

Changing Spaces Chatter

The latest information, news, and rightsizing tips from Lincoln's premiere senior move management company!

1st Quarter - 2015

In 2015, be sure your keepsakes are really worth keeping

Well folks – let's hear it. Do your New Year's Resolutions include losing 15 lbs, being the perfect parent and spouse, and finally clearing out some of the extra "stuff" in your home? Well, I can't be of any help to you with the first two (still trying to figure those out myself!) but clearing out the extra stuff, I can handle. So can the rest of our Changing Spaces SRS staff. In fact, we're professionals at it! ☺

One of the most difficult categories of "stuff" to get rid of are those things we label as "keepsakes." By definition, these are things that do not necessarily hold any functional value, but that we keep merely for the sake of keeping them (thus the term *keepsake*). It's important to identify these items in your home and really understand that these items serve no other purpose to you other than sentimental (or obligation). What kinds of items fall into this category for you? Keepsakes can be anything: furniture, clothing, knick-knacks, papers, photos, toys, or a number of other objects around the home. Having some keepsakes, of course, is wonderful. Having boxes and boxes (or rooms and rooms) full of keepsakes is not.

Perhaps you have a piece of furniture in your home that does not serve a functional purpose, but it does serve an aesthetic purpose: I have my great-grandmother's spinning wheel which I do not use to spin wool into yarn, but I do love how it looks and therefore its purpose is more than merely keepsake, it is aesthetic. However, another furniture item you might have is an old trunk stored away in your basement, garage, or attic. You no longer use it for a functional piece of furniture, and you don't appreciate the aesthetic of it (at least not enough to prominently display it inside one of the rooms in your home). So why are you keeping it? Well, because it belonged to your grandparent. You are keeping it for the sake of keeping it.

The key to determining if a keepsake is truly worth keeping is to ask yourself why you feel compelled to keep it: Because it reminds you of someone you love? Because you would feel guilty getting rid of it? Because you don't know what else to do with it?

If an item reminds you of someone you love, be sure that the item is the best way of remembering that person. Do you have other items that remind you of them? If so, do you remember them better the more items of theirs you have? I lost my mother to cancer nine years ago. Would I remember her more if I kept 20 of her things, as opposed to 5 or 6? Certainly not.

If you are holding on to something because of guilt, I understand, but that doesn't mean you're off the hook! If you don't clean up your home and make it the way you want it to be, no one else will. You'll likely be surprised that the "guilt" fades soon after you get rid of the item – even more so if you pass the item along to someone who truly wants and appreciates it.

I became the most recent heir to a collection of "stuff" that generations before me had saved – a great uncle's accordion, a great-grandfather's eyeglasses, some pocket knives and antique razors that belonged to someone I'm related to during the early 20th century, but I'm not quite sure who. None of these items reminded me of their previous owners. Mostly because I never knew these ancestors – they died years before I was



Changing Spaces SRS, LLC
Rightsizing & Relocation Assistance

Changing Spaces SRS, LLC
4830 Wilshire Blvd. Suite #106
Lincoln, NE 68504
(402) 483-0555
info@ChangingSpacesSRS.com
www.ChangingSpacesSRS.com

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Our Services Include:

- Assess your new residence, measure your furniture, and create a customized floorplan for your new home.
- Assist with the downsizing process of all your household's contents, room by room.
- Provide moving boxes and packing supplies, and carefully and efficiently pack all items for the move.
- Arrange moving dates and times with a moving company.
- Supervise and direct movers on moving day.
- Empty refrigerator and freezer items, transporting perishables to new home.
- Unpack and organize essentials in your new residence (make the beds, plug in lamps and phones, unpack bathroom and kitchen items) on move day so you can be comfortable in your new home the first night.
- Put everything – furniture, knick knacks, clothing, dishes – in its place in your new home.
- Make the beds, hang pictures, connect phone, TV, computer, clocks, etc.
- Dispose of all packing material and boxes.
- Empty old residence of all items not moved, either by hosting an estate sale, online consignment sale, or arranging for charity pick-up of items.

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born. I do, however, have photos of these people, and copies of their birth certificates, confirmation diplomas, and other records. These items, to me, are more meaningful and do a better job of telling the story of these ancestors than their objects do. Conveniently, they also take up less space! So I don't need to feel guilty about giving my great uncle's accordion to someone who loves old instruments, because it means more to them than it does to me. Instead, I'll cherish the photo I have of him playing the accordion on the steps of their home while he sits next to my grandmother, both of whom were young at the time.

Lastly, if you are keeping something simply because you're not sure what to do with it, start getting creative. Ask friends and family members if they have any ideas of who might appreciate this item you no longer wish to keep. Try Googling ideas of what to do with the item. Contact area charities to see if they could make use of it. Or, my personal favorite, list the item for "free" on Craigslist.com and you'll get many varied responses from folks who would love to have what you no longer want.

