

Compassion Focused Therapy

Self-Criticism

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Responsibility

- **During the workshop we will be engaging in various exercises such as compassionate imagery or working on self-criticism**
- **All exercises are entirely voluntary**
- **You are responsible for your own well-being**
- **All shared material is confidential**
- **You are clinically responsible for how you use CFT**



Internal Relationships

New Brain

Imagination and

Self-to-Self Relating



Internal Roles and the Inner Relationship of self

Two types of internal 'self → self' relationship

Hostile dominant self → fearful, subordinated self

Caring emphatic self → cared for, soothed self

**Mediated through and reflected in *affect, behaviour*
and *self-talk***

Internalised Self-Attacking and Shame: Self as an object for evaluation

Pre-modern

Inner demons; possession

Freudian

1. Superego – related to internalised parental prohibitions

2. anger turned inward to avoid aggression to desired other

Gestalt

Top-dog versus under-dog

Behavioural

Self-punishment

Cognitive

Self-attacking, self-critic

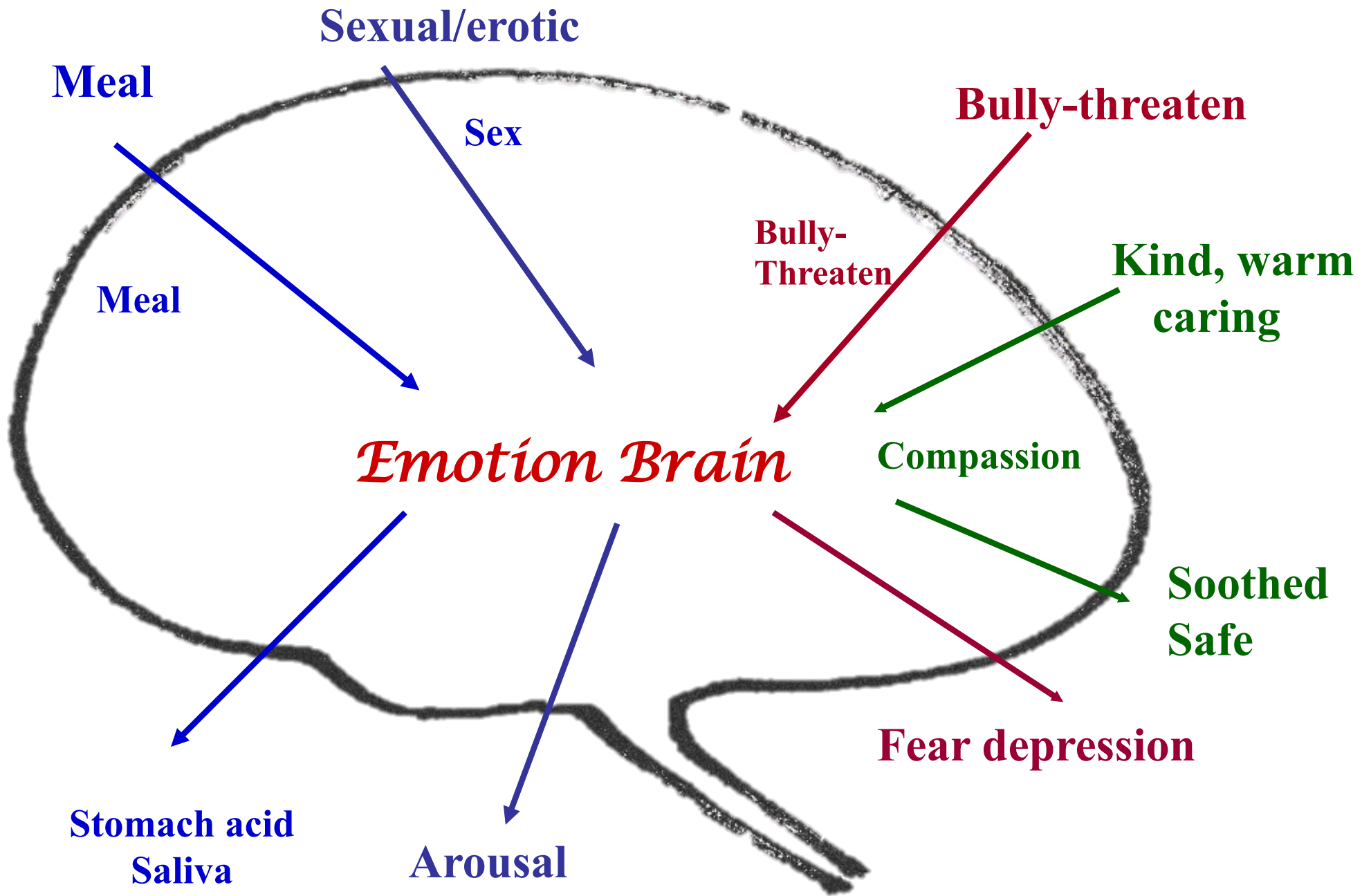
Evolutionary

Internalised hostile dominating signal

Ideal mismatch

Frustrated generated attacks – the unattractive or undesirable self





Brain-body responds to its own internal creations

**Critical-threaten -
bullying**

**Kind, warm
caring**

**Critical-Threaten
myself**

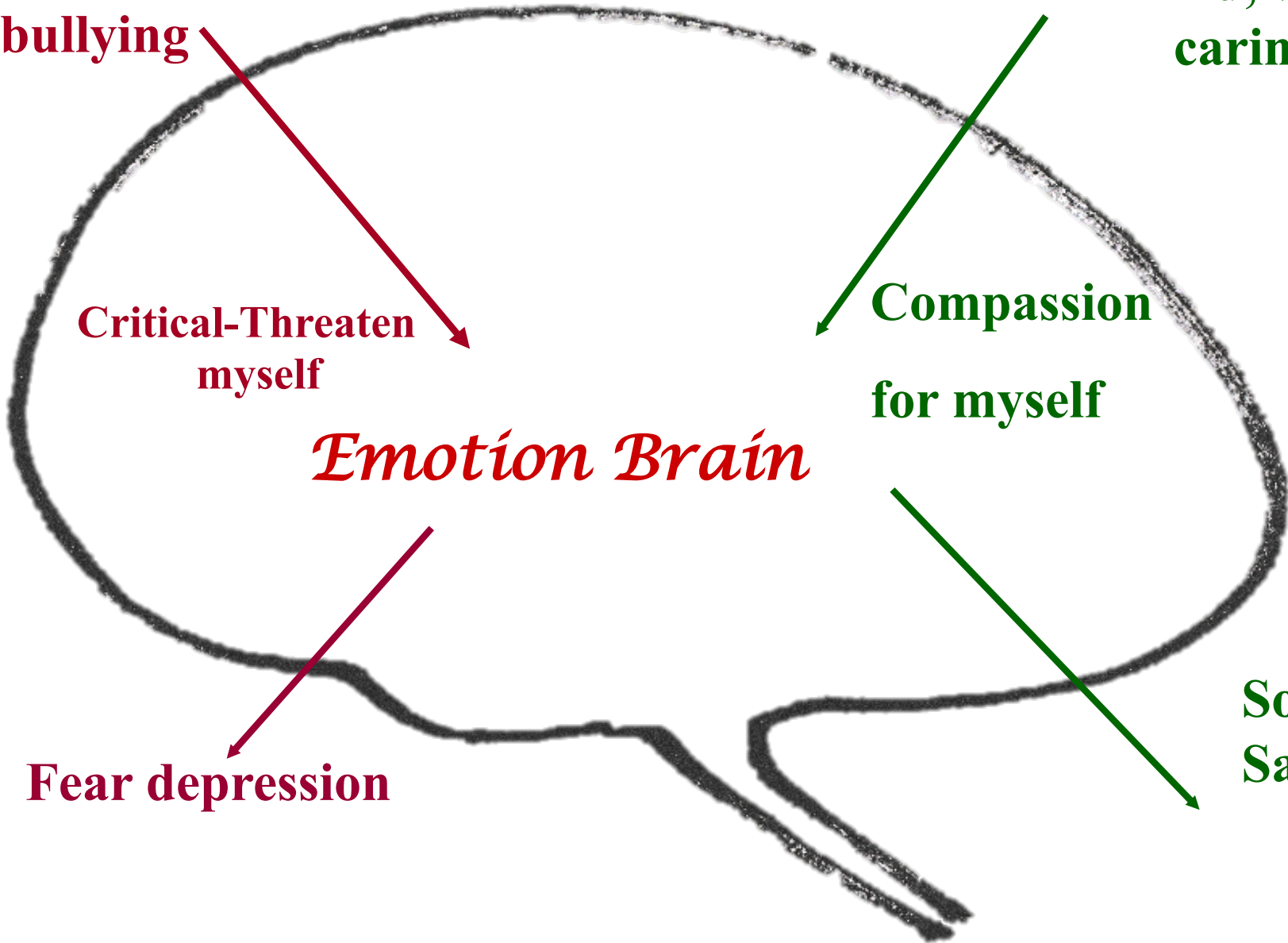
**Compassion
for myself**

Emotion Brain

Fear depression

**Soothed
Safe**

Brain-body responds to its own internal creations



Questions

**How does self-criticism and self-compassion/
reassurance work in the brain?**

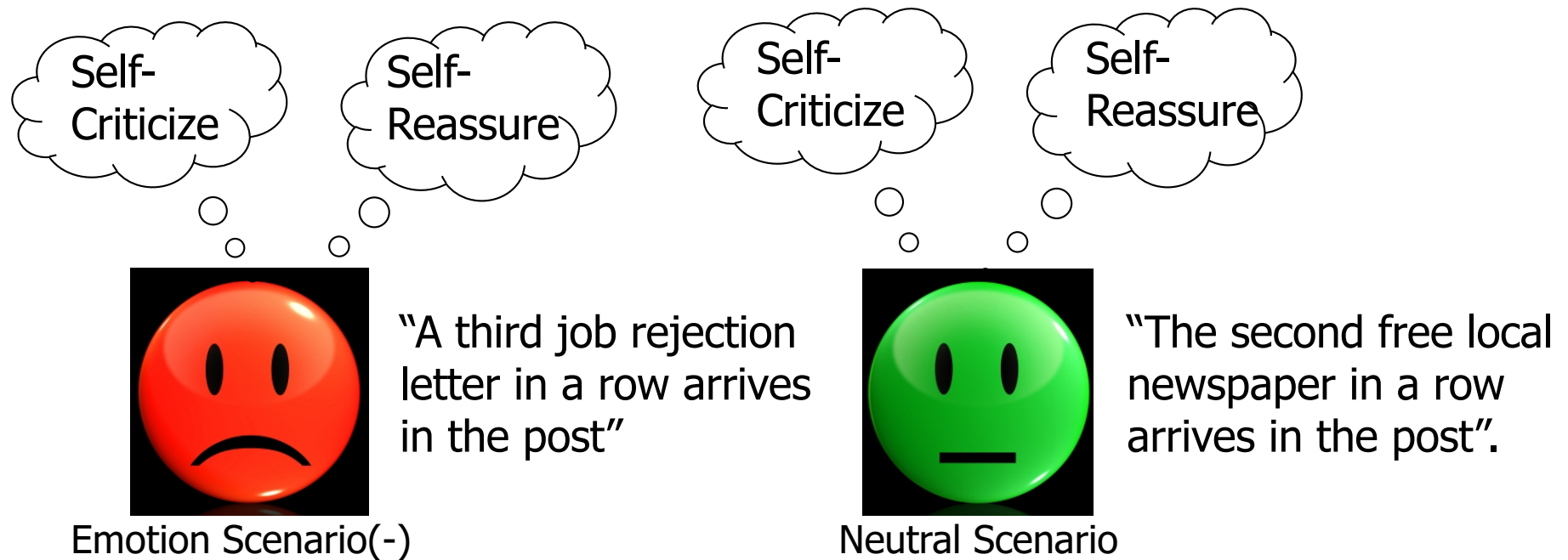
**Are there individual differences linked to trait
self-criticism?**

