



An Oaks of Louisiana White Paper

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10 Tips for Downsizing Your Lifestyle

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1. Assess your house

How much of the space do you use regularly? Is it time for a smaller house? Maybe a condo? Have a realtor assess the value of your home. It might be a good time to sell. Market conditions change and you may not have a good idea of what your property and home are worth. If you have an older home and have deferred maintenance, you'll want to know what it would take to get your home in shape to attract top dollar. Or you'll want to know what you might get on an "as is" basis.

2. Make a decision to do it and stick with it

This is the biggest problem. Most people think about it . . . and think about it . . . and think about it . . . long before they ever do it. Set a date to complete your downsizing and stay on track.

3. Start with yourself

Have you been through your closets lately? Are there clothes and shoes you'll never wear again? Do you have items that no longer fit? Are there clothes that you really didn't like once you wore them? What's in the boxes at the top (or back) of your closet? If you haven't opened them in the past two months, you probably don't need them. Keep in mind that there are shelters throughout every community that are desperate for clothing for residents. You can also donate clothing to the Salvation Army or Goodwill and receive a tax credit. Not only will your closets look cleaner and more organized, you'll have the great feeling of helping someone else.

4. Catalog your major belongings

You may have done this years ago for insurance purposes, but as items come and go, that list may no longer be up to date. Categorize your belongings by room or by furniture type. You'll want to take into account how often the item is used, whether it has intrinsic value or sentimental value and whether it would fit into a downsized lifestyle. For instance, if your dining room table seats 14, consider how often you have 14 people sit down for a meal at that table. If you have three vacant bedrooms, how often are they used for guests?

5. When taking on projects, break them into small pieces

Complete small projects first and reflect on what you have done to gain a sense of satisfaction. Attempting to do too much at the same time can make life and commitments seem overwhelming.

6. Don't say "yes" every time

Do you sometimes feel that you are "going along with the crowd" even when you don't want to? If friends call and want you to go and do things with them or if they are asking you to help with a church or club project, remember that, if they are truly friends, they will understand when you say "no." Are you babysitting more than you like? Grandchildren are wonderful but they can be draining. Don't take the joy out of babysitting by doing it so often that you dread the call.

7. Un-volunteer

When you agreed to be president of your bridge club or golf group five years ago, it seemed like a good idea. Maybe it doesn't now. The only way to get out of a volunteer job is to resign from the job. Don't feel guilty worrying about who will take over. If it's a worthwhile endeavor that others care about, someone will step forward. If they don't, it was the time for the group to disband. Organizations go through cycles and so do their leaders and volunteers. If you have a problem with this, just see No. 6!

8. Find people to help you

If there are things you like to do, keep doing them. If there are things that are a hassle, get help. Don't want to mow? Don't want to weed? Don't want to cook? Don't want to clean your house? There are people who are trained and willing to do all the things people might not want to do for themselves – from household and lawn chores to things like managing investments, planning travel, even walking your dog. Search them out, check their references and get the help you need.

9. Are you still driving a big SUV or large car (aka parade float)?

A smaller car is easier to maneuver, easier to park and is easier on gas mileage. Plus, a move down may help to downsize your auto insurance premium too.

10. Make a "Top 10 List"

of the things that are most important in your life. Focus your attention on these and you will gain the maximum joy from life!