

CTSA NEWSLETTER



Center for the
Treatment and
Study of Anxiety



IN MEMORIAM: DR. EDNA B. FOA

It is with deep sadness that the Department of Psychiatry at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania marks the passing of Edna B. Foa, Ph.D, a foundational force in psychology and a renowned scientist, colleague, mentor, and friend. Dr. Foa's death is an immense loss to our department, to the University of Pennsylvania, and to the global mental health community.

Dr. Foa's life and career were defined by intellectual rigor, moral clarity, and an unwavering commitment to alleviating human suffering. Over the course of many decades, she fundamentally reshaped the understanding and treatment of anxiety-related disorders, transforming clinical practice worldwide and improving the lives of countless individuals.

Dr. Foa was raised in Israel, an experience that shaped both her resilience and her sense of purpose. From an early age, she demonstrated keen curiosity about human behavior and a conviction that science should be used to prioritize solving real-world problems. She pursued her academic training in psychology with distinction, completing advanced graduate education in the United States during a period when women were still markedly underrepresented in the sciences. These formative years laid the groundwork for a career that would combine experimental precision with clinical compassion.

Dr. Foa spent the majority of her professional life at the University of Pennsylvania, where she served as Professor of Clinical Psychology in Psychiatry and founded the Center for the Treatment and Study of

Anxiety (CTSA). Under her leadership, the CTSA became one of the world's preeminent centers for research, training, and clinical care in anxiety and trauma-related disorders.

Widely regarded as the leading international expert in treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, and anxiety-related disorders, Dr. Foa's scientific contributions to the field are unparalleled. Dr. Foa developed two of the gold-standard frontline treatments for anxiety, Prolonged Exposure therapy (PE) and Exposure and Response Prevention (ExRP). These treatments have the strongest evidence base supporting their efficacy in dozens of clinical trials, and they have helped shape clinical guidelines for evidence-based treatment. Her work led to the global dissemination of evidence-based

treatments, with PE and EX/RP implemented across healthcare systems, including large-scale initiatives within the VA. She was a leader in the dissemination and implementation of evidence-based practices worldwide, particularly in Israel, where she did extensive work over the past twenty years. She published hundreds of high-impact scientific papers and books about the development, maintenance, and treatment of anxiety, with her work cited over 167,000 times. She secured tens of millions of dollars in grant funding, maintaining continuous support for over 30 years.

Dr. Foa received numerous awards, including being named to Time magazine's 100 Most Influential People in the World for 2010, several Lifetime Achievement Awards (including from the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies), Distinguished Scientist Award from the Scientific section of the American Psychological Association, and humanitarian awards for her work with survivors of sexual assault. She also received an honorary doctorate from the University of Basel.

Equally important to her scientific achievements was Dr. Foa's deep commitment to mentorship. She trained generations of psychologists, social workers, counselors, psychiatrists, and researchers, many of whom now hold leadership positions around the world. Known for her honesty, high standards, and fierce advocacy for her trainees, she demanded excellence while offering unwavering support. For many, she was not only a mentor but also led by example, modeling how to pursue science with curiosity, courage, and humanity.

Beyond her scientific contributions, Dr. Foa's treatments improved the lives of countless patients, including many who struggled with severe and chronic anxiety. Not only did her treatments save patients' lives, but they empowered patients to trust again and to heal their deepest wounds.

In her personal life, Dr. Foa was a devoted spouse, mother, grandmother, and friend. She took great pride and joy in her family and remained deeply engaged in their lives. Colleagues and trainees remember her warmth, her sharp

wit, and her delight in meaningful conversation. She valued culture, learning, and community, and she approached life with the same intensity and curiosity that characterized her work.

Dr. Edna Foa leaves behind a legacy that is both enduring and deeply human. Her science changed what clinicians do in the therapy room. Her leadership changed institutions. Her mentorship changed lives. And her courage - scientific, personal, and ethical - set a standard that will continue to guide the field for decades to come.

Dr. Foa's passing represents a profound loss to the field of clinical psychology that will be felt for generations. She would have encouraged her mentees and patients to approach this loss with courage and openness, and to come together in honoring her extraordinary legacy.

On behalf of the Department of Psychiatry, we extend our heartfelt condolences to Dr. Foa's family and loved ones. We honor her memory with profound gratitude and commit ourselves to carrying forward the principles that defined her life's work.