**How might compassion training influence
neurophysiology?**



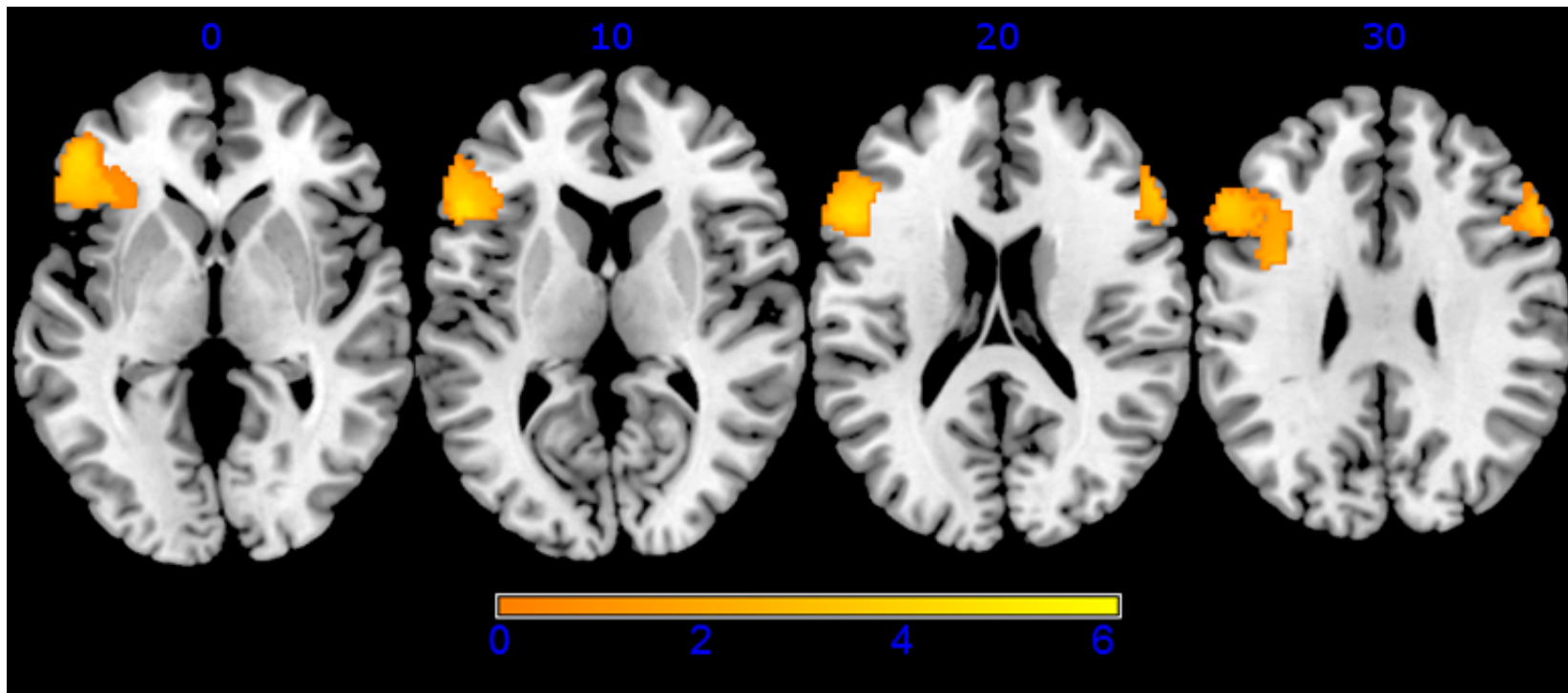
fMRI Study (Aston University)

STUDY: Olivia Longe, Gina Rippon, Paul Gilbert & Frankie Maratos



- 2X2 Factorial: 2 X Statement Scenarios, 2 X Imagery Perspectives
- Statements pre-tested (n=12), for imagability (i.e. ease of imagining self-critical or self-reassuring thoughts), 1-7 Likert Scale.

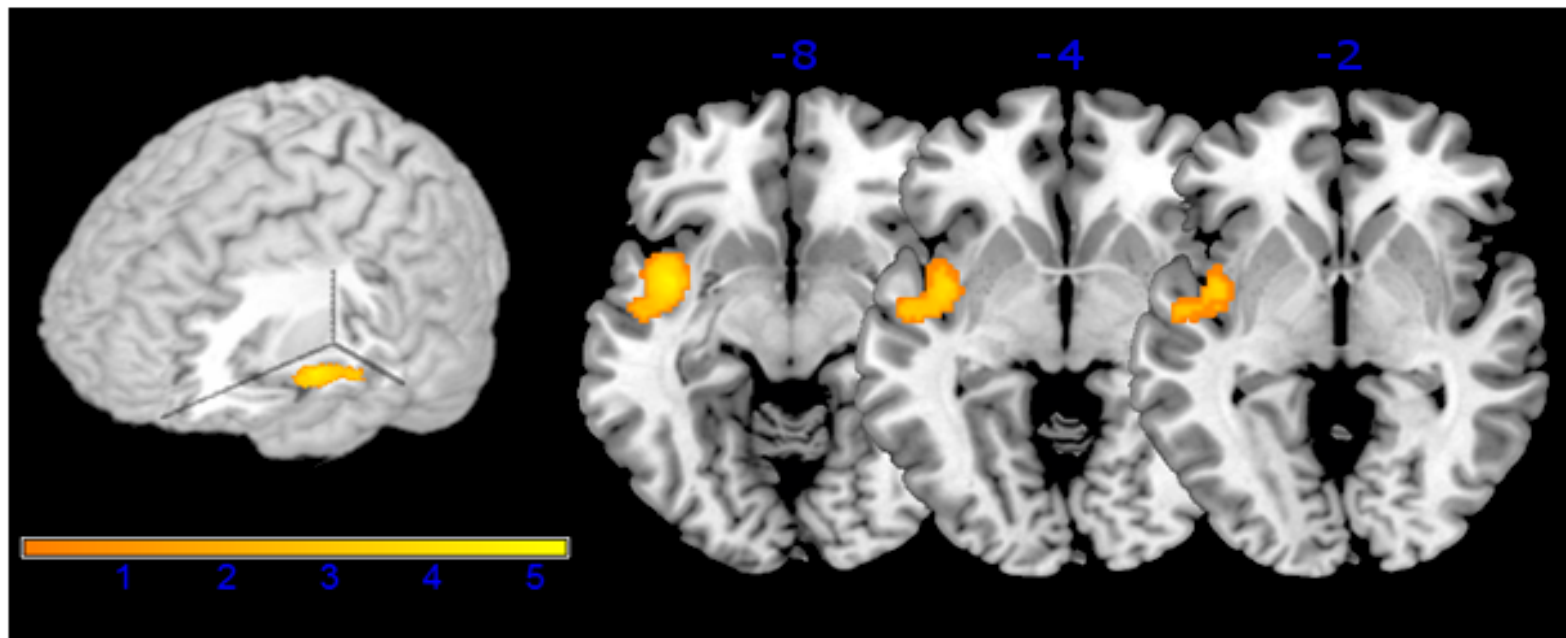
Self-Criticism during Emotional Scenarios vs. Neutral



Axial slices displaying left lateral PFC (BA 47, 45,9) and right lateral PFC (BA 46) activation

Longe et al. (2010). Having a word with yourself: *NeuroImage*, 49, 1849-1856

Self-Reassurance during Emotional Scenarios vs. Neutral



Whole brain and axial slices displaying left temporal pole (BA 38) and insula activation

Longe et al. (2010). Having a word with yourself: *NeuroImage*, 49, 1849-1856

Why Focus on Self-Attacking?

