

Transitioning later in life

by Josie Padro



There's no place like home. That's especially true for those who've lived in the same place for a lifetime. While many seniors live independently, there may come a time when they have to downsize, whether to a smaller, easier to maintain space or to some sort of supported living. Like any transition, it can be stressful for the person who is moving—and for those helping them move.

The task of dealing with the possessions gathered over many years can be overwhelming. What, to some, may seem like heaps of useless items can actually be precious objects with attached memories. Parting with those things can represent yet another loss in an elder's life.

Caregivers, on the other hand, often feel torn between the need to get the job done in time for moving day and the desire to allow their loved one to sort through their possessions at their own pace. "The important thing," says decluttering coach Anna Camporese, "is to reassure them that they are going to be respected and that their things are going to be respected."

Camporese believes six months is an ideal timeline—no matter how much time you have, the first step is to make a list of things that need to be done. Those tasks can then be broken down into manageable chunks, with a set deadline for each one. She points out that seniors can become quite fatigued so it's a good idea to deal with one drawer or one box at a time, and focus only on that.

Seniors are advised to keep items they've used for hobbies, such as sewing machines or knitting supplies, since they may want to engage in the activity in their new home. A small selection of kitchen supplies is also worth keeping. Even though many seniors' residences provide meals, suites may have small kitchens which are handy for preparing snacks and

simple meals.

Downsizing is a good time for seniors to bequeath special items to close friends and family. It's not only an opportunity to make sure that valued possessions go to people who will enjoy them and take care of them, but it's also a great way to have items removed out of the home. In the same vein, if family members have stored possessions in the attic or basement, set a date by which the owners must remove them.

[The following additional tips can help make the moving experience easier:](#)

Sort items into five categories: to be kept, to be given to family or friends, to be sold, to be donated, or to be thrown away.

Use a floor plan to map out the space the senior will be moving into so that you can measure and keep furniture that fits best.

Finish removing all the items after the person has relocated so they don't feel lost and alone in an empty house.

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After all the work of sorting, packing and moving is done, it's time to celebrate. Try to make the new location as homelike as possible by filling it with familiar things. Planning a meal together or hosting a small house warming party can be the start of more happy memories in the new setting.