

According to the Dao De Jing “**A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.**” This certainly holds true for Downsizing and Decluttering. How many times have I been told “I know it is time to Downsize and Declutter, but every time I start it is so overwhelming?” Too many times to count.

Decluttering has many benefits. Your home will be more comfortable because you are only surrounded by those items you use often or enjoy looking at. If you need to move or Downsize unexpectedly you will be ready. And if it is necessary to settle an estate your family won't be burdened with dealing with all your stuff.

Get over sunk costs! This means it doesn't matter what you paid for something- what is it worth today? China, silver plate and many antiques are no longer sought after and if a family member doesn't want them- set them free. Most technological devices are considered obsolete after only a couple of years.

Let me offer a helping hand! I have broken the decluttering process into 20 baby steps so over the course of 28 days you can make huge steps towards Decluttering your home. We will start with some simple areas and work towards the more challenging rooms such as the bedroom.

Please go to www.mysmallernest.com to download suggested Winnipeg donation sites for your unwanted items and information on Downsizing and Aging In Place.

Week One

Day 1 Cleaning Supplies. Over the years we accumulate all kinds of chemicals and gadgets to keep our home clean and tidy. Time to purge those bottles that are almost empty and those gadgets we bought at the Home Show that never did work.

Day 2 Medicine Cabinet. Dispose of any medicines you are no longer taking. Most pharmacies will accept these items for disposal. Get rid of old toothbrushes, toiletries you picked up at hotels you never used and make up and body care products that are past their best before date.

Day 3 Books, Magazines, DVD's, CD's There are always organisations looking for donations of books etc. they can use for fund raising. So much information and music is available online when you need help or want to listen to a particular song that you don't need actual books or discs. You can download books from the library to read or listen to without leaving your home. Vinyl records from the 60'S may be of interest to collectors if they are in good condition. As well, older first edition books can be valuable. Search online or call a specialty shop if you think you have something of value.

Day 4 Linen Closet. We all need to have an extra set of bedding, but.... Once the kids are gone we have less need for multiple sets of bedding, towels etc. Keep the good stuff and eliminate any that are stained, torn or a colour we will never use again.

Day 5 Laundry Room. Take a good look at whatever you have stored in your laundry room and purge -purge-purge. Many of us never iron clothes any more so maybe those tools can be eliminated. Have a good look at any clothes you washed to determine if they are no longer useful to you.

Over the weekend finish off any uncompleted tasks and enjoy a well earned rest.

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Day 6 Cutlery Drawer and Appliances. Donate duplicates. Discard gadgets, cooking utensils and appliances that are broken or you never use. Sharpen knives you use and discard others. There are sliding drawer inserts which will help you organise your cutlery.

Day 7 Dishes, Glasses, Cups and Storage Containers. Discard chipped items. Discard storage containers that don't have matching parts. Consider screwing cup hooks in your cup cabinet for extra storage.

Day 8 Pots and Pans. You have probably accumulated many duplicate pots and pans. Keep the best and donate the rest. Donate your baking trays and supplies if you no longer bake.

Day 9 Refrigerator, Freezer and Pantry. Discard any expired foods or items that have been around more than one year. Discard any frozen goods with freezer burn. Replace spices if they have lost their potency. Donate your canning supplies if you no longer can.

Day 10 Front Hall Closet. Discard any single gloves or mitts. Donate any coats, hats, scarves, shoes etc. that don't fit, or you never wear. Move any items that don't belong. Use shoe organizers on the floor to make better use of the space.

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Day 11 Bedroom drawers. Take everything out of your drawers. Purge anything that doesn't fit or has holes, tears or stains. Use drawer organizers to separate your socks, delicates, jewelry etc. Roll up your T shirts and underwear to save room. Put all your seasonal clothing in plastic containers under the bed.

