



## Dealing with the “Nasties”

*Definition:* The "nasties" are those behaviours and attitudes that are distasteful, irritating, and downright mean.

Many challenges arise in caring for someone but one of the most difficult is when the "nasties" arrive. They may arrive because of the person's physical and/or mental maladies. In other words, they may be experiencing pain or dementia - to name two very common culprits. Or, they may just be losing their social inhibitions and unfortunately can no longer or will no longer cover up their impatience and unpleasantness.

When these "nasties" are thrown at you, you do have choices about how you can respond. You may catch them, throw them back, step out of the way, wear a shield, or let them bounce off the wall behind you. Let's talk about each in turn because they are all your choices for responding, some are just better than others.

*Catching the "nasties".* Why? Metaphorically speaking, they are unpleasant, sticky, and they smell. When people choose to catch the nasties I wonder if they just don't know that they have a choice not to do this.

Throwing back the "nasties". Well, this is like 2 children having a sand fight in the sandbox. Basically, it will get you nowhere and will only exacerbate any difficulties you are experiencing. Also, it tends to be rather shaming to find yourself counter-attacking when you have probably been teaching others not to react defensively. This strategy will rarely if ever work.

Stepping out of the way of the "nasties" is like you taking a "time out". Or, for some particularly adept people, quickly re-framing the situation and not getting hurt or wounded by it no matter what the intention is. This one is good; however, it does require that you are constantly on the ball. So knowing that we all have our ups and downs, simply have this one if your carpetbag of successful strategies.

Wearing a shield is another excellent strategy. For some people, simply knowing that they have to put it on before entering the room just in case of any "nasties" are present, allows them a sense of freedom to be well no matter what.

Letting the "nasties" bounce off the wall behind you is another version of stepping out of the way but it allows you to articulate "ouch, glad I didn't get hit by that one" for example. A little bit of articulating the reality of what you are experiencing reminds you and the person for whom you are caring the impact of these "nasties".

But what about you're grieving? If you are caring for someone who has in the past been wonderful you may now be quite distressed to witness their orneriness. There are

several ways you might approach your dismay. They all begin with reminding yourself of the reality in the here and now. The reasons why someone is being ornery may be quite varied, ranging from the person lashing out at the pain they are experiencing and you just happen to be in the way, to the person believing you are strong enough to witness their orneriness because you keep staying around for more.

Perhaps the most difficult is when the person you are caring for vacillates between the person you once knew and a person you don't know. This back and forth nature of various relapsing remitting conditions can be extremely draining emotionally and physically for all parties involved. Whatever the case being kind, compassionate, and gentle with yourself will help you move through your grief. If it isn't sufficient, you have choices to connect with others experiencing something similar, being with your friends, or counselling. All will help.

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