

Downsizing – being able to let go

By SHARON BOWEN
Staff writer

Moving is a stressful time for anyone. But try stuffing 2,400 sq. ft. into 1,500 sq. ft., and stress quickly turns to panic.

Sometimes our things simply take over our lives. Too much furniture. Too many books. Too many mementos scattered here and there.

What can I do with all my things?

Before you run out and rent a storage unit, take some advice from Becca Clark. Clark is a professional organizer and the owner of Creative Convenience.

“Downsizing is a gift to you and your family,” said Clark.

Less clutter makes life more enjoyable. It reduces stress, and makes it easier to find things.

Sorting, organizing and purging keeps possessions under control. It makes a home more comfortable and cleaner.

This is true whether the homeowners are moving or staying put. Organizing even one room or one area can make a significant difference.

Don't wait until you can't. There is no one better qualified than you are to make decisions about your important possessions. Who else knows their history and can sort the family treasures from the junk?

There will never be a perfect time, so just get started.

Pick a date.

First, set a date and keep it.

Invite a disinterested outside party to act as facilitator. Family members are too emotionally involved.

Set a limit.

Since this is an exhausting process, limit your sessions to three hours. But don't feel rushed. Allow time to savor your memories as you sort through your treasures.

Have a plan.

Divide your project into small, manageable sections – for example, two shelves instead of the whole pantry.

Get ready.

Next, designate a staging area to work. Since it could take a few days to a few weeks, a place out of the main living area will be less disruptive. Get comfortable. A large, clean table or counter works well and reduces bending. This is physically demanding work, so sit as often as possible.

Sort.

Work one section at time. Begin by emptying the entire section. Sort things into categories: things to keep, things to trash, things to sell, things to recycle, things to donate and things to give to specific individuals.

Remember, this is the time to upgrade your belongings. Keep the best and toss the rest.



Clutter creates chaos. (Becca Clark photo)

Organize.

If you are moving soon, go

containers should fit your sessions and the storage area.

this stuff with me? I never like Aunt May's china anyway.



After – Shelves and storage boxes organize and simplify. (Becca Clark photo)

ahead and pack up items after they're sorted. When you move them to your new home, use clear containers of the same size to organize your belongings.

Place the things used most often within reach. This is the prime real estate in the storage market - the area above your knees to the top of your head. Things in this area are easy to access and easy to see.

Work each section until the project is complete.

Resist the urge to buy your storage containers until you've moved. At that time, you'll know the proper sizes and quantities to purchase. Your

Evaluate.

Some things are just harder to give away: inherited items, keepsakes and items with sentimental memories. Becca suggests asking these questions when facing a tough decision:

- Why am I afraid to let this go? Will a photo to remember it help me let go?
- Am I keeping this just in case I need it? Will I ever be a size 7 again?
- What does it represent to me? A past memory? A lost friend?
- How has this stuff affected my family? Does it cause conflict between us?
- Who said I had to carry

How long am I going to keep this? This 30-year-old plant has seen better days.

Keeping too much stuff has a price. Some items require additional insurance. Other items require special storage and cleaning. Then, there's always the worry about theft.

Becca and her team organize homes and businesses, using the latest tools and best practices to de-clutter and simplify. She frequently presents

workshops and seminars on organizing.

She's had several speaking engagements on organizing for KARK 4 Today show and KARK 4 News Today.

She has a Continuing Education course on Thursday at the National Park Community College in Hot Springs.

Contact Clark at 620-0546 for more ways to simplify and organize your home.

Or, visit her Web site at www.creativeconvenience.biz.



After – Finding storage solutions for everything. (Becca Clark photo)

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