

Ronald Brown
1945–2017

I would like to say a few things on behalf of Ron's patients. As well, on behalf of his colleagues at the Department of Psychiatry of the Jewish General Hospital and the Canadian Psychoanalytic Society. It is not just Ron's involvement in family life, athletics, and the business world, he actually had a day job.

First, his patients: He had so many of them and in several completely different settings, including in our general psychiatry clinic, in psychoanalysis, and as part of his medical expertise business. He was well known amongst us to take on a very large number of patients, many of whom suffered particularly difficult conditions, which he was able to manage in a calming and warm fashion. He was dedicated to them, advocated for them, and went, as a colleague put it, ten extra miles. I have inherited some of them and can say that they loved and will miss him. As late as last November, while undergoing chemotherapy, Ron was still doing psychiatric expertise work. This is a testament to his unusual fortitude and courage.

Next, his colleagues and students: During his valiant struggle against his disease, Ron kept up his devotion to his work in teaching and helping patients. Less than two weeks ago he was still a supervising psychoanalyst in the United States over the telephone. Over his long career, Ron taught generations of psychiatric and psychoanalytic patients, students, and colleagues. Knowing about his productivity and unusual hard-working ethic, I believe that it is possible that Ron both treated and supervised more individuals than any other of his colleagues in the two milieus (psychiatric and psychoanalytic) in which he worked.

That is quantity. But where he really stood out was in quality. He was an unusually sensitive and astute clinician. He was intense, serious, and private as a person. He was unusually creative—he thought outside the box. He was our department of psychiatry's official poet. Ron was "an original."

In his work, he was an exemplar of integrity and an in-depth, insightful, and humble approach to working with people. I am going to give a very short description of the philosophy of psychoanalytic psychiatry—I think Ron would have approved of this being done at his funeral as an extension of his legacy. What I mean is that in the comments and ideas that Ron shared with all of us, he demonstrated what makes psychoanalytic psychiatry different from other brands of therapy. It involves the therapist being as introspective and as honest with himself or herself as possible. That is, the business of therapy is not a one-way activity—it is a unique and spontaneous interaction between two people in which both brings to the table their own highly individual minds, reactions, and behaviours. Ron Brown taught a two-person psychology, a dynamic and spontaneous interaction between two individual minds reacting to each other in unconscious as well as conscious ways. He showed us that as therapists, we should not have the chutzpah to believe that we understand exactly what is going on at an exact moment. He taught us that at the same time as we are emotionally engaged, we should also stand back and look for our own unconscious biases and mistakes in understanding from what the patient says to us after we have said something. This is quite an uncomfortable position to be in: our patient is telling us in between the lines about our own distortions and errors. But Ron stood up for and encouraged that kind of insight and honesty.

A final personal comment: Ron taught me a lot about dying. When we recently discussed his illness and its impact on him, he told me—without mentioning the words *death* or *dying* (he refused palliative care, after all)—that he was profoundly grateful for the life he had had and the relationships he had had. He said he was so lucky to have been born where he was born and lucky to be born at the time in history that he was born. He told me that he was profoundly grateful for his relationships with his partners, his children, his friends, and his career in which he had become a doctor, psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, and senior teacher. He said that all this was uniquely and tremendously fortunate, and therefore his life had brought him contentment and great satisfaction. I was so touched by Ron's expression and explanation of the strong meaning of his life to him. That lesson has helped me to confront my own mortality.

So, Ron, as a colleague, teacher and, on behalf of your many patients, we have been inspired and learnt many truly important things from you and with you. For that, we thank you. You will not be forgotten.

Daniel Frank