

KAMAKHYAA

for the souls

KFTS is a free and open source platform for mental health resources. All the worksheets have been obtained from free external platforms, and the specific sources for each worksheet are mentioned at the end.

What Keeps My Face Dysmorphia Going?

Your negative assumptions about your appearance along with situational triggers can cause you to have a negative body or facial image which then leads to feelings of distress.

These negative assumptions one has about themselves are usually inaccurate, such as, “If people see the real me, then they will be repulsed” or “If I can see the problem, then everyone else must be noticing it too” or “If I don’t look perfect, then I look awful”.

These assumptions can flare up due to some triggers like negative comments by others about your appearance, perceived or actual rejection by others, situations where other’s attention may be on you, looking at an attractive photo of yourself, looking at ‘attractive people’ on TV or magazines or in person.

Due to your negative body or facial image, you might indulge in 5 types of behaviours to cope with your distress. These behaviours are:

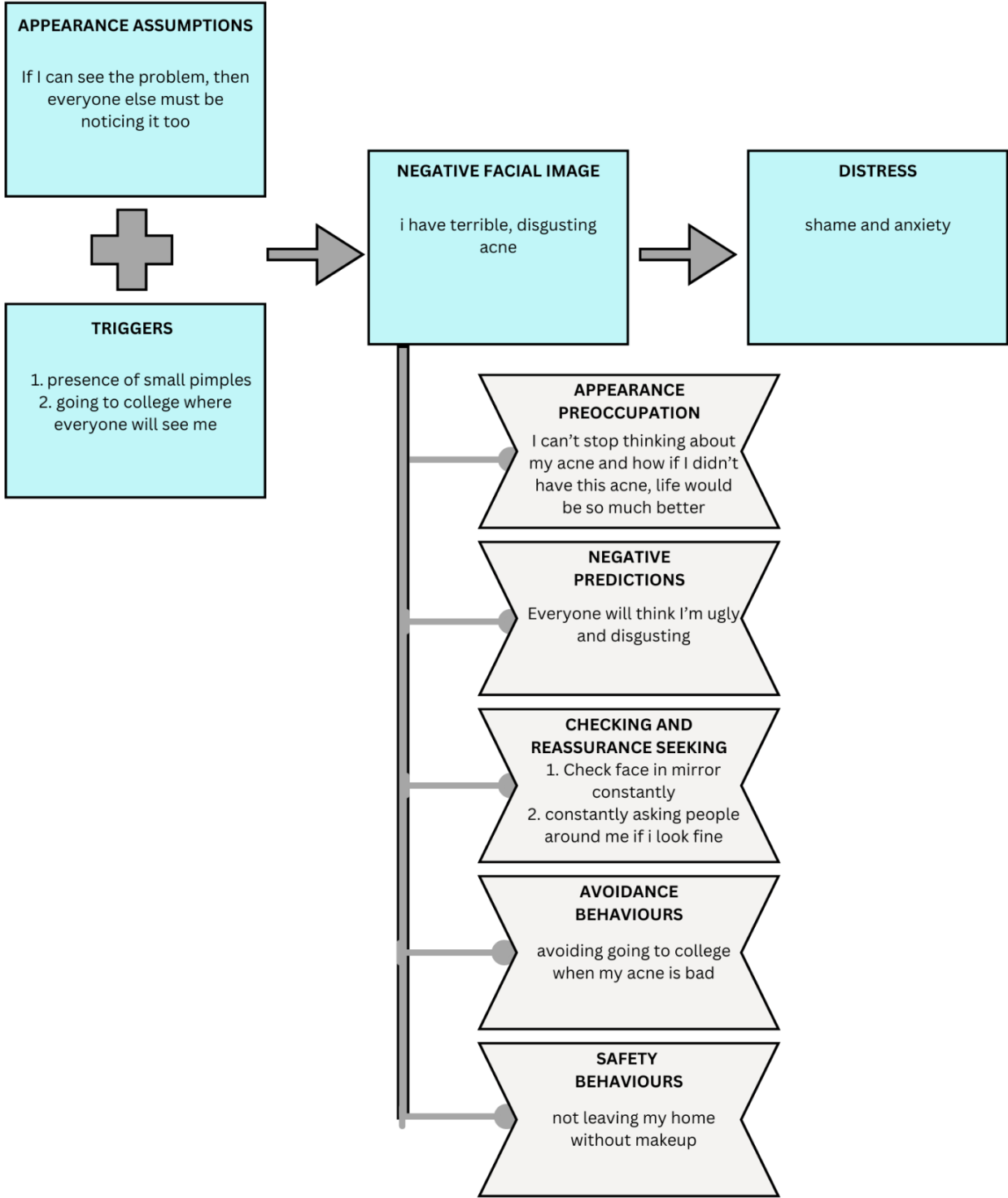
1. **Appearance preoccupation:** excessively focus on the area of concern, and evaluating and mentally searching for solutions to the problem with your appearance.
2. **Checking as reassurance seeking:** frequently checking mirrors, repeated touching of facial features that concern you, comparing your appearance with that of others, frequently asking your friends or family if you look OK.
3. **Making negative predictions:** overestimate the likelihood that others will respond to their appearance in a negative manner, underestimate their ability to

cope if this did occur, discount any information which suggests that things will not be as bad as they predicted, unable to accept compliments from others.

