

# Downsizing for a Move to Senior Living



**Learn how to navigate the emotional process and reap its benefits**

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Moving to a senior living community brings benefits like freedom from home maintenance, more social opportunities and access to wellness and fitness programs and healthcare. Senior living offers many lifestyle rewards but often within a smaller private living space when compared to residents' previous homes.

Many older adults eager to move to a senior living community are overwhelmed by the challenge of downsizing. It's a totally natural and normal response. The good news is that there is plenty of advice and tips from those who have successfully lived through the downsizing process and the professionals who helped guide them.

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## **How to Successfully Downsize for a *Simpler and Fuller* Lifestyle**

### **Be Aware of Emotions**

Surveying a lifetime of possessions to decide what to keep and what to let go of can be an emotional process. It typically goes a lot slower than people expect. Start the downsizing process as soon as possible and allow plenty of time to get the job done, including time for a few trips down memory lane.

*Tip...Go room by room instead of tackling the entire house in one day.*

### **Pick Must Have Pieces**

Choose the most necessary furniture items first like a bed, dresser, small kitchen table with a couple of chairs, couch and an end table. Then, if there's still room, add extra pieces. Some may want to buy new furniture, but using existing furnishings can make the new space feel more like home.

*Tip...Consider a smaller bed for extra living space.*

### **Practice the Mantra "Less is best"**

Most senior communities have model apartment homes that feature clean, simple designs. Use the image of the model home as an inspiration and try to duplicate its spacious, uncluttered look when choosing which things to bring and which to leave behind.

*Tip...If it hasn't been worn or used in a year, let it go.*

## Accept Help

Some senior living communities offer professional assistance to help guide new residents and their families through the downsizing process. There are also moving professionals for hire who can help. An outside person can simplify the choices about what to keep, discard, give to family or donate. Most people are relieved to have the support and guidance of an objective person.

*Tip...Be sure that the person who is moving has the final say in what stays and what goes.*

## Provide Room to Move

When space planning, make sure there is ample room to move easily and safely around the home, especially if someone is using an assistive device.

*Tip...Place paper cutouts of furniture in the space to see exactly how everything fits.*

## Try “Smart” Furniture

Dual purpose furniture is an excellent choice for smaller spaces. For example, a bench that also opens for storage or a side table that also serves as a desk.

*Tip...Hang a television instead of a mirror above a long dresser, which can also serve as a media base.*

## Bring Family Treasures

Framed family photos, artwork and other cherished items should have a spot in the new place to help create a familiar and homelike environment.

*Tip...Scan family album photos and upload them to a digital photo frame for easy enjoyment and saving space.*

## Be Generous

Don't wait for a birthday, wedding or baby shower to pass down family heirlooms. Give items away as gifts now and experience the joy of giving sooner rather than later.

*Tip...Donate unwanted clothing, furniture, dishes and appliances to charity.*

## Use Family Storage

Many residents have their children store items such as seasonal clothing or holiday decorations and bring them in when needed. Residents can take comfort knowing that their valuables are not gone but just being held somewhere else.

*Tip...Use shelf inserts in cabinets and closets to double storage space.*

## Community Living Advantages

Keep in mind that residents have a beautiful community to entertain in and not just their apartment homes. While amenities vary, most senior living communities offer comfortable gathering spaces, game rooms, private dining rooms and outdoor spaces and some even have movie theaters.

*Tip...Send a cute change of address card to family and friends to announce the move.*

## Remember the Big Picture

Take time out through the process to reflect on the reasons for downsizing. Letting go of years of accumulated possessions can be a daunting task. But doing so can also be a liberating experience that frees oneself to focus more on family, friends and special interests and to reflect on and achieve a deeper wisdom in this meaningful phase of life.



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