



RIGHTSIZING: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF “LETTING GO.”

PART 1 OF A 2 PART SERIES



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So, you’ve decided it’s time to move – or time to move on. You’ve been looking around and seeing what appears to be clutter and are inspired by the emphasis by Stagers and Chad on “Million Dollar Listing” on Bravo TV, imploring clients and prospects to “have the look of a top-tier home by cleaning out relics and only having what’s useful to you on display.” Attractive accessories, furnishings and antiques...many may make the cut, otherwise, take a tip from the trainers at your gym and get fit and trim. Scaling back need not be viewed as deprivation. The key here is to evaluate what matters most and then adhere to the discipline of letting go.

Personally, I feel that letting go of some of these items often referred to as treasures, heirlooms, etc. can be quite cleansing. Removing, selling, gifting and storing items that are representative of another time and place can never erase the memories attached. They are indelible and firmly etched within our hearts – and do not need to be a permanent fixture in our immediate surroundings.

Relinquishing these items that have accrued value largely due to an emotional connection representing time, places, and people from the past, does not negate their significance in our lives...the love we still feel for them...and the impact they have had on us and our children. To me, an inherited legacy is more about instilled values, ideas, character, etc. and less about crystal goblets, ottomans, accessories and bookshelves which may be hampering our lifestyle. A well-placed antique or collectible may enhance a room vignette, but should be matched with the general appearance and room design or composition.

Often these heirlooms have become badly tarnished and discolored, in disrepair and blighted. They cast a sadness in an otherwise happier room setting. Under the mantle of eclectic design, these pieces remain, often becoming an intrusive presence in a room, such as an overpowering lamp, clock or vase.

Journaling, memoirs and other forms of memory “banking” can be quite cathartic. A good friend of mine, Fran Metzman, an established author, editor, writer (currently her blog “The Age of Reasonable Doubt” on The Wild River Review.com is receiving much attention), and 2009 nominee for a Dzanc Books Award, teaches memoir/creative writing at Temple University’s

Adult Education School. She tells me that there is an interesting process that evolves over time when writing.

“We start to connect to another world within us we didn’t know existed. It is not mystical, it’s just that words help jog memories and incidents that we have forgotten. For me, passing by a sofa or a table that was given to me, all I see is the object. I might briefly recall who gave it to me and in a moment the deep feeling is gone. But not when I write about that person. It just brings up so much more, and I can go back to those notes. Then I can recall the memories all over again. I might even find myself writing more. It is amazing how that connection tends to bring to the surface events otherwise gone forever. For me, writing is the beauty I have not gotten from accumulation...having all the material reminders of departed loved ones is too sterile. (Writing) puts me much closer to the memory, brings out a certain spiritual quality not gained from material items.”

I share Fran’s love of self-expression when recalling the past. It also helps to bring out other sides of our personalities by creatively documenting those moments and times of our lives.

There are a number of individuals as well as professional organizers who can be of help in the process. Margit Novack, president of “Moving Solutions”, a firm based in Havertown, that services the Delaware and Lehigh Valley, provides hands-on help. (Margit is also Founding President of the National Association of Senior Move Managers). Margit and her staff have direct involvement, often from the time people decide to move, through to the final placement of cushions and glassware. They bring insight, understanding and skill to the task of customized rightsizing, and enable clients to proceed in the often arduous process of working with space and function requirements, while balancing their emotional attachments. The goal is to make moving, or moving on, as painless as possible.

Margit says that a huge emotional part of rightsizing gets mired with the seemingly enormity of the actual task. “One feeds on the other. When we (Moving Solutions) break down the job into smaller units, it alleviates the emotional component. People tend to be paralyzed by what they feel is an enormous task and then the emotions kick in and people then may be totally stuck. Margit’s approach is to tackle the “non-threatening, low-hanging fruit first...the easiest to discard”. People gain a sense of confidence and feel more positive when they see progress.”

Moving Solutions also utilizes a few techniques that assist in this process. “We listen to people’s stories. As they retell these moments of the past, they often realize that they are taking the memories without needing the items. We reinforce this success by coming up with creative ideas for taking portions of things that symbolize the past and greater emotional tie.” (Margit cites an example where a woman had 250 bow ties, a collection her late husband savored and which she retained in love and respect for his collection. Margit suggested that she take 12 and took them to a pillow company who created a lovely pillow for the sofa). “This process that we help people through can be cleansing in multiple ways.”

The Go To’s have a lot to look forward to and need and want to salvage the past without having to have pieces of those days everywhere during the cleansing process of rightsizing and entering new places and stages in their lives, regardless of making a physical move to a new home and environment or actually setting a new stage in their lives, both in their environment and lifestyle.

I find the following 4 step plan helpful in that it concisely encapsulates the game plan for rightsizing. I also encourage using firms like Moving Solutions, either in a consulting capacity or as a conduit throughout the entire process. They can provide invaluable assistance.

FOUR STEPS IN THE EVALUATIVE PROCESS

AUDIT - review all the pieces in light of your total furnishings and determine what your current likes, dislikes, lifestyle, socializing pattern, living spaces are today. What do you want to see when you want to have friends over. What do you need around you for your own comfort and style? What is it that cheers you when you’ve had a tough day at work? How do you blend recreation, work and other home-based activities and what will enhance your ability to ease through these activities? What is the minimal? What is the maximum?

EDIT - as painful as some writers find receiving text back from an editor with words and phrases cut, the end result is usually much easier to read and delivers the ideas with greater clarity and, punchier. Do the same with your home and rightsized rooms and furnishings, etc.

LIVE IT! - Important pieces or pieces you simply cannot move away from can be stored, gifted, on “loan”, etc. See how your newly configured spaces work without many of the pieces you thought you needed around you for comfort for so long. And then, if you still feel the need to have that table, shaft table or clock nearby – bring it.

RIGHTSIZE ROUND TWO – and beyond – always an option.

Carole Felton, MBA, SRES, is President of Carole Felton Communications, now celebrating its 23rd year as a multi-award winning marketing firm offering strategic marketing, public relations and management consultation, focusing on community/demographic-based marketing. Real Estate public relations, communications and marketing is the firm’s specialty. Clients and projects range in scope and magnitude from start-up companies to multi-million dollar residential and commercial ventures and include The Pohlig Organization, Historic Landmarks for Living, Scannapieco Development Corporation Prudential Fox & Roach, Dranoff Properties, The DePaul Group, Judd Builders/Developers, and Wilkie Lexus. The firm, based in Bala Cynwyd, PA may be reached at 610-664-4987 or cafelton@verizon.net for consultation.