

The importance of downsizing before it's too late

As a senior citizen, leaving your home of many years can be one of the hardest decisions to make. While deciding to move is never easy, it can be easier for you and your family if you make the choice to move now, while the choice is still yours.

As we age, maintaining a large home and yard can become a real challenge. Negotiating stairs to the bedroom, the garage or to the laundry area may not only be more difficult, it may actually be dangerous if your mobility isn't what it used to be. Living alone, or living with a partner who needs assistance, can add to your burden.

By moving into a different kind of home, many seniors are able to significantly reduce numerous stressors. Selling your home and buying a smaller home or condominium can open up many doors that may not, at first, seem obvious.

You may be surprised at how much your home is worth, and you may be able to reap immediate financial benefits by selling. Tax laws

have changed over the years, and the money you make could help you purchase your next home, pay off debt or just give you the security of having more cash available for the future.

As homes age, they often need more maintenance, which can become very expensive very quickly. Finding the right person to help you make repairs and updates can be a daunting task in itself. Living in a home that needs constant attention can also be trying.

By downsizing now, you have the power to choose what happens to your possessions and which items will go with you to your next home. If you move to a smaller space, now is the time to ensure that family heirlooms, photos, collections and other special items are distributed as you wish. Although letting go of these things can be difficult, you will no doubt relieve your family members of having to make these choices for you one day.

It is an unfortunate fact that



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some seniors wait too long to sell their high-maintenance, high-cost and multi-story homes. Unexpected illness or injury can make the decision to move become hurried. Lack of planning or time to choose exactly the right new home can lead to dissatisfaction and regret down the road.

The topic of moving is notoriously hard to bring up in family conversation. Seniors may not want to bring it up, as it may feel like an admission that their independence is in question. Adult children may not know how to bring it up to their senior parents, as they are afraid it may ignite sparks of defensiveness and even anger.

Emotions about the topic can be extraordinarily sensitive following life-altering events such as the death of a spouse, diagnosis of an illness or changes in financial status. Have the conversation and develop plans before these emergencies occur.

When everyone knows what the other one wants and needs early on, the plan is easier to put into action if and when the time comes.

Talking to a Realtor about the options available is a good place to start. There are real estate agents in the area who are designated Seniors Real Estate Specialists. They have taken specialized training to ensure that they have the knowledge and the tools necessary to help seniors and their families make decisions.

To find an SRES agent in the Greater Knoxville area, visit <http://www.seniorsrealestate.com/sarec>, or call the Seniors Advantage Real Estate Council toll-free at 800-500-4564.

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