CASE STUDY OF TOM

Presenting Problem and Precipitants:

Tom is a 43-year-old male with symptoms of chronic depression and social anxiety. He is currently single and lives with his mother and stepfather after what appears to be a drug induced psychotic episode whilst travelling. During his travels he was with his long – term partner Mary as they were travelling together, he then decided to travel on his own for a short period Mary returned home to Australia. During his travels he met another woman Jane and commenced a relationship with her whilst still in a relationship with Mary. The relationship with Mary subsequently ended, he continued a relationship with Jane. He described the relationship with Jane as being intense, and he idealised her, however he became unwell, they broke up and he returned home to Australia. Upon his return he discussed a period of isolation and withdrawal from the world and was preoccupied with this relationship ending, fantasising about being with her again and not being able to "let go", and idealising her and devaluing himself. Tom had four years of depression, isolated at home before he presented for therapy. Tom does state he feels bad for hurting this ex – partner and is ashamed of his actions whilst travelling.

Pre-disposing variables/Psych history:

Tom is the youngest of two boys. He described himself as a somewhat shy boy. He described his father as "eccentric" and his mother as "warm and anxious". He described his primary school years as being non-eventful, that there was no conflict between his parents or unhappiness at home. Tom indicated he was not bullied but was socially anxious and had friends that were "older than him". Tom stated that when he started high school things changed; he stated that his mother left his father and became involved with another man shortly after and moved to NZ. Tom was left with his father and his eldest brother moved away with his mother. When Tom was about 15 his father met a woman, who had kids of her own including a daughter that was a couple of years younger than Tom. Tom and this young girl (Janina) developed a romantic relationship. Tom and his father moved in with this woman and her family. Tom stated that his dad and Janina's mum did enforce some boundaries during this time but did not stop the relationship from occurring. Tom's father and this woman broke up six months later, but Tom and Janina continued to have an on again off again relationship. Tom described himself as intense and obsessed, always wanting to be with Janina. The ultimate break up occurred when Tom realised, she was "talking with other boys". Tom fell into a depression, withdrew from friends. Tom Became suicidal and attempted to take his life and was referred to a psychiatrist. Tom took antidepressant medication and discontinued to see the psychiatrist once his mood was stabilised.

Tom stayed on medication for most of his life, he finished high school but did not go on to Uni and worked mostly in retail. Tom loves to play music and surf. When depressed however he does not engage in any of these activities and finds it extremely hard to re-engage with these activities when his mood starts to lift. Tom has had numerous depressive episodes throughout his lifetime for varying periods of time. These episodes are characterised by severe psychomotor agitation, low mood, chronic suicidal ideation, anhedonia, and social isolation. When in relationships he describes himself as dependent and unable to engage in life without a partner to make him feel supported.

Tom questioned whether his father has “Bipolar Disorder” and his mother as having anxiety and an OCD like presentation. This awareness has only occurred in the last few years as an adult.

Perpetuating Variables

Avoidant coping strategies; negative self – appraisal, extraordinarily strong internal critic. No job/career. Very few friends in Melbourne (only one from high school) the rest live interstate where he was raised. Lives with parents and financially dependent. Unrelenting standards re: self and others. Self-sooths through eating junk and some self-medicating. Single and unwillingness/fear to date, feels has nothing to offer, but constant state of ambivalence.

Protective:

Desire to change, has resumed surfing. Sees his friend often. Good sense of humour, intelligent, attends sessions regularly and completes most homework assigned to him. Financial and emotional support from family.

Recent Presentation and main schemas:

Mood is stable, depression has lifted, but still has bouts of dips in low mood. Surfing, seeing friend(s), wants to make changes and live independently although stepfather is unwell and wants to remain at home to be a support to mum and to stepdad. Tom idealises therapist, has disclosed thinks about the therapist often, wants a partner like the therapist, his words: high achieving, attractive, warm and confident.

His Main Schemas: Defectiveness Shame, Social Isolation, Failure, Unrelenting Standards, Emotional Deprivation.
His Main Modes: Vulnerable Child Mode; Undisciplined Child Mode; Detached Self Soother; Detached Protector; Avoidant Protector, Critic, Healthy Adult; Happy Child Mode.