

# WISE UP TO SIZE DOWN

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO SMART  
SIZING FOR SENIORS



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# WISE UP TO SIZE DOWN

## A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO SMART SIZING FOR SENIORS

BY DIANA LIPTON

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## SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?



When I think of the many moves I've made, and the moves I've helped my clients make, I know that the stress of re-centering your life can be hugely alleviated. As I reflected on what helped make each transition less burdensome, I realized that it was the freedom in living with less. Additionally, many older folks wait until change is forced on them by family and they have no say in the decision. A better way is to act now so you can live your life on your own terms and decide where you would like to go when the time is right.

So many great books have been written to help with this process. But I'm using personal experience along with tips from the experts in creating my "smart-sizing" guidebook, *Wise Up to Size Down*. I hope it will be a valued resource in your transition. So, here we go!

First, let's examine your lifestyle now. This small quiz will help you define if it is better to move or stay and age in place: On a scale from 1-5 (5 being the best) put a number beside each question on the following quizzes.

1. Are you physically active? \_\_\_\_
2. Can you maintain your current health alone or do you need assistance? \_\_\_\_
3. How often do you need medical attention? None (5) more than once a month (1)? \_\_\_\_
4. Do you have close friendships? \_\_\_\_
5. Do you participate in clubs, classes, or community events? \_\_\_\_
6. Do you feel angry or depressed (1) or happy (5)? \_\_\_\_
7. Would changing your life or your home help? \_\_\_\_
8. How would you describe your spiritual wellbeing? \_\_\_\_
9. Is your current home suited to your needs? \_\_\_\_
10. Does your home need repairs or retrofitting to make aging in place comfortable? \_\_\_\_
11. What is the cost of those repairs and maintenance and is that affordable? \_\_\_\_

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After evaluating your life, maybe you decide to get more in-home help and age in place instead of moving. If you're content where you are and it's affordable to hire help, then maybe aging in place is your best option.

If so, the next level of evaluation is termed "PEACE."

This helps you determine if aging in place is practical:

**P**roximity to services: stores, entertainment, doctors, family, and transportation to get where you need to go \_\_\_\_

**E**xpense: the cost of staying in your home: taxes, insurance, utilities, landscaping, repairs and maintenance, and hiring assistance for your daily care \_\_\_\_

**A**ccessibility: how well can you get around your home, do you have stairs? Can a wheelchair get through doors or into your shower? \_\_\_\_

**C**omfort: do you feel secure living there? Do you have friends and family who visit so you don't feel lonely?

**E**njoyment: leisure activities, social events, games, meals, and outings with family and friends who visit \_\_\_\_

If your home can be modified for assisted living and you are secure with all the above, then aging in place might be a great option.

But, if you determine this is not practical, then the next step is to explore housing options.

## OPTIONS FOR SMART SIZING



You have 6 categories to consider when Smart Sizing:

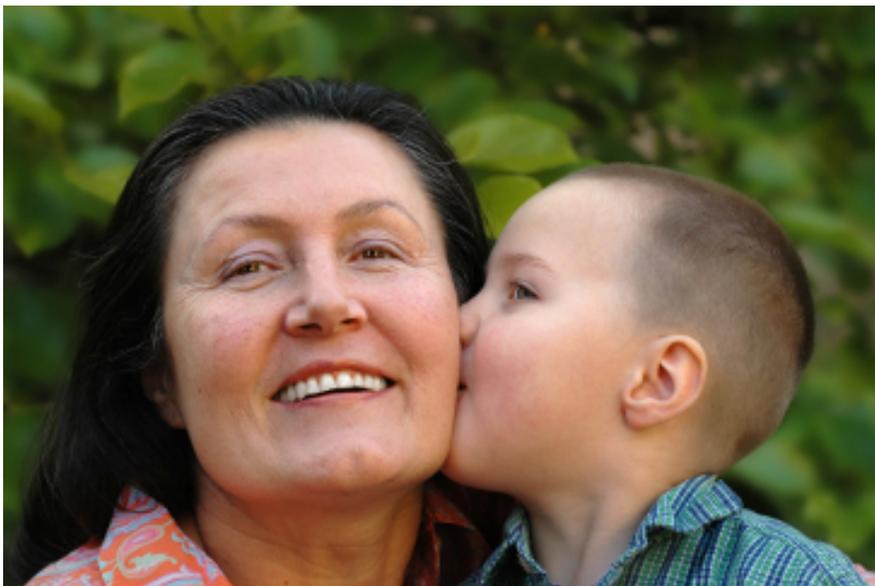
1. Buy or rent a condo or an apartment: If you're not ready for a full-on retirement community, moving to a condo eliminates the maintenance issues and provides close neighbors and usually activities in or around your new home
2. Buy or rent in age-exclusive community: Most are designed for the 55+ age and offer golf, a clubhouse, walking trails, single level homes, and social activities. This is geared towards a low maintenance lifestyle and independent living
3. Continuing care community: This is a stay-in-place community where you can get assistance as your needs grow and change. Usually there are additional fees for the care required. You might start as independent living before moving up the care spectrum. Most communities include your meals as well as activities, beauty salons, etc., so you don't have to leave for services.
4. Assisted living: If you have ongoing medical needs and can no longer take full care of yourself, they have staff to help with your care.
5. Full-term care: These are designed for folks with memory issues, dementia, ambulatory care, and have full-time medical oversight.
6. Multigenerational home: Move into your son or daughter's home or have them move into yours.

