

# Downsizing

By Donna Deos

I know the word Downsizing frightens many of you and I apologize for that. I realize that you have worked very hard for your entire life to accumulate the items you have. I also know that letting go of them can be overwhelming and even downright sad to contemplate. How can I possibly let go of these items? The stories they could tell, the memories they hold, the treasure that they are to me...

Okay, I get it and I felt that way too. After my mother passed I had an entire lifetime of treasures from both of my parents, grandparents, great aunt and uncle and even things my brother left behind when he moved. Some things were treasures to me too, some things were not. I had to face them all one by one and make a decision about them. Why? Because to date no one else had and now I was faced with the overwhelming task of realizing that I didn't really want or need all of this stuff. I didn't even know what some of it was or where it came from! We had wayyy too much stuff.

I did what I always do and I made lists, contemplated and studied the topic at hand. I had seen many families go through what I was doing. I had also seen very brave seniors take it on themselves as they readied themselves to move to smaller quarters.

All in all what I had learned was that it was an arduous task, but one that gave you great rewards as you did it and long after that as well. Here is some of what I have gathered and I hope it helps you as well:

Start small: pick something that is easy for you to go through and make decisions on. For me



that was my closet. I had lots of things in there that could easily be gotten rid of as I hadn't used or even touched them in years.

Start easy: Don't start with items that you love and would have a hard time giving up. Start with the things you know you can get rid of. The stack of old magazines you haven't touched and aren't likely to. Or perhaps, cleaning out that catch all "junk" drawer. We needlessly toss things in there and then later on can't find them when we want them anyway. Organize that.

Make it manageable: Only take on one project at a time. Don't look at the whole big picture of needing to clean it all out or you will get overwhelmed and never do it. Take it in tiny bites. You will win small victories all along the way. A drawer a day gets you there – eventually, and headed in the right direction.

Don't procrastinate! Find things you want your loved ones to have. Give them to them now. Why wait? Let them start enjoying them while you are around to witness it. Also, tell them the backstory on it so they can love and appreciate the item as much as you do.

Throw out the junk. I know

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we don't want to be wasteful. However, it is easier to part with the broken things that we know deep down we aren't really ever going to fix. It is okay to let them go, be recycled, or whatever. Mom didn't really need all of those margarine cups, glass jars, vases or grocery bags. Moving those things on was easy, went to recycling (except for the bags) and made an immediate and appreciable dent that I could feel good about.

Some things will slow you down. There are items, like old bank statements and such that you do need to handle with care and even shred. There are also large items that you maybe can't move or deal with yourself. There are folks out there who can help.

When you meet resistance from friends and loved ones, explain to those folks **Why** you are doing it. Let them know you are decluttering your life to make room for new and better things. Open space is a new and better thing. Freedom from the weight of those items holding you down is a better thing. Also, for your kids sake, you are saving them the need to do it themselves down the road. When you explain it that way, they are more likely to

jump on board and be helpful or at least more supportive.

One word of caution – don't just get rid of other people's stuff. Sure, if they are no longer with us it is a good and easier place to start. However, if they are still with us – they need to do this for themselves. We all have emotional ties to these items. You throwing away my favorite lamp does not help me heal anything. It simply hurts me more, and could very well make me angry. You letting me get to the point of wanting to do it myself is a way better approach. When we tell people what they ought to do because it is what we want them to do we actually push them further away from them being able to do it. Instead, use encouragement to get people to the place where they actually are willing to try it. If they see you making great strides at letting your possessions go, they may be more likely to jump on board. Again, starting with the less emotional stuff first helps gain momentum in the process.

Good luck! I welcome your stories of letting go of things and how that makes you feel.

All my best, as always,  
Donna



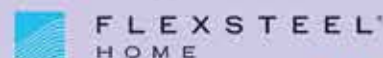
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