



Obituary

Steve de Shazer (June 25, 1940 –September 11, 2005)

Steve de Shazer passed away September 11, 2005, in Vienna, Austria several hours after being admitted to the hospital. His wife, Insoo Kim Berg, was by his side.

Widely recognized as the author of the first book on Solution-focused Brief Therapy, as a pioneer in the field of Family Therapy, and as a primary developer of what subsequently became the internationally recognized SFBT approach, de Shazer was sometimes addressed as “the grand old man of family therapy,” when lecturing at conferences in his later years.

In addition to countless chapters and articles, de Shazer published five ground-breaking books: *Patterns of Brief Therapy*, *Keys to Solutions in Brief Therapy*, *Clues: Investigating Solutions in Brief Therapy*, *Putting Difference*

to Work, and *Words Were Originally Magic* (W.W. Norton). He had recently completed a new book intended to update the Solution-focused therapy approach. Entitled *More than Miracles: the State of the Art of Solution-focused Therapy*, it will be published posthumously by The Haworth Press. Co-founder of the Milwaukee Brief Family Therapy Center, he lectured widely throughout Europe, Scandinavia, North America, and Asia while serving on the editorial boards of several international journals. His books have been translated into 14 languages.

An iconoclast and creative genius known for his minimalist philosophy and view of the process of change as an inevitable and dynamic part of everyday life, de Shazer reversed the traditional psychotherapy interview process by asking clients to describe a detailed resolution to the problem that brought them into therapy, thereby shifting the focus of treatment from problems to solutions.

Born and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, de Shazer was the son of an electrical engineer father and an opera singer mother. An avid baseball fan, and gourmet cook, he took long daily walks, typically early in the morning, always before retiring at night. His leisure pursuits ranged from reading philosophy tracts in original German or French, listening to Duke Ellington, Thelonius Monk and other Jazz greats, to perusing esoteric cook

books, Gourmet Magazine, and The Cook's Illustrated which he read cover to cover every month.

A classically trained musician, he played several instruments at a professional level, and as a young man earned his living as a saxophonist on the jazz circuit. A talented visual artist as well, he earned a B.F.A. prior to receiving a M.S.S.W. from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. He also studied at the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto, CA where he was mentored by the late John Weakland. They shared a lifelong friendship

Steve de Shazer is survived by his wife, Insoo Kim Berg, his stepdaughter, Sarah Berg, his sister and several nieces and nephews.