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# Downsizing Tips

How Chartwell can make your move easier



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# Introduction

Exciting news: you or a loved one have decided that a retirement community is the next chapter in your story—**congratulations!** You're probably feeling a mixture of emotions right now, as is natural when it comes to embarking on any big life change. Perhaps you're nervous, but excited? Nostalgic, but curious? Or even unsettled, yet relieved?

No matter how confident or at peace you are with your decision to embrace the many possibilities of retirement living, we're here to assure you that **you're not alone** if you're also feeling daunted by the chore that is moving. It doesn't matter if you're going to a bigger house, a smaller apartment, or a senior living community; there's undoubtedly a lot of work involved, and for some, it isn't exactly enjoyable!

That's why Chartwell wants to offer you some support as you get ready to undertake the task of downsizing. We've got some great tips from experts in their fields when it comes to **moving, organizing, decorating** and even the (sometimes challenging!) **family dynamics** involved with a move.

Our best piece of advice? Keep the big picture in mind, even during those moments of stress. You've chosen retirement living for a reason—whether that be for social enrichment, daily support, a feeling of safety or simply convenience—**and it will all be worth it** when you're handed the keys to your new home.

# CHAPTER ONE

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Tackling the emotional  
impact of downsizing

# How to overcome obstacles to positive life change

by Dr. Amy D'Aprix

I like to think of life like a book with many chapters. When we are younger, we are often eager for the next chapter of our life. For example, I remember my eighteen-year-old daughter impatiently counting down the months until she left for university. Many of us bring that same enthusiasm into chapters where we launch families and careers.

However, not everyone faces the later chapters of life with the same excitement. These changes may feel out of our control and not as welcome.

Perhaps our next chapter is launched because of health challenges or the death of someone we love dearly. Because upcoming change may not feel welcome, it's common to try to **hang on to a chapter of our lives, even if it no longer serves us well.**

Perhaps you're considering moving to a retirement residence because your current living situation isn't serving you well anymore—yet, you haven't made the commitment to move in yet. Any idea what's stopping you from making a positive change in your life?





The first step to answering this question is to identify the **emotional and practical hurdles** that are preventing you from making a change. Emotional hurdles could include leaving a home where you raised your children, or the home where your spouse last lived with you before passing. Meanwhile, downsizing can have both emotional and practical elements to it; memories associated with the things that are being let go of and the sheer difficulty of the task can all get in the way of moving forward.

The good news about emotional and practical hurdles is that they can be overcome. Once we identify hurdles, we can **seek the support of friends, adult children, and professionals in “jumping over” those hurdles**. This doesn't mean it's easy, but it's doable.

Recognizing that when you move from your home you may grieve the passing of that chapter of your life can actually help you move through it, rather than avoid it. The truth is to move forward into a new chapter we can't avoid hurdles; only jump over them. And needing the support of others to accomplish this simply makes us human!

Exciting new chapters can occur at any age. We just need to be open to them and **acknowledge and face the hurdles that, if avoided, could keep us from experiencing new adventures** and having the best quality of life possible.



## About Dr. Amy D'Aprix

Dr. Amy is a certified senior advisor, Vice President of the International Federation on Aging, and Co-Founder of the Essential Conversations Project. As a gerontological social worker, she has over thirty years of experience working with older adults and their families.

# CHAPTER TWO

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Downsizing and  
organizing tips

# 5 tips on how to approach your downsize

You or a loved one have or are about to come to a decision: you're ready to make the move to a retirement residence and lead the worry-free lifestyle you deserve! There's work involved leading up to the big move, but that doesn't mean it can't be a positive experience.

