



Downsizing Tips from **Designing Moves® L.L.C.**
Senior Move Managers

Really Helping Mom and Dad with their Move

In the many years we have helped people move and downsize we have seen a variety of family dynamics. Thus, this article has been weaving itself together for quite some time in my head.

Sometimes the most well-meaning offspring causes their parents more difficulties rather than providing assistance. How can you best help Mom or Dad with transitioning to the next chapter of their life?

- 1) The first thing you can do is LISTEN. I know it is hard and we all just want to get this done! Children come in with their energy and "can do attitudes" only to be derailed by stories from the past and a request to just sit and visit. You've traveled a long way for a short amount of time, but Mom or Dad just want to enjoy your company. There are stories you truly need to hear so listen for the clues to the issues that are really bothering them, and look for the thread that connects all of the conversation, and take the time to observe. It is easier to deal with a transition if

people feel someone is listening to them. Take notes if you have to – some day you won't be able to ask for the details on a particular story. It is crucial to realize that your parents are faced with diminished choices – they can't control their health, they may not be able to drive and if they can they may not be able to do so much longer, and in many cases there other things they cannot do that they want to do. But, they can make decisions on what they want to move to their new home or what they want to do with items that are not moving to their new home. Give them the control where you can. Truly this is the time you can lead by example and show your own children how you want to be helped when it's your turn.

2) ACCEPT the fact change is hard. It's taken decades to gather everything that fills your parent's homes and it all has a story. Telling the story is a way of releasing the item on to a new home. This isn't going to go as fast as you hoped it would! Sometimes we find our clients never told the family the story behind a certain item or the story was forgotten. Your parents need you for emotional support as much as the physical part of moving items. And they will be indecisive about some things. It's okay to let them take some time to think about it. Accept that fact that this is emotionally and physically draining to you too! Most of us aren't as energetic as we were in our 20's and we really aren't that far behind our parents in this process.

3) Be REALISTIC. Our clients can usually work in 2 to 4 hour sessions to sort through their treasures. They get tired, thirsty and hungry reliving parts of their lives. Some things bring up joyous occasions and some bring up reminders of losses, pain, and regret. There are often tears and feelings can be overwhelming. If you truly want to help your parents get through this; start with one closet, one dresser, and one room at a time. Don't expect to deal with a whole house in a week.

- 4) Be PREPARED. Your parents' solution to their downsizing dilemma is for you to take it all and then they don't have to make a decision! Be prepared to be upfront with your parents. If there are things you want then say so and get them promptly. If everyone wants the same thing – be willing to let it go. In the end it doesn't really matter who got what, it's the relationships that matter! Some siblings who have always gotten along can turn the dispersing of Mom and Dad's things into the battle of century. Let go – let someone else have the burden of caring for it, hauling it around, and dusting it; or take turns with siblings on where the item resides. The worst thing you can do is to change your mind on whether you want things after the tag sale or auction house contract has been signed. This can derail a downsizing fast and leave few options to accommodate the remaining items on short notice.

- 5) Stay CALM. If Mom or Dad have hired a Senior Move Manager who is affiliated with the National Association of Senior Move Managers (NASMM.org), congratulate them. Or help them find a NASMM Senior Move Manager. Be there to support your parents emotionally, keep them company on move day, and perhaps help with some of their most personal and confidential sorting. Know that Senior Move Managers have a great network of vetted sources to ethically help your parents and are the neutral third party to help them navigate decisions and be ready to move on move day.

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