

“The Zen of Home Downsizing”

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Take Care Move Assistance

Have you ever looked around your home and thought “How will I ever get out of here? I have so much stuff and so many decisions!” Understandably, it can seem overwhelming to consider downsizing a lifetime of treasures and memories. Truth is, downsizing and making the move to retirement living really can be a positive experience. With some careful planning, trusted resources, and a clear vision of your goals, downsizing can be easier than you would think.

There are many decisions and activities along the way for a senior and their family when they plan to downsize and move to a smaller home or retirement community. The following is hardly all-inclusive. It doesn't talk about legalities, real estate or finances, which are certainly important, especially during this period of time. Rather, this list focuses on some of what we, as professional Senior Move Managers, have found most helpful in the day-to-day activity of “downsizing” a home of many years to move to a retirement community. We hope you find this useful as you think through this process for yourself or family member.

1. Communicate, communicate, and communicate! Good honest dialogue among family members while going through this process is important.
2. Don't wait to get started. Start chipping away when you have the time. The process can feel very rewarding. For you, as well as your family. (We like to say, “You eat an elephant one bite at a time.”)
3. Treat the person who is downsizing with respect and engage them in all decision making. They really need to feel they are in control.
4. Keep in mind, as we age we lose stamina. Give the senior work to do where they can sit and be engaged in decision making (i.e. go through files and papers, junk drawers, write background on important items such as heirlooms, papers, etc.).
5. Consider enlisting a trusted family member or friend as project manager and keep them updated.
6. Keep a notebook of vendors, contractors, phone #, etc. Keep it at the senior's home so anyone can refer and add to it when visiting. Choose a binder that's brightly colored so easy to spot.
7. We have found the most productive time to work is 9AM-3PM. Give yourself permission to stop for the day so you can recharge.
8. Before moving anything, it may be a good idea to take photographs of rooms, furniture and other items deemed important.

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9. Determine a fair way to divide furniture and items amongst family members. Don't be surprised that some don't want anything while others want or need more. Regardless, try to balance the giving to minimize possible resentment.
10. Make a floor plan of the space you are moving to. Consider what you want to take, and most importantly, create a floor plan so you know what will fit, and what won't! This is also the time when you realize you are taking the best things with you and not saying good-bye to the past. Just take what gives you a “thrill” or will truly be used and appreciated.
11. Use Post Its or some other method to identify items that go to your new home. Very helpful on move day!
12. Have a sense of humor – these times can be stressful.
13. Storage services: Avoid if possible as it can be expensive. Some retirement communities include storage as part of the package but it isn't much space. Decide that if a family member or friend does not want an item, to send it on its way to a charity or for consignment (consult your Senior Move Manager to help dispose and disburse to your charity of choice).
14. Movers, downsizers and other outside services: Consider how long have they been doing this? Do they seem trustworthy and understanding? Are they used to working with seniors? Are they bonded and insured appropriately? Ask for references and check them.
15. Paper shredding: For big jobs a mobile service can come to your home so it can be done there. Do all at once to justify the cost. Check to see if your local UPS store does shredding, they usually charge by the pound.
16. Antique appraisers: Use the best and most reputable. They are a great resource for related services such as auction houses, junk haulers, “collectable professionals”, etc. Assign one person (family member or trusted friend) to be an overseer so things don't fall between the cracks. Get everything in writing as well as take photos of items to recall later.
17. Estate sales: Definitely meet with someone who specializes in this area, as you may be amazed with what they can do for you. And that means you don't have to think about what to do with your unwanted items. Note: Usually there will be a need for a minimum value of goods to sell to make a sale worthwhile.
18. If you are going to a retirement community that will provide meals...do you really need three sets of dishes? A rule of thumb: For each resident take 3 plates, bowls, cups, mugs, and silverware. How about just taking a few pots and pans as well as a few microwave safe dishes. Give away the rest. Less truly is more!



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19. Consider using your good silver for everyday purposes. You might as well enjoy it!
20. Did we say have a sense of humor?
21. Consider consulting a professional senior move management company (www.nasmm.com). It's one call instead of many. You can use them for most of the resources you may need (sorting, disbursement of goods to family and charities, junk hauling, packing the items you want to take, moving company, estate sale referral, floor planning, unpack and putting away your items, setting up computers, TVs and printers, hanging paintings, etc.).

Reasonably priced, Senior Move Managers do this regularly and understand what you are going through. They can set up a calendar and a plan of action that will fit your budget, as well as coordinate the level of involvement of friends and family who are available to help. And, the good ones know you are the boss.

About Take Care Move Assistance:

Licensed, Bonded and Insured, **Take Care Move Assistance provides moving help for seniors.** Founded in 2007, *Take Care* was created to provide exceptional project management to navigate through the moving process via consultation, oversight and action.

The Take Care Move Assistance team truly enjoys the satisfaction that comes from moving a senior into an independent living or assisted living community and hearing the client exclaim “I couldn’t have done it without you!” We are committed to providing you a successful stress free moving experience. We have successfully moved seniors to many Portland retirement communities and senior housing options – we know what works!



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