A Closer Look At The People You May Be Passing on Main Street

The Other Dr. Atkins

BY BARBARA ROSS-INNAMORATI

“I want to hear about them! E-mail me at: Barbaraross@optonline.net

Growing up in Wayne, N.J., the young Atkins did not seem necessarily destined for a career as a psychologist and author. Dr. Dale (as her friends call her) helps to keep family dynamics open and nurtur- ing. A licensed psychologist and media commentator, Atkins has appeared regularly on the Today Show, and has been a familiar face on such shows as Montel, Good Morning America, FOXNEWS, The Oprah Winfrey Show and Donahue. Atkins has over 30 years as a rela- tionship expert, focused on family interaction and has authored five books, including, I’m OK, You’re My Parents—How to Overcome Guilt, Let Go of Anger, and Create a Relationship that Works. This compelling book is a guilt- free guide for adults seeking a more satisfying relationship with their parents. Part of Atkins’ inspiration for the book was her close relation- ship with her own mother and father: “I had been thinking for a long time about the complex relation- ship between adults and their parents, especially because my mom is now over 80. So many of my patients seem to be mired in their relationship with her own mother and father: “I had been thinking for a long time about the complex relation- ship between adults and their parents, especially because my mom is now over 80. So many of my patients seem to be mired in their parents NOW. That way they will have the opportunity to devel- op and enjoy a balanced relation- ship as adults, before they assume the inevitable role as caregiver.”

Growing up in Way., N.J., the young Atkins did not seem necessarily destined for a career as a psy- chologist. The daughter of an auto- mobile dealer and a homemaker, Dale grew up in a very close-knit Jewish family with strong connec- tions to an extended family of aunts, uncles and cousins. “We loved to dance, we loved music and we loved to travel, which was quite big in our family—it still is,” says Atkins. Dale was quite athletic and loved to swim, ride horses and hike. Growing up, she always thought she wanted to work with people, perhaps in a museum, and in fact studied social studies and art histo- ry in college. But, as often happens in life, a random event would pro- pel Atkins down a different course. At 21, Dale, head counselor at a tennis and ski camp in Austria, suf- fered a bad skiing accident.

Atkins will give a free talk about her book I’m OK, You’re My Parents, Sunday, May 23 at 7 p.m. at Temple Israel in West- port. Her book will be available for purchase and signing.

DR. DALE ATKINS
Broken-hearted, she returned to the United States to recuperate and begin an extensive physical therapy program. While in physical therapy, she befriended children who were undergoing their own therapy program. Soon, Dale began to volun- teer and in the process rediscovered her gift and joy in working with children. Eventually, Atkins decid- ed to pursue a master’s in special education at Columbia University, specializing in deafness and there- after worked at the Lexington School for the Deaf in New York.

Off to Israel

In 1973, Dale traveled to Israel to study at the World Union of Jewish Students and work at the Miech Center for Deaf Children. After a few months of study, the Yom Kippur War broke out. Though her parents pleaded with her to come home, Dale stayed. To this day, Dale’s time in Israel dra- matically affected her life and her commitment to Israel. “Living in Israel at that time cemented my commitment to the country, the people and to the importance of liv- ing in peace,” comments Atkins.

Atkins volunteered for all types of assignments – teaching in a school, cleaning out bomb shelters and par- ticipating in a makeshift singing group that performed for the army.

Sisters …Family Relationships

Upon her return to the U.S., Dale headed to Los Angeles, where she worked with young deaf chil- dren at the John Tracy Clinic. She taught parents of newly diagnosed children and led groups, for family members. It was shortly thereafter that Dale decided to pursue her doc- torate in educational psychology at UCLA. She was interested in sib- ling relationships, particularly those involving children who have Westport News, Friday, April 16, 2004

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At Home in Westport

So what does the family expert’s own family look like today? Dale is married to Rob Rosen, a business executive. They have lived in Westport for the past 16 years. Rob and Dale have two sons – Jon (Jonathan) and Josh, who are both married. “The guys are very close,” Dale adds, “and we always work on creating open lines of communica- tion while nurturing all of the fam- ily relationships.”

Dale is very close with her sister, Daryl Roth, a Tony-winning theatre producer and her family who lives in New York. Her other family relationships remain strong, especially with her mother, who, at the age of 82 designs and sells jew- elry. Miles Davis, Atkins’ dog, is an important part of her life and a nearly constant companion.

Perhaps the biggest impact on Dale relative to her family has been the death of her father some nine years ago. Says Atkins, “It was very profound, and I still feel it today. But, living through my dad’s illness has made me a better person and therapist.” She adds, “I never take anything for granted… life is so transient… you have to appreciate every single thing and all the peo- ple in your life.”

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