**Here are some tips that can make the process as streamlined and stress-free as possible.**

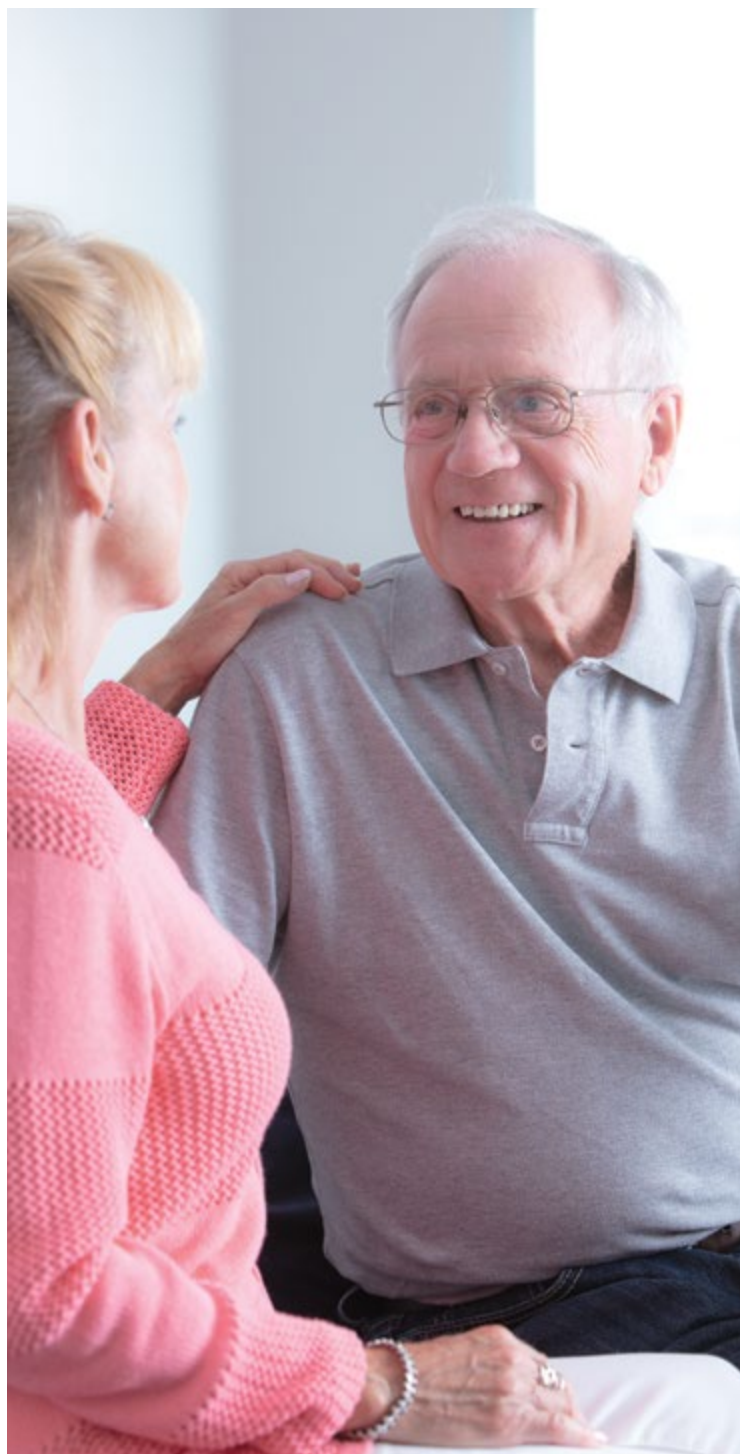
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## 01

### **Be selective about who is involved in the process**

For many older adults, one of the most time consuming tasks associated with moving is the prospect of having to organize and downsize an entire lifetime of possessions. Gerontological social worker Dr. Amy D'Aprix says, "As hard as it may be to sort through things, many people also report **how free they feel** after doing it."

Now is the right time to determine who will take the lead in your downsizing process—whether it's you,



a spouse, an adult child, or another loved one or friend who is willing and able to help. Make sure to **only involve people who will respect your wishes, and consider asking loved ones who you know work well under pressure or have a knack for organization.** One of the most efficient ways to manage a downsize is to divide and conquer—splitting up and delegating tasks amongst participating family members that suit their individual skills.



# 02

## Consider hiring professional organizers or move managers

If the process begins to feel overwhelming—and budget permits—think about hiring a professional organizer or moving manager to assist you with the move, **especially if family dynamics start to get complicated.** For example, the National Association of Senior Move Managers has member companies that specialize in moving and organization services for seniors.