Self-critics have poor social relationships
(Zuroff et al., 1999)

Depressed people become more self-critical as
mood lowers (Teasdale & Cox, 2001)

Self-critics may do less well with standard
CBT (Rector et al., 2002)

Self-Attacking in Psychosis

70% of voices are malevolent

Commands – sometimes with threats

Insults (direct and indirect)

Self-Critical Thinking Styles

Social Comparison

Personalisation and Self-blaming

Self-labelling/condemning

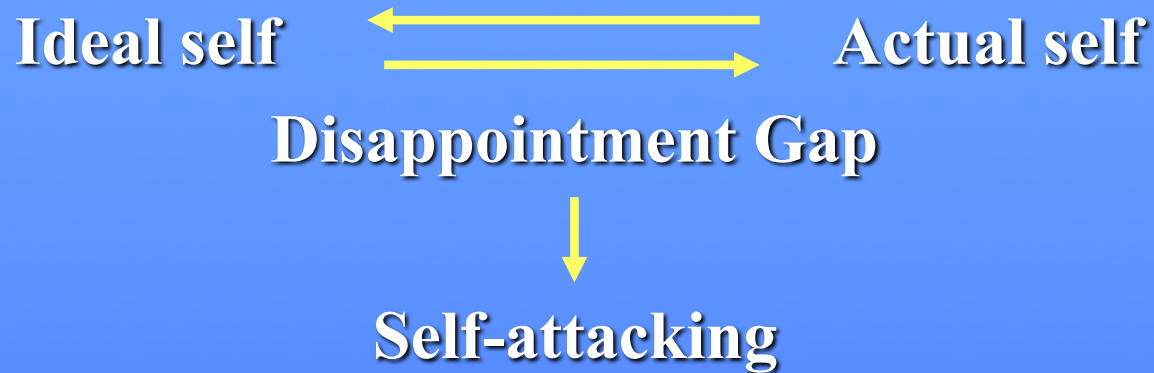
FORMS

Self-attacking (frustration)

Self-criticism (to improve/correct)

Self-hatred/disgust (to hurt or destroy)

Affects and Self-Attacking



- * Separate feeling of frustration from self-attacking
- * What are the key fears of failure
- * What is the emotional focus (e.g. anger, sadness, hatred, contempt)
- * Ability to experience and tolerate frustration without self-attack (conditioning)

A Submissive Strategy

Freud re-visited

Powerful Other(s) (Gods)
(harmful and/or protective)



Appease, submit, comply (sacrifice)



Harmful things (still) happen

Sense of aloneness



Self-monitor



Self-Blame

May also blame others for non-compliance
for upsetting the dominant (Persecute)

- **Meeting our inner critical
Process**
- **A Guided Discovery Journey**

Working with Self-Criticism

- **Functional Analysis –what does it do for you**
- **What are our Greatest fear of letting go?**
- **What forms dose it take (imagery)**



Self-criticism: A sequence

Functional analysis – How does it work for you? – what is your great fears of giving it up –can we explore these?

- **Imagine critic –appearance and sense of**
- **Feeling directed at self**
- **How we feel**
- **Does it have our best interests at heart?**
- **What part of our self might?**
- **How do these parts influence our brain – what would we choose?**

Reason to Hold Self-Criticism

- *In religions that believe that humans are basically sinners then focusing on one's sinfulness keeps one as a group member*
- *self-criticism is seen as sign that you are a person who tries and is committed*
- *family loyalty -treating oneself as others like parents treated me being loyal to their judgements of me as opposed to rebelling and seeing that they were inaccurate wrong or bad (Bowlby's 1980 defensive exclusion)*

Reasons to Hold Self-Criticism

- *Self-criticism avoids egotism being arrogant and resting on one's laurels or proclaiming one's strengths*
- *Self-criticism offers the could become so good we have the potential to avoid the rejections*
- *self-criticism carries the hope that if we can get it right and avoid rejection we could end up being loved wanted cared for and valued at a deep level*
- *sometimes we are self-critical because we want other people to come in and be reassuring – 'no you're not as bad as you think you are'*



Anger-Conflict Avoidance

- *sometimes we are self-critical because we can't deal with the angry we feel towards others ! Children learnt to self-blame to avoid anger upwards.*
- *The good self bad self paradox -- I must be an okay person because I criticise myself for this and don't let myself get away with it.*
- *Just hate the self*

