

Heart to Heart

Newsletter of the
ACT Branch
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2011 - March

Diary Dates

Tues 22 Mar - 10am General Meeting at the National Library (*see Secretary's note below*)
Tues 12 Apr - 9.30am Committee meeting, SHOUT

Branch President's Notes

We've made a good start to the New Year, with about 90 members signed up for 2010-11. A dozen or so were able to come to the Southern Cross club lunch on Feb 22, where the food was as delicious, and the conversations as spirited, as always.

Plenty of planning progress was made at the Management Committee meeting on Mar 1, especially about the branch's celebration of HSA's 25th anniversary. Currently we favour a lunch in June at one of the southside clubs -- more later on when and where.

Both walking programs have had some minor casualties recently, but should be back on track soon. We try hard to recruit more on their way through rehab, but rarely get a new starter. Perhaps a later time than 8.00-9.00am would be more popular, now that few if any walkers are still working? Or do grandparent duties now weigh as much as working used to?

Let me know what you think, and above all, stay well!!

Rex Oram

Secretary's Info

Our March General Meeting will be on Tuesday 22 March - Topic "Newspapers" - Where? The National Library of Australia. Meet in the Foyer at 10:00am. From there we will go to level 4 where snippets from the Library's collection are on display, the collection Titled 'Australian Newspapers 1803 - 1954'. This will be followed by coffee and chat in the café adjacent to the foyer. In April we are again visiting our Australian War Memorial.

Planning for a twenty-fifth Birthday Reunion for the branch was an important item at our March Management Committee meeting. Another matter which has come up at our meetings is that our hospital visitors are frequently asked to visit pre-surgery patients from the South Coast. There are no Heart Support Branches in that region so there are no friendly locals who can be phoned when the patient is feeling a bit uncertain and could do with some reassurance after returning home. We decided to insert ads in the South Coast local papers seeking such possible contacts. Accompanying the ads will be a short article about the work done by Heart Support, in the hope that publication will give us boost in the area.

Mary Hearn

Heart Support, Support Services

VOLUNTEERS TRAINING

One of the core features of Heart Support activities is the visiting of patients, both post-operative and pre-operative, in hospital wards throughout Australia. Here in the ACT we have some stalwart volunteers who have been providing this support to patients for a number of years. Our sincere thanks to you especially and also to our newer volunteers.

A HEART SUPPORT AUSTRALIA requirement is for our volunteers to have "Refresher Training" in the communication skills required to be a successful volunteer every two years. The ACT Branch 'Refresher' is to be held at SHOUT OFFICES, PEARCE, on Sunday, May 8, commencing at 10am.

The training will be approximately 5 hours in duration and a light lunch will be provided. It is estimated the course will finish not later than 3.30pm including a 45 minute lunch break. Volunteers on our current rosters are encouraged to attend. In particular, those who have only recently joined the roster are encouraged to attend even though their initial training was less than 2 years ago.

Any Heart Support (ACT) member who is not a volunteer on the rosters and who thinks they may like to join a roster is welcome to attend the training to see what being a volunteer is all about. The time commitment is only a couple of hours and pretty much at a time to suit themselves.

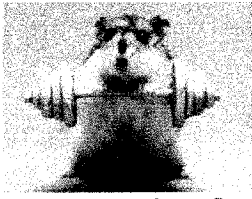
Also, we are looking for volunteer(s) to help out with the Wednesday roster and possibly the Monday morning roster. Any assistance would be greatly appreciated.

Please call **PETER MORGAN**, on 62884119 for more information.

The Branch Committee has recently approved expenditure to support the updating of some of the gym equipment at Canberra and Calvary Hospitals.

Peter Morgan

Walking Programs



Exercise to keep fit.

New members are always very welcome at our venues:

Tuggeranong Walkers meet Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 8.00am at the Active Leisure Centre at Erindale. Contact Doug Robey, phone 6231 8019.

Woden Walkers meet Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 8.00am at the Alfred Deakin High School gym except during school holidays. Contact Les Hartshorn, phone 6282 4826.

These feet are made just for walking



Part 2, continued from last month: Walking is... safer and more environmentally sound – you don't hear of "foot crashes", or pedestrian global warming.

The psychological benefits are more subtle, but equally real. First, driving is a stressful activity. Driving in perfect weather, with no diversions and light traffic, is actually quite difficult, even if it's habitual – it takes serious, sustained concentration. But add storms, mobile phone calls, GPS in Bob Dylan's voice, two kids complaining that their DVD is skipping, and a tailgating Jeep – suddenly, it's a short route to hypertension.

