

Functional Model of Suicide

Bryan, Rudd, &
Wertenberger
(2012, 2016)

Positive

Internal

Adding something desirable
“To feel something, even if it is pain.”

External

Gaining something from others
“To get attention.”
or
“Let others know how I feel.”

Negative

Internal

Reducing tension or bad feelings
“To stop bad feelings.”

External

Escape interpersonal task demands
“To avoid punishment from others.”
or
“Avoid doing something undesirable.”

Suicidal Beliefs

Unlovable

“I’m worthless.”
“I’m a burden.”
“I’m a failure.”

Unbearable

“I can’t tolerate it.”
“I can’t manage it.”
“I can’t handle it.”

Unsolvable

“It won’t be solved.”
“It won’t be fixed.”
“It won’t get better.”

Fluid Vulnerability Theory



Baseline (Stable)

History & Vulnerabilities

Prior suicide attempt(s)

Demographics

History:

- Mental health, substance use, relationships, trauma



Acute (Fluid)

Emotional Upset

Thoughts

Emotions

Physical sensations

Behaviors

Fluid Vulnerability Theory



Suicide risk is both **stable** and **fluid**.



Baseline risk captures the **stable predispositions** for suicide.



Fluid risk fluctuates **within** a person and can **change rapidly**.



Suicidal episodes are **time-limited**.



Multiple **suicide attempts** and **self-harm** are clear markers of **elevated baseline suicide risk**.



After resolution of an acute suicidal episode, an individual **returns to the baseline risk level**.

The Suicidal Mode

Baseline (Stable)

Individual History
and Vulnerabilities

White, Male

Past problems with alcohol

Two previous suicide attempts 5 years ago

History of relationship difficulties

Struggles with self-confidence

Acute (Fluid)

Emotional
Upset

Thoughts

"This is hopeless"
"No one is ever
going to love me"