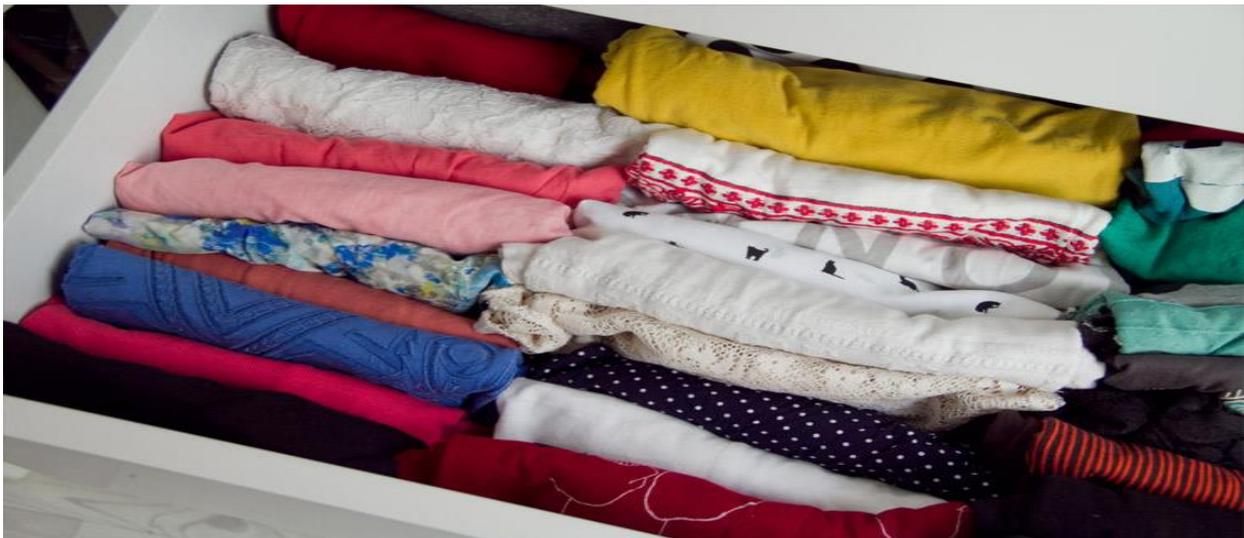
Day 12 Bedroom Closets. Remove everything from your closet. Discard or donate anything that doesn't fit. If you only have one hanging bar consider adding a second. Most people don't need much long hang for formal dresses or men's dress pants anymore. Use space on the floor for shoe storage, preferably with an organizer. Place purses and hats on the shelf above your hanging bar. When you rehang the saved clothing place the hanger pointing away from you. When you use something replace it with the hanger pointing towards you. Next time you purge get rid of anything where the hanger is still pointing away from you.

Day 13 Shelves and Table Tops. Try to keep items on your dresser or tabletops to a minimum. Floating wall shelves and display units work much better for family photos, collectibles and art pieces.

Day 14 Art Work and Collectibles. Take a good hard look at your art and collectibles. William Morris suggested we should have nothing in our homes that we don't consider to be beautiful or useful. Often our tastes change and art work or collectibles we enjoyed are no longer to our taste. Some items may have appreciated in value and can be sold, donated to charities for a tax receipt or pasted on to family members.

Day 15 Home Office. Go through all your correspondence, tax information, house hold receipts, bank statements, warranties etc. and get rid of anything that is no longer current. Talk to your accountant to decide which documents need to be retained in case of an audit. Throw out receipts and warranties for things you no longer own or are broken. Keep receipts to document major home improvements should you wish to sell your home.

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Day 16 House Maintenance Products. Partly used paint cans, construction material, old windows, screens etc. can be dropped off at Winnipeg 4 R locations.

Day 17 Home Workshop And Craft Room. Have a good look and decide if you will be using any of your tools or materials in the future. If not both can be sold on Kijijiji or donated to art programs such as Art City, Art Junction or your local high school. Good Neighbours Active Living Center Wood Shop and Canadian Wood Worker have annual used tool sales.

Day 18 Garage. Dispose of any partial containers of oil or other liquids. Our garages often end up storing odd pieces of leftover fencing material, that extra 2x4 from the deck, gardening supplies...you name it. If it has been hanging around for more than a couple of years it will probably never come in handy anyway. Time to let it go. Give it away or put it out on the next FREE Winnipeg pick up day- you will be amazed what gets picked up.

Day 19 Photos. This is one of the harder tasks! As our older family members pass on they leave us with a legacy of photos and documents. Plus, we have our own photos of family holidays etc. Discard or pass on duplicates. Many people scan photos and family documents and store on a memory stick. Ask your teenage grandchild how to do this if you need help. If you are really ambitious have the scanned photos printed in book form for your family. Write names, relationships and events on back of photos.

Day 20 Furniture. **The major reason seniors are hospitalised is because of a fall.** Falls are often caused by tripping over area rugs, extension cords or furniture. I highly recommend getting rid of all area rugs and extension cords and eliminating as many extra chairs and tables as possible. This is especially important in bedrooms and living rooms.

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