

Making the Move, Big to Small

By Judith S. Parnes, L.C.S.W., C.M.C

Moving house is a milestone in life that can be exciting and dreadful at the same time for everyone involved. New opportunities, but so much work! Feeling unsettled, missing familiar surroundings, worrying whether this was the right decision can cause us many sleepless nights.

Of all the moves that are made in life, leaving the place where you raised your children, the house that is filled with belongings and memories, can be especially difficult. Adult children will also have mixed feelings about this concrete change in their lives. Their family memories are also linked to their past environment, even when no longer living at home. Preparing yourselves practically and emotionally can lead to a rewarding new chapter in your life.

Selling the Family Home

Especially if you have lived there for a long time, selling your home can be physically and emotionally draining. Being prepared for those feelings and the work involved can help you get through them. Work together with organizing and packing, but be sensitive to give each other space as well. Talk about what you will miss, but also about what there is to look forward to in the new place.

As soon as you can, start deciding what comes with you, what goes to kids or friends, what goes to charity, what goes to a yard sale and what simply gets thrown away. You can repeat this process several times as you find there are some things you can live without after all. Work on only one room at a time so you don't feel swamped. Ask friends to help, get a few pizzas and make a social time out of sorting and culling. If you do start to feel overwhelmed, take a break and catch your breath before diving in again. Look into the services that will cart away large, unwanted items for a fee. Some charities will take away large objects for free. Check the library for books about organizing, which can be very helpful in keeping you focused.

As each room empties, mentally say goodbye, let go and begin turning your life towards your new neighborhood. Start doing some shopping at the local stores. Perhaps order a subscription to the local newspaper. By the time you move in, you will have some sense of familiarity and community.

Getting Help With the Challenge

Change is hard for everyone and leaving a well loved home is full of poignancy. If you find your move is becoming unmanageable or overwhelming, or if you simply would like some guidance from an expert, a Professional Geriatric Care Manager can be an excellent resource. A Geriatric Care Manager is a health care professional who is committed to supporting older adults and their families in maintaining independence, dignity and quality of life. Utilizing their training, knowledge and extensive experience, a Care Manager can assist you with planning and organizing many aspects of life transitions and assuring quality outcomes.

When you feel more in control, it is easier to remember this is a time that is full of possibilities. You had traditions in the old house, now you can start new ones as well to honor the present. This is a time to celebrate the fact that you are all beginning a wonderful new stage in your life as a family.

Judith S. Parnes, L.C.S.W., C.M.C., Gerontologist And Elder Care Consultant is Executive Director of Elder Life Management, Inc., Ocean, NJ. They provide quality elder care planning and management services to older adults and their families. Please visit www.elderlifemanagement.org or call (732) 493-8080 for more information