

Health First

Health Matters

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Oxygen and Home Medical Equipment

FALL 2007

THE US HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Let's change the **FUTURE**

As the trailer door opened, I started to introduce myself, but was interrupted. "Thank God you're here," the little man said. I stepped from the heat and humidity of the day through the trailer's aluminum door carrying a large oxygen tank and set it down next to the tan recliner he shuffled to. His breathing was labored, and for the next five minutes, we didn't speak. I hooked him up to the oxygen tank and waited for the life-giving gas to be carried into his bloodstream. He was in severe respiratory distress. It had happened before, but not this bad. After his distress had subsided, we spent the next half-hour reviewing the oxygen's use and coping mechanisms for his COPD. Then his wife arrived from the grocery store. It was obvious that his suffering hurt her too. Before I left, they had shared several moving stories of their love and lives together.

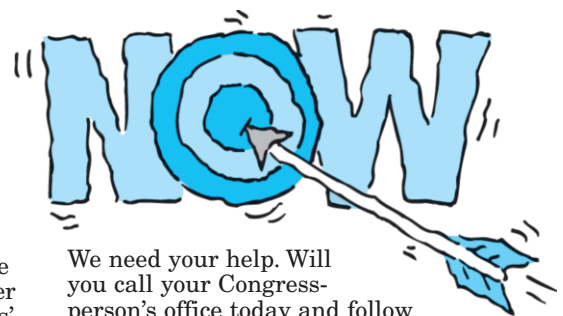
That was 27 years ago. And today, I still remember the relief I witnessed and the thrill I felt to be able to help another human breathe. It wasn't the first time I had felt it, nor was it the last. It's a perk of being a Home Respiratory Care Practitioner (H-RCP).

Part B of our country's Medicare program pays for home oxygen. As a matter of fact, **every year the cost of healthcare goes up for everything except oxygen.** In the last 20 years, reimbursements for home oxygen have been reduced 17 times! Today, there are several proposals in Congress to reduce it yet again. Sadly, reimbursements are so low that further cuts threaten our ability to continue to serve the needs of our patients.

Why does Congress want these cuts? Well, this time they need to renew a Children's Health Insurance Program called "S-CHIP." Currently, this plan is offered to families whose annual income is under \$30,000. Congress plans to offer the insurance to children whose parents' annual income is under \$82,000 a year — costing \$20,000 BILLION more. To fund this expansion, a cigarette tax was proposed, but Congress successfully defended their state's **tobacco crop**, so another funding source was needed. That's when they again went straight to the oxygen well, proposing cuts and shifting the money into S-CHIP. So America's retirees, who paid into Medicare for 30–40 years, will find themselves supporting insurance coverage for children whose parents make \$82,000 a year! Meanwhile, Congress continues to support the growth and distribution of tobacco products — the very cause of many of the breathing problems we suffer from today. When will we pay heed to the Surgeon General's warning from the 60s?

And that's not all. There are two other bills before Congress trying to stop Medicare from limiting our nation's oxygen suppliers and from offering oxygen supplies out to bid (HR 621, HR 1845). Can you imagine your satisfaction with a home healthcare system built on the cheapest products and least service? Every year, Medicare patients are paying more and more for Part B coverage and getting less and less for it.

The prompt delivery of oxygen to Medicare patients at home is being threatened by the budget managers in Washington.



We need your help. Will you call your Congressman's office today and follow up on this news? Will you let them know how you want them to represent you and your family on this critical, life-sustaining issue?

Call the Congressional Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and give them your zip code.

They will put you through to your Congressman's office. Tell them what you think about S-CHIP funding. Tell them what you think about the Competitive Bidding Process. Tell them what homecare means to you and your family. Tell them stories about your homecare company's service, and the meaning of the equipment in your life. Then tell your friends and neighbors to call. It's time for a change in the delivery of healthcare in America today. Will you help us continue to serve by speaking out? Will you do it today? If you need more information, call our office. We'll be glad to help.

This is our call to action. Raise your phone. Raise your voice. Make a difference today.

CALL. ASK. VOTE.