Classic Edna – A tribute from Marty Franklin

I am writing this tribute while waiting at an airport gate for a flight to a national conference. Over the course of the next few days I will have the opportunity to present applied research data, participate in a clinical roundtable about OCD and its treatment, & engage with colleagues as we toss around ideas for how best to move the field forward. Edna’s profound influence on my career, my life, and even my thinking is most often accessible during relatively quiet moments like this, where opportunities for reflection make their way forward amidst the work I have committed to myself to doing. Indeed, I learned of Edna’s passing a few weeks ago while right in the middle of presenting a clinical training about exposure-based treatments for OCD. I paused for a moment to take it all in, but before I could decide how best to proceed under the circumstances, I heard Edna’s voice, in her characteristic and unmistakable Israeli accent, telling me that these clinicians took time out of their busy schedules to receive this training, and therefore I must continue straight through to

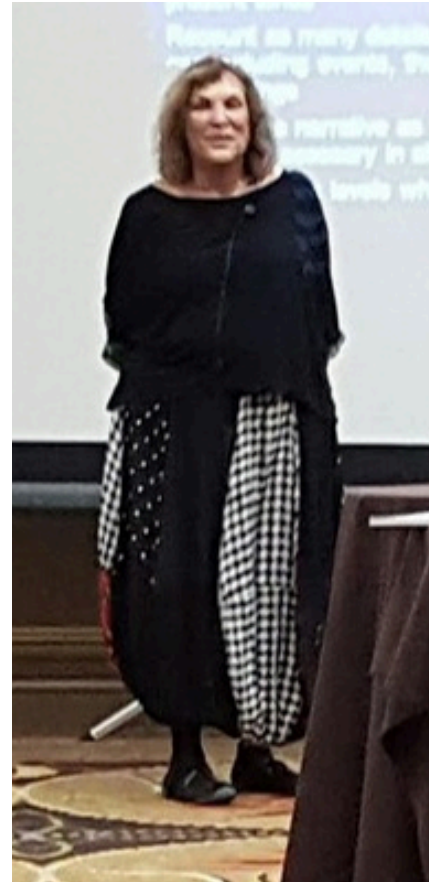


the end. My feelings? You can process those later. Classic Edna.

My very first day of internship in 1991 at the Medical College of Pennsylvania was spent in Edna’s presence at her Center for the Treatment and Study of Anxiety, the unit she established in 1979 to develop, test, and disseminate cognitive-behavioral interventions for anxiety and related conditions.

Edna’s work even by then was highly influential, and her legend was already well in the making. At that initial meeting, Edna slid a formidable stack of old-school medical charts across the table to me and said, “Marty, is it? These are your OCD cases for this rotation.” I thanked her, then asked the first of myriad naïve questions in the legendary Tuesday Meetings: “When will I receive the training to treat these cases?” She pivoted back to look at Michael Kozak, her Clinical Director, as if to wax nostalgic about the process of indoctrinating yet another green intern. Edna then gestured at the pile, and said, “The training is in there.” Edna was a fine clinician too, and thus read well my horrified expression, then offered, “But don’t worry: we’ll help you.” True to her word, she did exactly that.

Edna’s influence on the field broadly speaking, on the development and expansion of cognitive-behavioral theory, on using clinical science to alleviate human suffering, and in pushing the proverbial envelope, has been



chronicled elsewhere and cannot ever be overstated. Edna was one of the true pillars of clinical psychology, and the effects of her work will live on in perpetuity, of that I have little doubt. What was less well known except for those of us fortunate enough to have been mentored by Edna was the incredible amount of time and emotional investment she made in seeding the field with the next generation of theorists, scholars, and clinicians who would carry that work forward in the years to come. I count myself in that incredibly lucky group, all of whom were blessed by her personal investment in our training and careers. Edna had exacting standards for herself and for us, and fully expected that same

Classic Edna (continued)



Sitting in this airport now, on my way to give another set of talks on topics I have come to know very well and continue to pursue with the passion that comes from also believing that this work is vital, I concur with Edna’s assessment of academia, and am truly grateful that I listened. Thank you, Edna, for illuminating a path forward for me, as I know you did for countless others. You were unforgettable, and your work will continue on in the hands of those you mentored and trained to carry on the legacy.