These are the kinds of conversations our staff members have with our clients on a weekly basis, as we guide them through the process of letting go of what's less important, so that they can keep the items that are most important to them. I want to leave you with a quote by author Rachel Meeks from her blog Small Notebook (www.smallnotebook.org): "At the end of my time here, I want my cherished keepsakes to fill a box, not a storage unit."

Here's a fun (and helpful!) list Rachel provides on her blog, Small Notebook (www.smallnotebook.org):

Keep: love letters your husband wrote when you were dating

Don't keep: cards and letters from former boyfriends

Keep: an invitation from your wedding

Don't keep: the paper napkins and matchbooks embossed with your name

Keep: your baby's hospital hat and bracelet

Don't keep: your baby's stroller and car seat

Keep: a photo of your 3rd grade softball team

Don't keep: the trophies and medals awarded at the end of season pizza parties

Keep: a birthday card from your granny

Don't keep: every birthday card from your granny

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Insider tip: sort by category, not by room

In her book *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing* by Marie Kondo, she gives many valuable tips for tidying up your home and getting rid of the excess “stuff” that tends to accumulate. One of the simplest and most helpful tips, I believe, is this: sort by category, not by room.

This applies to every kind of possession you have in your home: towels, sheets, shoes, pants, sweaters, screwdrivers, cleaning supplies, spatulas, magazines, electronics, toys. If you have these items spread out into various rooms in your home, it is easy to collect more than is really necessary, and can also make things difficult to find when you really need them.

Let's start with clothing as an example. If some of your pants are stored in your closet, some in dresser drawers, some in plastic totes underneath the bed, and some in the basement cedar closet, there are a few problems: (1) It can be difficult to locate the particular pair of pants you want to wear, and (2) It can be easy to accumulate many more pants than is reasonable and necessary for you to own. So, gather all your pants together in one place. Now, make a pile of all the jeans, all the black pants, all the brown pants, all the khakis, and so forth. You can now more easily see just how many pairs of pants you have, and make decisions more easily about how many you should keep. Ask yourself – what is the reasonable number of jeans I should keep? For me, that number is 7-10 (I wear jeans most days, and like to have a variety). Next, ask yourself how many pairs of black pants do you need? For me, 1-2 pairs is sufficient (I don't wear them that often). Work your way through each category, taking stock of what you currently own, then making an assessment of the number that is reasonable for you to keep.

This idea of “reasonable” is of course subjective, and that's okay! It's your house and your stuff, so you get to decide! We find that some of our clients like to keep a sparse home with lots of extra room in drawers and cupboards and closets, while other clients like to have a bit more of their belongings surrounding them. Sometimes the amount you consider to be “reasonable” has to do with how much you use a particular kind of item (black pants, for example). Other times it might have more to do with the amount of space you have to store such items. For example, the number of bookshelves you own should probably determine the number of books you can keep (only as many as can fit on the shelves). Likewise, the number of tools you own might be determined by how many you have room for in your workshop or garage. For me, I limit the number of shoes I own to the number that will fit on the two shoe racks I have in my closet. When they are full, it's time to stop buying or start donating (I usually opt for donating, so I can continue to buy! Ha!) We can all dream of living in a mansion someday with unlimited storage space, but until then, let's live in our own realities and make the best of the current living situation we are in.

Towels and sheets are one area where multiple sets tend to accumulate if they are not stored in one place. Work through the same exercise with these items – bring all the towels and all the sheets from your entire home together in one area. Then make piles – all the bath towels in one pile, handtowels in another, wash cloths in another. Now, ask yourself – how many people live in the home, and how many towels do they go through in a typical week? This will tell you how many towels are reasonable to keep. The same with sheets – I think two sets of sheets per bed in the house is plenty. Let go of the rest. Local animal shelters will gladly take donations of both these items and put them to good use. As a reward, you will have extra room in your linen closet and a nice tax deduction for next year.

By now, you get the idea. For sorting through your possessions most effectively, sort by category, not by room. Happy New Year, and Happy Sorting!

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Won't you join us for one of our upcoming estate sales?

January 16-17: 4930 S. 67th Street
February 13-14: 6732 Forest Lake Place
March 20-21: 11400 Holdrege Street

All sales run Friday 8:30-5:30 and Saturday 8:30-3:30

All items full-price Friday
25% off Saturday 8:30-Noon
50% off Saturday Noon-3:30

For more information on all sales (and photos of sale items!) check out our website at www.ChangingSpacesSRS.com and our Facebook page "Changing Spaces SRS."

To receive e-mail notifications of all our sales, e-mail us at info@ChangingSpacesSRS.com

Do you know someone who needs to have an estate sale?

As always, we do free in-home consultations for anyone interested in our services.

CHANGING SPACES
4830 Wilshire Blvd.
Suite #106
Lincoln, NE 68504

