

Emotional Stocks and Bonds: A Metaphorical Model for Conceptualizing and Treating Codependency and Other Forms of Emotional Overinvesting

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Codependent behaviors are associated with an unhealthy reliance on others for meeting emotional needs. This over-reliance on others often leads to dysfunctional interpersonal relationships. This article presents emotional stocks and bonds (ESB), a metaphorical model for use with clients who display codependent behaviors. Emotional stocks and bonds incorporates theoretical tenets from Bowen family systems and attachment theory and aids clients in understanding and changing unhealthy relationship behavior patterns. In addition to an overview of the model's key concepts and its use in clinical practice, we provide a case illustration and a discussion of practice implications and limitations.

KEYWORDS: codependency; attachment; Bowen family systems

INTRODUCTION

Attachments and bonding are core biological needs that affect social and romantic relationships (Bowlby, 1969; Slater 2007). Early attachment relationships, usually with biological parents, shape later relationship functioning (Dinero et al., 2011; Sable, 2007; Salzinger, Feldman, Hammer, & Rosario, 1993). However, the influence of these early relationships can lead to positive or maladaptive behaviors in adult relationships (Johnson, Myers, Webber, & Borris, 2004). Family systems, similar to attachment theory, influence the navigation between emotional togetherness and

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individualism (van Ecke, Chope, & Emmelkamp, 2006). Bowen family therapy espouses that individuals must examine family-of-origin behavioral and emotional patterns or else they will repeat in future relationships (Gladding, 2007). "The possibility of repeating certain behaviors in interpersonal relationships is particularly likely if family members, especially between generations, are characteristically either emotionally over-involved (i.e., fused) with each other or emotionally cut off (psychologically or physically) from each other" (p. 141). Key goals of Bowen family therapy include increasing an individual's level of differentiation and decreasing emotional reactivity (Gehart, 2010). Bowen uses the term "differentiation of self" to describe the important process of maintaining closeness and emotional connection in relationships while functioning from an emotionally autonomous standpoint without emotional dependence (Klever, 2005; Murdock & Gore, 2004). However, some may experience family-of-origin environments that are distant, inconsistent, or emotionally over-involved, which will cause subsequent challenges in adult romantic relationships.

Attachment and Bowen family theories provide approaches for understanding the influence of early relationships on current relationship functioning and considerations for interventions (van Ecke et al., 2006). However, the two theories prove complex and oftentimes require longer-term interventions (Daly & Mallinckrodt, 2009; McBride, Atkinson, Quilty, & Bagby, 2006). Further, Bowen family systems and attachment theory focus primarily on intimate and familial relationships. Therefore, we present emotional stocks and bonds (ESB), which integrates aspects of Bowen family theory and attachment theory into a brief model for conceptualizing, treating, and addressing various types of emotional over-investing (e.g., relationship, work, hobby) through a five-step treatment approach.

A paradox exists within relationships in that emotional connection can bring great joy and great pain. At times, relationships can be rewarding and satisfying. Other times, they prove unhealthy, unsatisfying, and potentially destructive. Early attachments and relationship experiences play a pivotal role in the development of relationship norms and behaviors (Hinnen, Sanderman, & Sprangers, 2009). When attachment needs are not met, activation of attachment behaviors occur that include feelings of anxiety and distress along with irrational thoughts, beliefs, and activities (Bowlby, 1988; Hinnen et al., 2009). Resulting attachment behaviors include emotional distancing, e.g., dismissiveness, increased efforts towards emotional connection, e.g., preoccupation, or confusion, e.g., irres-

oluteness (van Ecke et al., 2006). Van Ecke and colleagues clarified that attachment is “more than a cognitive schema, it is an emotional blueprint, and a physiological pattern of responding that has been laid down and becomes activated during times of real or perceived threat that we might lose the significant other” (p. 83). Oftentimes, individuals with low levels of differentiation and/or attachment issues possess decreased insight into their relationship functioning and exhibit greater resistance when examining their relationships (Hinnen et al., 2009; Simpson, Winterheld, Rholes, & Orina, 2007; Skowron, Holmes, & Sabatelli, 2003). The emotional stocks and bonds model addresses emotional responses and behaviors in ways that not only include but also transcend relationships such as work, play, or other areas in which a person may look for the security of attachment. This manuscript presents the ESB model for helping clients develop greater insights into relationship patterns and for providing strategies to change dysfunctional relationship patterns.