If you're going to visit retirement communities, these questions will provide guidance so that you find the right fit:

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1. What is the cost and what does the cost include (such as meal plans, activities, etc.)?
2. Floorplans for the different units and square footage for the rooms?
3. What services are available on site?
4. Is there transportation to shopping, services, or doctor appointments?
5. Parking space for your car (if you're independent)?
6. Can you have a pet?
7. What are the rules for the property (no smoking, etc.)?
8. Visitation hours, if any?
9. Security or guest check in?
10. A practical guide to smart sizing for seniors



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One of the newer trends (adopted from other cultures) are the multigenerational homes. From an economic and emotional perspective, they make sense. Of course, there can be challenges. Living with family can create conflict. I've outlined some questions, thoughts, and a worksheet to provide light guidance for your family:

Do you need to purchase a larger home to accommodate more family members or purchase a new home?

Another trend is a younger family member who may need to move back home after college, after a divorce, or for other economic reasons. Considerations: private space, schedules, hobbies, workspaces, personality differences.

Preferences and priorities need to be discussed before making the investment such as:

- Dividing the cost for utilities and maintenance?
- Rules for behavior to avoid conflict later (such as no smoking in the house)?
- Establish schedules for common areas such as the kitchen so that everyone has some freedom to do as they like?

Benefits of Multigenerational homes:

- Financial: More cost effective than separate housing.
- Communal: Family care for and about each other, so it's ongoing support.

Affording your move:

In evaluation the options, consider your current housing costs vs. community expenses.

## SMART SIZING TREASURES & POSSESSIONS



I've read books on how to live as a minimalist. If you've been in a home for 25 years, as I had, you've probably collected items that have huge sentimental value, which can be more significant than monetary value. Considering giving those items away or selling them can feel overwhelming and sad. In my case, I tried to pass things to my kids; but they weren't interested. They didn't attach the same value. The items were part of my memories, not theirs. So, I borrowed a video camera and recorded my home before I started the dismantling process. Plus, I got to share where I had purchased those items and why they held value for me. It was fun and easy! I was creating a digital scrapbook for future generations. For the items you decide to purge, you can use an estate sale company or donate to Salvation Army or the like. If your items have more monetary value, you might consider getting them appraised and putting them on consignment. Or, look on EBAY to determine value before selling.

You can use boxes to divide items into these categories: family, donation, trash, sell, keep. Another way is to tackle one room per week until you've completed the entire home.

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As you pick up each item, ask the question:

Do you need it?

Do you love it?

Do you use it?

Then put it into the appropriate box.

It's amazing how free it feels to no longer have all the "stuff." It's the perfect entrée to your new life!

If you have large quantities of trash, use a professional trash removal company. It's so much easier than taking little piles to the trash can every week.

Now that you've made the decision to move and have the floorplan for your new home, you can measure your furniture and determine what to take, what to donate or sell, and what to give to family and friends. This includes rugs and art. Most retirement communities are very economical in room size, so "less is more" easily applies.

If you don't have friends and family who can help, you might consider a professional. They'll help you go through the process of organizing and redefining your life. They'll also do all the packing and manage the move from start to finish. This frees you from the physical burden of packing and helps work through the emotional exhaustion of moving. Usually, they'll unpack and set up and decorate your new home.

## SELLING YOUR HOME



If you now have made the decision to move, it is time to call in a pro!  
Many agents follow the 4 P's of real estate : Pricing, Putting it into the RMLS, Pictures and Praying it sells!

With the technology available, such as “virtual staging,” and having a strong online presence, part of home marketing is understanding and implementing the technology available. More importantly is the personal side of ensuring client success to the end of the transaction. This is my personal guarantee to each and every client.

Call and let my 3 decades of experience go to work for you. Also, check out my YouTube channel @ Diana Lipton Real Estate PDX, for more information on how to select a listing agent and other videos on “setting the stage” for the highest value.



Wishing you all the best,  
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