

Big Shoes to Fill

PBS is the intersection between values and science. While some questioned and others argued against the role of values in science, Ted took a stand...unafraid of ruffling feathers, and quite often, going against the status quo. Of course values play a role in science, and more than offering a persuasive argument, Ted lived this position. Driven by a core value that said, by all means do the right thing for people with disabilities and their families, his work embodied this intersect. He entreated us to broaden our perspectives, our understanding. He taught us that problem behaviors were forms of communication (you too would bang your head, if you had no conventional means of being understood). He made it clear that we can't always fix people, so instead we should direct our energy toward mitigating problem environments. Sometimes the environmental changes were quite simple—give the lady a hot water bottle for her menstrual cramps, and by all means lessen the demands. He told us that rapport and good relationships with the people we support are important, and together with his students figured out how to demonstrate this scientifically for those who needed evidence. He reminded us over and over that quality of life is the gold standard for treatment effectiveness; are we really making a difference? And, speaking directly to scientists, he told encouraged us to look across disciplines for answers, and even merge different theoretical perspectives to find solutions to problems knowing that it takes tremendous humility to really listen to alternative views. I will miss Ted greatly. I will miss his intelligence, creativity, wit, and most of all his voice that shaped our field and kept us moving in the right direction. We have mighty big shoes to fill to keep his message alive.

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