

The Upside to Downsizing

# **Reduce Resize REVIVE**



Sandra Wright & Kim Fleming



# **Reduce, Resize REVIVE**

**The Upside to Downsizing**

**—**

**by**

**Sandra Wright and Kim Fleming**



**PIQUANT PRESS**

copyright ©Sandra Wright and Kim Fleming 2010

*ALL RIGHTS RESERVED: No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission from the publisher and the author.*

Editor: James Dewar

Cover: Susan Lynn Reynolds

Cover photo [2008] Andy Dean Photography. Image from Bigstock.com

Piquant Press

Port Perry, Ontario, Canada

[www.piquantpress.ca](http://www.piquantpress.ca)

ISBN 978-0-9865850-4-3

Acknowledgments:

*Thank you to our families, friends, and industry colleagues who have genuinely supported this project with their wisdom, insight, and encouragement. A special thank you to Mark Fleming, for his guidance, direction, and uncanny ability of making an overwhelming task seem easy; your hard work and dedication on our behalf was pivotal on this book coming together.*

*To everyone at Piquant Productions who worked on this book ~ thank you! We were blessed the day we met you!*

*And lastly, and perhaps most importantly, thank you to our clients and their families, who have inspired this book; we are confident that you have headed into the most rewarding time of your life!*

*Dedicated to*

*Nadiene Mellon-Challice*

*1920-2009*



*....where our journey of support all began*

# Table of Contents

Introduction: <i>Why is Downsizing So Difficult?</i>	1
Chapter 1      The Emotional Aspects	7
Chapter 2      Hiring Outside Support	15
Chapter 3      Housing Options	25
Chapter 4:      Making Choices	35
Chapter 5:      Planning Ahead	51
Chapter 6:      Showing and Selling Your Home	57
Chapter 7:      Your Move	83
Chapter 8:      Celebrating a Successful Downsizing	100
Resources	
About the Authors	

# Introduction

## Why is Downsizing So Difficult?

### Shirley's Story

#### *~ How to downsize successfully*

Shirley, a well-dressed lady with sparkling eyes proudly tells us that she's 81 years old. We'd never have known. Poised and confident, Shirley is a walking testimonial for successful retirement living.

Living alone in an east-end Toronto bungalow, it wasn't until her wellness became compromised that she began to think about downsizing. Heeding the advice of others 'to not wait too long and make the move while you are still in good health and able to make friends', Shirley credits the ease of her transition to her early planning, and positive outlook. A resident at Sunrise Unionville Retirement Residence just north of Toronto, Shirley doesn't stay still for long. If she isn't taking part in local outings or hosting visits from family and friends, Shirley's comfortably enjoying the peace and tranquillity of the screened in sun-porch at Sunrise, or the frequently provided entertainment.

Shirley took the bull by the horns and orchestrated her downsizing with great precision. While acknowledging that leaving her home was difficult, she told herself that when living there became 'work', when she could no longer manage the way she wanted to live, then it would be time to leave. Surrounded by a supportive family, Shirley began looking at local retirement residences on her own a year before her move. "I didn't want my family to fuss and get involved before I had it clearly in my mind what I wanted to do and where I wanted to go, and wasn't ready to share how badly my arthritis was affecting me. What I was clear about at that point was that this was the last chapter of my life, and I was going to do it the way I wanted." Once making the decision to move to Sunrise, Shirley



wasn't sure how to pull it all together, but was relieved to discover the support services available her. Hiring a company specializing in downsizing, Shirley marvels at how the connection and trust she developed eased the transition for her. "It was as though a weight had simply fallen off of my shoulders. I trusted their expertise, their caring, understanding process, and the resources they brought to the table. My independence ascertained that I had no intention of leaving all of the work to my daughter because I knew how overwhelming the process could have become", said Shirley.

