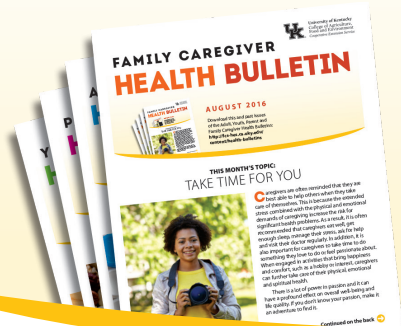


# FAMILY CAREGIVER HEALTH BULLETIN



APRIL 2019

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## THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

# HOW TO AVOID BECOMING A 'BULLY'



**A**long with joy, caregiving can also be associated with friction and frustration. You might be nudging a care recipient to get out of bed when they don't want to, reminding them to take pills when they forget, encouraging exercise when they don't feel good, and forcing baths when they would rather skip it.

At some point, gentle cajoling might feel less like support and more like bullying (Jacobs, AARP, 2019). Sometimes, especially in the moment, you might feel that gentle guidance is necessary to motivate or to maintain an important schedule, but, often in retrospect, caregivers might question such "necessity."

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# Take time to obtain and listen to feedback — from family members, friends, co-workers, and the care recipient.

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Dr. Barry Jacobs, clinical psychologist, family therapist, and health-care consultant for AARP, reinforces the fine line between getting things done and feeling like a bully versus letting things go and feeling guilty of irresponsibility and neglect. Jacobs provides the following tips to help you become a better caregiving coach and motivator versus a feared caregiving bully (Jacobs, AARP, 2019):

- **Prioritize.** Assess the situation, and decide if it warrants putting the task over the relationship and/or a care recipient's feelings. For example, is rushing and pressuring your mother to "hurry up" and brush her teeth or "get out of bed" really for her own good as you like to believe? Or might it be important to give her that control to sleep later because she is actually tired? Rather than overruling or expecting a care recipient to obey, Jacobs suggests prioritizing issues. For example, safety issues, such as medication management or issues related to driving, might require firm action, but other issues, such as time of day for lunch or a morning versus afternoon doctor's appointment, can likely be accommodated with more flexibility and respect for the care recipient's wishes.
- **Strategize.** Jacobs believes that caregivers, like all great coaches, need to be able to read the care recipient's mood and understand their abilities in order to maximize their effort (AARP, 2019). To do this, caregivers might have to appeal to reason, turn to humor, change the subject, take a different approach or tone, or even temporarily change the coaching staff to receive better cooperation. A range of strategies and approaches can help calm your frustrations and empower the care recipient.

*Caregivers need to be aware of their personal style and approach so that pressure to get this or that done does not turn into a form of bullying that creeps into caregiving.*



- **Reflect.** Absorbed in the chaos of trying to balance caregiving and life, it's not uncommon to ignore how you might come across to others. Therefore, Jacobs reminds caregivers to take time to obtain and listen to feedback — from family members, friends, co-workers, and the care recipient. Take time to talk to the care recipient about your relationship, their expectations and ask if you are treating them in a way that they like to be treated. Listen to their answer.

In conclusion, a caregiver should not bend a care recipient to his/her will or convince themselves that the ends justify the means. "Caregiving isn't about efficiency... it's about caring" (Jacobs, AARP, 2019). Therefore, caregivers need to be aware of their personal style and approach so that pressure to get this or that done does not turn into a form of bullying that creeps into caregiving.

#### REFERENCE:

Jacobs, B. J. (2019) AARP. How to motivate without bullying during caregiving. Retrieved from <https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/home-care/info-2019/motivate-without-bullying.html>

**FAMILY CAREGIVER  
HEALTH BULLETIN**

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