*H. Wayne Sale, President
Health First*



TRADING PLACES

Reduce fat, salt, and sugar with spices and herbs

TO USE LESS FAT:

Bake or broil meat, poultry, or fish. Remove skin from poultry. When you do use oil, use only small amounts and choose heart-healthy mono- or polyunsaturated types like olive, canola, or corn oil instead of butter. The oils or butter used in breading, batters, gravies, and sauces have 100 calories per

tablespoon, compared to almost none in herbs and spices.

TO USE LESS SALT:

Savory flavors that add a “bite” to foods are the best way to reduce salt. Try black pepper, garlic powder, cilantro, curry, cumin, dill, basil, ginger, and coriander. Lemon juice and unseasoned vinegars also add zest.

Use garlic and onion powder instead of their salt forms. If you purchase spice blends, make sure to check the label for sodium or salt content.

TO USE LESS SUGAR:

In most recipes you can cut the sugar by up to half.

Sweet-tasting spices that can replace sugar include: allspice, anise, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, mace, and nutmeg.

RULES OF THUMB

1 Tbsp. of fresh-cut herbs is equal to 1 tsp. crumbled or dried herbs, or ¼ tsp. ground.

For best flavor, add fresh herbs near the end of cooking time or sprinkle on the food just before serving. Ground herbs and spices will keep their flavor best if added about 20 minutes to an hour before serving, depending upon how well they hold up in cooking.

To intensify the flavor of whole spices (cardamom, mustard seed, coriander, fennel seed), stir them in a dry nonstick skillet over medium heat for one minute.

Source: Add a Little Spice (& Herbs) to Your Life, by Alice Henneman, MS, RD, University of Nebraska, Lincoln

SPICE ADVICE Flavor and food combinations

Beef: bay leaf, black pepper, onion, garlic

Chicken: ginger, marjoram, paprika, sage, and thyme

Fish: basil, curry, dill, dry mustard

Carrots: cinnamon, cloves, dill

White potatoes: dill, garlic, parsley

Winter squash: cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg

Pasta: basil, oregano, paprika, garlic, parsley

EATING-WELL RECIPE

Sweet Potato Oven Fries

2 medium sweet potatoes (12 oz. total), peeled

1 Tbsp. plus 1 tsp. olive or canola oil

½ tsp. paprika

¼ tsp. each garlic powder, salt, and pepper

Heat oven to 450°F. Spray a baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray. Cut sweet potatoes into French fries (about 3" long and ¼" thick), place in a large bowl and toss with oil, paprika, garlic powder, salt, and pepper. Arrange sweet potatoes in a single layer on prepared baking sheet. Roast for about 18 minutes, turning once, until lightly browned and tender. Serve immediately.

Serves 4. Per 3-oz. serving: 131 calories, 2 g protein, 21 g carbohydrate, 5 g total fat, 2 g fiber, 155 mg sodium.

Source: The Woman's Day Guide to Lasting Weight Loss, by Kathy Keenan Isoldi, Filipacchi Publishing

BOWLING

Walk and roll your way to strength and stamina

Bowling may not look like great exercise, but it requires many of the skills and strengths used in other sports. That includes exceptional hand-eye coordination, strength, flexibility, and balance. An hour of bowling will burn between 150 and 250 calories, depending upon your weight.

