

Help Your Des Moines Aging Parents Declutter or Downsize!

Moving is hard under the best of circumstances. Moving your aging parents to an assisted living facility or retirement home takes on a whole new level of stress, because what you call “junk” are their prized possessions! Even downsizing to a smaller home can be traumatic.

After living in one home for a long time, your senior parents have cupboards, closets and storage spaces overflowing. It can even look like a bad episode of *Hoarders*. Most of the heavy lifting and packing will fall to you unless you hire a small move specialist. The hardest part of the move is that your parents are emotionally attached to their collections and memorabilia, so letting go can be painful for them.

Here are some tips to help your Des Moines aging parents declutter:

1. **Listen.** Many of the items have stories attached to them. Letting go is not easy, so take the time to listen. Make sure they know you have their best interests at heart. Behind those photos is a lifetime of experience!
2. **Give items away to family members or friends.** You'll find that family members or friends may need tools, appliances and/or furniture or will love the sentimentality of an item that so much to your parents. Make a list of what they want to give to whom.
3. **Map out their new place.** They have their “favorite chair.” Map out the new rooms for them so they know how much furniture they can take.
4. **Donate books.** Many libraries and schools are clamoring for books; many assisted living facilities and retirement homes have a center library.
5. **Donate movies.** Do they have movies that their grandchildren have outgrown? Donate them to a children's home or a shelter.
6. **Have a garage sale.** There may be value in those heirlooms. Considering selling them on eBay or Craigslist or hold a garage sale or estate auction.
7. **Hire an objective 3rd party.** It might help to get yourself out of the picture and get a 3rd party involved. Consult the [National Association of Professional Organizers](#) to find one near you.
8. **Rent a storage space.** It might be best to do the move in steps and rent a storage space until they can see for themselves how much will fit. It will give them security knowing all their possessions are not being given away.
9. **Pick out charities for donation.** There are many reputable charities including those that cater to specific groups such as seniors, veterans, the homeless, etc. Many let you schedule a pickup online. It will help if your parents know that what they are giving will continue to give.
10. **Junk removal services** – Check in a local directory such as Yelp or Google to find local junk removal companies. Some of the more popular ones include: 1800gotjunk.com and JunkGenius.com. A team will arrive right at your front door and help remove unwanted items from the home. Make sure they accept the items you want to give away.
11. **Shredding services** – Think before throwing away any paperwork that contains personally identifiable information such as social security numbers, bank or credit card data, medical records, etc. These items should be shredded. Check with your local church or community providers who often host free shred-a-thons. Also, contact your local pharmacy to safely dispose of expired medications.

At FirstLight HomeCare of Des Moines, our caregivers are more than willing to help your parents pare down, downsize, create more room in their home and/or make it safer to age in place; let us help with the physical, and emotional, tasks of decluttering.