EMOTIONAL STOCKS AND BONDS

The emotional stocks and bonds (ESB) model therapeutically addresses clients who have enmeshed attachments and low levels of differentiation. Developed as a metaphorically based intervention approach, ESB draws parallels to investments with emotions representing financial resources, relationships representing areas of investment, and needs fulfillment representing dividends or investment returns. Developed as a metaphorically based intervention approach, ESB draws parallels between investment terms and therapeutic terms, with emotions *being represented as* financial resources, relationships *being represented as* areas of investment, and needs fulfillment *being represented as* dividends or investment returns. Stocks represent the attached objects with which emotional investments are made, and bonds represent the attachments. The use of language and concepts with less negative connotation can be effective in working with couples who exhibit greater resistance to therapeutic terminology (Bagley & King, 2005). Therefore, the ESB model utilizes disarming terminology to reduce the stigma associated with counseling by eliminating terms such as codependency, enmeshment, entanglement, and fusion.

The ESB model draws from attachment theory and Bowen family systems. Attachment figures generate representative or working models that guide behavior, affect, and perceptions in later relationships. Emotional stocks and bonds theory purports that emotional overinvesting leads to

- (a) an activated attachment system, evidenced by fear of rejection and threat of loss (attachment theory),
- (b) low levels of differentiation, evidenced by distorted thinking, and
- (c) beliefs and emotionally focused approaches to address relationship conflict (as in the Bowen family systems).

The central goal of ESB is illustrated by van Ecke and colleagues' description of differentiation: "the healthy individual maintains a balance between the pull towards togetherness and the push towards separation, which state is called differentiated . . ." (2006, p. 84). Differentiated individuals are more objective and less emotionally oriented in their responses (Murdock & Gore, 2004), which is a desired outcome with ESB.

Securely attached individuals have greater positive emotional regulation during stress and can exhibit proactive, emotionally regulated behaviors toward attachments (Simpson et al., 2007). These individuals also demonstrate more effective problem-solving skills with their romantic partners. They tend to be more emotionally supportive, calm when distressed, and effective with emotional regulation (Simpson et al., 2007).

The two components of the ESB model are emotional stocks and emotional bonds. Time and energy directed to a particular attached object create the emotional investments that are known collectively as emotional stocks. Emotional bonds are the results of these emotional investments. Bonding-related terms used in this model include the symbiotic nature of attachments, emotional over-investments, and a diversified emotional portfolio. The ESB model has two primary tenets:

- 1) The amount of emotional time and energy directed towards the various areas of attachment in an individual's life is finite.
- 2) Emotional time and energy are *traded*, not created or destroyed.

In addition to the key concepts and tenets of the ESB model, we will present model-based evaluation and treatment strategies along with recommendations for using ESB with individuals, couples, group, and psychoeducational interventions.

EMOTIONAL STOCKS

Emotional stock is the foundational concept of the ESB model. It represents the emotional investments made *to* attached objects and developed through the *emotional time* and *emotional energy* directed toward those objects (e.g., significant other, love interest, work, family). *Emotional time* is the time spent focused on a particular attached object. Physical presence with the attached object is not necessary to invest emotional time.

For example, a person at work may have persistent thoughts about a love interest without the love interest being physically present. *Emotional energy* is physical engagement in activities directed toward the attached object. Emotional time can be invested without emotional energy; emotional energy is invested alongside emotional time. Thus, emotional time and energy are the components of emotional investments used to create/buy emotional stocks.

Fundamental to the ESB model is that emotional time and energy, the resources to make emotional investments, are finite. We will expound on the finite nature of emotional time and energy in the section on emotional over-investing. As with the law of physics dictating conservation of energy, emotional time and energy are neither created nor destroyed, only transferred or shifted. This “shifting” of emotional investments both influences and is influenced by the symbiotic nature of attachments, emotional over-investing, and diversified emotional portfolio, which are other key concepts presented in the following section.

