When the Going Gets Tough: Coping for Caregivers
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Levels of Response to Problem Behaviors

1. Irritating but no real consequences
2. Negative consequences over time
3. Negative consequences NOW
4. Imminent DANGER NOW
LEVEL 1:
Consequences: Irritating

- Repetitive behavior
- Rituals
- Too much sleeping/TV
- No help in house
- No response to your needs/feelings
- Demands for _______
- Refusals to _______
LEVEL 1 Responses

* Distract and Redirect
* Humor
* Can I live with this?
* A battle I want to fight?
* A battle I can win?
* Can I look the other way?
LEVEL 2:
Consequences over time

* Eating too much/wrong foods
* Refusal to see others
* Refusal to do activities
* Refusal of grooming/hygiene
* Irrational spending
* Lack of sensitivity to friends/family
* Hoarding
LEVEL 2 Responses

* Distract & Redirect
* Encourage, repeat in a few minutes/hours
* Don’t ask, rather tell matter-of-factly
* Intervene, offer matter-of-fact reason
* Environmental changes
  - move objects to different location
  - remove possible cues
* Explain to others privately
LEVEL 3: Consequences NOW

- Refusing medications
- Driving when shouldn’t
- Drinking too much
- Verbally aggressive
- Provoking others to anger
- Up all night
- Agitated for extended periods
- Demanding to do something unsafe
LEVEL 3 Responses

* Distract & Redirect
* Ask person for “help”
* Talk to your doctor
* Consider medications
* Solicit help from family members/friends
* Consider in-home caregiver or placement
LEVEL 4:
Consequences: Danger NOW

- Physically threatening/aggressive
- Demanding to do something unsafe
- Extreme confusion
LEVEL 4 Responses

- Consider a plan BEFORE there is a crisis
- Leave the house
- Call for help - friends/family/neighbors
- Call the police - explain the situation
- Consider placement or hospitalization
Caregiver Emotional Reactions

- Anger
- Embarrassment
- Frustration
- Fear
- Depression
- Grief
- Fatigue

- Gratitude
- Peace
- Enjoyment
- Satisfaction
- Resolution
Caregiving is rewarding, yet challenging

- Unrealistic expectations of yourself
- Physical exhaustion
- Neglecting your own health care
- Frustration/irritability
- Social isolation
- Guilt/depression
You will need:

- Curiosity
- Kindness
- Stamina
- Willingness to look stupid.
Unresolved Issues

* Parents - How can they still push your buttons?
* They installed them!
* Spouses/partners – decades of memories, including resentments, hurt
* Any emotional pains that are unresolved will likely resurface
Knowing how you’re feeling...
Three Components of a Healthy Lifestyle

* Physical Wellbeing
* Cognitive/Intellectual challenge
* Social Connectedness
Closing Thoughts:

* Plan ahead to avoid crisis, but...
  Live in the here and now
* Find SOMETHING to be grateful for every day
* Take time to recognize when something goes well
* Notice the aspects of your loved one that are NOT effected by the disease