



Freeing *Ourselves From* STUFF

BY MARY KAY MINNIS

If you are 55+ with adult children, you are most likely facing the same painful dilemma as the rest of us. Our children, quite simply, don't want our stuff. They don't want the set of china, the silver plate serving dishes, the Hummel collection, the antique books, or the formal dining room furniture. They don't want our Frank Sinatra albums, wooden treasures from Hawaii, collection of Mother's Day plates, National Geographic magazines, or even their own soccer trophies. And we need to downsize. Now what?

Over the past six years, as we've assisted seniors and their families

through the downsizing process and liquidated many homes after a loved one has passed on, I've had plenty of time to reflect on this issue. There are many resources to help us deal with our excess belongings, such as estate sales, online auctions, rummage sales, charitable contributions, recycling, and disposal. Physically, getting rid of things is fairly uncomplicated. But emotionally? Not so easy. Why does giving up our beloved treasures feel as though we are losing a piece of our heart?

It's the memories we've connected to our things. How can we simply let go of the chair we used to rock

our babies to sleep? The tinsel and glitter creations they so proudly brought home from kindergarten?

To be honest, I admire the younger generation and their freedom from stuff. Several of our grown children, considered millennials now live in tiny apartments in Minneapolis. A few dishes and books, their clothes, some nice rugs on the hardwood floors, a couple of plants. They have only what they need, and can move to a new apartment with two days of preparation. And they are happy. We should all strive for that kind of freedom! I can't imagine burdening these free spirits with



So we need to hold on to that joy and let go of the clutter. Only then can we move into this next and greatest stage of our lives as happy and free as a millennial.

Photographs provided by Caring Transitions.

my copper music box collection, my Willow Tree angels, or my favorite childhood books.

But to have that freedom, we have to learn to let many of our belongings go.

I am learning, slowly, to separate the memories from the stuff. I don't need the actual chair to remember the joy of rocking my babies. I don't need the wrinkled paper plate ornament with the glitter falling off to remember the joy of receiving a gift from my five-year-old. While our homes can easily become overcrowded with things we really don't need, our hearts can hold a limitless abundance of joyful memories that we never need to downsize.

Mary Kay Minnis is President of Caring Transitions of northeast Wisconsin. Caring Transitions provides help to seniors and their families needing assistance with relocation, downsizing, estate sales, and household liquidations in northeast Wisconsin. You can reach them at (920) 569-0084 or at caringtransitionsgreenbay.com.



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