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TV's Dr. Ross brings blunt talk in return to region



Dr. Rachael Ross, recurring co-host of the television show "The Doctors" speaks on Wednesday during the Indiana Parenting Institute Chat & Chew event at Avalon Manor. (Kyle Telechan / Post-Tribune)

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Eschewing the podium of most keynote speakers, Dr. Rachael Ross chatted about women's sexual health from a brown chair that would be comfortable in most living rooms during a frank yet funny conversation on Wednesday afternoon at Avalon Manor in Hobart.

"Ten years ago, the sexology practice was (mainly) how can I spice things up in the bedroom, and now it's like 'We just don't have sex anymore' what can we do to start having sex anymore'," said Ross, star of the daytime talk show "The Doctors."

"How do you keep the passion going at a time when all of these other things are coming at you so fast that you find yourself sending a text message that you shouldn't have sent, answering the phone call you shouldn't have answered and now we're headed down that troubled trajectory."

Ross' talk was part of the "Women Unleashed: From the Bedroom to the Boardroom" event sponsored by the Indiana Parenting Institute. Ross said women these days are often exhausted due to the duties of work, parenting and the household, so often relationships suffer.

Ross, who is a family medicine doctor and a sexologist, was born and raised in Gary — at 4th and Arthur, she states proudly — but she's developed a national profile as a co-host on "The Doctors," where she dispenses her signature style of engagingly blunt talk about sex and relationships.

Ross films the show in Los Angeles and she now lives in Chicago. But she still makes a point to see patients at Primary Care Consultants — the Gary practice started by her father, Dr. David Ross, and her mother, office manager Ruthie Ross, which is down the street from where she grew up. Her brother, Nathaniel, is a doctor at the practice, as was her sister Rebekkah prior to her death from sickle cell anemia.

Ross gave birth to her first child — Rebekkah Story Ross — five weeks ago. After years of giving advice to new moms about postpartum depression and other issues that face new moms, she said it was a different story when she had to go through it herself.

"Everything on me turned a different color," Ross said. "I've got a stripe here and a stripe here. I was standing in the mirror (saying) 'Oh, what's happening?!' Now I'm sitting and texting my friends 'Are they going to lighten up? Does it stay the same color?'"

Ross said that her daughter came into the world with her fist raised into the air, which was a clarifying moment for her.

"For the first time in my life pushing her out and looking in her eyes, I realized exactly how strong women are," Ross said. "Here it is, my mom did it five times, her mom did it nine times and at the end of the day, women have so much inborn strength, so much inertia. And what's really sad right now, you see that nobody has taught this next generation anything about it, they don't know how strong they are, they don't know how powerful they are.

"I can't imagine — I had so much family support — just being a single mom and not having a soul on earth being there to help you and how difficult that would be."

Ross fielded many questions from women in the audience — from how diet impacts sex drive to learning how to value yourself in a relationship. She stated matter-of-factly that some issues with sexual relationships go beyond her expertise.

"It is pointless if you can't stand the person," she said. "If your partner gets on your last nerve, you really do need couples counseling first before you can even worry about sex."

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