level of investment and intensity on our part. Vigorous debate was just part of the process, where occasionally the fur would fly. But Edna also knew us well enough to understand what each of us needed in order to help us make the commitment needed to join her in the vanguard. In one of our many career development conversations back in the mid 1990s, likely in her East Falls office well after 8 pm, I was fretting about the “soft money” environment of academic psychiatry, and openly wondering if it was time to pivot to hard-line academic psychology or even to private practice. Edna stopped my rumination dead in its tracks, looked into the depths of my soul (which she did regularly), and said, “It’s only soft money if you can’t get it...and I know you can get it. Plus, academia is a really fun way to make a living, and a life.” Edna Foa believed in me: it was about damn time to believe in myself as well, and to make the commitment required to honor that belief. And to always keep pushing to get better at the work, which is truly a never-ending process.



I will miss her very much – A tribute from Rich McNally



Edna was my primary clinical supervisor during my internship (1982-1983) at the Behavior Therapy Unit in Temple University Medical School's Department of Psychiatry. It was the original behavior therapy unit in America, established by Joseph Wolpe who was still directing it. She was a marvelous supervisor. I learned a great deal about applying evidence-based treatments that she and Gail Steketee had established as efficacious, such as in vivo exposure and response prevention for obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). She also supervised many other cases of mine involving a variety of syndromes.

In my "spare time" during my internship year, Edna and I devised, conducted, and published laboratory experiments. Some extended psychophysiology research I had done during graduate school, testing the preparedness theory of phobias, whereas others were cognitive psychology experiments concerning information-processing biases in people with anxiety disorders.

During that year, I applied for many Assistant Professorship positions throughout the country but was invited to interview for only two of them.

I received offers from both, but neither had Ph.D. programs in clinical psychology. Edna came to the rescue by offering me a postdoctoral position on her OCD grant. During my postdoctoral year, Edna taught me how to write grants – yet another invaluable skill.

Edna's influence continued after I obtained an Assistant Professorship in the Department of Psychology at the University of Health Sciences/The Chicago Medical School. We had just landed a NIMH grant, and so I conducted half of our studies in Chicago while she conducted the other half in Philadelphia. Moreover, I established

an Anxiety Disorders Clinic where my Ph.D. students mastered the behavioral and cognitive-behavioral treatments that I had learned from Edna, including the intensive OCD treatment program. Two of her clinical "grandstudents," Drs. Nader Amir and Brad Riemann, subsequently went on to establish Edna-style OCD programs across the USA.

Edna and I remained connected professionally and personally throughout the years. I served on the DSM-IV PTSD committee she co-chaired, and we continued to publish together. But the most special memories I have are dinners we shared, often with our spouses, Charles and Donna, at ABCT conferences or at ones in Europe.

I will certainly miss her very much. Had I never met Edna or had her as a mentor, my career and life would have turned out very differently than it has. She will live on in my heart and memory.



Where would I be without Edna? – A tribute from Carmen McLean

Where would I be without Edna? I learned so much from her. Edna was renowned for her research, scholarship, and treatment dissemination, but fewer people know that she was also an incredibly dedicated and generous mentor. She consistently shared opportunities with junior faculty to bolster their professional development, and she devoted countless afternoons and evenings to discussing projects and writing with her mentees. I will never forget the many hours spent in her office, working on papers and grant applications. She taught me to scrutinize every word to ensure it was as accurate, clear, and compelling as possible. While it was sometimes tedious, it was ultimately rewarding, and my writing improved significantly through her guidance.

I also learned a lot from Edna about being proactive and direct. While others might wait weeks for an email reply, Edna understood the value of simply picking up the phone, and her persuasiveness was unmatched. I will always admire her passion and dedication to helping people with anxiety. I could never match Edna's stamina and enthusiasm for her work. It seemed as though she had enough energy to go on indefinitely, making her departure all the more unexpected. I will do my small part to continue her legacy and will always remember the invaluable lessons she taught me. Edna's influence will forever remain a part of who I am.



Endlessly Committed – A tribute from Sandy Capaldi



It has been my distinct honor to work with Edna these last 25 years, and truly my singular pleasure to have known her so closely. I learned so much from her, not only about our work, but about what it means to dedicate your life to something larger than yourself. She shaped my professional identity in profound ways, and just as deeply, my personal one.

