

Downsizing to Assisted Living

Are you or a loved one ready to make the move to assisted living but hesitating because the thought of downsizing is daunting? We understand! No one wants to get rid of their “stuff,” but when a move to assisted living is necessary, decluttering and downsizing is a must. In this resource, we break down helpful ways to downsize so you can thrive in your new community.



Plan in Advance

Planning is key! You will be SO overwhelmed if you just walk into a room and say, “Okay, what needs to go?” You can’t plan every detail, but it’s important to have a conversation and make sure everyone involved is on the same page before starting the process.

1

Write down the items you absolutely want to keep as well as a few things you have no problem letting go of.

2

Jot down the reason you want to keep or get rid of these items. Sometimes, there is no rhyme or reason why we’re keeping certain items except that we’ve had them for so long. Realizing this could make it easier to “let go.”



This is the first step so don’t get discouraged. At this stage, we’re trying to better understand what can easily go or needs to stay.

Starting Small

So, you have your list of things to keep and get rid of.

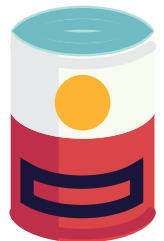
Let’s start with the easiest task – getting rid of what we don’t mind losing. If you know there is something, like that old dining table that nobody likes or uses, start there. If there’s not something that stands out, a good place to start is the kitchen.

1

Get rid of those mismatched or chipped plates.

2

You don’t need an entire silverware set so put those in the pile to go.



3

Throw out outdated food and whatever else may have been sitting in your pantry for years.

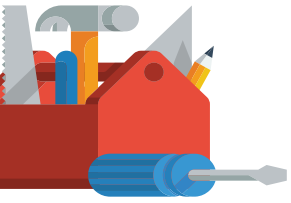
4

Go through your kitchen appliances and determine what you will need in your new home. Most likely, your new apartment will have a microwave and fridge so you don’t have to worry about bringing those items.

You might be saying right now, “What about the other little stuff in the kitchen and what are we going to do with all the furniture?” Don’t worry, we’ll get there! Once you and your loved one get in the groove of accepting letting things go, it will be easier to address the larger furniture in the living room and bedroom with an open mind.

The Tough Stuff

While it may be easier to get rid of little knick-knacks and unused appliances, it may become very difficult to get rid of some of the following items.



- **Holiday decorations**
- **Photo albums**
- **Jewelry**
- **Artwork**
- **Tool boxes, golf clubs**
- **Furniture such as couches, tables, chairs, dressers, hutches, etc.**

We have a few specific techniques you can use to tackle the more difficult items.

1. Involve family members and children

Oftentimes, seniors (and parents in general) keep things, such as tables, China sets and jewelry because they think their children will want them. Unfortunately, the truth is that these items may not have the same importance to your children as they did to you. Your family may not have the space or desire to keep that chair or collectable chest you've been holding onto. Have a discussion about these challenging items. You may come to the conclusion that they're easier to get rid of than you thought!



2. Staying in the family

It's painful to lose our belongings, but keeping them in the family is a way to lessen this hardship. We're not suggesting caregivers should keep everything from their loved one's home but your aging relative may find comfort in knowing some of their cherished items are staying in the family.

Here are a few examples:

Invite Mom for the holidays and show her all her beautiful decorations that now light up your home.

Ask extended family and friends if they could use any furniture. Most of the time, you'll find many people are enthusiastic about getting free furniture, especially if that furniture is significant to their family members.

Put their extra dresser in your guest room so when they come and visit, they will feel right at home.

Take Dad's fishing gear and make sure to let him know it'll be waiting at your house whenever he wants to fish.

It is reassuring to know your belongings are staying within your family circle and will hopefully ease any uncertainty about downsizing.



3. Donations

When seniors realize their belongings may be able to help those in need, some feel more inclined to give them up. Rather than being tucked away in someone's closet, those books you've been holding onto or that table set could mean the world to someone in need.

Here are some local companies in Connecticut that can help you donate your items:



Simply enter your zip code and find local charities currently accepting used goods.

bit.ly/2GUjkd5

You'll feel good knowing you can help others while transitioning to senior living. An added bonus is knowing your donated items are tax deductible!



A paid service that takes your items and passes them along to local companies.

bit.ly/2IaCLxG



Organizers for Charity
Community of Professional Organizers Dedicated to Helping Others

Professionals and groups who can help you make a donation.

bit.ly/2E6LaQw

While seniors may initially be reluctant to let go, most find the end results surprisingly pleasing. Now that you have this guide to downsizing, the next step is moving in. Check out this helpful infographic, "Moving In: 10 Easy Steps" to learn more about the move-in process.

bit.ly/2IcCSc3



Have any additional questions regarding downsizing or transitioning to assisted living? Contact a UMH Senior Care Transition Counselor!

offers.umh.org/call-seniorcare-transition-counselor