# 03

## “Right-size” your possessions

What is “rightsizing?” As opposed to downsizing, it suggests focusing on the treasures you want to keep, rather than on the loss of things you may not need or use. It’s all about **choosing the possessions that fit the life you have now** (or the life you want in the near future), **rather than allowing your things to dictate the way you live.** While acknowledging your past life and home, rightsizing celebrates each new chapter and the journey you embark on to get there.

*Next Avenue, a website for seniors founded by PBS media, suggests the “Four Box” system for de-cluttering and assessing what needs to go—and stay—in your space. Get four boxes or plastic storage bins (you may need more, depending on the number of items) and label them as follows:*

**Keep until I’m gone:** For items of sentimental value, such as family heirlooms, personal letters, wedding china, and photo albums.

**Appraise and sell:** For unwanted items of value.

**Keep with me:** For unsentimental items, such as furniture and art.

**Garage sale/donate:** For unwanted items.

For larger items such as furniture and art, they suggest taking and printing photos of the items, then placing the photo in the appropriate box. Or you could simply write a short description of the item on an index card and put the card in the box.



# 04

## Get help setting up your new suite

While the downsizing process can expend a lot of time and energy, so too can setting up your new suite in your retirement community. Don't be afraid to ask for help getting organized in your new space, especially if you believe it will help you feel at home faster.

The same advice applies: the more hands the merrier, however you may want to **delegate according to each person's strengths!**



If you're supporting a senior loved one, you may even consider setting up their new suite **before they move in**—such as placing furniture, artwork, and personal items—if that will make the experience more stress-free for them.



# 05

## Be open about how you're feeling

Before, during or after the moving process, your emotional journey may just be starting. A move for just about anybody can involve **grieving for their previous home**, says Dr. Amy, and can take time to resolve.

“Being open with someone you trust—a spouse, sibling, friend or adult child—about your move may help you to work through what you're feeling and take the next step forward with confidence and positivity,” Dr. Amy explains.



# Marie Kondo's organizing tips for downsizers

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Does decluttering spark joy in your life? For many, the answer is a resounding “no.” If, however, you are a fan of organizing wonder-woman Marie Kondo and her “KonMari Method,” your response might contain more delight than disdain.

“Enchanted” with organizing since she was a child, Kondo is now an international success story with three mega-selling books and a hit Netflix TV series, **Tidying Up with Marie Kondo. Her goal is simple:** to help people transform their cluttered homes into serene and inspiring spaces.

For anyone moving to a retirement community, the downsizing process may seem a long, tough slog to achieve serenity. Kondo, however, simplifies the task by tackling the big conundrum faced by most people: how to decide what to keep and what to give away?

“Hold each item in your hands, as close to your heart as possible, and then, pay close attention to how your body responds,” Kondo says. **“When something sparks joy,** you should feel a little thrill running through your body, as if your body is somehow slowly rising up to meet the item, embracing it even.”

If the item doesn't “spark joy,” Kondo advises disposing of it—a move you can now make with confidence, having evaluated the object's deeper emotional impact on your life.

Here are four more tips that may help you on your organizing journey:

## Visualize your life in your new space.

Kondo asks you to imagine the kind of life you will lead in your new—or decluttered—space. “Think in concrete terms so that you can vividly picture what it would be like to live in a clutter-free space,” she says. For example, imagine enjoying getting up every morning in your suite, knowing that you don't have to worry about last night's dishes, and can instead meet friends for a morning coffee in the lounge.

## Discard before deciding where to keep things.

There are only two tasks involved to tidying or decluttering, Kondo says: discarding and deciding where to keep things. “Do not even think of putting your things away until you have finished the process of discarding,” she advises.

## Show gratitude for an item's service.

Once you've decided a particular item no longer “sparks joy,” but may still hold sentimental value, Kondo says you should give it a send-off that respects the donor. She advocates thanking the item for its service, maintaining that this gratitude will reduce or even eliminate the guilt you may feel by discarding or giving it away.

## Discard first by category, not by room.

Kondo maintains sorting by room is inefficient; instead, she advocates sorting by category, starting first with clothes, then books, papers, miscellaneous, and finally items or mementos with sentimental value. She likens this order to training your tidying muscles, starting with the easiest stuff and working up to the most difficult and meaningful things.

\*The following source provided reference for this blog:

Kondo, Marie. *The Life-changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing*. Random House Canada. Toronto, 2014.

