

Caryl Elizabeth Rusbult was born on March 9, 1952 in Sigourney, Iowa to Mary Laughlin Rusbult & Francis Rusbult.

She graduated from Loara High School in Anaheim, CA, and continued her education by receiving her Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from the University of California, Los Angeles, and her Doctorate in Psychology from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Early in Caryl's professional career she met her husband, David, while working at the University of Kentucky. After a faculty softball game, Caryl gave him a ride home since he did not have a car at the time. From this began the romance that would turn into a loving lifetime partnership. The two were married in 1981.

Caryl was a lover of life! She thoroughly enjoyed traveling with friends and family, exploring art and history museums, and other interesting places. She loved great food, drink, and conversation wherever she went. She valued movies of any kind and was immensely open-minded, which made her always fun to be around. Her unwavering belief in the general goodness of others made her a loving, patient, kind, and generous friend and family member.

At 57, Caryl passed away peacefully in her home, with David at her side, on January 27, 2010, after losing her battle with cancer. Caryl was a very special, one of a kind woman who will be dearly missed by all of those who were blessed to know her.

Caryl is survived by her husband; David, her parents, Francis and Mary; her siblings, Connie and Craig; and her nieces, Kimberly and Nicole.

Caryl's Professional Achievements

The following report contains excerpts from information compiled by Paul Van Lange, who was a long time friend and co-worker of Caryl's.

Caryl began her professional career at Franklin and Marshall College but soon moved to the University of Kentucky. In 1986 she returned to North Carolina. Chapel Hill was the scene of her most important theoretical contributions, including the investment of commitment model of commitment processes and most recently the Michelangelo effect (the manner in which close partners "sculpt" each other in ways that help them reach valued goals). In 2004 she and her husband, David, moved to Amsterdam where she became Professor and Chair in Social Psychology at the Free University. There, Caryl expanded her interdependence theoretical orientation, developed new lines of research and served as an important inspiration to students.

Caryl's Investment of Commitment Processes is one of the most well-known and influential theoretical frameworks in the area of close relationships. She was a major contributor to the "Atlas of Interpersonal Situations" (2003). A year later, with Harry Reis, she published "Key Readings on Close Relationships." Caryl served as associate editor for the "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology" (1990-1994) and the "Encyclopedia of Psychology" (1996-2000). Caryl has been elected to the boards of several national and international organizations.

The enormous impact of her theory, research, and teaching was recognized by many major grants and awards, including "The Mentoring Award" (2002) and the "Distinguished Career

**In Loving Memory of
CARYL ELIZABETH RUSBULT
(March 9, 1952 - January 27, 2010)**

Award" (2008) from the International Association for relationship research. The committee reviewing the nominees for this award concluded that they "can imagine no scholar more deserving of this particular award. The "New Contribution Award" (1991-1992), the "Reuben Hill Award" (1991), the "J. Ross MacDonald Chair" (1997-2002) and the "Distinguished Alumni Award" from the University of North Carolina (2009).

A very recent award is the "Caryl Rusbult Young Investigator Award" (January 2010) that she helped create in 2000. This award is designed to assist young investigator students who need financial help.

Some of Caryl's words of wisdom include:

- "Always take the high road," meaning that when in doubt take the morally unquestionable decision.
- "Dare to take risks," meaning that when facing a wonderful but somewhat uncertain opportunity, go for it.
- "Throw money at the problem," meaning that if you can solve things easily and in a structural manner, do it. Hire a cleaner if you do not like cleaning or want to buy time.

Students who have very complex situations with no solution or end in sight might complain about the problem. After listening to a student for some time, Caryl would say: "Well, how do you eat an elephant? You do not eat it all at once. You eat it piece by piece. So – just go for it step-by-step and you will see that it is fun."