Loneliness- Lost and Empty

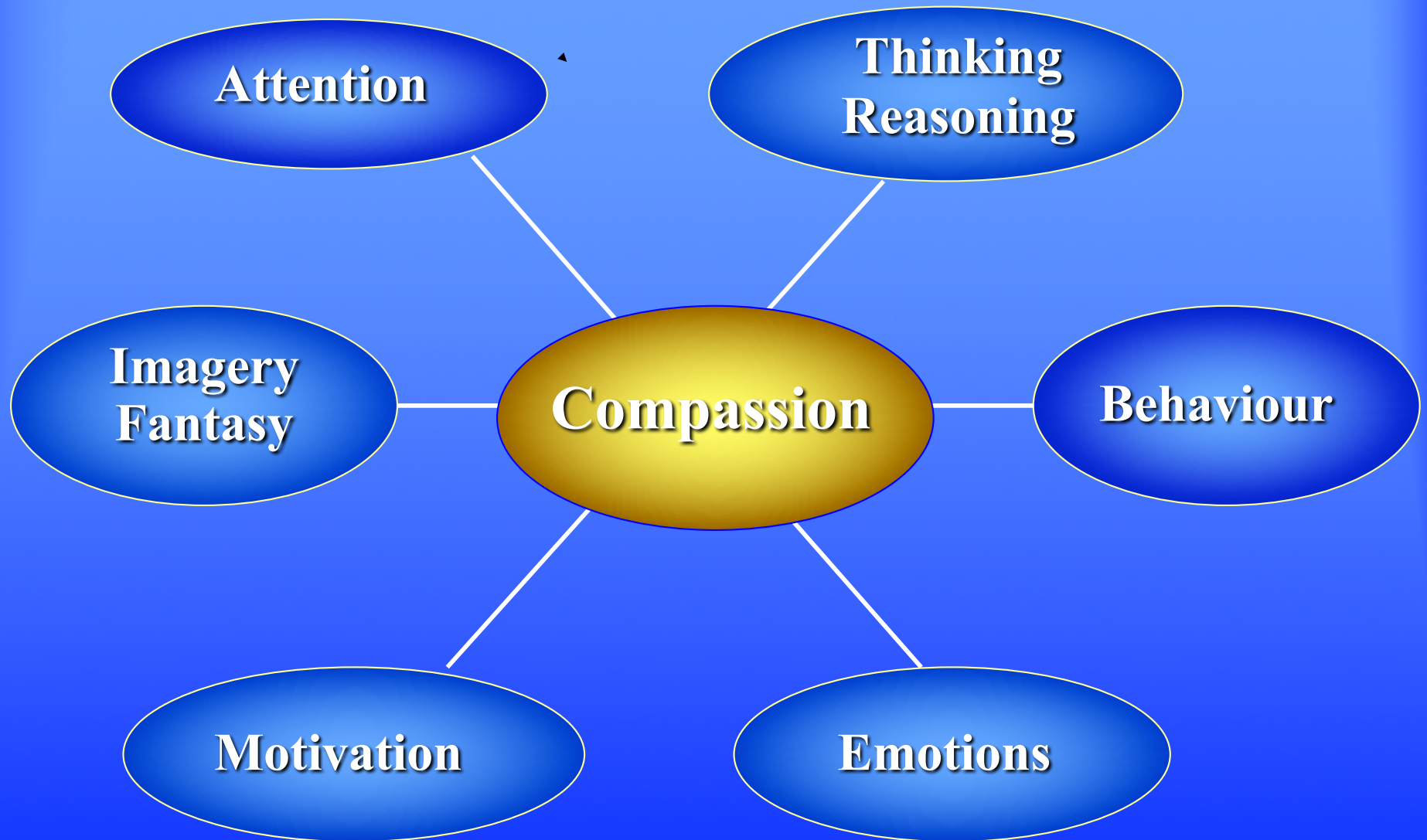
- *My inner critical voices give me direction - even purpose (this is often prominent in people who have the underlying sense of aloneness and disconnection)*
- *My inner critical voices help me to not feel lonely*