Walking has none of this. We can walk at our own pace, with our own rhythms, without worrying about the road-raging idiot behind us, or where the next turn-off is. It's a less distracted, anxious way to travel.

Second, walking offers discovery. Research shows that children who chiefly travel by car barely know their neighbourhood. Everything moves past too fast, and they're isolated by glass – no touching or smelling the landscape. When they walk, kids' native curiosity is rewarded with tactile, tangible experience. This, in turn, is educational. Many kids have a hands-on learning style: walking lets them connect ideas with new, unexpected impressions, particularly with an adult talking to them.

Which brings me to the social dimension. When walking, conversation isn't a distraction from the road and its threats. We can stroll and converse without fear of getting lost, or crashing. Usually it's a slower mood – so we're not rushed into cutting off sentences.

And, as I've suggested, walking allows for discovery: a tiny cyclamen growing in rocks, a building site packed with diggers, two dragonflies in flagrante delicto.

For my son and daughter, a long walk is like an adventure, school lesson and playtime all rolled into one.

Obviously not everyone can walk to work and school, or to the train and bus. Inner urban neighbourhoods have better public transport facilities, and many suburbs are not pedestrian-friendly. Professional life and health also makes a difference. Some jobs, for example, require quick trips between distant suburbs, and some with physical disabilities cannot walk at all.

But we able-bodied Australians ought to rediscover what our 19th-century forebears knew well: we don't always have to walk to somewhere. We can just take a walk: for conversation, entertainment, education, exercise.

Australia needs a change of shoes, not just engine oil.
(Damon Young)

About People



Leonie Fryar

Leonie Fryar does not fit the description of your 'typical' heart patient. When Leonie had her heart attack three years ago, she was young, well within her healthy weight range, very fit -- and, of course, female.

But she was a heavy smoker, and regular binge drinker.

"I was actually misdiagnosed at the time because not even the doctors thought my pain was heart-related," she explains. "I was told it might be reflux or a virus."

Leonie, a 43-year-old, lives with her husband, Gary. She vividly remembers the night the pain started.

"It was on a Sunday night, after another weekend of heavy drinking and smoking," she says. "Gary took me to a 24-hour medical clinic and I was diagnosed with reflux. Because I was a size eight, slim and fit girl, no-one considered I had a heart condition."

During the next few days the pain escalated, so her GP ordered an ECG. When he saw the result, he sent her straight to a cardiologist.

"Two of the main arteries were blocked – one by 90 per cent, one by 99 per cent," she explains. "So he put me straight into hospital and operated the same day. I had an angioplasty, a balloon threaded through the artery to push against the artery wall to open and clear blockages, and a stent is inserted into each to keep them open."

Leonie survived her heart attack but has accepted there's a high risk she'll have another, as severe damage has already been done.

"Unfortunately, I also naturally have very high cholesterol levels," she says. "So I'm on medication for that, I'm exercising moderately and still eating well. But I haven't had a cigarette since. And if I wasn't doing all those positive things by now, I don't think I'd be here. It's ironic, but it was actually the best thing that happened to me," she says. "It's made me take stock of what's important -- and that's not working around the clock, trying to get ahead."



Trisha Langridge

Trisha Langridge was a healthy 46-year-old school teacher who didn't smoke, had normal cholesterol levels and who kept herself physically active, when she unexpectedly suffered a heart attack while playing a game of netball with her students.

Since her heart attack, Trisha now loses her stamina more easily and has had to make significant lifestyle changes. She works less and is extremely mindful of what she eats. She urges women of all ages to be aware of the risks of heart disease and to take care of their hearts.

"The perception is that this only happens to older people -- even I thought heart attacks didn't happen to women in their 40s."

Trisha's story is an example of how knowing the warning signs of heart attack and the importance of acting quickly can save a life.

"As I came off the court for about 10 seconds I had a crushing pain in my chest and then a shocking pain in my back. When I got to the staff room it was so bad my teacher's assistant called my physio. In the meantime I was dizzy, clammy and apparently very pale. Fortunately, one of the girls had experience with heart attacks as her husband had had one, so an ambulance was called."



