

From Ann Bass, owner of A Lighter Move: [website](#)

Among the best kinds of gifts for older relatives and friends are gifts of time and service. If you have noticed that someone special on your list seems to have an abundance of things at home that are not being used or are gathering in excess, you might offer to help with downsizing.

Older adults delay dealing with possessions for a number of reasons, but often the physical tasks of pulling things out, lifting, boxing and hauling are more than they can handle. Research shows that the longer older adults wait to downsize, the less likely they are to get the job done and then it becomes the responsibility of others when a crisis occurs. The biggest part of the job is making decisions about things – and that needs to be the sole job of the older owner. If you offer to handle the rest you might help get things underway.

A few tips to keep in mind will contribute to your success.....

Focus on one specific area at a time and start in a place that is less emotionally charged, like a linen closet, part of a garage or bathroom. After momentum starts to grow you can head into the more personal areas like clothing closets and offices.

Aside from actual trash, **don't begin by throwing things away**. This avoids the throwing the baby out with the bathwater problem. Instead first tag for keeping the things that are used most often and/or are considered most precious.

After determining what are the “keepers,” **gifting items to relatives and friends might be considered next**. Selling and donating things would follow. It is important to keep in mind that things are worth only what someone will pay for them at the time of sale. This sometimes discourages the older owner, but that discouragement can be mitigated by realizing more value with charitable donations. After most “good” things find a home then what remains can be recycled or thrown away.

There are many sources for **selling furniture, décor and personal goods**. Safety should be a consideration when choosing your venue – do you want strangers coming to your person's home or would engaging a vetted dealer be a better option? There are also many books and tips easily accessed online and in bookstores to guide the process. If you would like to get a downsizing project underway but don't have the personal time to assist, you can also engage professionals to help.

The process is not complicated but the decision making may take time. While helpers see THINGS the older owners are processing their LIFETIME. So it is important to keep in mind that any attempt to rush the process or to make decisions for someone are likely to unravel the project and derail your initial intent of being helpful and loving. The good news is that such projects CAN be accomplished.