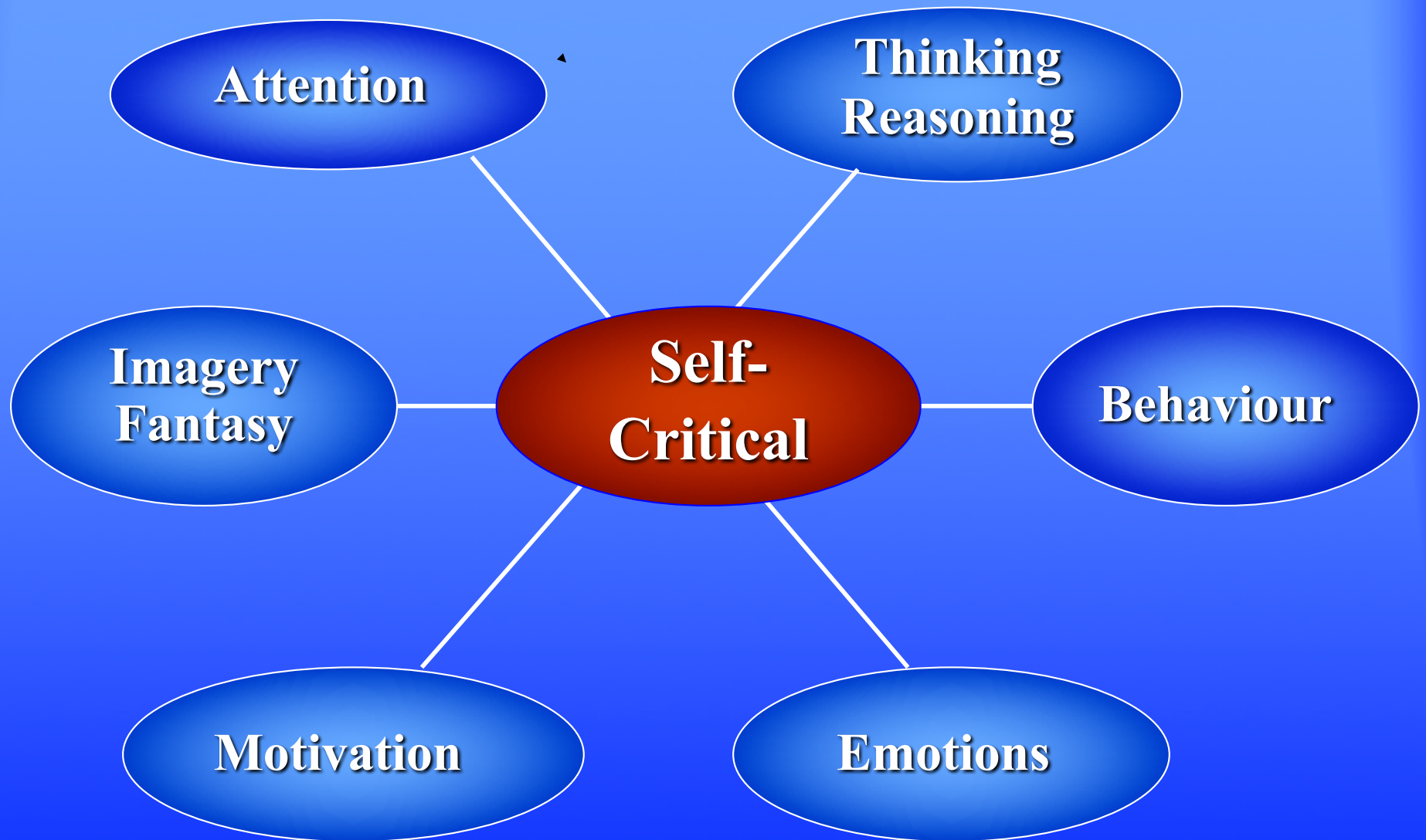
Threatened mind can block Compassion



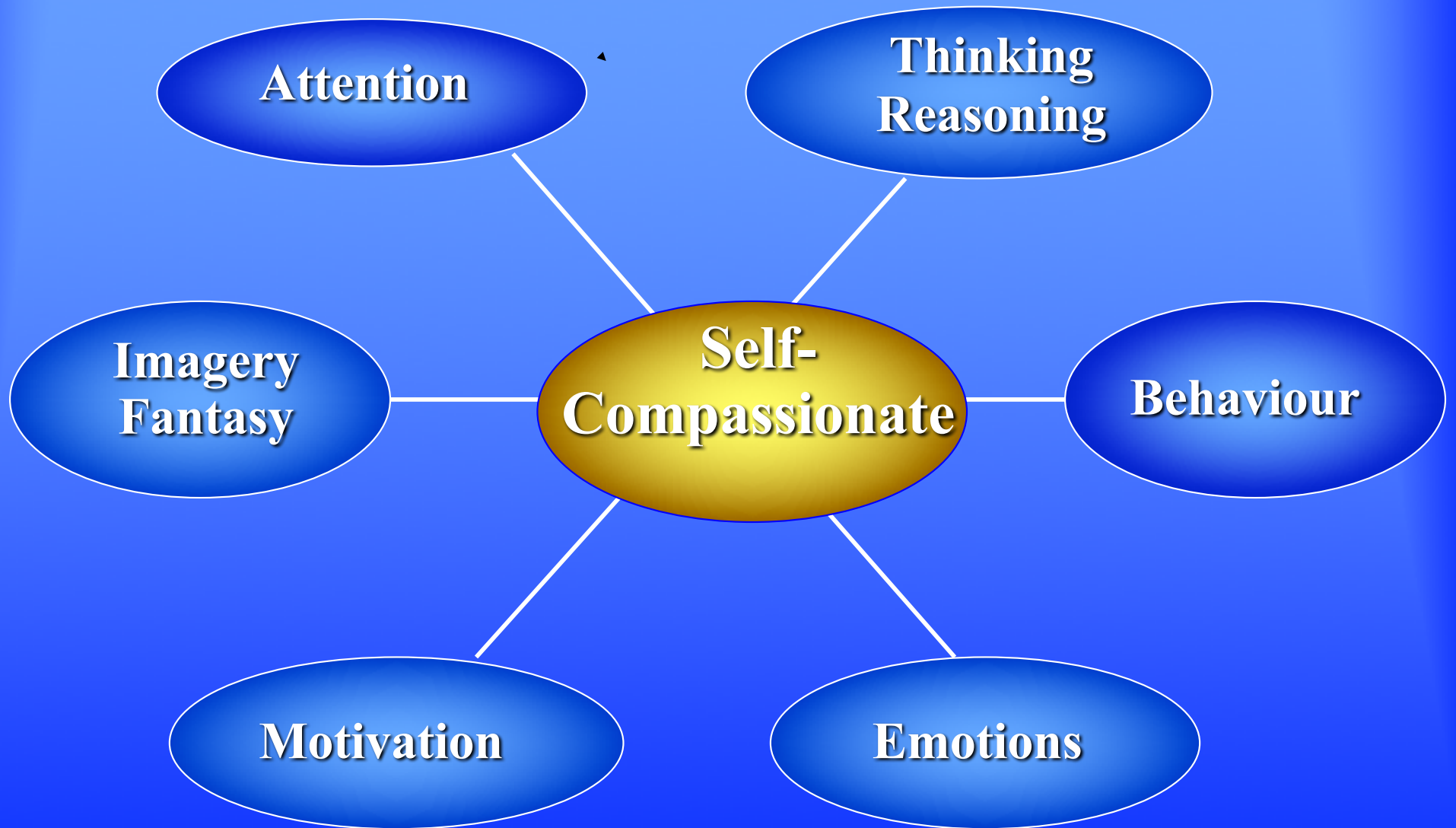
Compassionate mind



Self-Critical Mind is also Threat-focused Mind