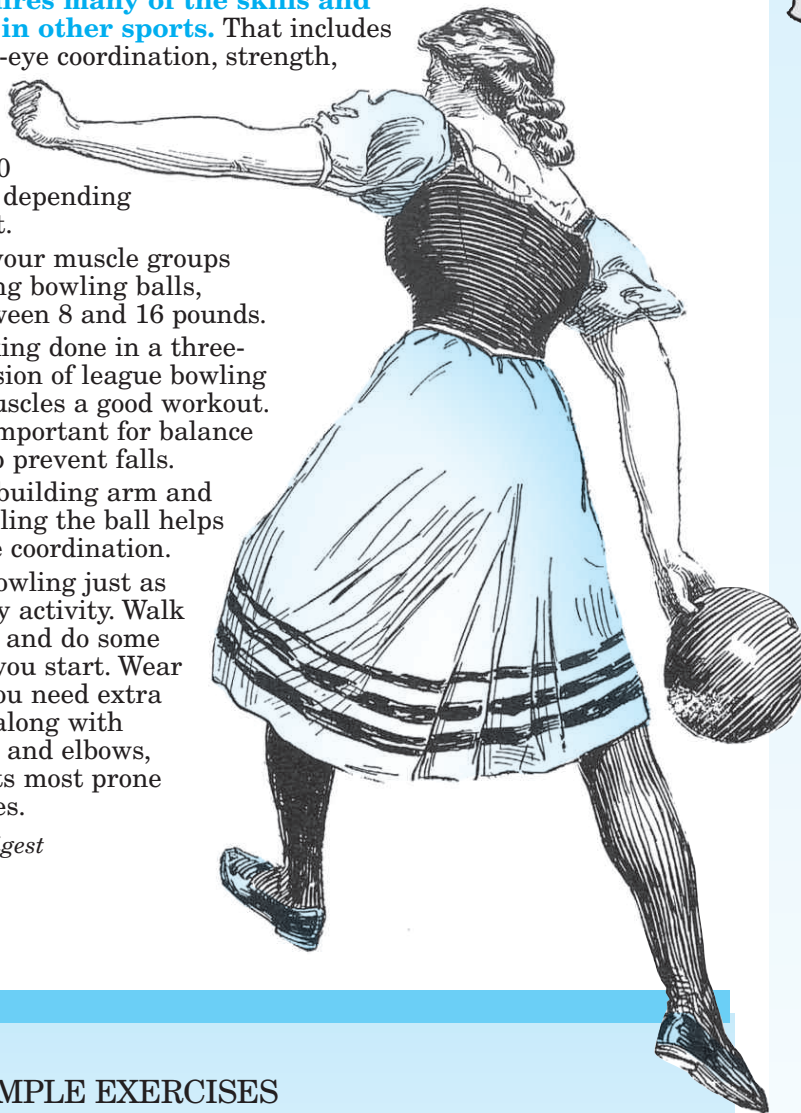
You use all of your muscle groups to carry and swing bowling balls, which weigh between 8 and 16 pounds.

The brisk walking done in a three- to five-round session of league bowling gives your leg muscles a good workout. Strong legs are important for balance and can also help prevent falls.

In addition to building arm and core strength, rolling the ball helps develop hand-eye coordination.

Warm up for bowling just as you would for any activity. Walk around the lanes and do some stretches before you start. Wear wrist guards if you need extra support. Wrists, along with shoulders, knees, and elbows, are the body parts most prone to bowling injuries.

Source: *Bowling Digest*



3

SIMPLE EXERCISES

For better balance

- 1. Walk heel to toe.** Put your heel just in front of the toes on the opposite foot each time you take a step. Heel and toes should almost touch.
- 2. Stand on one foot** while waiting in line at the grocery store, bus stop, etc.
- 3. Stand up and sit down** without using your hands.

Source: *Fitness Over Fifty: An Exercise Guide From the National Institute on Aging*, Hatherleigh Press



FAMILY FITNESS

Autumn's best activities

Changing colors, crisp mornings, warm days, and cool evenings make fall perfect for outdoor activity. Here are some ways for the entire family to enjoy the season:

- **Walks, hikes, and bike rides:** See the changing landscape up close. Be sure to bring a jacket, water, snacks — and sunscreen, even though the temperature is cooler.
- **Walk around the neighborhood or visit a local park:** Ask each family member to find five different types of leaves. Identify them when you get home. Make leaf rubbings.
- **Work parties:** Raking leaves and chopping/stacking wood are all good ways to get your heart pumping.
- **Leafy fun for kids:** See who can make the biggest pile of leaves in 30 seconds.
- **Visit local orchards and pick apples:** Bring home the bounty and make healthy snacks like sugarless applesauce.



Drink water before, during, and after any physical activity or workout.

POWER TO THE PATIENT

Cutting costs without cutting corners

I was trained, as were many doctors, to make patient care recommendations without regard for cost. I got the first hint this was a problem when a patient returned without having gotten tests and medications I ordered. "I couldn't afford them," my patient said, embarrassed. Had I known, I could have discussed doing without the test along with prescribing a low-cost generic medicine.

With overall health-care costs rising, many people must consider their out-of-pocket costs. Yet, many doctors do not know the cost of tests and medications or what their patients can and cannot afford.

