framework of Anger



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# The Anger Log



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\_\_\_\_ Bodily reactions (coinciding with negative emotions including anger):

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Self-talk (coinciding with negative emotions including anger):

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Images (coinciding with negative emotions including anger):

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Previous events and mood prior to triggering event:

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# The Anger Log



Safety, respect,	Drivers should drive cautiously and with consideration	Being cut off on road	He did it purposely He's inconsiderate	disrespected fear anxious ignored	(6)
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**Bodily reactions (coinciding with negative emotions including anger):** tension in chest, rapid breathing

**Self-talk (coinciding with negative emotions including anger):** I can't believe he did that. I should punish him for that.

**Images (coinciding with negative emotions including anger):** None

**Previous events and mood prior to triggering event:** Past history of feeling disrespected and vulnerable and current mood

# Mindfulness and Mindful Meditation

...moment to moment, nonjudgmental awareness, cultivated by paying attention in a specific way, that is, in the present moment, and as non-reactively, as non-judgmentally, and as openheartedly as possible.- Jon Kabat-Zinn

- Be alert to the details of how clients practice meditation.
- Encourage discussion of appraisals of observations.
- Emphasize informal practice as well as formal meditation
- Articulate the difference between gaining distance from experience and suppression of the experience

# Compassion-Focused Theory and Therapy

CFT is based on an integration of evolutionary, social and developmental theories; Buddhist psychology and neuroscience.

Our brain contains three types of emotion regulation systems:

1. One helps you to seek and maintain safety, to alert you to potential threats
2. One rewards seeking support warmth, connection and attachment to others—soothing, and
3. Another moves you to strive for life fulfillment, supporting your capacity to focus on goals and identify how to achieve them

# Key Concepts of CFT

- The challenge is to train the brain to be mindful to awareness and choice regarding the system that is being activated
- Compassion and self-compassion help to create the soothing essential for creating such balance
- Compassionate meditations impact these systems

# Self-Compassion

Psychologist Christopher Germer states that:

“Self-compassion is a form of acceptance. Whereas acceptance usually refers to what’s happening *to you*--accepting a feeling or a thought--self-compassion is acceptance of the *person* to whom it’s happening. It’s acceptance of ourselves while we’re in pain.”

# Components of Self-Compassion

Self-compassion entails (Kristen Neff):

- Kindness with oneself
- Non-judgment
- Recognizing and honoring our humanity
- Wisdom

# Cultivating your Compassionate Self

Exercise #1 – Recall your being compassionate with others

Exercise #2 – Gathering your compassionate mentors

Exercise #3 - Envisioning your older self



# Directing Compassion at Your Hurting Self

Share compassionate meditations:

I know you're hurting

I'm here to sit with you and your anger

This is what you are feeling right now

Like all feelings, it will pass

I know it's uncomfortable

We can do this

I'll help you move past it later

# Directing Compassion at Thoughts

- It makes sense that you would think what you think – given your history
- We have all kinds of thoughts
- Of course that is where your mind goes
- It makes perfect sense to your emotional brain
- That's a familiar path

# Directing Compassion Toward Expectations

- If only it were true
- How nice that would be
- It is unfortunate, disappointing and sad that life isn't the way I would like it to be.
- It figures

# Compassionate Responses to Desires

- It's sad to give up desires
- Unfortunately, you may believe or feel your desire is a need- when it is not
- I'm here to help you with your needs
- I'm here to help you grieve

# Grieving and Mourning

- Grieving involves acknowledging the immediate pain
- Mourning involves letting go of it
- Addressing past hurts
- Mindfully reinvesting in the present

# Practicing Compassion Within the Session

- Being mindfully present
- Being compassionate in responses
- Being mindful to help client identify alternative responses to self that are self-compassionate
- Finding opportunities within the session to encourage client mindfulness
- Helping client identify and overcome challenges to self-compassion

"Having compassion starts and ends with having compassion for all those unwanted parts of ourselves. The healing comes from letting there be room for all of this to happen: room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy."

----Pema Chodrun