EMOTIONAL BONDS

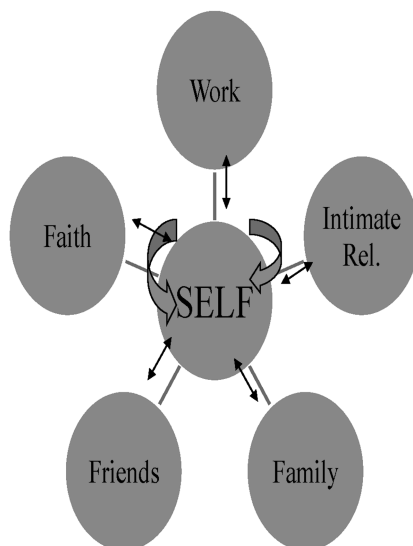
The emotional time and energy directed towards attached objects *create and intensify* emotional bonds. Although the attachments in an individual's life fluctuate over time, humans maintain core attachments, such as those with a significant other, close family members, work, spirituality/faith, and hobbies (Holmes, 1993). However, the emotional time and energy given to attached objects brings an expectation of a “return on our investment” that exists in proportion to the amount of emotional time and energy invested. For example, a first-year college student who invests emotional time and energy into a social organization might hold an expectation that the organization meet his or her need for belonging. We have termed this concept “*expectations for needs fulfillment*.” Attachment theory asserts that attachments meet certain needs and that the satisfaction of those needs is directly associated with the well-being and maintenance of relationships (Patrick, Canevello, Knee, & Lonsbary, 2007). Additionally, different attachments meet different needs (Patrick et al., 2007). For example, an intimate relationship might meet needs for happiness and acceptance, while work might meet needs for sense of accomplishment and financial stability. The ESB model acknowledges variances in attachment needs and notes emotional distress occurs when expectations related to personal needs are not met (Roisman, 2007). In addition, the ESB model purports that the expectation for the attached object to fulfill needs increases (or

decreases) with the amount of emotional time and energy directed toward the attachment.

Emotional stocks and bonds theory also proposes that the most important attachment, the “flagship investment,” is with one’s self. The phraseology “having a healthy emotional relationship with one’s self” may seem strange but the concept is evident in attachment theory and Bowen family systems. Bowen viewed the family as an organic system held in balance by the opposing forces of togetherness and separation (Murdock & Gore, 2004; van Ecke et al, 2006). Through this balance, the healthy individual becomes autonomous within the system; this is also known as differentiation (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). “Differentiation of self is the ability to maintain cognitive functioning in the midst of emotional processes and to sustain a separate self in the midst of relationship pressures” (Klever, 2005, p. 236). Bowen’s concept of differentiation of self, as defined above, also parallels Bowlby’s attachment theory. Secure attachments create self-reliant, confident, and resilient adults (Sable, 2007). Additionally, secure attachment consists of emotional resilience, improved cognitive abilities, and behavioral flexibility. So that an individual who has a healthy relationship with “self” possesses enough internal resources to effectively navigate the forces of togetherness and separation. This person is able to nurture and to support him- or herself to a level that does not warrant overreliance upon others, thus resulting in secure attachments with others. The ESB model posits that healthy relationships are achieved when individuals possess a clearly defined sense of self and ego within relationships and that the process of building relationships is nurtured through a healthy and nurturing relationship with the self.

The ESB model uses the emotional portfolio diagram, which is an adaptation of Virginia Satir’s wheel or circle of influence (Satir, Banmen, Gerber, & Gomori, 1991), along with genogram components (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985) in the labeling of emotional relationships depicting the various relationship bonds in a client’s emotional portfolio. Although any of the categories of emotional relationships in genogramming can be used, the ESB model focuses on McGoldrick and Gerson’s original patterns of close, fused, hostile, conflictual, distant, and cut-off for mapping relationships. However, neither Satir’s circle of influence nor genograms can fully illustrate one’s relationship to “self.” Thus, an important addition within the ESB model is the inclusion of a line(s) radiating outward from the individual going back to them that represents their relationship pattern with self. Similar to a genogram, the emotional portfolio diagram would be a key tool used throughout the intervention process.