WHAT CAN YOU DO ?

- 1. Ask how much a test or treatment costs.** Tell your doctor you want to be an informed consumer and need to know before committing to follow-through.
- 2. If an expensive test is ordered,** ask how the results will change the doctor's treatment plan or if a treatment decision can be made without the test.
- 3. If an expensive treatment is ordered,** ask if there are less-expensive options available. What are the risks and benefits of taking the less-expensive approach?

By dealing with costs head-on, your doctor can work with you to find the best approach for your personal situation.

William J. Mayer, MD, MPH
Medical Editor

Do you have a subject you would like the doctor to discuss? E-mail DocTalk@HopeHealth.com.

Chaos and clutter

♥ Try this if you don't know where to start when it comes to organizing your life:

Imagine you have just 30 minutes to get out of your house in an emergency. Make a list of what you couldn't live without, and then do an extra list of things you'd miss if you didn't have them.

This will help you decide what really matters to you, says organization expert Mary Lynne Murray (www.marylynne-murray.com).

Prostate cancer

♥ Cooked tomatoes, including everything from pasta sauce to ketchup, are high in lycopene, a chemical that may help prevent prostate cancer.

At age 40, men should talk to their doctor about what type of prostate cancer screening would be best for them, taking family history, race, and other risk factors into account.

Source: National Prostate Cancer Coalition, www.fightprostatecancer.org

Coffee buzz

♥ Do you sometimes feel the effects of caffeine even when you drink decaf coffee?

The actual caffeine content in decaffeinated products can vary greatly. Under Food and Drug Administration regulations, coffee can contain between 2 and 13 milligrams of caffeine and still be labeled decaffeinated. That's enough for people who are very sensitive to caffeine to feel the effects.

There is no decaffeination process that removes all the caffeine. The water process method removes approximately 94% to 96%. Methods that use chemical solvents or highly pressurized carbon dioxide can remove up to 98%.

Sources: University of Notre Dame; National Sleep Foundation

Health

Health Briefs for Busy People

Tried-and-true advice

♥ Ignoring the urge to have a bowel movement because you want to avoid public toilets or because you're too busy can start a cycle of constipation.

Grandma's age-old wisdom will also help prevent constipation: Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, drink lots of fluids, and get regular exercise.

Some common misconceptions are that a bowel movement every day is necessary and that wastes stored in the body are dangerous. These misconceptions can lead to overuse and abuse of laxatives, which may be unneeded and in some cases even harmful.

Source: American Gastroenterological Association

Don't be fooled

♥ If you have a red spot on the surface of your skin that develops and spreads quickly and is sore or has a pinching sensation, have it evaluated by a doctor.

It may be MRSA (pronounced mer-suh), a contagious type of staph infection that is often mistaken for a spider bite but needs treatment with antibiotics other than those from the penicillin family.

The best day-to-day defense against staph and other germs is frequent hand-washing and using alcohol-based hand-sanitizers between washings.

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Halloween treats

♥ Keep chocolate Halloween candy behind closed doors or cabinets and away from pets. Chocolate can be fatal to dogs, hamsters, and rats. Dogs love chocolate and will hunt the smell. In a small dog, even 1/3 ounce of baking chocolate can be very serious.

Source: The Yuk Report, Washington Poison Center, Spring 2007

All in the family

♥ Family health history is an important risk factor for diseases like cancer, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

To learn how to research your family history and share it with your doctor, visit the Surgeon General's Family Health History Initiative (www.hhs.gov/familyhistory/).

Self-defense for kids

♥ Kids' best defenses are their voices and their legs. Teach them to run away from someone who is bothering them while at the same time yelling to attract as much attention as possible. Have them practice yelling at you.

Kids should also be taught not to approach cars that stop to ask for help and to never go anywhere with anyone without your permission.

Source: Seattle Police Department

Break time

♥ When working at a computer, take mini-breaks every 20 minutes or so to help prevent aches and pains. Do some shoulder shrugs along with some wrist, neck, and back stretches.

To ease eyestrain, look away from the monitor every 15 to 20 minutes and focus on a distant spot, then blink for a few seconds to keep your eyes moist.

