

# LifeSolutions® Corner

## The benefits of decluttering



**THANKS TO AN ABUNDANCE OF MASS-PRODUCED ITEMS, AND A CULTURE THAT PROMOTES CONSUMPTION, WE HAVE MORE THINGS THAN EVER BEFORE. WHILE THESE ITEMS CAN BE A SOURCE OF JOY, PRIDE, AND USEFULNESS, THEY CAN ALSO BE A SOURCE OF STRESS.**

### Why should I downsize?

Decluttering can be a difficult process, but it's a worthwhile one. In the future, you may need to move to a smaller home, move in with a relative, or move in to an assisted living facility. In any of those scenarios, it's unlikely you'll have space to bring all your belongings. Paring them down now will help, especially because this kind of move may be quick and unexpected.

Even if you remain in your home, decluttering keeps it more manageable and safer for you. Having many things collecting dust can reduce indoor air quality and lead to hard-to-treat pest infestations. Clutter can also become a tripping hazard.

### Decluttering tips

As you go through your items, separate them into three categories: keep, pass along, and toss.

- **Keep:** Keep anything that you regularly use.
- **Pass along:** Items that you no longer need and are in good condition can be donated or sold. For example, if you have five pots and use only one, the other four can find a good home. Some items, such as family heirlooms, you'll likely want to give to loved ones. Be sure to set these aside from the general donation pile.
- **Toss:** Anything that's worn out, stained, or broken can be discarded. If you have a lot to toss, it might be worth using a junk-removal service to haul everything away.

### How to deal with sentimental items

As you're sifting through your belongings, you'll undoubtedly come across items that have sentimental value.

These are the trinkets filled with meaning that connect you to different chapters of your life. Use these strategies as you make decisions about these beloved keepsakes:

- Have photographs and videos digitized so that you can keep them without the clutter.
- Create guidelines around what you'll keep, like one physical item per memory. You might, for example, keep a vial of sand from that fun family trip to the beach, but let go of everything else you still have from that time.
- Turn favorite photos into a collage for your wall, or have special T-shirts sewn into a quilt.
- Snap photos of things you're parting with but would like to remember.
- Take your time. It's emotionally taxing to go through a lifetime of memories. You don't have to do it all at once.

### Getting help

Are you overwhelmed by the idea of downsizing? Experts, such as professional organizers and movers, can help. For specialized expertise, the National Association of Senior and Specialty Move Managers is an organization whose members focus on helping older adults simplify their homes.

Don't feel like you must do this alone. Whether you turn to an expert or friends, you'll want some support. It's mentally, emotionally, and physically challenging, so it's normal to need some assistance. Once you've started to make progress, though, you'll feel the benefits of a lighter, decluttered life.

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**Featured Webinar:  
Downsizing Your Home and Belongings**

This workshop will discuss proven techniques of what to save, what to share with others, and what is best to be donated. Most importantly, the session will help the audience understand that letting go of belongings does not mean letting go of the memories or connections that have been created throughout a lifetime.

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LifeSolutions is a confidential employee assistance program (EAP). Our services are available to you and members of your household at no cost.

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