A CAREGIVER TAKE-HOME GUIDE

A Lifetime of Memories

Downsizing & Decluttering with Compassion | Presented by Monica Hayes, Impact Move Management

The goal is not an empty house. It is a home that supports the person living in it.

Start with empathy

Possessions may represent identity, memories, security, and legacy. When someone is experiencing losses of independence, health, routines, or a familiar home, keeping control of their belongings may feel especially important.

Words that help

Instead of…	Try…
"You don't need this."	"Tell me why this matters to you."
"We have to get rid of things."	"Which pieces are most important to keep?"
"I'll take care of it."	"Would you like me to help with this part?"
"We have to finish today."	"Could we start with one small area?"

Five compassionate steps

1. Picture the destination — Use a floor plan; identify favorite furniture, routines, and treasured items.

2. Start small — Choose a low-emotion drawer or closet; try 20–30 minutes.

3. Give things a path — Keep • Gift • Sell • Donate • Recycle/Discard • Decide Later (with a date).

4. Save the story — Photograph a piece, record its history, or share it with a willing relative.

5. Celebrate progress — A safer pathway or one completed drawer is meaningful progress.

YOUR PRACTICAL PLANNING PAGE

Our Downsizing Action Plan

Complete this with your loved one. Let them make decisions whenever they are able.

What three things will make the next home feel most familiar?

_____

Which ONE small space can we start with?

_____

What item or collection has a story we want to preserve?

_____

When will we work together, and for how long?

_____

What is one decision we will leave for another day?

_____

Our support team

Role	Person / next step
Decision partner	_____
Memory and story keeper	_____
Packing / logistics helper	_____
Donation / resale coordinator	_____
Professional support	_____

A safe first priority

Check clear walking paths, exits, access to the bathroom and kitchen, and trip hazards. If safety risks are severe, seek appropriate professional help rather than attempting a forced cleanout.

My one small step this week

I will

_____

You Do Not Have to Do It Alone

Build a network around the person, not a crowd of people making decisions for them.

What professional move management can help with

- A personalized transition plan and furniture floor planning
- Compassionate sorting, organizing, and packing
- Coordination of movers and move-day logistics
- Tag sales, resale/consignment, donations, and removal options
- Unpacking, organizing, and resettling into the new home

Sale or consignment proceeds vary and are not guaranteed. Agree on services, costs, and decision-making roles before work begins.

A note about hoarding

Hoarding disorder is not the same as ordinary clutter. Persistent difficulty discarding belongings, significant distress, and loss of functional living space may warrant evaluation by a qualified mental health professional. Avoid shame, surprise cleanouts, and disposing of possessions without consent. Start with collaboratively improving safety.

Caregivers need care, too

Adult children and partners may feel grief, guilt, exhaustion, or disagreement about belongings. Delegate specific tasks, set realistic time limits, and ask for help before burnout.

Helpful resources

1. International OCD Foundation — For Families

hoarding.iocdf.org/for-families/how-to-help-a-loved-one-with-hd/

Helps families understand emotional attachment to possessions, difficulty discarding items, and how to approach hoarding behaviors with compassion rather than confrontation.

2. National Association of Senior & Specialty Move Managers (NASMM)
hatgpt.com
Explains professional move management, including sorting, downsizing, packing, moving, and setting up a new home. Particularly relevant to explaining the services Impact Move Management provides.

3. National Association of Productivity & Organizing Professionals (NAPO)
https://www.napo.net/?utm_source=chatgpt.com
Helps families understand professional organizing services and locate organizers who can assist with decluttering, sorting, and developing manageable organizing systems.

4. Hoarding Disorder Resource Directory
https://hoarding.iocdf.org/find-help/?utm_source=chatgpt.com
Provides a way to find specialized mental health professionals and support services when difficulty discarding possessions goes beyond typical clutter.

IMPACT
MOVE MANAGEMENT

Compassionate planning • Downsizing • Move coordination • Resettling

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“We are not erasing the past. We are making space for the future.”