



Work, Life, Balance

For Dr. Dale,
a simple principle
has anchored an
eclectic career

by JIM REISLER

BACK IN THE 1980S AT THE John Tracy Clinic in Los Angeles, Dale Atkins (MA '72, Special Education) was videotaping a session on parenting behavior, speech and language with a mother and her hearing-impaired child when the woman's other child began demanding attention. When the mother failed to respond, the outburst escalated and Atkins intervened. She had to show the mother the tape three times, but the woman finally got the point: Success for the family depended on meeting the needs of

both her children. Balance was essential.

Thirty years later, Dr. Dale, as she is now widely known, is famous for her concept of balanced living, which she champions with patients, in speeches and presentations, and as a frequent guest on the *Today* show. On issues ranging from parenting and marriage to workplace bullying, the stresses of job change and even sibling rivalry, "my focus continues to be all about balance and staying well, healthy and focused on what's important," she says. "Contrary to common logic, people *can* change the map of how they're brought up and choose a path that works. The goal is to reexamine your decisions."

Atkins speaks from experience. At 21, she was head counselor at a tennis and ski camp in Austria but had to head home to New Jersey after a serious skiing accident. While in physical therapy, she befriended children undergoing their own therapy and rediscovered a passion for working with young people.

At Teachers College, she earned a master's degree in special education with a concentration in deafness and thereafter taught at the Lexington School for the Deaf in New York. As she worked with families of deaf children, Atkins expanded her focus to sibling relationships, a topic she explored in her UCLA doctoral dissertation and, subsequently, in her workshops and book, *Sisters*. Meanwhile, she's branched out, writing on everything from creating better relationships with aging parents, in *I'm OK, You're My Parents*, to marriage, in *From the Heart*. Having her two sons, Jono and Josh, get married in the same year inspired Atkins to write *Wedding Sanity Savers*. She wrote *Sanity Savers: Tips for Women to Live a Balanced Life* from a desire to help people healthfully juggle multiple aspects of life.

"I've always liked doing several things at once and finding the connections," Atkins says. One link that's always present for her: "I'm forever in awe of how people have lived their lives to date and how they really want to take charge and change. And if I'm lucky enough years later to find out that the changes we worked on made a difference, well, that's gratifying."

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