



A Note from Executive Director, Vicki Hickman

Downsizing Without Losing My Mind (Or My Closet Space)

At work and at home, the word downsizing gets tossed around a lot. It's one of those terms that causes instant stress — right up there with "colonoscopy" or "some assembly required." And trust me, I get it.

In my case, I'm not facing a corporate restructure — I'm preparing to move into an in-law suite as part of a grand multigenerational living plan. Construction is starting any day now, and the countdown is on: my daughter, son-in-law, and grandson are moving in with us starting Mother's Day weekend. Which feels either deeply poetic or like a cosmic prank — the jury's still out.

Now, I have a perfectly comfortable home — about 2,400 square feet, basement included. That's enough space for two people to live like royalty...or, in our case, like slightly disorganized collectors. You know how they say nature abhors a vacuum? Well, I abhor empty shelves. If there's storage, I'll fill it — and probably label it.

Take my wardrobe. It could go toe-to-toe with any Hollywood starlet's, minus the red carpet. I rotate seasonal clothing like a department store, swapping out winter coats for tank tops with the precision of a NASA launch. But now, I'm downsizing to one closet. ONE. Closet. So, two-thirds of my wardrobe had to go. I hope the lucky new owners enjoy my "someday I'll wear this" section as much as I thought I would.

Then there's our home office — the heart of our house for 25 years. My husband, Todd, just retired on April 25 (yay, Todd!), and the entire office has now been repurposed, purged, or sent to the great donation center in the sky. It's like we pressed "Ctrl+Alt+Delete" on our work-from-home era.

And let's not forget the baby gear. Crib, pack-and-play, highchair, a backup highchair for the backup pack-and-play — all things I lovingly hoarded just in case. Turns out, my daughter is fully stocked. (And her baby equipment is newer, safer, and doesn't smell faintly of teething biscuits from 2003.)

Of course, my biggest hurdle has been the emotional archaeology of my "heirlooms" — items handed down from generations past. I started asking myself four ruthless questions:

Do I have more than one of these?
Why do I have this?
Do I love this?
Do I actually need this?

It's a slow, soul-searching process. And Todd has been standing by, watching me pull ancient treasures from dusty corners, shaking his head like a man witnessing an archaeological dig at a suburban yard sale. "Why on earth do you have all this stuff?" he asks. Fair question.

Mind you, this is the same man who is clinging to 30 vinyl records, a stereo system from 1987 that looks like it could launch a rocket, and a CD player that holds 250 discs — most of which could now be accessed faster on Alexa. And yes, he's buying new speakers. Because apparently, we're building a recording studio in our in-law suite.

This whole process made me reflect: why did I hold on to so much? Is it because I went without growing up? Because I never thought I'd live this life? Maybe. But mostly, I think I kept things "just in case." Just in case I lost weight. Just in case I hosted a themed dinner party. Just in case my son-in-law decided he really wanted a vintage fondue pot.

But these days, my "just in case" has been replaced by "just in time" — specifically, just in time to spend meaningful moments with my grandson, Roman. He's worth more than any item in my basement. (Except maybe that fondue pot. Kidding!)

The question now is, what do I do with all this stuff? One resident recently inspired me with her creative take on decluttering: a "garage give-away." Not a sale — a celebration. She opened her home, served snacks, told stories about her treasures, and gave them to folks who truly needed them. It was a community event with a heart. I loved that idea and might just steal it — minus the work of organizing hors d'oeuvres.

The good news is: progress has been made. I've cleared space, created breathing room, and let go of the weight that clutter can quietly carry. Turns out, downsizing isn't about losing things — it's about making room for what matters most. - **Vicki**