

Jerilyn Ross

was a dedicated clinician, pioneer, and trailblazer.

A creative thinker and visionary, she lived her dream of helping people with anxiety disorders get treatment to take back their lives.

Think back to the mid-1970s: Jimmy Carter was elected President, disco was alive and well, and Watergate was the political scandal of the decade. There was no e-mail or Internet, no iPods or cell phones. There was no diagnostic category for anxiety disorders. And there were few treatments for phobias.

Jerilyn, a native New Yorker, was a math teacher in the New York City public schools. The city was her home, but the sudden onset of a height phobia and panic attacks left her feeling scared and alone. Dr. Manuel Zane, a psychiatrist at White Plains Hospital who used novel techniques, treated Jerilyn successfully.

A Visionary Career

Jerilyn's experience left her certain that treatment could end the fear, loneliness, and helplessness of others who suffered from what would become known as anxiety disorders. She knew that the terror, irrationality, and debilitation associated with these disorders were incomprehensible to those who had not experienced them.

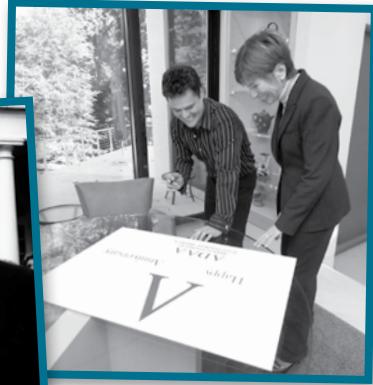
She wanted to help people get treatment — and she did just that. She moved to Washington, D.C., and began her career as a psychotherapist, eventually opening the Ross Center for Anxiety and Related Disorders, a private practice. With Drs. Robert Dupont, Arthur Hardy, and Manuel Zane, Jerilyn founded in 1980 The Phobia Society of America, now called the Anxiety Disorders Association of America. ►



Above, Jerilyn with ADAA co-founders and past presidents Arthur Hardy and Robert DuPont in 1985. Right, Jerilyn with current ADAA Board of Directors Chair Jerrold Rosenbaum in 2006.



Below, Jerilyn with President Bill Clinton at the White House in 1999. Right, Jerilyn watches as performer Donny Osmond signs an ADAA poster.



The founders' vision was to have patients, clinicians, and researchers help solve the mysteries of anxiety disorders and improve the lives of everyday people.

Jerilyn believed that the synergies created by including everyone as an equal partner, listening, learning, and working together would bring this about. Through education and raising awareness, the organization could change the way anxiety disorders were perceived and treated.

She was passionate about creating a rich, diverse forum. With the consumer as the focus, Jerilyn wanted the power of science to improve the lives of those who lived with an anxiety disorder.

Leading ADAA

Jerilyn Ross was a tireless advocate for science and training, treatment and education. For nearly 25 years she was a passionate spokesperson for ADAA at Congressional hearings, in the White House, and at the National Institute of Mental Health. She represented ADAA in lasting partnerships with NIMH, the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology, the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies, and other mental health advocacy and professional organizations.

She encouraged more research for better treatments and improved understanding of the disorders' underlying mechanisms. She promoted professional training and faster translation of science to practice. She successfully built a unique foundation for ADAA.

Speaking Out, Reaching Millions

Jerilyn was saddened by the stories of wasted lives, years of misdiagnosis, and poor treatment. She was dismayed that debate continued about whether anxiety disorders are serious. Speaking out for those living with an anxiety disorder, those who provide treatment, and those who conduct research, Jerilyn made everyone's voice heard.

She never met most of those whose lives she touched. Through her radio show in 1987–92, she inspired many to seek treatment. She was a sought-after expert for newspapers and magazines. As the author of two books, *Triumph Over Fear* and *One Less Thing to Worry About*, and guest on countless radio and television shows, including "Today," "Larry King Live," and "Oprah," she reached millions with a simple message and ADAA's tagline: Anxiety disorders are real, serious, and treatable.

She also spoke to students about the satisfaction one finds as a clinician. And she explained to physicians and other health professionals the crippling and devastating effects of an anxiety disorder on patients and their loved ones, as well as the impact of anxiety on overall health.

Jerilyn inspired many to become involved with ADAA and to reach out to others. She enriched us with her love of life. She shared her love of traveling, boating, skiing, and playing piano. She shared stories about her family, and as many may remember, her parents were “regulars” at the annual conference until 2001.

Lasting Legacy

Jerilyn was recognized for her advocacy, receiving the Patient Advocacy Award from the American Psychiatric Association (2004), Anxiety Disorder Initiative Award from the World Council on Anxiety and the World Psychiatric Association (2001), Distinguished Humanitarian Award from the American Association of Applied and Preventive Psychology (1994), and media awards from the American Association of University Women and the Mental Health Association of Northern Virginia.

Jerilyn’s energy was endless, her passion and commitment unwavering. Not many knew that in the 1980s she was diagnosed with

melanoma. While the prognosis was poor, she beat the odds and was ready to lead ADAA in 1985. When diagnosed with breast cancer in 2001, Jerilyn attacked it with her usual positive attitude. Few attendees at the 2002 conference could have imagined that the very active Jerilyn they saw had just completed chemotherapy.

With spirits high, Jerilyn worked until the end responding to reporters. Though she lost her battle with neuroendocrine cancer, we each have our own memories, and collectively we have something much bigger.

Jerilyn left us her most precious treasure, ADAA, to grow and pass on to the next generation. Her legacy lives on in all of us — in those who provide treatment and do research, in all who suffer from an anxiety disorder, and in their loved ones touched by these disorders.

Jerilyn’s impact is honored by each of you and your involvement with ADAA. It is up to us to nurture, grow, and carry her dream forward.

Jerilyn on the cover of the November 2000 issue of *TEN: The Economics of Neuroscience*, one of the many publications that sought her expertise.