Signs of a possible stroke

Some doctors say a bystander can recognise the indicators of a possible stroke by asking three simple questions (providing there are no other obvious issues – e.g. arthritis making the raising of arms difficult):

- Ask the person to SMILE.
- Ask him or her to RAISE BOTH ARMS.

- Ask the person to SPEAK A SIMPLE SENTENCE (coherently) - (e.g. "It is sunny out today.").

If he or she has trouble with any of these tasks, call 000 immediately and describe the symptoms to the dispatcher.

After discovering that a group of non-medical volunteers could identify facial weakness, arm weakness and speech problems, researchers urged the general public to learn the three questions. Widespread use of this test could result in prompt diagnosis and treatment of a stroke and prevention of brain damage.

Another useful test is this: Ask the person to stick out their tongue. If the tongue is crooked, or if it goes to one side or the other, that could be an indicator of a stroke.

(a condensation of advice from several sources, and checked with a medical practitioner – repeat of an article published in H2H May 2008)

Sleep right, sleep tight

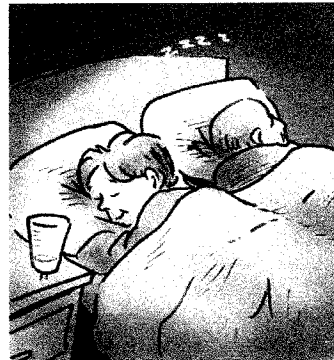
Our sleep patterns change as we get older. Developing good sleep habits is a more effective way of solving sleep problems than resorting to medicines. Sleeping tablets usually make sleep problems worse, not better, in the long term. They can also cause side effects, even those bought without a prescription. If you don't sleep well, some of these strategies might help.

Reset your body clock

We all have an internal 'body clock' that controls our daily cycle of becoming sleepy in the evening, sleeping through the night, and waking up in the morning. Being 'in sync' with your body clock makes it easier to sleep.

You can help to set your body clock by consistently going to bed and getting up at the same time every day, regardless of how well you slept the previous night. If you can't get to sleep within 20 minutes, get up and do something relaxing in another room until you feel sleepy again. Persist with this routine until you develop a regular sleep pattern. It will also help your body to associate going to bed with sleep rather than sleeplessness and frustration, which, in turn, will help you to sleep better.

Sunlight also helps to set your body clock, so try to get outside in the sun for a while every day.



Some people can sleep well despite having a short nap in the afternoon. However, if you're having trouble sleeping at night, avoid having a nap during the day. If you do nap, keep it to only 20 minutes before 3 pm.

Have a bedtime routine

Doing the same things each night in the last half hour or so before going to bed helps to remind your body that it's time to go to sleep.

Your bedtime routine might include things like having a light bedtime snack or glass of warm milk, having a warm bath, reading, or listening to music, the radio or a talking book. Avoid computers.

Be comfortable

Keep the bedroom dark while you sleep. Even dim lights, such as those from a television or computer screen, can disturb the body clock and result in poor sleep.

Try to keep your bedroom and bed at a comfortable temperature. Being too warm or cold is a common reason for waking up frequently in the night.

Relax your mind

You can't sleep well if your mind is not relaxed, so try not to take your day-time stress, anger or work to bed with you. Also, avoid work and activities involving concentration, such as working on the computer, late in the evening.

If you can't relax because of chronic worrying, stress or anger, consider learning some relaxation techniques to help you 'switch off', or seek help from a GP or counsellor.

Avoid stimulants

Avoid caffeine drinks, such as tea, coffee, energy drinks and cola, close to bedtime and maybe even from early afternoon. Milk contains tryptophan, which has been shown to enhance sleep, so consider a warm milk drink instead.

Alcohol before bedtime may help you to dose off. However, it also disturbs the normal sleep rhythm, so you won't tend to sleep as well.

Get regular exercise

Being physically active during the day makes it easier to fall asleep and improves how well you sleep. However, the timing is important. Exercise too late in the day stimulates the body and raises body temperature, making it harder to sleep. Exercise in the morning or afternoon gives your body time to wind down and cool down.

Getting back to sleep

If you wake up during the night, relax and try not to get stressed. Try some relaxation techniques or a repetitive, non-stimulating activity like counting sheep. Remind yourself that although it's not as good as sleeping, resting in bed can still refresh your body. If you've been awake for more than 20 minutes, try getting out of bed and doing a quiet activity in dim light until you feel sleepy again.

Tackle underlying problems

Poor sleep can be a side effect of some medications and some chronic conditions, including depression, anxiety and sleep apnoea. In these situations, treating the underlying problem often alleviates the sleep problem.