Behaviors

Alcohol use
Taking pills

Emotions

Depressed
Angry

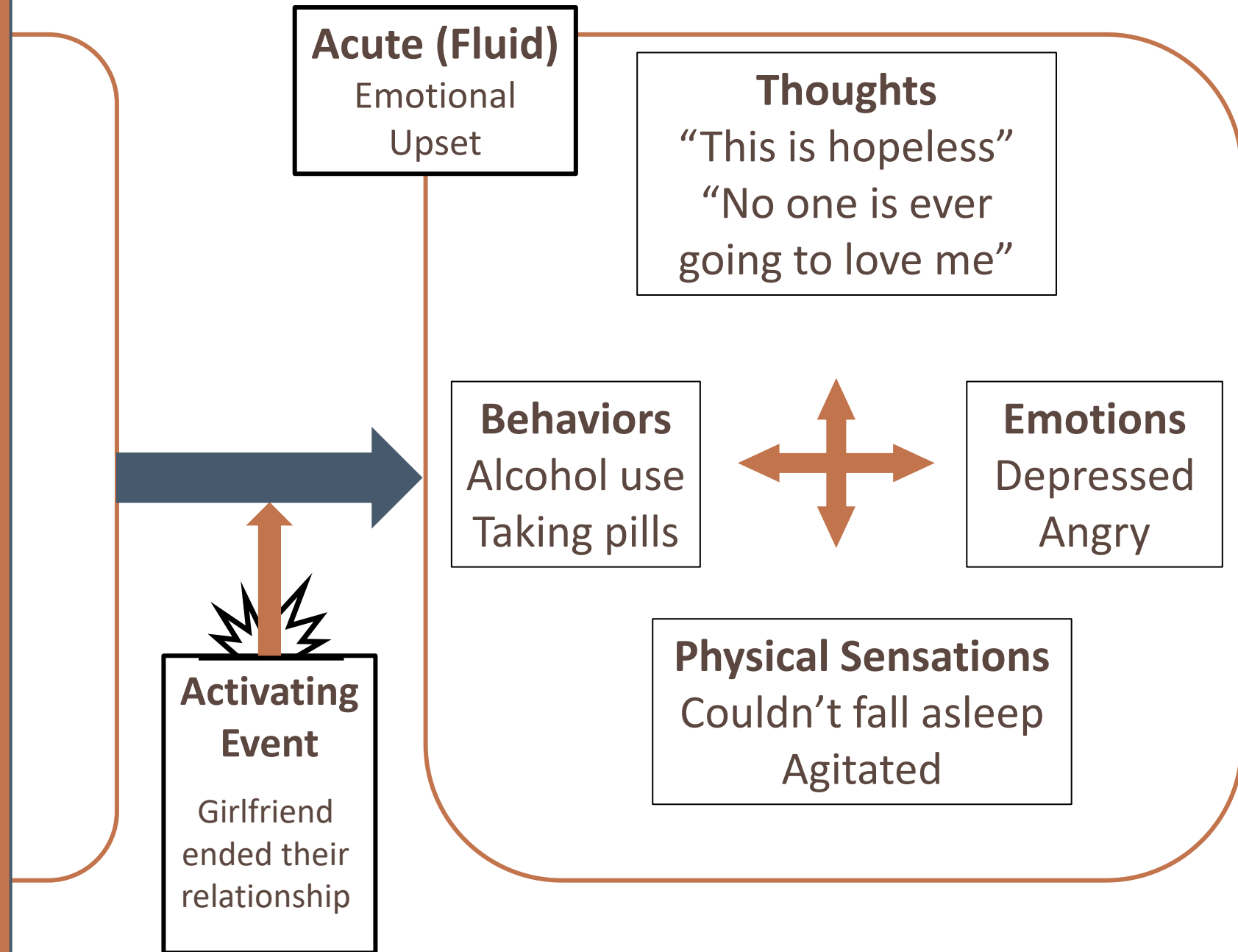
Physical Sensations

Couldn't fall asleep
Agitated

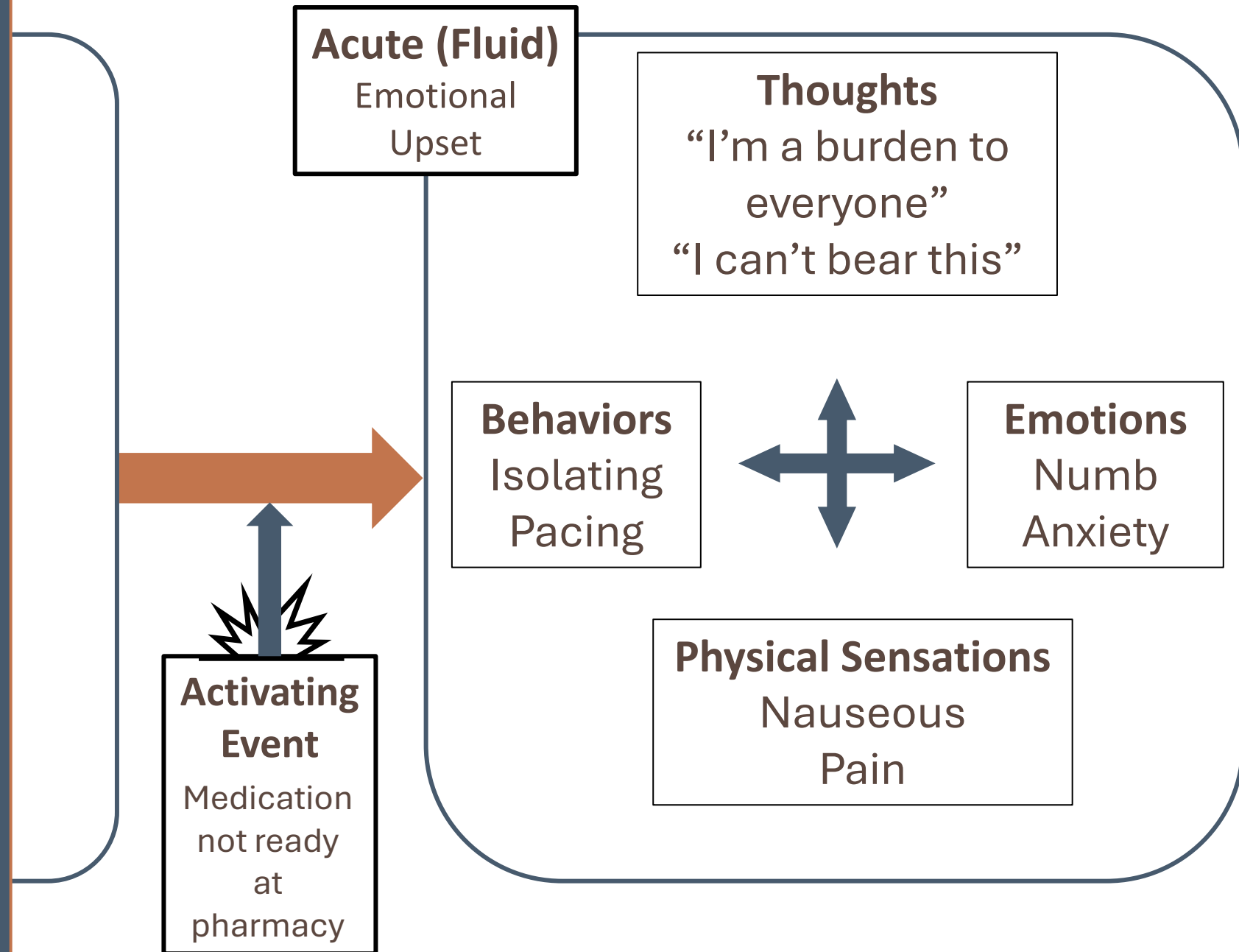
Activating Event

Girlfriend
ended their
relationship

