

It's the perfect season to warm up to the thought of downsizing

The chill of winter is in the air and the sidewalks are covered in snow, it's no wonder that older adults may be thinking about whether it's time to downsize to a smaller home or join a retirement living community.

What begins as a thought will either blossom into a practical project, or be possibly swept to the back of one's mind depending on the level of emotional concern. If the thought crossed your mind however, it's probably there for a good reason and this may be the perfect time to start learning more about the process and range of housing options available to you.

Downsizing is a transition in living that can bring distinct benefits. In fact, it can be a welcome life event for many older adults. First, it can prolong wellbeing by eliminating certain risks and responsibilities and allow you to redirect precious energy and resources to activities that enhance your quality of life. Second, with busy or geographically dispersed families, a strategic downsize can bring relief and peace of mind when done on one's own terms, rather than waiting for an ultimatum and leaving all the decisions to adult children. Third, a well-timed downsize can allow you to become connected with a new community that can offer friendship and support as you age.

My time as a senior housing and relocation specialist has offered me insight into some of the fundamental principles behind successful downsizing. Some of these are as follows:

- Be clear on your reasons for downsizing

- The way a downsize happens matters and is different for every person

- The value of doing your homework and planning ahead cannot be underestimated

- Reducing stress throughout the process is critical to preserving wellbeing

- Share decision-making with those you trust and who know you well

- Enlist the expertise and assistance of others to ensure the success of your downsize

- Keep the big picture in mind

The good news is that if you are thinking of downsizing, there has never been a better time to do so. A variety of housing options exist to suit almost every need. For example, a fully independent condo or rental option, that is more centrally located to family, friends, and activities, might be a great fit for you. Joining an integrated, older adult community with centralized services and recreational opportunities might offer both pleasure and convenience. The best choice for both you, and or a loved one, might be to join a retirement community that will allow you to age in place with greater care and daily support.

An important first step in planning your downsize is getting answers to key questions such as Where do I want to live next? Will it meet my needs today, and in the future? Can I afford it?

What will I do with all my stuff? Am I ready to “let go”? How long will it take? Who will help me through this? Fortunately, the eldercare service industry is maturing and can help you find the answers to all of these questions.

While downsizing is a significant undertaking, it is also a great opportunity to align your living arrangements with your needs and wants in order to age well. I suggest you start by learning about options that suit your needs and lifestyle, and connect with experienced and trusted professionals to find out exactly how they can help.

Join us for one our upcoming, free information sessions in February where we will tackle the above questions, share experiences, and get an update from a local realtor. This is the perfect season to start planning and warm up to the thought of downsizing.

Jennifer Moir is an Elder Planning Counselor, Certified Relocation and Transition Specialist, and owner of Ottawa based Age Well Solutions. Age Well Solutions will be hosting two information sessions on the topic of downsizing on Monday, February 25th from 7:00 – 8:30PM at the Rideau Park United Church, 2203 Alta Vista Dr., as well as on Wednesday February 27th from 10am – 11:30am at the Alta Vista branch of the Ottawa Library at 2516 Alta Vista Drive.

No charge to attend. All welcome. Free parking. RSVP by calling 613.277.6449 or email info@agewellsolutions.ca. Visit www.agewellsolutions.ca for more information.

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