

# DOWNSIzIng

Make your life easier by decluttering.

Clutter has negative effects on your mental and physical health, too. It can leave you feeling anxious, stressed, or even depressed.

Studies have shown that cortisol, the stress hormone, levels are higher in people who have a cluttered home. Clutter is anything you can't get under control. Declutter your house and friends and family will notice

that it looks like your house is getting bigger. Try a couple different methods of downsizing to enjoy the space you are living without the clutter.



Objectives:

1. Become aware of a couple different methods to downsize.
2. Learn the steps to downsize.
3. Develop a strategy for downsizing your living space.
4. Downsize your living space.

Deanna Turner taught several clutter control programs in the past. They were good at organizing her clutter, but she never got RID of the clutter. Deanna took everything out of her office at home and sorted them into keep, trash and donate piles. Both methods of downsizing we are going to talk about will help you downsize. One method especially gives a person practical steps and motivation to downsize no matter what room, drawer, closet or other container you are tackling.

## DOWNSIzIng

People are busy in life and their possessions grow quickly. Often there is too much stuff to sort and process. Older adults may be collectors. They spend the first half of their life collecting items and the second half getting rid of them. Cleaning is easier when you have fewer possessions.

Organizing a person just straightens up their possessions. Decluttering a person moves the possessions from the space by putting it into the trash, donating it, selling it or finding a home for the items. A person becomes aware of the stuff they have in their home. Words of wisdom only declutter your OWN stuff.

## REASONS TO DOWNSIZE

Have you gone into a room, wanted to pretend the mess did not exist, turned around and shut the door? A person reaches their Clutter Threshold, how much clutter they can stand. Once you declutter your house or apartment it seems to get bigger.

## SWEDISH DEATH CLEANING

Margareta Magnusson wrote *The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning* to help people as they were going through items of their loved ones who died or as they wanted to downsize when they were moving to a smaller place or wanted to spare their family when they died. By death cleaning you will save your loved ones hours of their time going through your stuff that you did not want anymore.

Women traditionally are the family members who get the job of going through a loved one's items. Magnusson suggests first spending some time going through your own items so it will be easier to decide which items to keep. Work at your own pace to downsize. A person may need to say goodbye to some items. You may shed some tears as you are going through the items. Life is more enjoyable when you get rid of abundances.

### Death Cleaning suggestions:



- Ask yourself as you are decluttering, will anyone be happier if you save that item? If no, then put it in donate or shred pile if paper. Think about the event or feeling around that item.
- Start with big items and go to smaller items. Give away items to loved ones if they want them.
- Give away items to relatives or friends going off to college or starting a household.
- People get new small and large appliances. Discard or give away the old ones.
- Keep one set of dishes to fit the table you have.
- Pick out a few hand tools to save from a loved one's collection and give the rest away.
- Gifts people give you, keep them out when they visit. Eventually give the gifts away if no room in your house.
- Collections people often enjoy organizing them rather than using them. If no one wants a collection, you might donate to a museum or try to sell on the internet.
- Books only keep ones that you have not read or you want to read again.
- Recipes can't all be kept. If you need a recipe, easy to find one on the internet.



- Clothes sort in two piles to keep and donate. When older like Magnusson between 80 & 100, you realize that you are not going skiing anymore. Time to downsize. Keep clothes with strong sentimental values.
- Photographs and letters there are too many emotions so wait till last to go through them. Get rid of letters and diaries you do not want anyone else to see.
- Photographs put photos in an envelope for each child and have a dinner with your children to give them away.
- Letters are difficult to read, reflect on and shred if desired.
- Donate items nobody else wants.
- When everything is sorted through, buy a bouquet of flowers and relax.

## DECLUTTERING AT THE SPEED OF LIFE



Dana White thought secretly of burning her house down to eliminate the clutter. She wrote *Decluttering at the Speed of Life-Winning Your Near-Ending Battle with Stuff*. Win your battle with stuff. Learn to live with less stuff. Enjoy your home as a place to live instead of a place to store all your stuff. The more stuff a person brings into their house, the more out of control it gets.

Follow the One-In-One-Out Policy. A person buys a new table, gets rid of one.

Focus on the present not the future. Live for the moment.

Are you guilty of Clutter Paralysis where you are unable to take any action when there is an overwhelming mess? You may be frustrated and feel hopelessness.

## STRATEGIES

A person makes progress every time they follow the steps below. Use whatever chunks of time you have to start decluttering. Set a timer for the amount of time you have. You may only get a couple steps done sometimes.

**Step 1.** Trash- Use a black trash bag so items will be **thrown away**.

**Step 2.** Do Easy Stuff – Take the items to their **permanent home**. Do the dishes, etc. There may a feeling of peace just doing the easy stuff. You develop a momentum as there are improvements in your house. There are no “Keep Boxes” which White says become “procrastination holders”.