Every so often do a full body stretch, and whenever possible switch to a non-computer related task.

Source: Stanford University's Department of Environmental Health and Safety

FISCAL FITNESS

MONEY AND MARRIAGE

9 issues to discuss before you tie the knot

Whether you're getting married for the first time or remarrying, these questions can help you focus on how you'll manage money. Have each partner write down answers separately and then discuss the responses:



1. What assets are you bringing to this marriage?
2. What are your regular income sources?
3. What are your current and potential liabilities? Include credit card debt, mortgages, alimony, child support, promises to pay for college or care for aging parents, etc.
4. How do you want to handle day-to-day finances? Do you want a joint checking account or separate accounts? Who will pay monthly bills?
5. What type of health, life, auto, and disability insurance coverage do you have?
6. How much money do you like to have in savings to feel comfortable?
7. What is your income tax liability? A working single parent who takes the "head of household" deduction may be surprised to discover the increased amount of tax owed when they file a joint return as a married person.
8. How much retirement income will you have? Has any retirement money already been committed to a former spouse?
9. Do you have anything extraordinary in your financial history or credit report, such as a personal or business bankruptcy?

Source: National Endowment for Financial Education, www.nefe.org

Separating the good from the bad

♥ Saturated fats and trans fats can raise your cholesterol as well as your risk for heart disease, while mono- and polyunsaturated fats can help protect your heart.

But how do you tell the difference?

Unsaturated fats are usually liquid at room temperature, like olive oil, canola oil, and corn oil.

Saturated fats like butter and those found in red meat and poultry skin are solid at room temperature.

Check food labels carefully — if you find the words "hydrogenated" or "partially hydrogenated," the food contains trans fats.

The information in this publication is meant to complement the advice of your health-care providers, not to replace it. Before making any major changes in your medications, diet, or exercise, talk to your doctor.

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UNDERAGE DRINKING How to convince your teens that staying sober is “awesome” and “cool”

1. It's easy to gain weight if you drink too much.

A glass of beer has about 150 calories. It doesn't take long to consume almost half your daily calories if you combine drinking with snacking on pizza or chips.

2. You'll be a better dancer.

You might think you're a smoother mover after a couple of drinks, but in reality, alcohol impairs your motor skills.

3. Not drinking improves your dating potential.

Alcohol can slur your speech, constrict your pupils, and affect your eyesight, none of which is attractive. It's also not cool when an adult must chauffeur you and your dates because your license has been suspended for drinking underage.

4. You'll be smarter.

Teens who drink too much can lose up to 10% of their brainpower. That could be the difference between an entire grade on a test, remembering a winning sports play, or forgetting the notes to a song.

5. It could save your life.

In addition to being linked to fatal car crashes, drinking too much can cause alcohol poisoning, which may lead to unconsciousness and heart and respiratory failure.

Source: *Underage Drinking: You're Stronger Than You Think*, published by MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving

THE POWER OF FRIENDSHIP

Hum along to these health tips

“I Get By With a Little Help From My Friends” and “You've Got to Have Friends” are popular songs with some wise advice: Strong friendships play an important part in keeping us healthy.

A phone call to a friend may be all you need to stick to an exercise program or stay away from junk food. A friend is a safe sounding board for your anger, sadness, and frustration, as well as a cheerleader for your hopes and dreams.

In fact, researchers have found that a lack of strong social connections can be as much of a health risk as obesity, smoking, and too much stress.

The “therapy” you get from talking through everyday problems with a friend can ward off more serious problems like high blood pressure, depression, and insomnia that may develop if your feelings go unaddressed.

Sources: Todd H. Jackson, PhD, University of Wisconsin; Bowling Alone, Robert Putnam, Harvard University; Michael Wetter, PsyD and Chief of Adult Psychiatry at Kaiser Permanente



YOUR BODY CLOCK

Are you a morning or an afternoon person?

Knowing when your body functions best can help reduce workday stress.

If you know that you're not a morning person, try to avoid important early morning meetings if possible.

If you always run out of gas about 3 p.m., prepare ahead of time by planning a healthy snack or taking a brief walk to renew and refresh.