# CHAPTER THREE

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Decorating your  
new suite

# Advice on how to furnish and decorate your new suite

You've made the decision to move into a retirement residence and start a new chapter in your life—but what furniture and possessions should you bring with you to your new home? If you live in a large home or apartment, downsizing may factor into your transition—deciding what items to bring with you, gift to family and friends, or even donate—but of equal importance is determining **what you want your new suite to look and feel like**. In fact, it's an exciting opportunity for a **fresh start in creating a space that reflects your personality and style!**

With this in mind, we sat down with decorating guru, Patricia McKnight, for her advice on outfitting your new suite.



**Q: In terms of furniture, what are the most important things for new residents to consider before moving into their suite?**

The key thing is to look at the space first.

**Take measurements** or have a family member or friend do this for you, to make sure your existing furniture is going to fit well in the space. It's good to know beforehand, for example, if a sofa would work best, or perhaps a loveseat and two chairs. One of the most common—and easiest—mistakes to make is having too much furniture. That can become a safety issue, because you're more likely to bump into or trip over pieces that are crowded together. Individuals who have walkers, wheelchairs, and other mobility aids—or who have visitors with mobility restrictions—will benefit from **uncluttered spaces that are easy to navigate**.

**Q: Speaking of safety, are there other specific concerns when it comes to decorating a new suite?**

New residents sometimes like to bring in their own area rugs; however, **rugs that are laid over existing carpeting, or even bare floors, can pose a tripping hazard**. If you have a smaller area rug that has a lovely pattern or is an heirloom or Oriental design, think about hanging it on a wall as a piece of art. We also suggest **not using glass tables**, as they can pose a safety hazard if they break or shatter when something is dropped on them.



**Q: Should residents bring their existing furniture or consider buying new things?**

That depends on budget and individual preference. One thing to remember is that moving represents a big change for many people—particularly if they have been in a family home for many years—and coming into a new space can be different at first. **Being surrounded by familiar items is comforting** and can help ease the transition. At the same time, **some people love the idea of starting fresh and look forward to buying a new sofa or accessories.** Because condo living is so popular now, there is an entire range of smaller-sized—and even convertible—furnishings and storage options to choose from that are well suited to a retirement suite.

**Q: How can new residents make their suites instantly feel like home?**

The easiest and simplest way is to decorate with **personal photos, art and accessories.** When their loved one moves in, some families create a photo wall as a house-warming gift, using different-sized, framed photos that are meaningful to the new resident. The frames can be the unifying element, all in the same colour or style. The other benefit of creating a photo wall is that table or nightstand surfaces can now be freed up to display other objects or needed items.

Bringing **toss cushions or a soft, warm throw blanket** is another way to make your suite feel instantly homey. If your furniture is neutral, this is where you can add pattern, texture, or a pop of colour. **Adding lighting** is another way to make your new home more inviting—as well as reducing eye strain and increasing safety. Table lamps cast a soft glow and can be part of a cozy reading nook, for instance.

Overall, **it's often the small things that will make you feel at home in your new space**—personal items that are special to you.



# How the **hygge** method can make your new suite cozy

Have you ever heard of “hygge?” There’s no exact English translation, but hygge (pronounced “hoo-guh”) is a **Danish concept describing a mood of coziness, contentment and comfortable conviviality.** It has become a cultural phenomenon in Denmark, evoking “a form of everyday togetherness,” and “a pleasant and highly valued everyday experience of safety, equality, personal wholeness and a spontaneous social flow.”

The idea of warmth, coziness and simplicity encompasses a style of hygge decorating that has become popular the world over. If you’re considering how to make your new suite or apartment feel like home, decorating using the principles of hygge is a perfect way to **make your personal space feel inviting, bright and uncluttered.** Here’s how to get started:



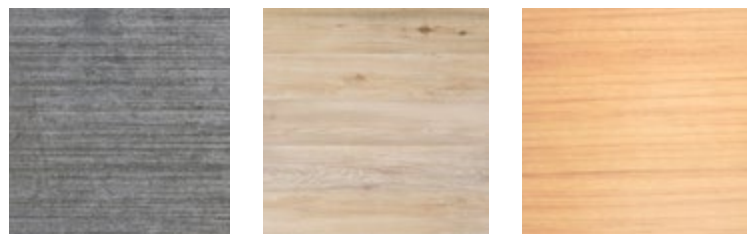
## **Use a warm, neutral colour scheme**

Hygge advocates for light colours in neutral tones, such as **pale ivory, warm greys, and earth tones.** The idea is to project a calming, relaxing mood.



