

A Tribute to Edward G. Carr

On June 20, 2009 Ted Carr and his wife Ilene Wasserman were killed in a car accident. We join those feeling the pain, and frustration at their loss. As colleagues who worked closely with Ted Carr we also join those taking time to reflect on memorable (quotable) moments with Ted. Much will be written about the wit, wisdom and tenacity that Ted Carr brought to the fields of autism, psychology and special education. He forced us to think differently, to consider alternatives, to act. He built durable relationships based on an old-school sense of honor. He trained young scholars who are now major contributors and leaders in their respective fields. His contributions were substantive and his approach was unique.

As we consider the ways Ted touched our lives, and the broad contributions he made professionally, it is appropriate to be specific about the breadth and impact of his contributions. Consider, for instance, that in 1977 as a 30-year old professor Ted Carr published an extraordinarily influential article in *Psychological Bulletin* with the scholarly title, "The Motivation of Self-injurious Behavior: A Review of Some Hypotheses." In this paper he proposed that self-injurious behaviors like self-hits, self-bites and head-hits performed by individuals with severe disabilities were logically linked to a small set of predictable consequences (e.g. obtaining desired objects, avoiding undesirable demands); and that by understanding these specific consequences (e.g. his/her "motivation") we could better design support that would reduce self-injury. The taxonomy of motivational functions that he proposed was stunning in simplicity, scientific clarity and utility. What Ted Carr did in 1977 was to define with eloquence and precision a logic model (the $e = mc^2$) that has been adopted, adapted and expanded into behavioral assessment tools used throughout the world. A large research database now exists documenting the accuracy of his model, and an even larger list of stories abound about how this model has made a difference in the lives of individuals. We know well a woman in Oregon who was diagnosed with autism and severe mental retardation, and hit her head against hard objects when asked to do simple household tasks. For decades her head hitting had been seen as a natural part of having autism and severe mental retardation. When a systematic functional behavioral assessment was conducted, it became clear how her self-injury was logically linked to avoiding undesirable tasks. When she was taught alternative, and appropriate, ways to communicate, her self-injury along with the resulting pain and damage were dramatically reduced. Ted Carr's ideas and examples made her story possible.

The precedent established by his 1977 paper was replicated over the next three decades. His research was distinctive for the impeccable quality of his scholarship, the conceptual sophistication of his research questions, and the clinical impact of the procedures he developed. These features are well represented by Ted's creation, with Mark Durand, of "functional communication training" (FCT) (Carr & Durand, 1985). FCT emphasizes the teaching of new behaviors that are documented as functional for an individual. Next to positive reinforcement, this procedure is perhaps the most frequently-replicated practice in interventions employing applied behavior analysis and positive behavior support.

Ted wrote by dictating, and this resulted in manuscripts that sang with the voice and inflection of his oral presentations. To read a Ted Carr manuscript is to hear him speak. It makes his science more accessible, and leaves you looking for the subtle quips in the text. It was his wonderful ability to say

complicated things in understandable ways that led Ann Turnbull to recruit Ted to lead a synthesis of research on positive behavior support. This synthesis was published in 1999 and summarized the research foundation and credibility for positive behavior support as a clinical technology. He followed this impressive accomplishment in 2002 with a first-authored paper entitled, "Positive Behavior Support: Evolution of an Applied Science." In these two documents, Ted framed the core elements of positive behavior support (PBS), and the foundation from which PBS research and technology should evolve. The continuing high citation rate for these two documents attests to the value of his guidance.

In addition to providing scholarly leadership Ted Carr was an activist. More than any other person Ted Carr is responsible for the creation of both the *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, and the Association for Positive Behavior Support. While many have collaborated in making the journal and the association successful, it was Ted Carr who voiced with enthusiasm the need for both. It was his vision that PBS move beyond a niche approach to behavior support, and assume a durable role for guiding policy, systems, education and development of new professionals. He was adamant. He was persistent. He was persuasive. In the end he convinced Bob Koegel and Glen Dunlap to assume founding editorship roles with the *Journal*, and he agreed (with some reluctance) to become the founding President of the new association. Anyone involved in positive behavior support owes a direct and substantial debt to Ted Carr for his vision and commitment to building a durable PBS foundation. He expected us all to change how we understand, educate and support individuals with problem behavior.

In 2006 as Ted's tenure as APBS president closed he agreed to provide the keynote address at the annual APBS conference. This address was later published in *JPBI* under the title, "The Expanding Vision of Positive Behavior Support: Research Perspectives on Happiness, Helpfulness and Hopefulness." We propose that when colleagues gather in March for the 2010 APBS conference, all be encouraged to re-read this address. It is a classic example of Ted Carr's approach. While so many of us work hard at mastering current mantras, Ted stepped back, celebrated what had been done in the field, and laid out a multi-decade challenge for the future. His paper integrates a commitment to rigorous science with an equally strong commitment to making change that will improve the daily lives of people. He encourages us to be proud of what has been accomplished yet intolerant of what remains to be changed. He wanted us to be better than we are, and he actually believed we could do it. For that we will remember and miss him.

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