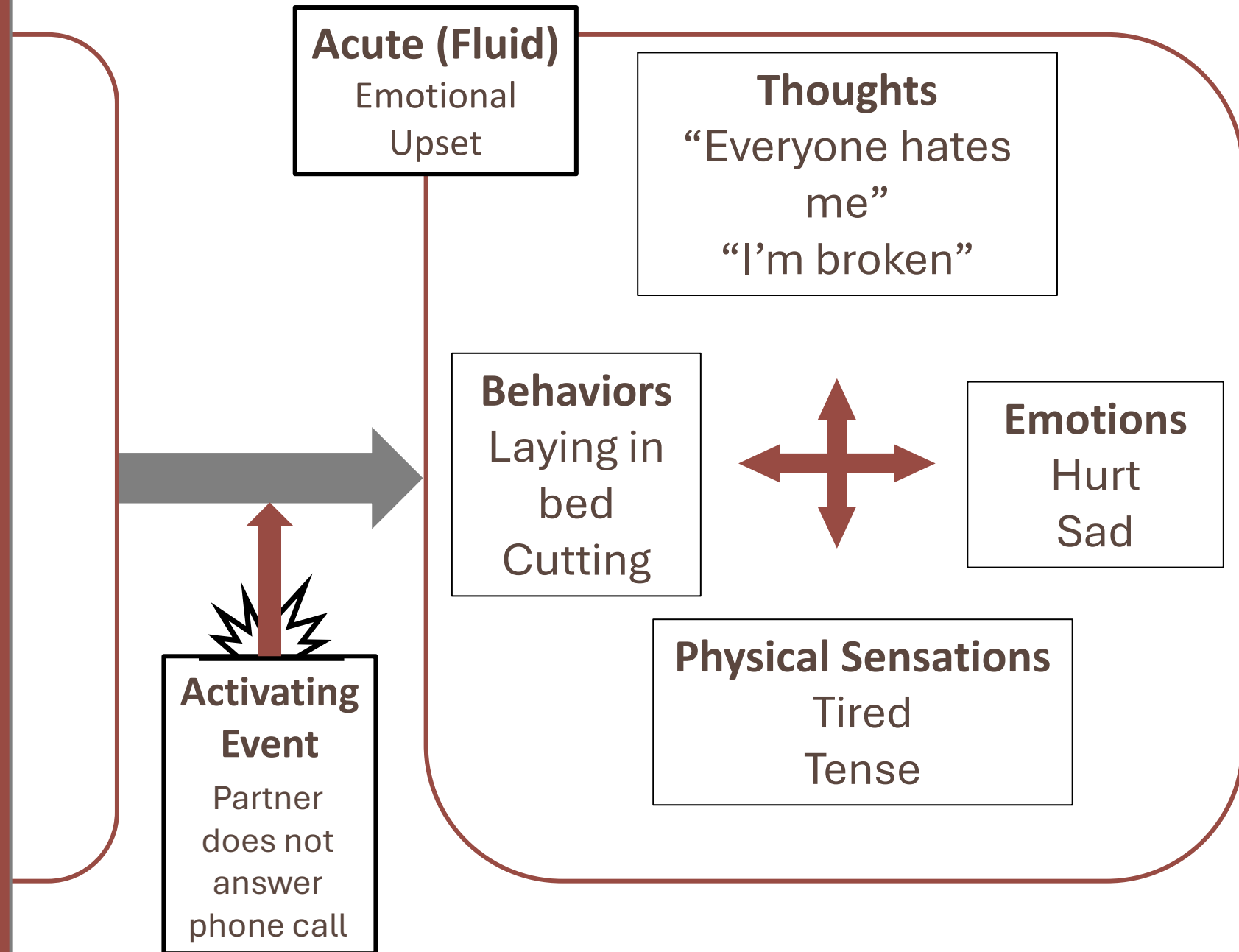
Suicide Attempt



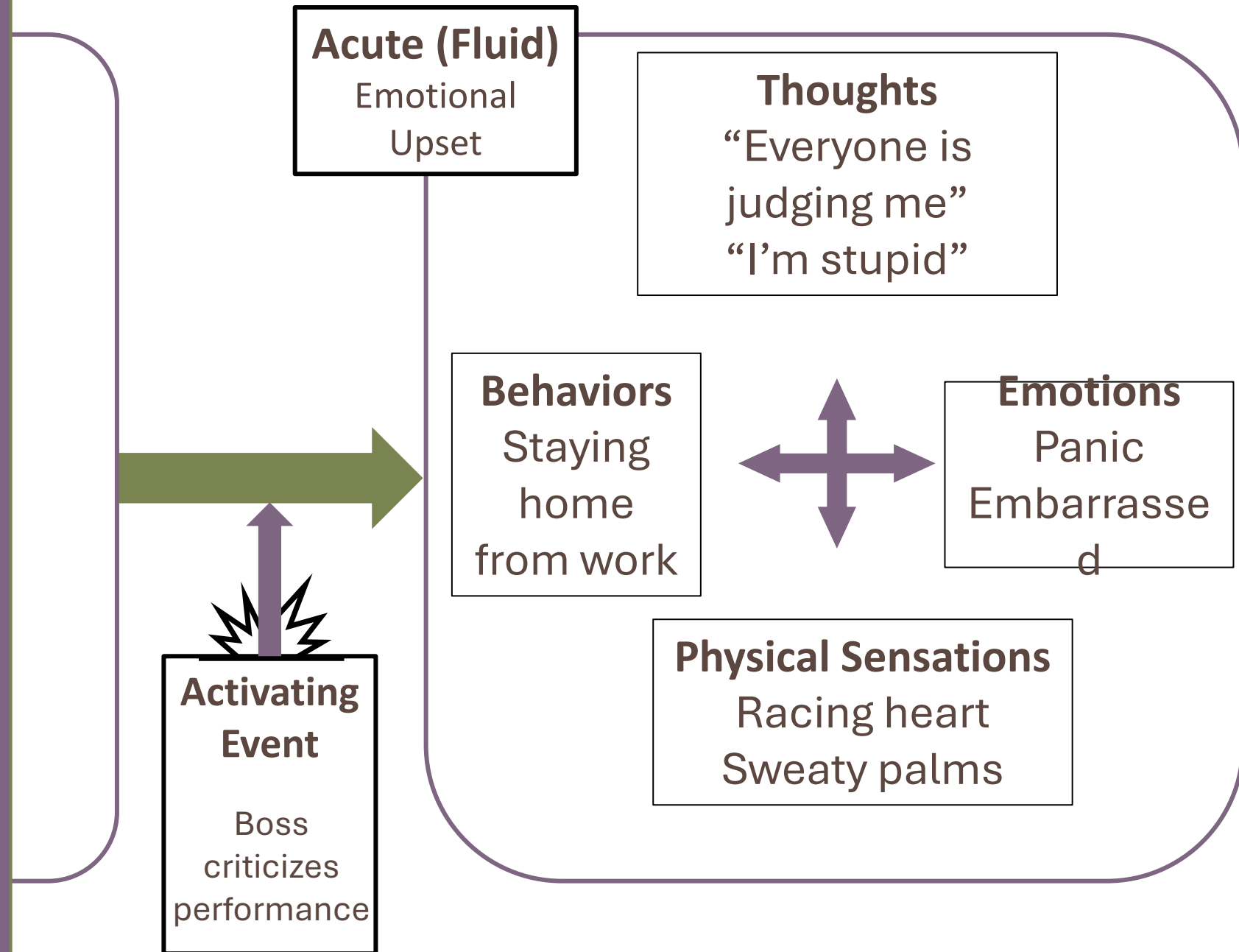
Suicidal Thoughts

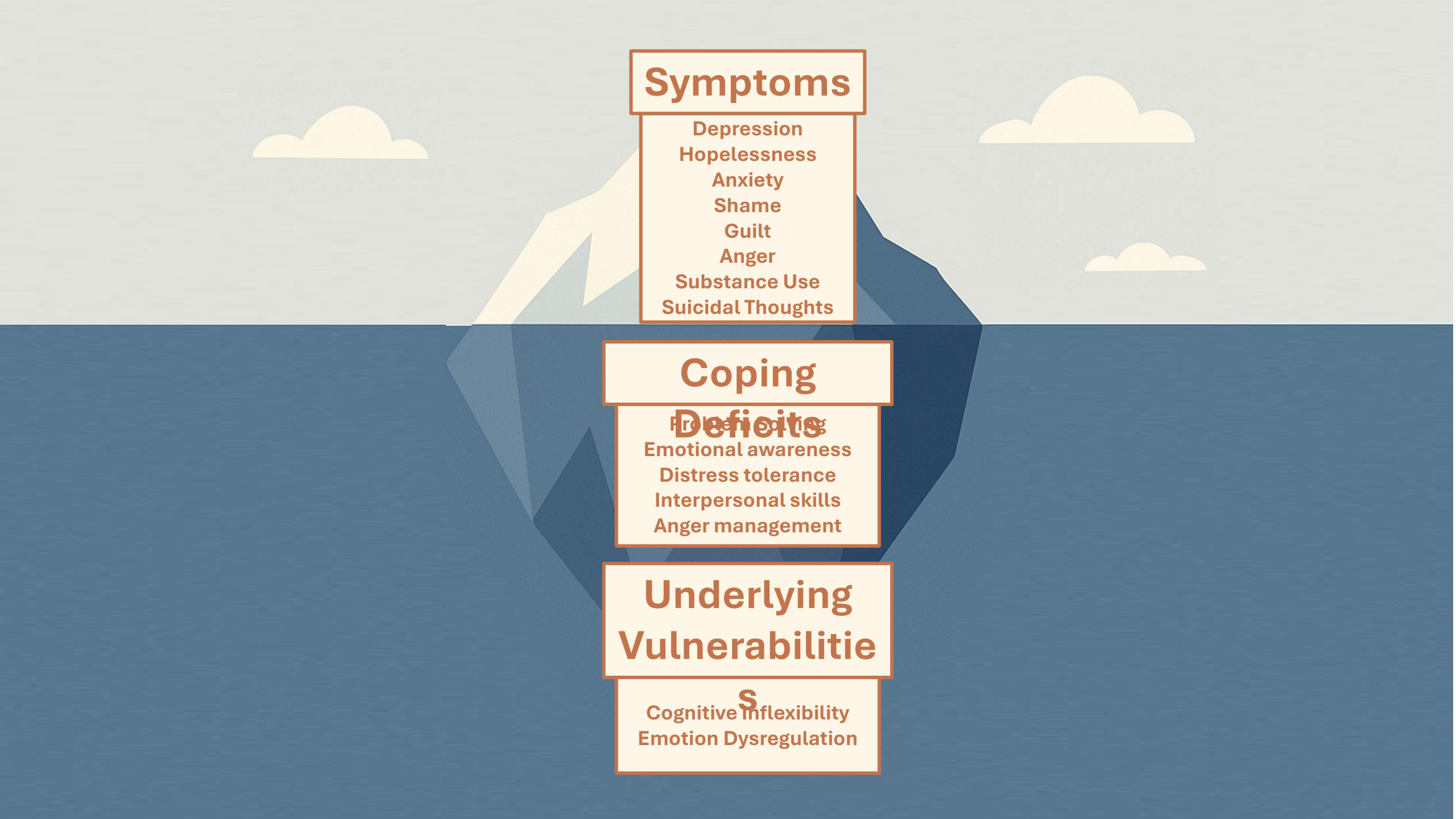


Self-Harm



Emotional Crisis



An iceberg floating in a blue sea under a grey sky with three white clouds. The iceberg is divided into four horizontal sections, each with a title and a list of items. The top section is above the water, while the other three are below. The sections are titled 'Symptoms', 'Coping', 'Deficits', and 'Underlying Vulnerabilities'.

Symptoms

Depression
Hopelessness
Anxiety
Shame
Guilt
Anger
Substance Use
Suicidal Thoughts

Coping

Deficits

Emotional awareness
Distress tolerance
Interpersonal skills
Anger management

Underlying Vulnerabilities

Cognitive Inflexibility
Emotion Dysregulation