**Step 3.** Get Rid of Clutter-Why do you have that item? **Recycle, donate, or sell.** Make sure you actually do sell the items. The goal is for stuff you do not want to leave home. Have a donate box handy. Take a trip to the thrift shop often.

**Step 4.** Still have items?

Ask Yourself Two Decluttering Questions-

1. If I wanted to use this item, where would I **LOOK** for it?  
Place item in its **permanent home**.

2. If don't know the answer, then ask yourself if I wanted to use this item, would it occur to me that I already own one? Do you need two of the item? If no, put in **Donate** container.

**Step 5.** Make Items Fit in Living Space. – Use the Container Concept.

1. **Consolidate** items together.

2. **Purge** to Limits of the Containers- cupboards, baskets, drawers, shelves or other containers. Your favorite items get first priority in the container. Donate items you do not like.

Let the container make the tough decisions. If items fit in the container, it is easier to get rid of the items that do not fit.

Avoid buying more containers because items do not fit in it.

Time to downsize.

## **VISIBILITY RULE**

First declutter rooms that are more visible if someone comes to your house. Focus on all floors, surfaces and open shelves. You may want to work deeper and declutter all drawers too. Work on one room and go onto the next room.

## **CLEANING HOUSE**



**Layer 1-** Deal with Daily Stuff- Wash dishes, sweep and pick up random items.

**Layer 2-** Clutter- Get rid of items.

**Layer 3-** Cleaning- Wipe off counters, mop floors, dust and vacuum. If you have been decluttering, it is easier to clean house when you deal with day to day stuff and clutter is gone.

## SPECIFIC ITEMS

Books	Remember the One-In-One-Out rule. Keep your favorite books and ones you want to reread.
Paper-	Go through one pile and sort to a smaller pile. You may have to go through it more than once. <b>Mail</b> get rid of it as it comes into house. <b>Pay more bills by automatic with drawals.</b> <b>Kid's drawings</b> get a container for each child or grandchild. When full, go through it.
Files-	Downsize your files. Record a listing of Insurance accounts, credits cards, lawyer, etc. in <i>Our Valuable Records</i> . In case of injury or death, your loved ones would be able to access your information.
Kitchen	Look for things you do not use and put in donate box. Toss expired food. Declutter refrigerator inside and outside. Put like foods together such as salad dressing. Get rid of the jar with one pickle. Outside of the refrigerator get rid of magnets you do not like and outdated information.
Grandma's Dishes	Can't keep all of them? Keep a cup or hang plate on wall.
Clothing	Toss ripped or faded clothes or cut into rags. Donate clothes never wear.
Hobbies	Decide which hobbies get priority and which one you do the most. Downsize the rest.
Storage Areas	Instead of 2 boxes of baby clothes downsize to one. Tackle in segments of time.
Other People's Clutter	Get rid of your clutter before you tell someone else how to declutter. Kid's go through the steps with them to help declutter. Let your spouse declutter their own items. Relationships matter more than stuff. Be the muscles to help relatives take donated items to the thrift shop.
Moving	Declutter before you move.
Decluttering Dreams	Hobbies where you bought the supplies & thought you would start working on it. Give it up if not going to happen and donate supplies. Live for today!

**More Space & Use Items-** Decluttering will give you more space to enjoy your collections and items you find joy in keeping. Use those glasses and if you do not find them great, then put in the donate box. Justify items kept by using them.

As you declutter, your house or living area gets bigger. You can enjoy a bigger house without taking up a bigger mortgage. Life is easier when there are no boxes and piles everywhere. Follow these strategies to downsize your house one step at a time. Then enjoy living in your house. You will have time to “smell the roses”.

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Resources:

*Decluttering at the Speed of Life-Winning Your Near-Ending Battle with Stuff.*  
Book by Danna K. White, 2018.

*Our Valuable Records*, K-State Research & Extension, MF685, Rev. August 2019.

*The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning- How to Free Yourself and Your Family from a Lifetime of Clutter.* Book by Margareta Magnusson, 2018.

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# DOWNSIzIng STRATEGY

## Top Visible Rooms

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

- Step 1.      Trash
- Step 2.      Do Easy Stuff. Take items to their permanent home.
- Step 3.      Get Rid of Clutter. Recycle, donate or sell.
- Step 4.      Ask Yourself Two Decluttering Questions-
3. If I wanted to use this item, where would I LOOK for it?  
Place item in its permanent home or donate.
  4. If don't know, then ask yourself if I wanted to use this item, would it occur to me that I already own one? Do you need two of the item?  
If no, put in **Donate** container
- Step 5.      Make Items Fit in Living Space. Use the Container Concept
3. Consolidate.
  4. Purge to Limits of Containers- cupboards, baskets, drawers, shelves or other containers.

***Remember the best things in Life...Are not Things!***