

## **Is it time to downsize, declutter and simplify?**

There comes a time in most everyone's life when they decide they need or want less "stuff." In the best of circumstances this comes as a choice.

Often individuals decide to downsize or eliminate much of their accumulated possessions because they want to realize the benefits of a simpler life. Some do it because they just get tired of all the attention and maintenance that possessions demand. In other circumstances the decision to downsize is made because a person wants or needs to move into a smaller space, to a new location or to an assisted living facility.

Whatever the motivation, decluttering, downsizing and moving is a process that can be accomplished easily and effectively and will also bring greater peace, freedom and control into one's life. The following true stories from the lives of actual clients will give you some insight into how beneficial the process can be.

### **THE HOUSE THAT WOULDN'T SELL**

I was hired by a woman who wanted more organization for her household and family. We made an appointment to get together the next week to start getting her organized. I suggested that as a way to prepare for our session, she start "subtracting." That meant, looking all around the house for anything that could be thrown out or immediately given away. The idea was to create some space and get the "energy" moving.

When I arrived on the day of our first scheduled session, we got right to work and my client told me a very interesting story. She said that once she started to "subtract," she experienced a sense of greater well-being, and had a more optimistic outlook. In addition, their second home, which had been on the market for over two years without generating interest, had finally received an offer. She and her husband countered the offer, and were waiting to hear the results.

We continued with our organizing, and were well into emptying the hall closet, when the phone rang. It was her Realtor. The counter offer had been accepted, and the house was sold! My client was amazed, excited and grateful. She said that she knew that this had happened because she was tossing out and getting organized.

Start subtracting and organizing, and see what happens in your own life. You might be surprised.

### **ARE YOU TOO BUSY NOT TO DOWNSIZE?**

Some people decide to downsize because they are just too busy with their creative activities to take care of the responsibilities of a large home. I interviewed a couple who had made the move from a big house to an apartment

25 years ago. Still quite young at the time, their only reason for making the move was to enjoy a simpler life. They never regretted their decision.

"We just didn't have time to take care of a house," they said. "The easiest part of the move was giving up lawn care, snow removal and maintenance; the hardest part was deciding what to bring."

When asked how they were able to part with belongings they loved but couldn't take, they said they had to "bite the bullet." They explained, "You have to make up your mind that sacrifices are part of the decision you have made."

What they could not take they disposed of by first inviting their family members to choose whatever they wanted. The remainder was donated to charity. They admitted that they put some stuff in storage but discovered later they really didn't need it.

Other tips from this couple are:

- Do most of the packing yourself, but hire the best professional movers you can find.
- Hand carry as many of the valuables and breakables as possible. Let the professionals pack artwork, mirrors or other valuables you must ship.
- If possible, relocate to a place where you have family or friends, social connections, and activities you love.

### **FROM A FOUR-BEDROOM THREE-STORY HOME TO A TWO-BEDROOM APARTMENT**

This is the story of a client who moved from a four-bedroom, three-story home with an attic, basement, and garage, to a two-bedroom apartment. The process took 3 months of daily work.

She started in the basement and worked her way up. By making three piles of stuff -- what to take, what to sell or give away, and what to throw out -- she was able to keep everything organized as she worked.

Her late husband had been a pack rat who loved garage sales and had many collections. That didn't stop this motivated woman. His collection of telephone insulators went to the telephone museum, and his collection of old radios was sold at an auction held by the local radio club. Everything else sold at her tag sale. She said, "Once the stuff was gone, I never missed it."

She also shared this valuable advice:

- Go with relatives or friends to look at apartments. Not only can they help you decide, but they might spot problems that you don't see.
- Find your new apartment before you start downsizing so that you can measure the floors and create a plan to scale. This way you will be sure which furniture will or will not fit.
- While organizing for the move, make sure to have someone around who can carry out the trash for you. There will be a lot of it.

When asked how she was able to let go of the memories she replied, "You just make up your mind you are going to do it!" She said that, all in all, the move was a satisfying experience and she is very happy in her new place.

The most important thing to remember is that your attitude can make all the difference in the ease and success of your project. If you approach organization or a move with the end in mind -- a simpler, happier, more carefree life -- you will enjoy the process so much more.

Whenever we downsize, we find ourselves having to break emotional attachments to our possessions. This is not easy. When I moved from the East Coast to Iowa several years ago, all I chose to bring with me was what I could fit into my car, and 17 boxes filled with books, files and a few personal items and memorabilia that I shipped. I brought no furniture, appliances or sports gear. I decided to let go of 15 years accumulation.

Although letting go seemed difficult to do at the time, I honestly haven't missed anything that I left behind. I took the time to carefully assess my belongings and brought only what was meaningful, necessary and irreplaceable. Through that experience I learned how little I really need, and how holding on to too many possessions can limit my freedom.

Now, before I purchase something big, I picture myself having to move it, and I always I gain a new perspective of its desirability and value to my life.

Is it time for you to organize, declutter and downsize? You may be surprised at how wonderful it feels and marvel at how much new good flows into your life.

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