

Stressfree Living

HEALTH & LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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THE GENTLE ART OF MOVING

Simple Ways to Ease the Stress

I want to move. I need to move. But with so many arrangements to be made, people to contact, and belong deal with, where do I begin? I just look around at so much stuff and I'm completely overwhelmed! This is the sentiment expressed by many seniors today.

No matter what the age, moving is no one's idea of fun. So many things to do, so many changes, everything happening all at once, most are just happy to survive the experience. Moving however is particularly trouble seniors.

First, when a senior moves, it usually means leaving a cherished home of twenty, thirty, forty years or more. circumstances, making a move is not just a physical change of place. It can be a traumatic experience when is familiar is uprooted.

Secondly, when a senior makes a move it is almost always to a smaller place. This means decisions, decisions...furniture, pots and pans, the linen closet, family photos, and more. The decision making alone enough to deter someone from making a wanted or much needed move.

Finally, while most seniors maintain the spirit, I want to do it on my own, many have diminished physical and mental abilities making it difficult to do the often backbreaking and mind boggling duties of moving.

Fourteen years ago, Gentle Transitions' founder saw this need while relocating her mother no less than four throughout her later years. She set forth a mission to ease this transition for seniors and their families. Here some of the more important tips that can ease the stress of your move.

Draw a Floor Plan

Don't just eyeball it or think it will just work out on moving day. Visit the new home and take a tape measure. Measure the furniture from the current home and check to see that it will fit around the corner of the entryway nook that you envision it. Consider using furniture in different ways. Oftentimes, the objective is to find furniture pieces that are sentimental, attractive and functional.

Sorting & Decision Making

Start the decision making process in areas where the decisions are relatively easy, like a spare bedroom. Have some success behind you before taking on the tougher things (tax documents and paperwork). As best you break up the decision-making into pieces and try to achieve small accomplishments first.

Use colored stickers to make what goes to the new place and what doesn't. This will allow you to keep the home livable through the process and help you remember what goes where for when the time comes.

Focus on what you or the senior needs in the new place like packing for a trip. If the item doesn't go, then determine later what will happen to the remaining items. Will it go to the kids, charity or a sale?

Disposing of Unwanted Items

Be specific with family members about what items may be available to them and when they need to pick them. If an estate sale is appropriate, realtors, community newspapers and churches are good sources to locate organizations that conduct sales. If considering a charity, call them well in advance to learn their criteria. Have an inventory of the large items prepared to discuss with them.

Utility Changes

A checkbook is a good place to start making a list of all the companies you need to notify. The most important is the change of address card from the post office. This card provides the necessary information to arrange for mail to be forwarded to your new address.

It's paramount to have phone service in both places on moving day. Start the new service before you move and discontinue the old service after moving day. Communication on moving day is critical.

Packing

Whatever you do, finish the decision-making before starting the packing. It's too much to pack and decide at the same time. Do the packing just prior to the move either with friends and family, a moving company or a service that specializes in moving seniors. Make sure medicines are available to the senior at all times. We also recommend carrying remotes and cell phones in a purse or personal bag. They have a way of getting boxed up somehow.

Selecting Movers

Check with the retirement community, neighbors, and realtors for reputable movers. Find out their years of experience and if they are bonded and insured. Request an on-site estimate prior to the move. Movers charge on an hourly basis for local moves and by weight on distance moves.

Moving Day / Resettling

Recruit all the help you can get. Unpack and arrange the new place as much as possible on moving day or the day following. The sooner things are unpacked and placed or put away, the sooner the new place will begin to feel like home. Hang the pictures promptly, as they are one of the most important ways that a house becomes more inviting. A new place that is fully resettled immediately will reduce anxiety and will provide benefits far beyond moving day.

Tending to the items above may not seem exciting. However, these seemingly insignificant details hold the keys to where stress can grow. Just a little planning, preparation and attention to detail can greatly help you minimize the stress of a move for yourself or a loved one.

Diane Bjorkman and her husband own Gentle Transitions. Over the past 14 years, the company has moved thousands of seniors into more than 150 senior communities throughout the Twin Cities. It has been recognized nationally for its innovative senior service and has been featured in good Housing Magazine, Money Magazine and The Los Angeles Times. Gentle Transitions provides hands-on expertise to seniors and their families with all aspects of the moving process, from floor plans, downsizing arrangements, packing and complete resettling. They can be reached at 952-944-1028 or 651-224-0335 or research their website at www.gentletransitions.com.

04/19/06 **By** Diane Bjorkman

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