Figure 1



EMOTIONAL OVER-INVESTMENTS

Emotional overinvesting or enmeshment is a common relationship problem found in different types of attachments and relationships. In addition to romantic entanglements, enmeshments can be found in friendships, family relationships, and life roles (such as identity as being a student or employee), or with a religion (Ainsworth, 1969; Brown, Rodgers, & Kapadia, 2008). When an over-identification occurs with an individual (or role), happiness becomes defined by the satisfaction and perceived quality of or stability with the attached object. In emotional overinvestment, attachment to a particular object increases, while attachment to other objects decreases. This change can be evidenced through codependent feelings and behaviors that include low self-esteem, controlling and manipulating behaviors, self-doubt, addiction, intimacy problems, denial of one's own feelings, and people pleasing (Septien, 1993).

The ESB model purports that feelings of anger, frustration, and resentment occur because the attached object is not able to meet the unrealistically high expectations for needs fulfillment. Often fear of losing the attachment drives the aforementioned feelings and behaviors (Skowron and Friedlander, 2007). We react more strongly, subjectively, and automatically in the areas in which we are overinvested, whether it is an intimate relationship or money. "Emotionally healthy individuals meet

their own needs without guilt and can connect with others without sacrificing their own integrity” (Hogg & Frank, 1992).

When individuals become preoccupied with attached objects, people, or roles, an attachment response that the ESB model terms the “overinvestment spiral” may activate. The overinvestment spiral occurs when the amount of emotional time and energy directed towards an already overinvested attached object increases in response to fear and anxiety about losing the attachment. However, a paradox exists. As the increases in the expectations for needs fulfillment from that attached object heightens the negative and uncomfortable emotions (particularly fear of losing that attached object), the individual further increases the amount of emotional time and energy directed to the attached object and decreases emotional time and energy to other attached objects, including his or her “self,” and thus spirals deeper into enmeshment and dependency.

ESB IN CLINICAL PRACTICE

The overall goals and intended outcomes of the ESB model are for clients to diversify their emotional portfolios and to meet their own needs while being able to establish appropriate relationship boundaries with others. Counselors using the ESB intervention process help clients

- (a) learn about the ESB model,
- (b) develop an emotional portfolio diagram,
- (c) evaluate how he invests emotional time and energy along with how he is invested in the various areas of relationship attachment in their lives,
- (d) analyze and gain insight into needs fulfillment and expectations for needs fulfillment, and
- (e) develop strategies to meet their own emotional needs.

Through this process, the client learns to understand the ESB model, to apply the model to his emotional portfolio, and to recognize and effectively respond to shifts in emotional investments in order to stabilize his emotional portfolio.

THE FIVE STEPS OF ESB

1. The ESB Model Overview

The counselor using the ESB model provides the client with an overview of the model with the goal of having the client reach a clear understanding of the model so that the client may begin to conceptualize how the model might fit within the his life. It is important that the counselor explain the model in the order presented in this paper and to use

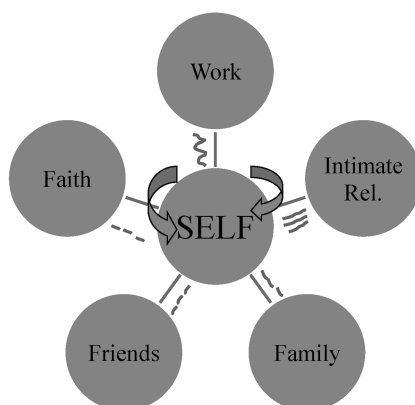
the third person in the explanation, with the exception of “self as the flagship investment.” Using third-person language allows the client to learn the model more objectively. By using ESB people may better understand their difficulties with relationships.

The initial overview of the ESB model usually takes one complete session and begins with a presentation of the overall goals and intended outcomes. Next, the counselor explains the concept of emotional stocks, how it is comprised of emotional time and emotional energy, and how these are focused on different areas of the client’s life. The counselor also needs to have the client understand that emotional time and energy may be applied to individuals (e.g., parents, siblings, significant others) and roles (e.g., student, job holder, sportsperson). The counselor then presents the concepts of emotional bonds (created as a result of invested emotional time and energy), needs fulfillment, and expectations of needs fulfillment (correspondent to the amount of emotional time and energy invested in the individual or role). The counselor also discusses the emotional portfolio diagram, explains the relationship patterns of close, fused, hostile, conflictual, distant, and cut-off, and clarifies the lines used to depict patterns on the client’s diagram.