I have so many memories of Edna, countless conversations, moments of laughter, intensity, challenge, and generosity. I have probably taught hundreds of workshops with her over the years, and somehow, every single time, I still learned something new from her. That was Edna: endlessly brilliant, endlessly working, endlessly committed.

Her loss is immense and leaves an irreplaceable void in our field. And yet, the world is left an undeniably better place because she was in it. Her contributions, her wisdom, and the lives she changed will continue on, long beyond her time here. I am profoundly grateful to have walked alongside her.



May her memory be a blessing – A tribute from Yoshiharu Kim & Sho Takahashi

Upon learning of the passing of Professor Edna Foa, whom we deeply respected, we wish to express our heartfelt condolences, together with the many clinicians who admired her and the many patients whose suffering was relieved through the treatments she developed.

As a professor at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, Prof. Foa led the Center for the Treatment and Study of Anxiety (CTSA) and developed highly effective exposure-based treatments, particularly for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Most notably, prolonged exposure therapy (PE) for PTSD and exposure and response prevention for OCD have long been recommended as first-line treatments by related professional organizations and guidelines. She also helped establish the methodology for psychotherapy outcome research and demonstrated the effectiveness of her own clinical work from multiple perspectives. Although she was a psychologist, she served as a professor in a medical school and pursued psychotherapy research with a rigor comparable to that of medical research. PE has shown effect sizes greater than those of pharmacotherapy, and the majority of patients with PTSD who receive appropriate treatment recover from the disorder. At a time when few effective treatments for PTSD existed, Prof. Foa's development of such treatments and her demonstration of their efficacy were groundbreaking not only for the field of trauma but for medicine and psychology as a whole. Her achievements were also widely recognized beyond academia. In 2010,

TIME named her one of the 100 most influential people in the world, and her portrait appeared on the magazine's cover.

Prof. Foa was not only an outstanding researcher but also someone who remained deeply committed to the recovery of people suffering from trauma and anxiety. Until shortly before her death at the age of 88, she continued to lead clinical research on PE and to organize workshops. She was unsparing in her criticism of clinicians who practiced treatments with little demonstrated benefit, regardless of their stature in the field. At the same time, she generously supported research, not only on PE but on any work that could advance the well-being of patients with PTSD.

Through the founding and leadership of the CTSA, as well as through her lectures and teaching around the world, she worked tirelessly to promote evidence-based treatment and to train the next generation of clinicians and researchers. She mentored many who followed in her path. Although she placed the highest value on rigorous scientific research, in case discussions she repeatedly reminded us that numbers alone are not everything, and that what matters most is helping patients reclaim their lives. She never stopped asking what truly helps people wounded by trauma get better. At the CTSA, PE sessions were, in principle, recorded, and when we visited, she allowed us to view them openly and without reservation, including difficult cases and unsuccessful ones. We were deeply impressed by her fairness and openness.



May her memory be a blessing (Cont.)

Prof. Foa also shared a deep and lasting connection with us. Since Dr. Kim first invited her in 2003 to lead the first PE workshop ever held in Japan, she and her staff have visited Japan many times. She also welcomed our colleagues to the CTSA and guided us in the appropriate dissemination of PE. As a result, PE workshops have been held in Japan almost every year, and clinicians and supervisors certified by Prof. Foa have been trained here. Manuals and workbooks for both adults and adolescents have also been translated into Japanese, and the treatment is now covered by Japanese official health insurance. Even for clinicians who do not themselves practice PE, learning through these workshops that PTSD can improve within a relatively short period, and seeing the concrete path to that recovery, brought tremendous hope and contributed to the development of PTSD treatment and support in Japan across a wide range of professional settings.

Prof. Foa was born in Israel into a Jewish family and grew up in a society shaped by war and terrorism. This environment surely shaped her deep concern with the effects of fear and trauma on the human mind, as well as her sense of mission to help free people from such suffering. Those of us engaged in trauma treatment and support share that commitment. By striving to improve support and treatment and to continue building practices that aid the recovery of those who suffer from trauma, we hope to carry forward her legacy and honor the generosity she showed us.

We extend our deepest condolences to her family and friends.



