

Caregiving Corner

Resources & Solutions for Caregivers

Spring Cleaning

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It is that time again when we all peek into our closets and decide that this will be the year that we will go through the stacks of boxes. Something about the warmer weather and the 'extra' time that daylight affords us that re-motivates us each year to trim down – not only our physiques, but our belongings too! There are lots of reasons we clean out – some people are downsizing for a move, some people just want to simplify their life. Whatever the reason, weeding through the clutter is good medicine for leading healthier, happier lives.

If you are caring for an older adult, you may have recently dealt with the challenge of assisting that person with cleaning through their belongings. Or, if you are a senior, you may have just had to significantly downsize your possessions. There are some general steps that everyone can follow to make this process a more satisfying, hassle-free experience.

First, many belongings are transferred to children and grandchildren. Rather than waiting to will something to someone, many older adults discover that it is more satisfying to distribute some belongings to heirs so that they can see them enjoying the items. Obviously, it is not practical to give away everything, but seniors should keep their family members in mind when they decide what they could reasonably get rid of. It is important to remember to always ask family members if they want something before you get rid of it – you never can be sure about what item someone may have grown attached

to. Caregivers should also be careful about encouraging an older person to get rid of something that may not seem practical, but may hold a great deal of sentimental value for them.

Second, you may want to consider having a garage sale. Participating in garage sales are a perfect way to offload non-valuable items because they generate some money and these sales can also get rid of large volumes of stuff. It is worth mentioning again to be careful about selling something for a buck that your family members may have truly treasured. Some churches and schools will host rummage sales as fundraisers if someone wants to make a donation while at the same time finding a good home for their unnecessary goods.

There is also another option if you are interested in selling some of the items that you have decided are not needed – consignment shops. A number of companies here in Charlotte specialize in estate sales, a service that is more commonly associated with the disbursement of possessions after an individual has died. However, families can also utilize such services when an older parent is downsizing for a move, or simply wanting to get rid of some of their belongings. These services allow people to consign items, usually larger items, in antique or consignment shops.

Third, any remaining items, after passing the belongings onto family members and selling others at the garage sale, can be donated to thrift shops. There is a tax

advantage to this option and it is obviously a quick and fast way of getting rid of those final items that were not selected by family or rummage sale shoppers.

No matter which option best suits your needs, there are many easy ways of cleaning through those piles of boxes in your attic to get a fresh start this spring. We don't need a life changing reason, such as a move, to clear out the clutter in our lives, but planning will help you and your loved ones with this process. Plan ahead for any sales so that there is plenty of time afterwards to get rid of whatever items were not sold. You can also start going through your collected 'stuff' long before you need to so that the project is more manageable and isn't so overwhelming. Spring is almost here and it is a great time to put on some gloves and go through those old boxes!