Following this, the counselor presents the two key tenets for the ESB model: the amount of emotional time and energy directed towards the various areas of attachment in an individual’s life is finite; AND emotional time and energy is traded, not created or destroyed. The key tenets are presented at this point because the client needs to grasp the foundational concepts to fully understand the key tenets.

Following the explanation for the key tenets, the counselor should present the concept of emotional overinvestment. This needs to be presented after the key tenets because the key tenets are the vehicles that lead to emotional overinvesting. The client would need to understand the key tenets to help them avoid emotional overinvesting. The tenets provide the foundation for the client to better understand the emotional overinvesting in a particular area because emotional time and energy, which cannot be created or destroyed, is shifted towards one particular relationship or role creating the overinvesting.

Up to this point, the counselor has explained the model in third person. The concept of one’s “self as the flagship investment” is presented last to the client and should be explained in second person to the client (e.g., “Your relationship with your ‘self’ and the emotional time and energy placed to your ‘self’ is the flagship investment in the emotional stocks and bonds model.”). Saving the explanation of the flagship investment until the

Figure 2

end and introducing this concept in second person allows the client to reflect more deeply with a greater understanding of the ESB model.

2. Development of the Emotional Portfolio Diagram

The goal of the second session using the ESB intervention process is development of the client's emotional portfolio diagram. The counselor could ask the client,

"What are the different areas you invest your emotional time and energy?"

These are the client's attached objects. A simple figure representing the client can be drawn in the middle (e.g., a stick figure) with lines radiating outwards that represent the different areas of emotional time and energy investments. The line radiating outward and back to the figure signifying the client represents the relationship to "self." The relationship lines used in genograms to depict relationships patterns (close, fused, hostile, conflictual, distant, and cut-off) would then be completed for the various areas of attachment.

3. Analysis of Emotional Stocks and Emotional Bonds

At this point, the client has an explanation of the model and a pictorial representation of relationship attachments. This third step of the ESB intervention process helps the client gain a deeper understanding of the emotional time and emotional energy he or she puts toward the various relationship areas. Once the counselor and client identify the major areas of relationship attachments, they discuss the nature of the emotional time and emotional energy placed in each attachment area. The counselor should solicit specific examples in the client's life to explore emotional

time and energy directed toward relationships so that the client can obtain a deeper understanding of investments in attachment areas. Examples of open-ended questions to help the client and counselor gain insight into the different areas of attachment include:

“How do you spend emotional time in this area?”

“How do you spend emotional energy in this area?”

“Tell me about an occasion when you spent emotional time in one area of attachment without the individual of the attachment being physically present?”

Additionally, the client should be asked about emotional time and energy to “self.” At this point, the counselor helps the client examine how the two key tenets (emotional time and energy are finite and can only be traded) apply to the relationship investments on his or her emotional portfolio diagram. The client also can begin to identify and explore any emotional overinvestments along with emotional and behavioral results of emotional over-investments. Depending on the amount and nature of the client’s emotional investments, one-to-three sessions should be allocated for this step (in addition to the one session for the overview and one session for the portfolio diagram). However, the client will return to this ESB analysis to evaluate changes made during the portfolio diversification step.

4. Needs Analysis

The fourth step in the ESB intervention process is to help the client gain a deeper understanding of needs met up to this point and expectations for needs fulfillment through relationship attachments. This step involves the client analyzing

- (a) the needs that are met through the various relationship attachments,
- (b) expectations for needs fulfillment from each relationship attachment,
- (c) emotional and behavioral reactions when needs are met, including any activation of attachment behaviors and emotional responses when needs are not met, and
- (d) behavioral and emotional responses associated with shifting of emotional time and energy among the different areas of attachment.

This is a fairly involved step within the ESB intervention process, and the number of sessions spent on this step depends on the client’s goals, level of differentiation, family-of-origin attachment issues, and self-esteem. A

salient characteristic with codependence and emotional over-involvement is placing the needs of others before one's own needs. It is also characterized with other behaviors such as martyrdom, external focusing, self-sacrifice, and intrusion (Dear & Roberts, 2005; Hogg & Frank, 1992). However, the ESB intervention process analyzes the client's emotional needs, expectations of those needs being met, how areas of emotional time and energy meet his or her needs, and how the client responds when needs are not met.

Hogg and Frank (1992) suggested counselors evaluate a central to the concept of codependency: a client's expectations related to giving and receiving in a relationship.