Source: Mike Collins, workplace consultant and president of The Perfect Workday Company



Be prepared to deal with traffic jams by knowing alternate routes and keeping a map handy.

DEBUNKING

Breast cancer myths

- **You *only* get breast cancer if you have a family history.** Although having a family history can increase your risk, 80% to 85% of women with breast cancer have no family history of the disease.
- **I'm too young to worry about breast cancer.** The disease is more common in post-menopausal women, but 25% of the women with breast cancer are younger than 50.
- **If I have a breast lump, it's cancer.** Some lumps can be benign tumors or cysts.
- **If a lump is painful, it's not cancer.** Although lumps that are painful are generally not cancerous, in some cases they can be. Bottom line: Any lump should be thoroughly checked by a doctor.
- **If I have consistent normal mammograms, I don't need to worry.** Women should also have a clinical breast exam by a health-care provider at least once a year, and get any lump they find themselves checked by a doctor as soon as possible.
- **If I do have breast cancer, it means I'm going to die.** When caught early, at least 98% of women with breast cancer survive five years. The 10-year survival rate is 85% to 90%.

Source: University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

Save money with generics

Generic prescription medicines may cost up to 80% less than brands. Even though they may look different, the medicine is the same because generics have gone through the FDA approval process to make sure they are safe and have the same effects in the body as brand medicines.

Talk to your doctor about whether or not taking generics would be appropriate for you. Some frequently prescribed brands that have generic equivalents are included in the chart below.

See the difference...

Here are examples of the monthly cost of some common prescription drugs. The brand-name drug is listed first, followed by the generic version. Check out the monthly savings for buying generic (last column).

Brand-Name & Strength	Brand-Name Cost (1 month)	Generic Name	Generic Cost (1 month)	Monthly Savings w/Generic
Allegra 180 mg	\$88.56	Fexofenadine Hcl	\$37.80	\$50.76
Cardizem CD 240 mg	\$88.77	Diltiazem Hcl	\$36.00	\$52.77
Prilosec 20 mg	\$145.00	Omeprazole	\$21.00	\$124.00
Valium 5 mg	\$127.99	Diazepam	\$1.82	\$126.17
Zocor 20 mg	\$149.35	Simvastatin	\$10.20	\$139.15

Source: Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan

October

Health Observances

Breast Cancer Awareness

Beginning at age 40, all women should get regular mammograms to screen for breast cancer.

The power of screening comes with regular exams, because doctors can look at previous mammograms to study any possible changes. Early diagnosis and treatment is still the best weapon against almost all types of cancer. Visit www.cancer.org for more information.

Healthy Lungs

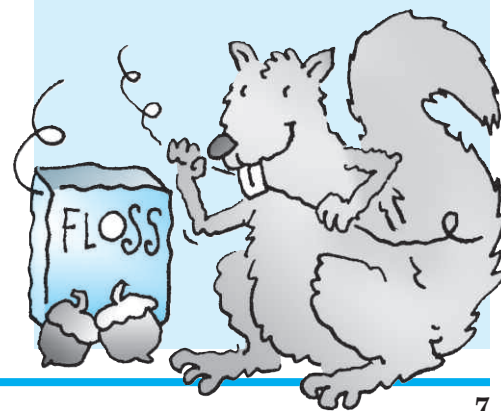
Indoor air pollution from smoke, mold, dust, dander, and chemical cleaning products can contribute to allergies, asthma, and even lung cancer.

To breathe easier, keep your home smoke-free; protect against mold by using fans in areas where moisture is high, and use natural cleaning products like baking soda and vinegar. Visit www.lungusa.org

Dental Hygiene

Chewing sugarless gum helps increase saliva and washes out food and acid between brushings.

For tips on how to teach your kids to brush and floss properly, visit www.adha.org.



your health matters



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body, mind, and soul

“You have to THINK anyway, so why not think BIG?”

— Donald Trump

“The will to win means nothing without the will to prepare.”

— Juma Ikangaa,
Tanzanian marathoner

“You can name your salary here. I like to call mine Fred.”

— Unknown

“Always follow your dream, unless it’s the one where you’re at work in your underwear during a fire drill.”

— Unknown

“Prosperity is living easily and happily in the real world, whether you have money or not.”

— Jerry Gillies

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