

## RUSSELL R. JOHNSON, Ph.D.



Russ Johnson died unexpectedly of natural causes on April 29, 2024, during a recent visit to Pittsburgh, the community in which he lived and worked from 1982 until 2019, when he and his wife, Gwyn M. Brown moved to Santa Barbara, California to be near their son, Benjamin. He was born on March 23, 1951, in New York City to Patricia C. Johnson (Blandford) and Louis W. Johnson, but was raised in

Lakewood, NJ. The eldest of four children, their family also included siblings Lewie, Carolyn, and Gary.

A licensed psychologist and nationally certified school psychologist for over 30 years, Russ consulted, worked, and taught in schools, hospitals, and private practice. He held adjunct faculty positions at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Medicine and School of Rehabilitation Science and Technology. In addition, he served as Chief of Pediatric Psychology and Coordinator of Behavioral Medicine at The Mercy Hospital of Pittsburgh (now UPMC Mercy). For 15 years he was the consulting psychologist to Shady Side Academy Senior School. Early training at McLean Hospital at Harvard University led to a Ph.D. in Psychology from Peabody College at Vanderbilt University. During his graduate work, he was a Visiting Researcher at the Boys Town Center for the Study of Youth Development.

In 1992, Russ opened a private clinical practice in Squirrel Hill, providing both psychological testing and therapeutic intervention services for children, adolescents, and adults. He also developed an innovative approach specifically to support children and adults with autism spectrum disorder, the ICONZ program. He was in Pittsburgh as part of his continuing work on that important program.

As a clinician and colleague, a friend, a husband, a father, Russ Johnson was unremittingly present, leaning in, listening. He said it was important to listen to the music, not just the words. To hear the music underneath the words was a hallmark of his personal and professional engagement, his wisdom, and the profound impact he has had on so many.

Russ is survived by his wife, Gwyn M. Brown and his son, Benjamin B. Johnson, of Santa Barbara, CA; his mother, Patricia; his brother, Gary and sister-in-law, Mary; nieces and nephew, Brandy Smith, Abigail Johnson, and Austin Johnson of Umatilla, FL; sister-in-law and brother-in-law, Heidi L. Brown and Bob Biasetti of NYC, NY.

A celebration of Russ' life will be announced and held in Pittsburgh at a future date. Arrangements by **JOHN A. FREYVOGEL SONS, INC.** ([freyvogelfuneralhome.com](http://freyvogelfuneralhome.com))

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