"Are you able to balance your need to connect with others while maintaining autonomous independence?"

"Can you meet your own needs, or do you rely on others to meet your demands and needs?"

Furthermore, Loughhead, Spurlock, and Yuan-yu (1998) concluded that because clients with codependency tend to assume responsibility of meeting other's needs and expect others to reciprocate this behavior in return, it is critical to include questions or statements focused on feelings related to fulfilled or unfulfilled needs.

"Can you comfortably give to others without expecting a need to be filled?"

"Do you feel resentment and anger when you do something for others in your relationships?"

"Describe your process of developing nurturing, fulfilling relationships with others."

The counselor could also prescribe an "investment hold," in which the client would pause or significantly decrease emotional time and energy to an "overinvested" attachment. The client may then analyze the resulting emotional response for keys and clues to needs desired from that attached object. For example, a client might not see or communicate with an enmeshed significant other (i.e., attached object) for one week and experience feelings of fear, loneliness, and self-doubt suggesting that needs for security, self-confidence, and interpersonal connections are expected from that particular relationship object.

5. A Diversified Emotional Portfolio

The last step of the ESB intervention process builds on the needs analysis and desires to help the client diversify his or her emotional portfolio and to transform the "self" into a flagship investment. Once the

client understands needs that are met and expectations for needs fulfillment, particularly from areas of emotional overinvesting, he or she may process diversifying the emotional portfolio, increase the ability to meet more needs, and achieve greater balance in the emotional portfolio. Finding balance between autonomy and connection with others is the key (Hogg & Frank, 1992). "Once the client understands his or her relationship patterns, counseling needs to focus on restoring balance to relatedness" (p. 374). From an attachment theory perspective, emotional over-investments contribute to irrational thinking and beliefs, fears of loss or rejection, and emotionally driven approaches. Additionally, emotional over-investments lead to activation of attachment behaviors (Campa, Hazan, & Wolfe, 2009; Conner, 2011; van Ecke et al., 2006). Adults who demonstrate this hyper-activating of attachment behaviors show attachment insecurity and emotional over-involvement in their adult relationships (Dinero et al., 2011; Roisman, 2007).

So, this last step in the ESB intervention process helps the client identify and implement specific behavioral strategies towards diversifying his or her emotional portfolio that include an increase in his or her ability to meet needs. Solution-focused therapy's exception question and scaling questions offer effective launching points to help the client identify strengths and strategies to attempt behavioral change (Mireau & Inch, 2009; Taylor, 2009). In addition to brief approaches, the counselor might address incidents of childhood trauma related to attachments and how these might influence current relationship patterns (Sable, 2007). Van Ecke and colleagues (2006) also suggested the following to help clients

increase [the] ability to consciously experience and handle anxiety; increase ability to admit feelings of vulnerability; increase ability to think about feelings before acting; increase ability to admit feelings of disagreement, and make plans for self development; increase ability to stay focused on self; and greater emphasis on the possibility of working through previous trauma (p. 101).

Therefore, effective negotiation of needs fulfillment within relationship proves necessary for the individual and relationship well-being (Patrick et al., 2007).

CASE ILLUSTRATION

The following case presents the application of ESB with an adult during individual counseling. Dontrelle is a 35-year-old married man with three children. He is well-educated and is a successful attorney. He came to counseling due to stress related to marital problems. He reported that

his wife, who had become increasingly upset about the amount of time Dontrelle spent working, was considering divorce because she felt frustrated and believed Dontrelle valued work accomplishments more than he valued his relationship with her. The counselor recognized that although Dontrelle was not reporting codependent behaviors within his relationship, he was displaying evidence of codependent or emotional overinvesting behaviors with his work, resulting in high expectations for work to meet his overall needs. Therefore, the counselor chose to use ESB as the guiding model during counseling with the aim of helping Dontrelle identify and examine where he placed emotional time and energy, what his expectations for needs fulfillment were and how he responded to met and unmet needs, and lastly how he might diversify his emotional portfolio.