Compassionate Mind



Summary of Self-Criticism

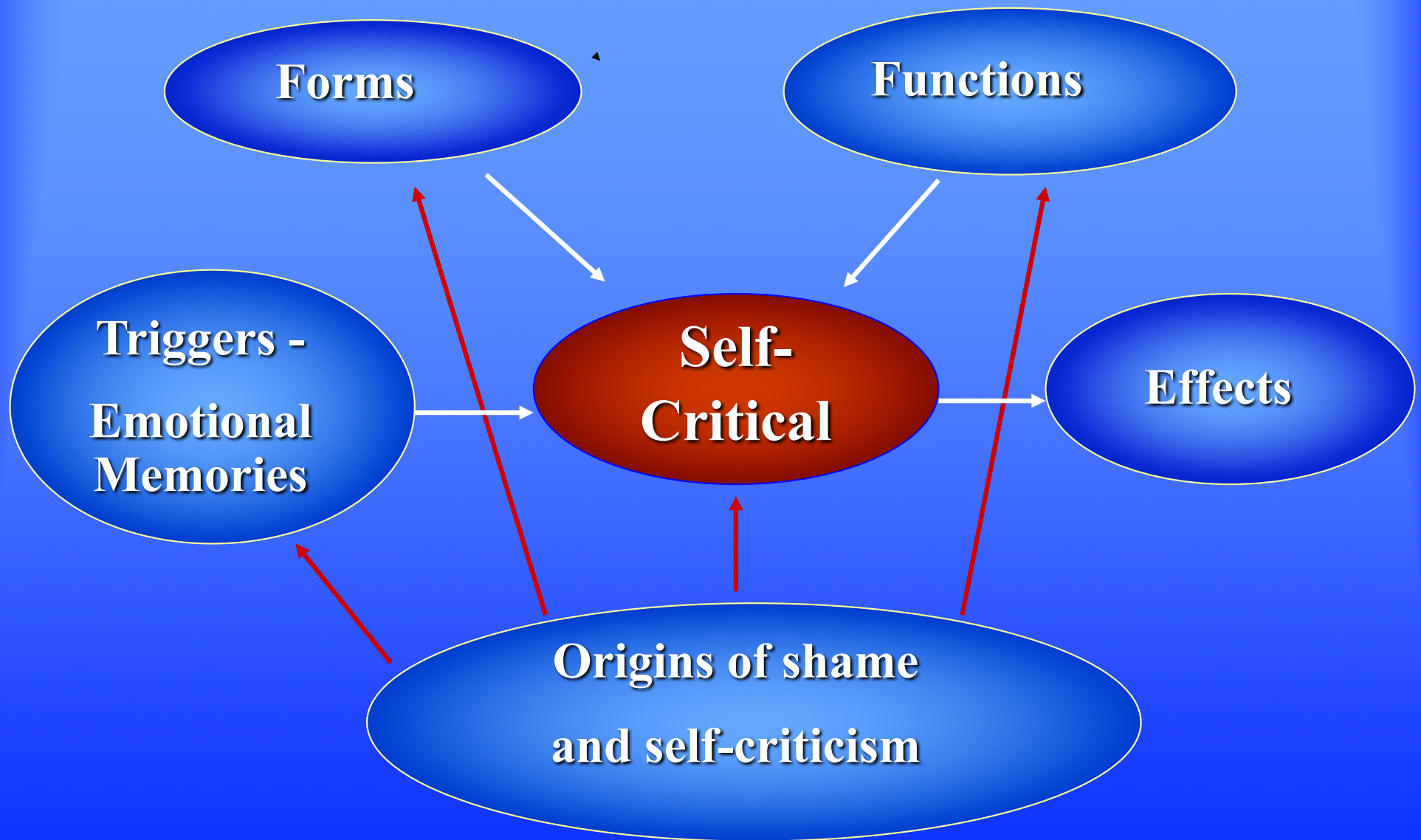
Social threat a *very major* threat to humans – shame is becoming the undesired and undesirable self