Retirement living undoubtedly suits Shirley perfectly. Decreased blood pressure, regular physio and exercise and lessened arthritic pain topping her list, Shirley is truly at peace. Residing in a comfortable beautifully decorated one bedroom suite, her initial fears of losing her privacy and independence were unfounded. "Moving to a space less than a third of the size of my house was daunting at first. What I am fortunate to have realized through this process is that I have moved with not only what I need, but what I most cherish; I am surrounded by what I love and by what brings me comfort. And what I gave up? I haven't pined for anything; I know that my happiness doesn't lie in my stuff."



At 81, Shirley's inspiring acknowledgment that she lives each day 'looking forward, living for today and tomorrow and not dwelling in the past', clearly defines successful ageing at its very finest!

## What do we do with all that stuff?

You may be one of Canada's nearly 11 million baby-boomers or one of the 4.3 million Canadians over the age of 65. You may be a couple, or a widowed survivor prepared to move from the home in which you raised your children to an apartment or retirement community, or the adult child of parents who are making such a move.

Whatever your situation, the inevitable question for many people facing this task may well be, "what do we do with all that stuff?" Seniors who move out of the family home into smaller quarters typically need to give up 60 to 75 percent of their possessions. You may feel the weight of decades of family treasures ~ and trash ~ on your shoulders, but at least you can be assured that you are not alone.

When the time comes to leave the family home behind, what *do* you do with all the things that have accumulated over the years? Where *do* you begin and in what order do you work? How *do* you even begin navigating the senior housing market? And how *do* you get through the whole experience in such a way that everyone in the family is still on speaking terms?

Those questions in themselves are enough for many people to just avoid the decision to downsize all together. If you are still 'sitting on the fence' about whether or not to move, or if you do have some qualms about leaving your current home, it is our hope that **Reduce, Resize and Revive** will give you another perspective on the issue. Although you've more than likely heard over and over about the value of aging in place (remaining in the same home for as long as possible), there are just as many proponents for making a later-life move. Just as we change throughout our lives, our lifestyle and housing needs also change. Remember the houses you grew up in with your parents and siblings? Remember your dorm room, or the small apartment you shared with friends, or your first home after getting married? Just as those living situations fit you and your lifestyle in the past, your current housing situation should be a good fit for where you are *now* in life. Different spaces really do fit different phases. Moving later in life should take you

to a simplified setting with less responsibility, more available support, and assistance *when* you need it, and opportunities for interaction with others. Why? Because these factors will contribute to your overall functioning and well-being as you continue to age and can help prolong your independence. Plus, your new simplified lifestyle will give you the freedom to do more of what you enjoy so that you can live each day to the fullest, along with the time to focus on successful aging so that you can make the most of this phase in your life.

So why do so many people want to age in place? Studies show that the biggest factor is the difficulty in letting go and moving on, however denial, fear, depression, grief, basic resistance to change, and emotional attachment all have a role in this. Yes, letting go of a long-time home and moving can be stressful. It can even have negative effects on some older adults. But hanging on too long often leads to a life of loneliness and isolation, things that are even more detrimental to positive health and successful aging.

Moving later in life is *not* just another move. This is a major transition where you will cross the threshold into the next phase of your life. Honour and value its' importance as you did with other passages such as leaving home for the first time, marriage and retirement. Throughout **Reduce, Resize and Revive** we will take you through the downsizing process, step by step, beginning with 'thinking about it' right through to adjusting to your new home.

*You* can become a positive role model for your adult children and your peers; older adults who proactively make the needed adjustments and changes that benefit this phase of life are becoming the new role models for our aging population.

Ready?

Set?

Downsize!

## **When Is It the Right Time to Consider a Move?**

Many people, when initially thinking about moving from their family home into a condo, retirement residence, or retirement community, feel that they aren't ready to make the move. And yet, ask most residents of the local retirement residence, and you'll hear a resounding "If only I had known, I would have moved in much sooner!"

When is the 'right' time? Take this short quiz, and find out if you or someone you know could benefit from a move into retirement living.