Sleeping tablets usually make sleep problems worse, not better, in the long term.

If you have sleep problems, talk to your doctor or pharmacist, and tell them about any other symptoms you may be experiencing. If their suggestions don't help, consider

asking for a referral to a sleep specialist or sleep clinic, so your sleep problem can be investigated.

Get NPS resources

NPS has some resources to help you get a good night's sleep. They can be ordered from the NPS website.

The Sleep right, sleep tight fact sheet has advice about sleep, sleep problems and things you can do to improve your sleep.

If you're having trouble sleeping, use the Sleep diary to help you work out what might be affecting your sleep. Take it to your doctor to use as basis for discussing your sleep problems.

(This article was published in 'MedicinesTalk' which is sponsored and published by the National Prescribing Service. The information in 'MedicinesTalk' is not medical advice, so seek professional help before making any decisions based on this information.)
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Dealing with Depression

Chronic Conditions Seminar

Thursday 17 March 2011 - 7:00pm to 8:30pm
SHOUT Meeting Room, Building 1,
Pearce Centre, Collett Place, Pearce

Speaker: Kathy Griffiths, Centre for Mental Health Research,
Australian National University

No RSVP required

Further information: SHOUT 6290 1984

CIT Skills for Carers

CIT (*Canberra Institute of Technology*) Skills for Carers has been providing flexible training for carers in the ACT since 1995, through short courses, workshops or on an individual basis. **There are no fees for this training. If you are a carer you might like to enquire further about the following courses:**

Behaviour Matters 1

Working out and managing 'normal' and 'not so normal' behaviour in children with disabilities.

Topics Covered:

- Identify which of your child's behaviours are disability related and need managing and some ideas and strategies to do that.
- What behaviours are age appropriate and need enjoying or disciplining and how to do that.
- What to do when you can't tell the difference.
- Create an individual plan for your child that can be implemented at home and shared with other family members and your child's school.

Date: Fridays - 25 March; 1, 8, 15 April

Time: 9.30am-11.30am

Venue: CIT Southside Campus, E Block, E11

Facilitator: Bobbi Cook - a child, youth and family behaviour therapist and counsellor who has a special interest and

extensive experience in supporting families who have a member who manages a disability of some kind.
To Register: 6207 3628 or e-mail CarerSkills@cit.act.edu.au

Emergency First Aid for Parents & Carers



A two session course providing knowledge and skills to perform emergency first aid for life threatening injuries and illnesses. Specially tailored to the needs of family carers.

Please Note: Attendance at both sessions and successful completion of assessment is required to receive a Statement of Attainment from Red Cross.

- Enclosed footwear and comfortable clothing is recommended.
- Tea and coffee, microwave and fridge available.
- Free parking.

Course 1

Date: Fridays - 18 & 25 March

Time: 1:30 – 5:30pm

Venue: Brindabella Specialist Centre, Red Cross House, Garran ACT

OR

Course 2

Date: Saturdays - 21 & 28 May

Time: 9:30am – 1:30pm

Venue: Brindabella Specialist Centre, Red Cross House, Garran ACT

To Register: 6207 3628 or e-mail CarerSkills@cit.act.edu.au

Relaxation and Mindfulness



This four week course will explore ways to create more time for ourselves despite often having to juggle competing demands and caring for a family member who is disabled or unwell. Taking time to care for ourselves is time well spent for our well being and health. Each week we will close the session with a relaxation practice or mindfulness exercise.

Date: Tuesdays – 22, 29 March; 5, 12 April

Time: 6:00pm – 8:00pm

Venue: CIT Southside, E Block, E11

Facilitator: Carol Guy, a registered nurse with qualifications in Mental Health and Life Coaching.

To Register: 6207 3628 or e-mail CarerSkills@cit.act.edu.au

Supporting your Anxious Child

A short course for parents, grandparents and carers focusing on understanding and supporting your school aged child who experiences anxiety.

Course 1

Date: Mondays – 21 & 28 March

Time: 7:00 – 9:00pm

Venue: CIT Southside Campus, D Block, D105

OR

Course 2

Date: Wednesdays – 4 & 11 May

Time: 7:00 – 9:00pm

Venue: CIT Southside Campus, D Block, D105

Facilitator: Yolanta Lenar, a psychologist with 11 years working experience specialising in developmental disability and behaviour problems practising in ACT. She has conducted groups for people living with mental health issues, problem solving groups and support groups for parents and carers caring for children with Development Disabilities.

