

## Downsizing - Be Proactive and Take Charge!

Downsizing can bring up mixed feelings & “overwhelm” – opportunity & loss; excitement & sadness... Reduce overwhelm by taking charge of your downsizing.

### Three items you'll need to start:

1. Calendar - overview: important appts., deadlines, decluttering commitments
2. Notebook - details: itemized lists, phone numbers, who/what/when/how
3. Graph paper - for layout of new space

**What is your TARGET DATE?** How many months between NOW and the TARGET DATE? I recommend three months, *minimum*.

### Top four To Do items to get done “NOW” (put on calendar and in notebook):

1. Find a Realtor - If you're selling, find someone you like and trust, ASAP.
2. Find a Mover - If you're moving, start interviewing and scheduling ASAP.
3. Find maintenance help - Painters, handymen, carpet cleaners, housecleaners ...
4. Plan decluttering sessions - 2-3 hours per session, several times a week, until the Target Date. Most rooms and/or large storage spaces (master closet, pantry) will take 4-6 hours to declutter. Garage and kitchen may take 8 -12 hours EACH to complete.

## Making Decisions: Furniture, Gifts, Decluttering

**Furniture - Start with Floor Plan:** Measure & verify your new space, don't believe the floor plan. Leave 3 feet between large items of furniture (edge of bed and bureau, doorway and first piece of furniture). Closer spacing of furniture can cause falls, if you can't maintain a wide, balanced stance.

Use graph paper to make accurate drawing of rooms. Create accurate models of your furniture to make sure it will fit (with 3 feet rule!). Even if Aging in Place, rethinking furniture placement can help reduce your risk of falls.

A floor plan shows what furniture will fit (keep), and what won't fit (donate, gift or consign).

**Gifts - Communicate with Family Members, Heirs:** Start NOW. Tell them your plans and goals, target date. Offer items you're willing to give away. Be firm about deadlines for claiming/picking up items. Be clear about what is yours to keep, and what is available as gifts.

**Decluttering: After Furniture and Gifts are determined:** Create a cleared-out holding area for Donations, Consignments, Recycling (in garage or guest room or rented POD).

Five possibilities for stuff -

- **Keep** (MOVE) Items you know you need or love and **will use** in new home.
- **Consign** items in excellent condition. Consigning includes: showing items to consignor, getting an agreement, transporting to consignor, arranging payment.
- **Donate** items you can't/don't want to consign to a charity that does pickups
- **Recycle** items that can't be donated and shouldn't be trashed
- **Trash** stuff you can't recycle or donate.

Pick up liquor boxes and clear plastic trash bags. LABEL boxes and bags with painters tape and permanent marker (KEEP (or MOVE), CONSIGN, DONATE, RECYCLE). Also, big opaque trash bag for TRASH. Label sections of the holding area to reflect same.

**Sort Like with Like**, and DECIDE about how many of a type of thing that you'll keep/move to new space. Donate or consign the rest. (GOALS help you stay on track with this work.)

**Every Day, Hardly Ever, Probably Never.** If you use it Daily, keep it. Hardly Ever, donate. Probably Never, donate.

**Keep the Love, Donate the Rest.** Don't like it, but it's a gift? Keep the Love (from the giver) and Donate the Item. Ditch the guilt, remember the intentions!

**Where to Start?** Start anywhere, and stay in that area until you've done. Keep coming back to an area until all drawers, counters, closets, boxes, cubbies, rafters, bookshelves, chests ... have been emptied and assessed. Remember where you left off by noting it on painters tape stuck on the walls or furniture.

**Schedule Pick-Ups:** You will have extra recycling and trash for your trash hauler. Notify hauler a week in advance. Have donations and consignments picked up when holding space is full.

**Lather, Rinse, Repeat:** Declutter each room and storage space in the house by following the steps above.

**VERY IMPORTANT!! Schedule "Me Time":** Schedule time on your master calendar for YOU. Walks, coffee or lunch dates, time with neighbors, yoga, golf, date night, movie night ... whatever helps you ENJOY life and RELAX. When it's on the calendar, you can see that successful progress towards your TARGET DATE includes time to "smell the roses."