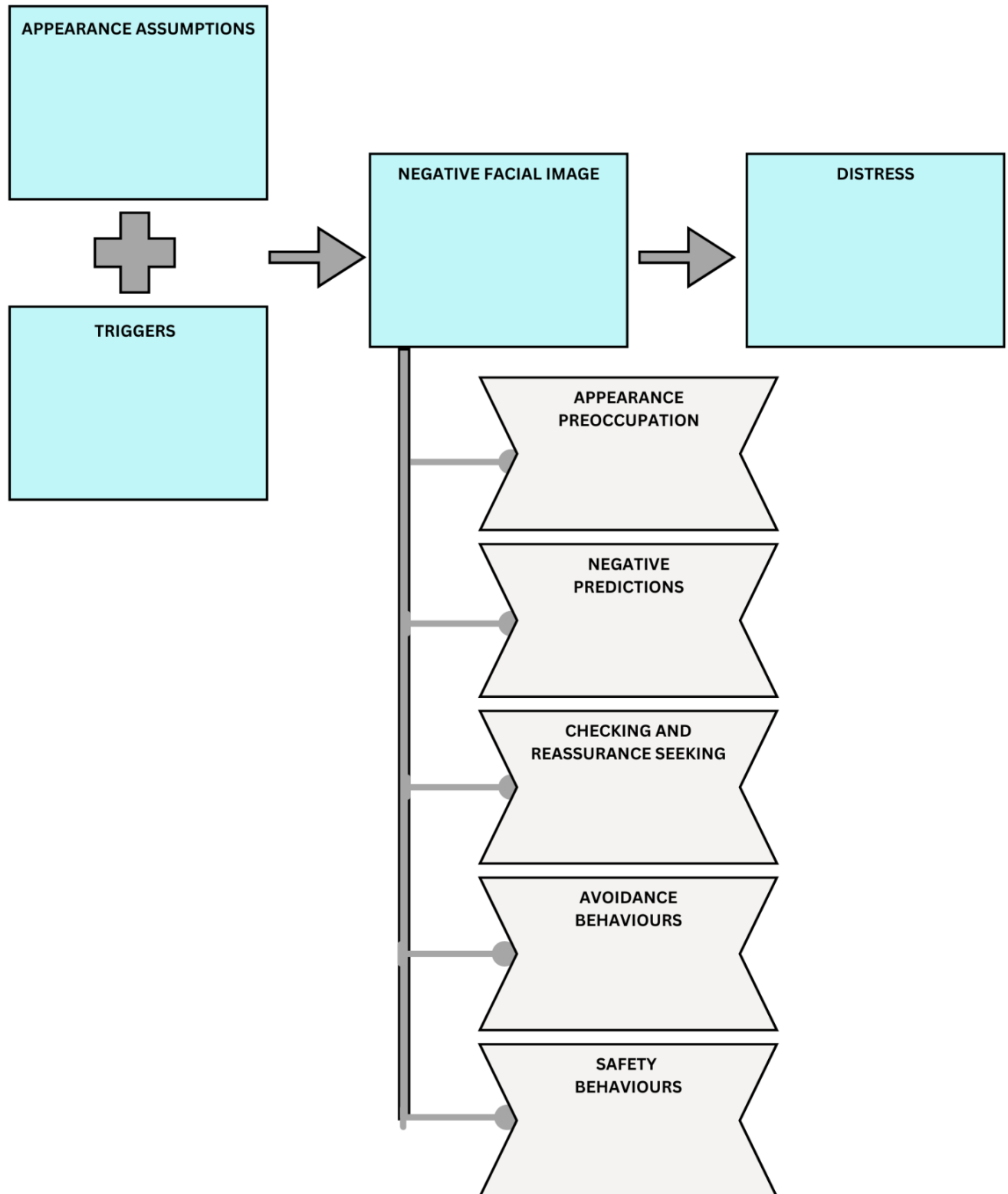
4. **Avoidance behaviours:** avoiding people, places or situations where you feel your appearance may come into question by others, or where you feel you will be reminded of your distressing appearance flaws.
5. **Safety behaviours:** including using makeup or hairstyle to carefully conceal the area of concern, turning your face a particular way or covering features with your hand during conversations to hide the problem area, avoiding eye contact with others to decrease the likelihood of them looking at and evaluating you, getting dermatological or cosmetic treatment.

Take a moment to consider the types of behaviours you have been indulging in related to your body or facial image.

Here's an example:



Identify you own behaviours:



You might not even be aware of such behaviours or the negative consequences they have related to your body or facial image. Some of the consequences of such behaviours can be:

- Focusing on an aspect of your appearance (via preoccupation and checking), can alert you to minor imperfections that you or others would normally not have noticed, magnifying your negative body image and leaving you more distressed.
- Avoidance behaviours can limit your ability to learn whether others really will accept you as you are, therefore limiting your ability to build self confidence and put your negative body image into perspective.
- Safety behaviours like efforts to cover up (e.g., excessive makeup), can have the opposite effect and draw more attention to yourself, seemingly becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- The more you use the 5 strategies mentioned, the more you will continue to use them, as you don't give yourself the opportunity to learn new ways of managing the distress related to your appearance. They become the only way you know how to manage life with your perceived flaw.
- These 5 strategies just strengthen the idea of the importance of physical appearance, and deprives you the opportunity to build a tolerance for your imperfections, which everyone needs. You don't get to see what really happens when you put your real or 'imperfect' self out there in the world, instead of hiding away and covering up. Often when people with face dysmorphia finally test out their assumptions, the outcome is quite different and far less disastrous than they predicted.

Sources:

- Anderson, R., Saulsman, L., McEvoy, P., Fursland, A., Nathan, P., & Ridley, S. (2012). *Building Body Acceptance: Overcoming Body Dysmorphic Disorder*. Perth, Western Australia: Centre for Clinical Interventions. Worksheet retrieved from: <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/>