### **DO YOU...**

- Mow your lawn and shovel the snow?
- Cook nutritious meals for just yourself?
- Go out with friends, relatives, and neighbours as much as you'd like or once did?
- Shop for groceries, do the laundry, or clean your home by yourself?
- Make and attend doctor and dentist appointments by yourself?
- Manage the dosage of your medication by yourself?
- Feel safe when you shower or bathe?
- Keep up with your appearance, still making personal hygiene a priority?
- Walk with a cane or walker?
- Have someone to help you if you fall?

### **ARE YOU...**

- Comfortable driving your car safely during daylight hours?

### **IS YOUR...**

- Life all that you would like it to be?

- Home health care provider as reliable as you'd like?
- Neighbourhood as safe and friendly as it used to be?

These questions are indicators of independence and quality of life for seniors. A 'no' answer to more than a few questions should prompt you to consider how the quality and safety of your life can be improved by a move into a retirement living community.



## Chapter 1

# The Emotional Aspects

### Planning the Downsizing

#### *~ How to Ease into the Transition*

The only thing constant in this world is change, or so the saying goes. Change in anyone's life is inevitable. It may be filled with pain, anxiety, and sometimes even fear. The same can be said about moving from your family home into retirement living. It's a change that some of us dread but we all know is inevitable. But like any other change that happens in our lives, retirement living can be eased into with minimal pain, fear, and anxiety if only we know what to do and what to expect. The decision to downsize can be a difficult one. Emotions and nostalgic memories often hold people back from embracing their new situation. Concentrating on the positive benefits of making the move can help ease the sense of loss. And, the more careful you are about making the right decision for you, the better you will feel about it.

It is important to remember that change can be difficult; especially when it involves relocating one's life and possessions. The transition can be made easier with good communication. It is best if this communication begins early on – before a decision is forced by circumstance or illness. We have heard repeatedly from both children and seniors how the 'other one' does not want to discuss future care issues. Children say that their parent won't discuss it or accept that they may need care, and seniors say that their children cannot face seeing them age and become dependent. Often, at least one, if not both of them is afraid to broach the subject even though fears and concerns occupy their thoughts.

# About the Authors

Kim Fleming and Sandra Wright, recognized experts in the field of Senior Move Management, are the owner operators of Organizing Lives. Accredited as Certified Relocation and Transition Specialists™, Organizing Lives provides a multi-faceted approach to Rightsizing with gentle and expert guidance, fully understanding the unique emotional and physical stresses that accompany this transition. Armed with comprehensive training and knowledgeable in all aspects of later life home transitions, Professional Organizers and Certified Staging Professionals™ Kim and Sandra possess the empathy, understanding and sensitive approach necessary to refocus their clients on shifting away from the how-to's of making a later life move to WHY moving forward is vital to successful aging.



As adult children who have experienced the conflicting emotions and difficult decision making of a downsizing transition first-hand, Kim and Sandra have the desire, passion and optimism to guide their clients through the process ensuring their emotional needs are acknowledged and honoured.





# Moving later in life is not “just another move.”

Whether you're moving yourself or are supporting your parents as they transition into a smaller space, **Reduce, Resize, and Revive: the Upside to Downsizing** is the only roadmap you'll need to simplify your surroundings so you can focus on what matters most ~ the freedom to do more of what you enjoy so that you can live each day to the fullest, along with the time to focus on successful aging so that you can make the most of this phase in your life.

With real life wisdom from two of the industry's foremost authorities on household organization and life transition downsizing, as well as personal accounts and anecdotes from dozens of seniors, **Reduce, Resize and Revive** will help you plan, prepare and embrace your downsizing journey. Throughout these pages we will take you through the downsizing process, step by step, beginning with 'thinking about it' right through to adjusting to your new home.

Moving later in life is not just another move. This is a major transition where you will cross the threshold into the next phase of your life. Older adults who proactively make the needed adjustments and changes that benefit this phase of life are becoming the new role models for our aging population.

Are you ready?



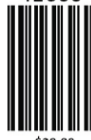
PLUME PRESS

ISBN 978-0-9865850-4-3



9 780986 585043

42000 >



\$20.00