On gratitude and growing – A tribute from Lily Brown

Dr. Foa started teaching me things well before I met her. In graduate school, I read one of her seminal papers on the role of uncertainty and unpredictability as risk factors in the development of anxiety. Her clear writing helped me to make connections between the lab and the clinic - between the animal studies and the patients in front of me. Her work helped me to grow into a researcher with a focus on posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). While I was always interested in the topic, Dr. Foa's leadership in the field helped me to see that my biggest impact would come from work that was deeply personally meaningful. As a graduate student, I realized that I wanted to do what Dr. Foa did. I wanted to have a career in research, but to ensure that the research was connected to the clinic and to helping people, especially trauma survivors.

When Dr. Foa posted an advertisement for an open faculty position at Penn, I could not believe my luck. I was *really* junior, still a predoctoral intern, but decided that had to at least throw my hat in the ring. I was enormously grateful that she interviewed me. On the interview, I was not surprised to learn that I had some growing to do. A lot of growing. During my job talk, she stopped me on more than one occasion to correct me. When I referred to "treating trauma," Edna interjected with "We don't treat trauma. We treat PTSD." She was right, of course. I remember thinking that I was having a hard time reading her reaction to my talk. She was on her phone for much of it, but when she interjected it was obvious that she was paying attention. Sometimes she looked bored, sometimes irritated, sometimes she gave me a patronizing smile - I deserved all of those reactions.

After the job talk I made my way to interview with her. I was surprised that she was extremely warm and complimentary. I had awareness even then that the compliments she was giving me were not entirely deserved, but she had a way of making me feel good. Edna was an expert at disarming people - a testament of her incredible clinical skill. I realized that I wanted to grow in that way as well, and felt extremely grateful that she trusted me with an offer.

I started in my role and on my *first* day, was given feedback about some more areas for growth. Edna did not like how I started my emails. In my mind, the emails were friendly. In hers, they were too informal, airing on disrespectful. I was annoyed, but of course she was right. More gratitude, more growth.

Our first collaborative grant revealed growth edges galore, and she taught me how to grow in grant writing. I stayed in her office for hours, sitting on one of her red chairs, back throbbing from leaning over, flabberghasted at the focus on every single word. "This is obsessive" I thought. But, of course, she was right. In

grant writing, every word mattered. That grant did not get funded, but the next one did. It would not have, had it not been for the growth in me that Edna cultivated.

Three years after coming to the CTSA, Edna stepped down from her role as director and nominated me to fill the role. Talk about growth edges. That was all very complicated, but Edna designed the CTSA so brilliantly that most things fell into place with time and with Edna's help. Sometimes, 6.5 years after assuming this role, I still find myself thinking "How did I get so lucky?"

I am eternally grateful to Dr. Foa. She has taught me a tremendous amount about academic matters, professional development, and personal success. Inspired by her legacy, my goal will be to pass down the lessons that she has taught me, in collaboration with the rest of the CTSA, for the next generation of psychologists. Thank you, dear mentor. We will do our best to serve those who need us, in your memory.



Memories of Dr. Foa, Throughout the Years



Memories of Dr. Foa, Throughout the Years



Memories of Dr. Foa, Throughout the Years



STANDING LEFT TO RIGHT:

- First Row: Steven Sola, Ph.D.; Allan H. Cristol, M.D.; Joseph Wolpe, M.D.; Anthony F. Panzetta, M.D., Professor and Chairman; John R. Benson, M.D.; Charles Shagass, M.D.; Louise Sonnenberg, M.D.; Barry Shmavonian, Ph.D.
 Second Row: Louis Harris, M.D.; Carey Mayer, M.D.; Gerson Schreiber, M.D.; Richard Moldawsky, M.D.; Michael Ascher, Ph.D.; John Ball, Ph.D.; Edna Foa, Ph.D.; Roy Stern, M.D.; Roy Steinhouse, M.D.; John Harding, M.D.; John Straumanis, M.D.; Stephen Alloy, M.D.; Herbert Cooper, M.D.
 Third Row: Susan Au, M.D.; Linda Hopkins, Ph.D.; Glenn Peterson, M.D.; John Fryer, M.D.; Donald Overton, Ph.D.
 (Top) Kerschbaum, M.D.; Abdollah Nabavi, M.D.