To Register: 6207 3628 or e-mail CarerSkills@cit.act.edu.au

Building Supports

Have you thought about learning how to build a support network for someone you know?

A support network is a group of people who meet on a regular basis to help somebody develop and plan their personal goals in life. The support network acts as a community around that person who, for whatever reason, is unable to achieve what they want in life on their own and decides to ask others for help. Through these workshops Sally Richards will help carers examine the issues, ideas around developing support networks for the person they care for. Practical advice on:

- What are Support Networks? Why have one? Who benefits?
- What do they do?
- How do you invite people?
- How do you deal with conflict?
- How do you build networks?
- How do you maintain a support network?

Course 1

Dates: Wednesday 6 April

Time: 10:00am – 12:00noon

Venue: Koomarri Centre

OR

Course 2

Dates: Wednesday 13 April

Time: 10:00am – 12:00noon

Venue: Koomari Centre

Facilitator: Sally Richards is a mother, a teacher, a family leader, presenter and innovator. Sally has a wealth of knowledge of the Disability Sector through her personal experiences and professional work. Sally has presented Circles of Support/Building Networks for a person with a disability and their family at forums, workshops and seminars at national and international conferences.

To Register: 6207 3628 or e-mail CarerSkills@cit.act.edu.au

Hospital stories from the past

Flora Britton was Canberra's first officially appointed midwife, coming to the Territory in 1926. In 1927 she married

Augustine Foster Phillips and continued her nursing practice for several years.

Like the midwives of Queanbeyan, Flora attended a birth, after which she would visit her patient twice a day for two days, then once a day for another seven days, for a fee of four guineas.

On one occasion, during the night Flora was called to attend a patient on Russell Hill. As she didn't know the roads, which were being built at the time, she drove by instinct up the hill.

The next day on her return journey, having spent the night with her patient, she discovered the road had been dug up to lay water mains. The workmen told her she would not be able to drive any further forward and would have to go back the way she came.

She replied that she did not know how to drive her car backwards, so the men refilled the hole to enable her to cross the road.

Midwives were kept busy in Canberra well into the thirties. (from 'Royal Canberra Hospital – An Anecdotal History of Nursing 1914-1991', slightly edited)

Point to ponder



CORRECTION - Fable of the porcupine

In the February issue of *H2H* we passed on a fable which contained a boo-boo at the end. Diane Rawlings points out that the picture, repeated below, is of a baby hedgehog, an entirely different animal from a porcupine. (Diane is Branch Secretary and newsletter editor of the South Gippsland Branch of HSA.)



Diane also passed on a riddle:

Q: How do *porcupines/ *hedgehogs/ *echidnas mate?

A: Very carefully!

[* insert your choice]

Why the Kings of Bhutan ride bicycles



Monks at a monastery outside Punakha in Bhutan.

Bhutan has pioneered the use of Gross National Happiness (GNH) as a measure of progress, instead of the more commonly used Gross National Product (GNP).

GNH measures not only economic activity, but also cultural, ecological, and spiritual well-being.

The Prime Minister of Bhutan, Jigmi Y. Thinley, says that Bhutan has undertaken this pursuit through four broad strategies, or indicators.

First, he says, Bhutan is promoting sustainable and equitable socioeconomic development.

Second is the conservation of a fragile ecology, using indicators of achievement such as the way the green vegetation cover in their country has expanded over the last 25 years from below 60 to over 72 percent. They continue to promote policy reorientation with respect to battling climate change.

The third strategy is promotion of culture. Among the various things they do is ensure that, small as their country is and vulnerable as it may appear to be, no Bhutanese should suffer a sense of insecurity arising from loss of their cultural identity, language, and so on, under the onslaught of modernization.

Bhutanese have a sense of pride and dignity about themselves. **It is their government's hope that, unlike many of the developed, industrialised, and urbanised societies, Bhutan will always have the benefit of a social safety net in the form of the extended family network.** There are various ways in which they ensure this, including religious festivals, traditional festivals and social festivals, which serve to bond community and family.

Then there is a fourth strategy — good governance — on which the other three strategies or indicators depend. Democracy is what enables and empowers each individual not only to express their point of view, but gives the power to determine what kind of people should lead and how these people should be held accountable.