The ESB process began with the counselor providing an overview of the model. Dontrelle found the language understandable and easily adopted the model's language as he asked clarification questions regarding investing emotional time and energy. During the second session using ESB, he and the counselor began to create the emotional portfolio diagram. This was a particularly insightful aspect of the intervention because Dontrelle began to see, on paper, his narrow areas of interests and how much emotional time and energy was placed in his work. Dontrelle initially attempted to consider his emotional time and energy invested towards work as an investment for his family. He struggled with seeing the difference between the two areas of investments, but the counselor suggested they revisit the issue after a more comprehensive discussion of how he invests his emotional time and energy and after his needs analysis.

Dontrelle began analysis of his emotional stocks and emotional bonds during the next session. In depth questions were asked to help him explore how he invests his emotional time and emotional energy. During this phase, which took two sessions, he explored how taking work home and checking e-mails on his smartphone during his children's soccer games might have constituted physical time with family but more meaningful emotional time and energy with his work. Additionally, Dontrelle was able to recognize how his sliding into more emotional time and energy towards work occurred with a decrease in emotional time and energy towards his marital relationship, self-care (time to take care of himself), and emotional time and energy with his children. This led to his recognizing and accepting that he overinvested in the work area of his life.

The fifth session using ESB model addressed Dontrelle's needs analysis, particularly the expectations for needs fulfillment from his different areas of attachment and his emotional and behavioral reactions to unmet needs.

He realized that it became easier to “invest” time and energy in work because he received positive reinforcement and appreciation from his job, the things that he yearned for but did not receive from his marital relationship. Dontrelle also realized that when needs were not met at home, he had more control, or at least a greater perception of control, in putting forth the effort (i.e., increased emotional time and energy) at work to obtain the desired reward (appreciation and feeling valued). He also recognized how this process exacerbated his feelings of low self-worth, which he mitigated by focusing less on his own self-care needs and more on the area where he felt most efficacious—work. Dontrelle’s work was defining him, more so than any of his family roles of his “self.”

The final phase of the model addressed the client diversifying his emotional portfolio. Dontrelle understood the systemic aspects of his emotional portfolio, the finite nature of his emotional time and energy, and how his overinvestment in work related to the other areas of attachment in his life. As he decreased his emotional time and energy towards work, he increased self-care activities along with time scheduled to spend with his spouse and children. Dontrelle also strengthened his communication and assertiveness skills in his family relationship and was able to communicate more openly and effectively and make requests regarding his needs.

The remaining sessions were spent strengthening these newly developed skills, helping him recognize the positive shifts occurring in his emotional time and energy, and teaching him to identify potential warning signs and roadblocks so that he could avoid sliding back into an overinvested portfolio.

DISCUSSION

Recent attachment research has focused on attachment styles and intimate relationship functioning in adults (Dinero, Conger, Shaver, Widaman, & Larson-Rife, 2008; Connors, 2011; Dykas & Cassidy, 2011; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Madey & Rodgers, 2009; Wampler, Shi, Nelson, & Kimball, 2003). Hazan and Shaver (1987) stated that, “Attachment theory . . . explains how both healthy and unhealthy forms of love originate as reasonable adaptations to specific social circumstances” (p. 511). Additionally, Madey and Rodgers (2009) supported the strong biological underpinning of attachment and love in romantic relationships. Empirical evidence supports the influence of attachment styles on romantic relationships and the value of close relationships in the development of secure relationships (Dinero et al., 2008; Dykas & Cassidy, 2011; Wampler et al., 2003).

- Emotional stocks and bonds theory provides a brief approach for
- (a) helping clients examine the attachment styles and attachment responses in emotional responses,
 - (b) providing a mechanism for clients to explore emotional overinvesting (i.e., enmeshment), and
 - (c) helping the client develop a strategy for new and more functional behaviors.