Self-criticism has multiple origins – abuse, neglect, bullying, competitive relationships, trying to win approval - is usually linked to feeling ‘socially unsafe’ – thus with external threat

Velco-like trauma memories – ‘threat first’ processing

Different functions of self-criticism: Self-correcting and self-persecuting can be linked to complex networks of meaning, self-identity and social relationships. Check fears of letting go of it

Self-Critical Mind is also Threat-focused Mind

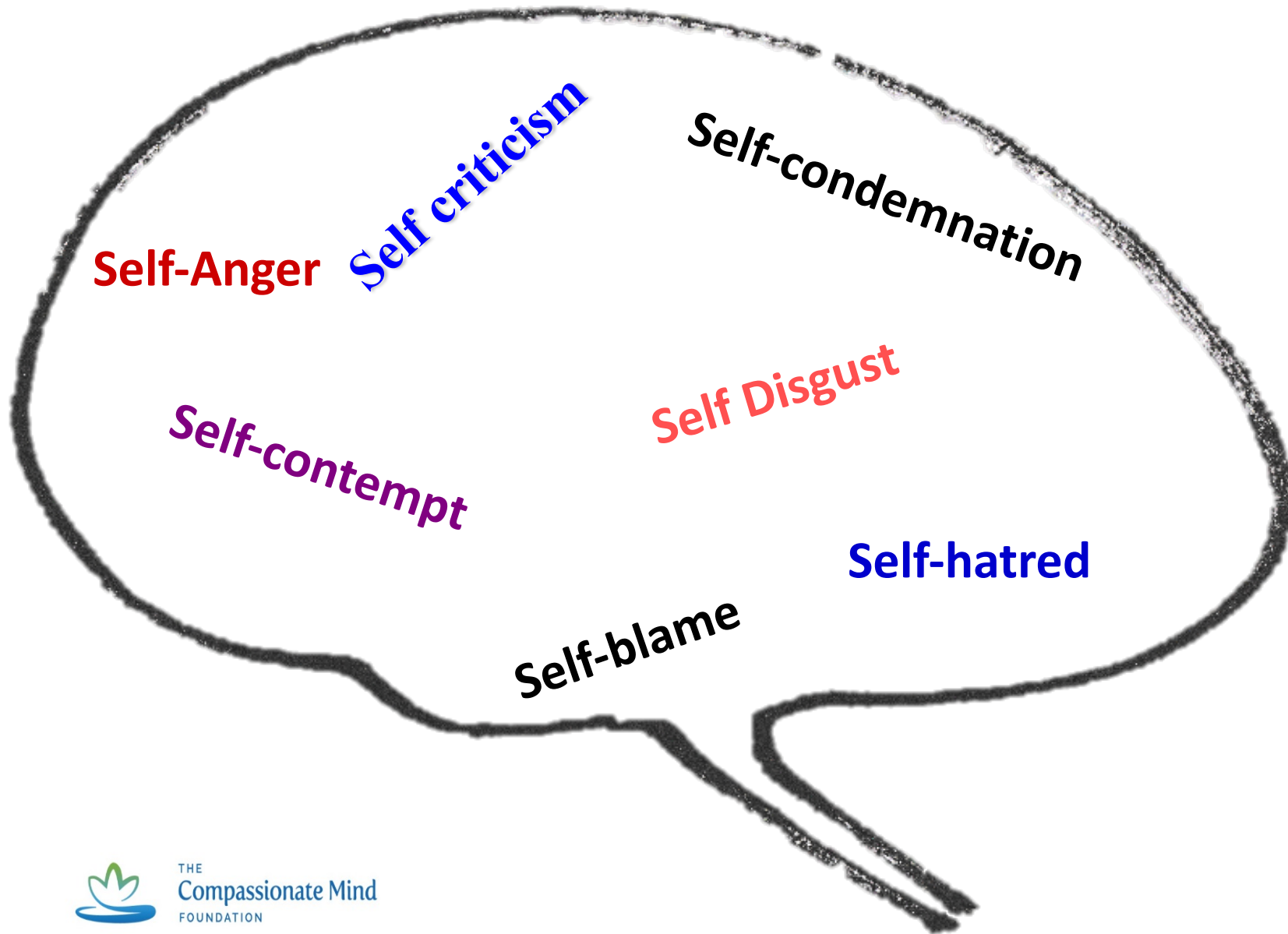


Shame and Self-Criticism

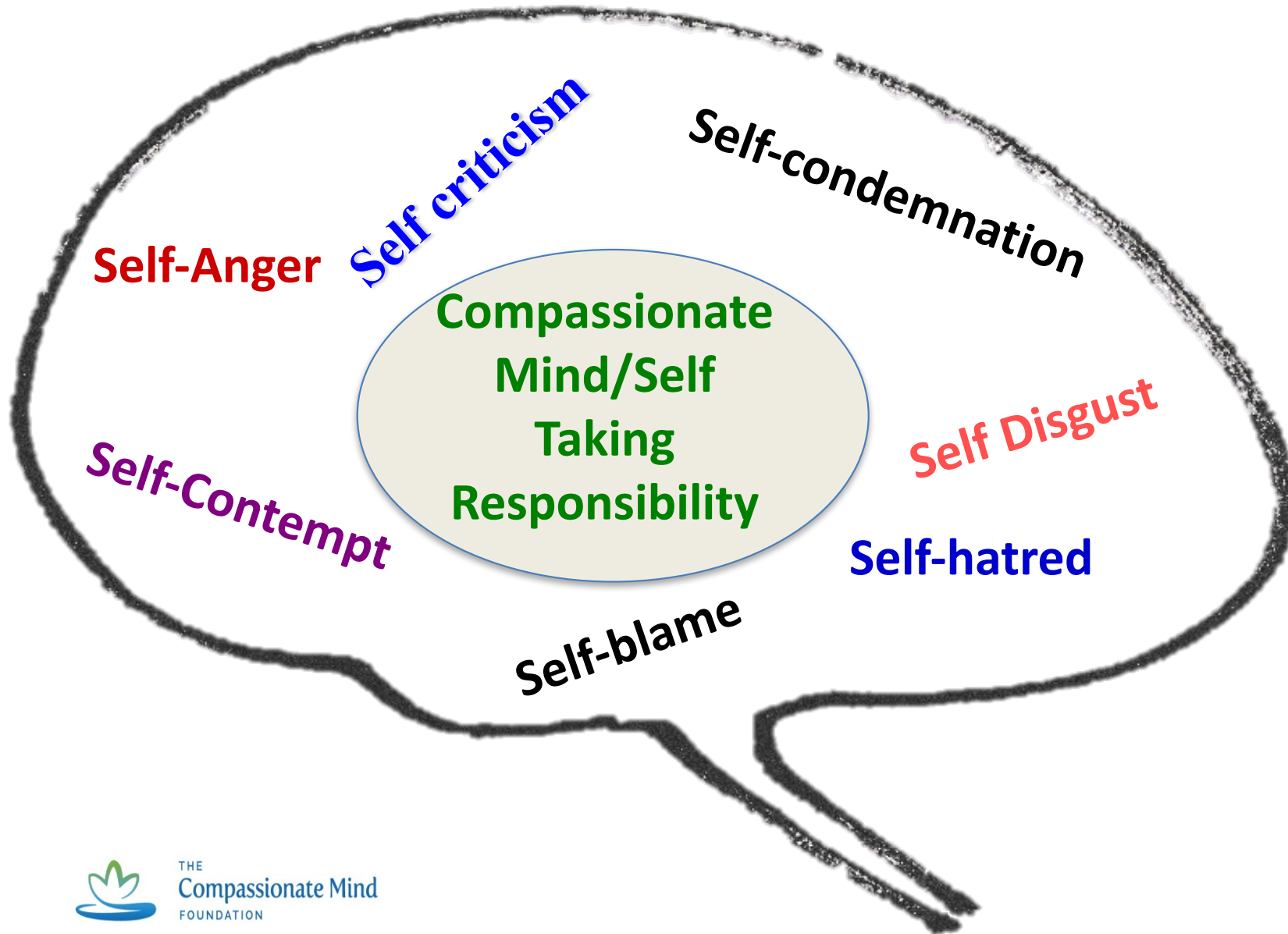
	External shame	Internal shame	Humiliation	Guilt
Social Mentality	Rank	Rank	Rank	Caring
Attention	Mind of the other	Own mind/ self	Mind of the other	Mind of the other
Cognitive	They think badly of me	I think badly of me	How dare they think badly of me	I have hurt someone
Emotions	Threat - anxious	Threat- depressed	Threat-anger	Sorrow/Remorse
Behaviours	Defensive	Defensive	Defensive	Reparative

- **Steps to Growth and Change**

Self-judgement, self-function and self-form



Self-judgement, self-function and self-form



Self-Criticism vs Self-Compassion

Shame Self-Attacking

Desire to punish and condemn

Backward looking

Linked to disappointment and focusing on deficits

Emotions are anger frustration anxiety contempt

Consider critical teacher with a child who is struggling

Compassionate Self-Correction

Desire to improve - at one's best

Forward looking

Linked to building on the positives and abilities

Validation of set back and encouragement

Consider compassionate teacher with a child who is struggling

Steps to Forgiveness

- **Understanding what self-forgiveness is and is not**
– let go of anger and moving to acceptance and bring peace
- **Distinguish between *self*-criticism and *behavioural* criticism**
- **Recognise the possible hurt, fear or injury that sit behind the self-critic**
- **Address personal reasons for not self-forgiving**
- **Difference of shame and guilt and role of sadness**
– becoming fallible human being



Compassion for the Critic

- Understanding it's origins and functions
- Activate the compassionate self – stabilise intention with wisdom
- View the critical self and see behind it – the fears hurts or injures
- How would you compassionate mind/self like to help the critic find peace.



Rebellion model to change

- * **Listening and considering possibilities that dominant (e.g. critical parent/teacher/bully) was/is wrong (still high fear)**
- * **Externalising and voicing new ideas, beliefs of rebellion ‘you’ (e.g., parent) are wrong about me)**
- * **Behaving against values and dictates of dominant (e.g. acts of defiance) (Milgram, 1974)**
- * **Distinguish helpful from destructive rebellions**

(Gilbert & Irons, 2005)



Rebellion Model to change

Don't Rush Rather be aware of rebellion as fear of:
disloyalty and loss or connection
coping with ambivalence, guilt
retaliation,
aleness,
protect 'them' from my anger.

Blocks can also arise from desire to hold onto pain for secondary gains (show them what they have made me do, induce guilt – wait for recognition of rescue) – the trophies of suffering.

(Gilbert & Irons, 2005)