The Prime Minister was very happy to say that their two kings — the fourth king who is now in retirement, and the present king who sits on the throne — have recently started riding pushbikes. The government is trying to make Bhutan a bicycle culture, supported by a public transportation system. **They are in the process of making it more expensive to drive private vehicles.**

(Points made in September 2010 to Madhu Suri Prakash, and reported in a longer article in *YES!* magazine)

[Bhutan is a tiny country wedged between China and India, cut off in the heart of the Himalayan mountains by some of the world's highest peaks. Land area, 38,384 sq km. Population, approx 700,000.]



Monastery with a view
(access by bicycle might be a bit difficult!)



Smile Awhile



There I was sitting at the bar staring at my drink when a large, trouble-making biker steps up next to me, grabs my drink and gulps it down in one swig.

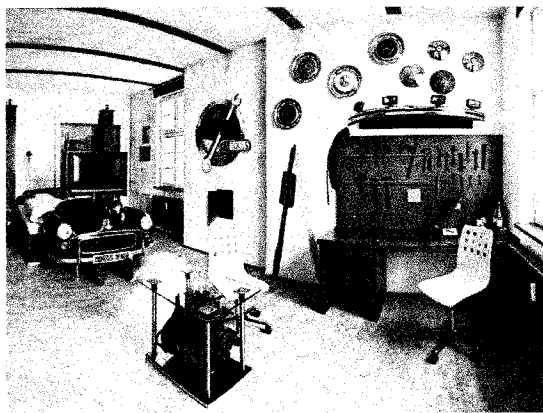
"Well, whatcha' gonna do about it?" he says, menacingly, as I burst into tears.

"Come on, man," the biker says, "I didn't think you'd cry. I can't stand to see a man crying."

"This is the worst day of my life," I say. "I'm a complete failure. I was late to a meeting and my boss fired me. When I went to the parking lot, I found my car had been stolen and I don't have any insurance. I left my wallet in the cab I took home.

"I found my wife with another man and then my dog bit me. So I came to this bar to work up the courage to put an end to it all. I buy a drink, I drop a capsule in and sit here watching the poison dissolve. Then you show up and drink the whole thing!

"But enough about me, how's *your* day going?" (from June McCluskey)



Is this the bedroom of a teenager? Maybe it belongs to Mr J L B Matekoni, proprietor of Tlokweg Road Speedy Motors in Botswana? But no. It is a bedroom in a German hotel for rev-heads, where you can sleep in anything from a Cadillac or Mercedes to a VW or this Morris Minor (complete with mechanic's feet protruding from under the front bumper). And the engine makes a splendid coffee table!

Language problems: My new Mexican friend Ricardo had a problem. He'd woken with a serious toothache and he needed to see a dentist. This, however, was not the major problem. The

problem was he was living in the US but, after just a few weeks, wasn't yet confident with his English. Still, that tooth wasn't going to fix itself.

"So I thought about what I'm going to say to the dentist," Ricardo tells me later... "I think about what you call the things in your mouth and I know it's 'teeth', so I think about what the plural must be for that. Put an 's' on it and it's 'teeths', right?"

"Now, you remember that for Mexicans there is no sound for 'th', so it just comes out like 't'. So I visit the dentist and in front of all the people there I say to the girl at the desk, 'I have pain in my teets.' Everybody laughed at me!"

What was worse was that at the time, Ricardo didn't even know what the English word "teats" meant -- he just thought everyone was laughing at his pluralisation of teeth. (Ben Groundwater)

Welcome to my happy home

Sit down, relax, converse.

It doesn't always look like this.

Sometimes it's even worse.

The Italian Elbow: An Italian grandmother is giving directions to her grown grandson who is coming to visit with his wife.

"You comma to de fronta door of the apartimenta. I'ma inna apartimenta 301. There issa bigga panel at the fronta door. With a you elbow, pusha button 301.

"I will buzza you in. Comma inside, de elevator is on a de right. Get inna, anda with a you elbow, pusha 3.

"Whena you get out, I'ma on a de left. With a you elbow, hita my doorbell."

"Grandma, that sounds easy, but why am I hitting all these buttons with my elbow?"

"What? You comma empty handed?!"

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The Last Word



This is the true joy of life:
being used up for a purpose recognized by yourself
as a mighty one;
being a force of nature instead of a feverish,
selfish little clot of ailments and grievances,
complaining that the world will not devote itself to
making you happy.

(words attributed to George Bernard Shaw)



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