Decreased levels of differentiation lead to distorted thinking and beliefs (e.g., working late means there might be an affair), relationship instability (e.g., arguments and conflicts over amount of time to spend together), and irresponsible behaviors (e.g., stalking) (Klever, 2005). Decreased levels of differentiation contributed to emotional reactivity, emotionally oriented responses, and avoidant approaches (Murdock & Gore, 2004). Bowen suggested that the imbalance between togetherness and separation creates anxiety, which is similar to Bowlby's theory. In romantic relationships, low levels of differentiation can lead to fusion or relationship enmeshment (Murdock & Gore, 2004), evidenced when the effect of increased anxiety impairs one's ability to regulate emotions and when emotions drive one's intellectual capacity (Sable, 2007). As clients achieve success in balancing autonomy and emotional attachment, they work to increase levels of differentiation. Increased levels of differentiation and relationship security contribute to more effective coping, and also serve a preventative role when the client is faced with new stressors (Conners, 2011; Murdock & Gore, 2004).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Emotional stocks and bonds is a brief therapy model to address emotional over-investing and to promote a balance between autonomy and emotional investment in relationships. The model fits most therapeutic settings, including individual and couples counseling, group counseling, psychoeducational workshops, and gender specific groups (Hogg & Frank, 1992; Pistole, 1995). Attachment behaviors developed earlier in life influence information processing in relationships (Dykas & Cassidy, 2011). Thus, counselors may work with individuals to address current relationship enmeshment and over-investing as it relates to attachments early in childhood. Additionally, Dinero et al. (2011) identified the importance of close relationships and early attachments on romantic relationship quality. Counselors may also use ESB with couples to assess attachment related concerns in each individual and emotional investment issues in the relationship. Emotional stocks and bonds with couples includes teaching

concepts of balanced emotional investments in order to increase healthy coping skills in the relationship and demonstrating psychoeducational factors in differentiation, needs fulfillment, and diversified emotional portfolios.

Emotional stocks and bonds theory is also appropriate for a counseling group setting and psychoeducational workshop setting. In the psychoeducational workshop, group leaders focus on teaching ESB concepts and interventions to a group of individuals or couples and elicit group responses throughout the process. In the group setting, advantageous therapeutic factors include the socially safe environment where clients experiment with new thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in a secure, stable setting, and hearing the experiences of others contributing to some normalization of the process. Clients may have an opportunity to build trust in these supportive environments and build healthy relationships as a result of exchanges among group members (Edmundson, Byrne, & Rankin, 2000).

LIMITATIONS

It is vital that counselors understand the implications for addressing attachment-related issues when using ESB in their clinical practice (either as a brief intervention or long-term therapy model). Counselors must fully conceptualize the therapeutic components to ESB. Future research may center on validating the key concepts to this therapeutic modality (i.e., needs assessment, emotional portfolio diversification) in order to determine the overall effectiveness and outcomes in individual clients and couples. For instance, does the ESB model help individuals and couples successfully resolve attachment issues? Does the model promote healthy, regulated emotions in relationship (Pistole, 1995)?

Current literature and research report that counselors and clients must address attachment-related issues, evaluate levels of differentiation, and focus on emotional regulation in counseling to develop regulated, balanced emotions (Dinero et al., 2011; Dykas & Cassidy, 2011; Murdock & Gore, 2004; Sable, 2007; Roisman, 2007). Emotional stocks and bonds draws upon this current literature to support the working model as appropriate for addressing the attachment issues, codependency, emotional over-investing, and emotional regulation. However, further research and analysis is needed to validate the effectiveness of ESB in concentrating on key concepts such as the emotional portfolio, emotional time and energy, emotional regulation, and symbiotic attachment. Future exploratory research is needed to support the claim of the ESB model as an insight tool, brief intervention, and long-term therapeutic modality that serves individ-

uals and couples experiencing attachment-related issues and relational distress due to a lack of emotional regulation and coping.

CONCLUSION

Emotional stocks and bonds theory provides a conceptual model to help clients understand their areas of emotional involvements. The model reviews core concepts in attachment, co-dependency, and emotional over-investment and promotes emotional regulation through the development of a client's emotional portfolio diagram. Discussions about key concepts, including emotional time and energy, symbiotic nature of attachments, and emotional over-investments provide clients with an objective, operational, and less threatening manner to explore their relationship patterns. It is amenable to different therapeutic approaches (i.e., individual or group setting) and theoretical orientations (i.e., incorporating cognitive-behavioral concepts or in the context of person-centered counseling). It can be used as a means to gain insight into relationship patterns and attachment assessment, as a specific intervention with a client in counseling, or as the primary treatment modality. Because ESB is more concrete but systemic and process-oriented, it has utility with clients at varying levels of insightfulness and concreteness and is useful with clients at different levels of cognitive or emotional orientation. Finally, ESB is adaptable to clients with various levels of cognitive, emotional, and relational development and insight.

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