## **Introduce lots of textures and pale woods**

Break up neutral tones with interesting textures that will add warmth and interest. Think of a **big, chunky wool blanket or a sheepskin pillow** to snuggle up to on a long January night. Consider adding a blond wood tray set with a tea pot (with its own cozy of course!) and pottery mugs too.





## Let there be light—flameless candles and twinkly white lights

Hygge is all about bringing light into the darkness of a cold Danish night. The soft glow of a flameless candle is instantly **calming and relaxing**, making any room special. Realistic—and safe—battery-operated candles work beautifully.

Add a string of mini twinkle-lights around your window or on your balcony or terrace for winter radiance and an inviting atmosphere for family and friends, another foundation of the hygge lifestyle. Gathering around a fire—indoors or out—is a huge part of Danish culture too. With today’s wide array of electric and realistic digital fireplaces (you can select a video of a real-life fire-in-a-fireplace to play on your TV or computer screen), your new suite will **radiate warmth and hospitality**.

## Remove clutter—and add friends!

Hygge advocates for a tidy, uncluttered esthetic—and if you are downsizing to a retirement suite or smaller space, this is the perfect opportunity to **decorate your new home with only the things you really love**.

Think about creating a wall dedicated to photos, art and even cherished mementos. An uncluttered space means more room for visitors. That’s an essential tenet of hygge—**enjoying life in the warm company of old friends and new**. If you have just moved in, think about hosting your own hygge get-together, a great way to meet other residents in your community.

\*The following source provided a reference for this article:

1. Wikipedia. “Hygge.” (Edited November 2019), online: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hygge>





# CHAPTER FOUR

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How Chartwell can  
support your transition



# More than moving day: **How our community relationships can help**

When you hear us say that we can help you with your move, you may think we mean we'll have staff available the day you move into your Chartwell community. This is partly true: we will help ensure the day goes smoothly for you and your family—for example, that the elevator is booked, the front entrance is clear, and your new suite has been refreshed and cleaned for you to begin arranging furniture and settling in. But what we can also offer you is **some help leading up to the big day.**

Our Retirement Living Consultants pride themselves on the strong local relationships that they've forged with community organizations and professionals. We've gotten to know **many trusted people who we can refer to you depending on your needs—**

from realtors and financial planners to professional downsizers and moving companies. Whether you need help selling your home, understanding the affordability of retirement living, or are finding the task of downsizing a lifetime worth of belongings too overwhelming, we know someone who can support you in your journey. That's because they've supported other residents living with us, too!

Beyond our community connections, we want to reassure you that once you sign a lease with us, the support of our Retirement Living Consultants doesn't end there. They are there to help you navigate every step of the process, and you'll find the **circle of staff who support you only grows leading up to move-in day!**



# Welcome to Chartwell: Our move-in program

We understand that change isn't always easy, even when we're excited for what comes next. For many, once the process of downsizing and setting up a new suite has concluded, a new worry can creep in: how will I settle into life in my retirement residence?

That's why we created our Welcome to Chartwell program. Our aim is to help you feel at home in your new retirement community by **meeting regularly with you within the first 30 days** of you moving in. We'll **show you around** your residence to help you get the lay of the land, introduce you to our staff, resident ambassadors, and other people we know share some of your interests, **help you find a place to sit at mealtimes** if you're dining with us, and **invite you to optional activities and outings** we think you might enjoy.

Both leading up to your move and once you've moved in, we're here for you. We hope that months from now, you can look back and not only feel that your transition to Chartwell went smoothly, but that you're now living with the peace of mind you deserve.



## Questions about living at Chartwell?

Chartwell representatives are standing by to answer your questions and support you on your retirement living journey.

**Call us today at 1-855-461-0685** or speak with your local Chartwell Retirement Living Consultant to learn more.

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