

The Perks of DOWNSIZING

After retirement, many seniors begin the downsizing process. Downsizing can reduce utility costs, maintenance and landscaping expenses—something that is very appealing on a fixed income. There are many reasons why people choose to downsize in their later years, but the process doesn't have to be daunting. In fact, it can be liberating!



Throw it out! Listen; if it's broken, if it has no emotional value, if it has no more purpose—throw it away!

Tips to help with the emotional and physical stress of the process:

- 1. Plan ahead.** You certainly didn't accumulate all these things in a few days, so be kind to yourself and set a realistic timeline. A few weeks to a few months is reasonable.
- 2. Hire a professional organizer,** or convince a good friend to help you. If you want to maintain your friendship, set some ground rules before you begin! Establish how much decision-making authority your friend will have, and whether or not you will have veto power.
- 3. Decide what you're keeping,** donating, selling, passing along to loved ones, or throwing away.
 - a. Touch everything only once—this is hard for me because I second-guess myself, but hold yourself to it!
 - b. If you're keeping the item, make sure it will fit in your new place if you're moving. Take measurements of furniture to ensure there's room. It may be helpful to sketch the arrangement of a room to see if the item you want to keep will work.
 - c. Donations are tax deductible and sometimes the agency will even pick up the items. Give them a call ahead of time to make sure they will accept the item you want to donate.
 - d. eBay, Craigslist, local Facebook sites in Daviess County are all great resources for selling treasures you no longer need. For antiques, contact a local dealer to learn its value before selling. They may even wish to purchase the item from you.
 - e. Get rid of duplicates! I have nearly two of every kitchen appliance, pot and pan, two sets of glasses, flatware,

plates, and an entire double cabinet of nothing but butter bowls and water bottles. It is safe to say, I'll never use it all. I tell myself I'm saving these things so my daughters can have a well-stocked kitchen when they're ready, but the truth is, who needs an abundance of water bottles? Time to go!

- f. Go ahead and pass along your family heirlooms now. Take it from me, the one who is gifted with the heirloom will smile and think of you each time they see it.
- g. Throw it out! Listen; if it's broken, if it has no emotional value, if it has no more purpose—throw it away! One thing the Army taught me with all our family moves was that if you haven't unboxed it yet, you're probably not going to unbox it at the next move, either. Throw it out! If you can't decide what you want to do with it right away, place it in a specified location for 24 hours. If you haven't thought about it, found a way to repurpose it, or found anyone interested in it, it goes.

4. Have a downsizing party!

Everybody likes a party, so gather your family and anyone with whom you would share your precious mementos and pass on those items. Everyone leaves with something that reminds them of you, and you have the joy of watching them enjoy it. Share the stories of the treasure; write the history down and give that with the gift so that when they pass it down,

they pass along the history. If you have time, hand-write those notes! Take lots of pictures!

- 5. No self-imposed guilt.** If you really do not have room for something, you don't use it, you're never going to find a way or place to enjoy it, do you really think the one who gave it to you would want you to keep it? Of course not! Find a way to pass it along to someone who will enjoy it and use it in a way it was intended.

I'm not one of those natural organizers—many of us aren't—but with a good plan and enough time, we can take some of the stress out of the downsizing process, and have an organized, clutter-free home (and even pass along a little love) in the process!

Dana Peveler is the executive director of the Senior Community Center of Owensboro-Daviess County. The center offers a variety of activities, resources and programs designed to help seniors live their best life! Visit 1650 W. Second St., call 270-687-4640 or visit www.seniorcenterodc.com to learn more.

