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# Don't Feel Guilty Downsizing Your Stuff

by Kirsten Sharpe: the REALTOR for SENIORS™

**It happens to all of us.** Over the years we accumulate a lot of stuff, just by living our lives. Until we contemplate a move to downsize into a smaller space, we don't take notice of how much has crept into our home. In order to downsize, you have to minimize material possessions, sometimes 50% or more. How do you do that without feeling guilty about letting go?

**At first you try to sell your stuff,** because naturally you feel it is worth a lot of money. So here I am, the bearer of bad news (or being realistic, whichever way you see it): there is a very small market for used possessions. You've tried to give your kids things but as I wrote in my previous article, your kids don't want your stuff. And why should they? They have their own taste and want to show their individuality in their decor. Your friends who gush and tell you how valuable your pieces are, and that you should sell them for a lot of money, don't want them, not even for free. When you ask if they know who will buy them, they don't know anyone. You start getting creative on how to find buyers; you think about selling on-line, doing a garage sale, or hiring an estate sale company. Until you realize how time consuming this is and from past garage sales, you know those shoppers want items for cheap, and then you're stuck with all the stuff no one wants.



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**The auctioneer or house clean-out company** you've interviewed won't give you much, because the re-sale market for used stuff, especially antiques, is very small. Keep in mind they need to come to your house with a crew and a truck and a trailer, pack things up, take them to their facility, re-sell what they can and discard the rest. And they need to make a profit. There just isn't much money to be made on used stuff, whether it is furniture, décor, dishes, or wall art. Possessions, houses, and cars are only worth what someone is willing to pay for them. You may feel your solid wood dining room set is worth a lot of money, but if you can't find someone to pay your price, it isn't worth that.

**No one goes to a store** to buy a dining set and says "well, when I sell this 25 years from now, after my growing family has celebrated holidays, birthdays, and happy and sad events at the table, after we've had fun dinner parties and the kids did their homework on it, I expect a grateful stranger to buy it from me for \$350". You'll explain it is solid hardwood and made my Amish artisans, which you believe everyone appreciates. But it doesn't work that way. Let's amortize: if you bought it 25 years ago for \$2000, it cost you \$0.22 a day to use it. That means by now it is well amortized, it has depreciated, and you got your money's worth.

**Let go of possessions without feeling guilty.** You're not getting rid of memories, only objects. Just because you own something now, doesn't mean you have to own it forever. You can't get rich by selling your used stuff. It is very time consuming, frustrating, and in the end often not worth it. You may feel better donating items to a charity who can help families or animals in need. Find an organization close to your heart (Resale to the Rescue is my favorite, as their funds help local animals), and it will be easier to let go of your stuff as others benefit from your generosity. Then look ahead to the less cluttered life you are planning, as you reinvent yourself in your new space. Because to be truly happy, you don't need a lot of stuff.

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