

SENIOR CARE

TIPS TO EASE THE JOURNEY



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INTRODUCTION

This booklet brings you practical and immediately usable insights in bite-size pieces for dealing with a wide range of elements involved with seniorcare. Whether you or your loved one stays in the current living situation or relocates, you are sure to find one more idea you had yet to consider.

Each author in this booklet offers tips from his or her expertise. The well-tested tools and techniques included here will get you thinking about what works best for you now and later. You'll see suggestions about everything from downsizing possessions, the importance of pets, choosing the right living environment, managing your money, assuring a safe hospital stay, anticipating Medicare coverage, addressing spirituality, and more.

Contact these authors. They remain successful, inspired, and inspiring by contributing to your life. Plus they are really terrific and interesting people you'll want to know and have in your circle, whether they are in your backyard or not. Interview them in your publication if you are a journalist. They are professionals, ready to share with those who find it useful.

Multiple sources and bulleted content are all in one place right here for your article, radio or television interview, blog, or website.

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STEPS TO DOWNSIZING

- 1 Review bathroom medicine cabinets, drawers, and under the sink.** Discard anything that has expired or you no longer use.
- 2 Evaluate the clothes, shoes, and miscellaneous items in your closets.** Get rid of anything that no longer fits. Give it to charity or someone else. You typically only wear 20% of what is in your closet.
- 3 Throw away old or expired food from your kitchen or pantry.** This also includes removing food from your refrigerator or pantry that you no longer enjoy.
- 4 Go through your photos.** Separate them for giving to your children or other family members.
- 5 Check with your financial adviser or tax person to know how long to keep financial information.** Keep only what you need and discard the rest.

Whether planning to move now or in a year, these tips can get you started on your downsizing and will help simplify your move. Brenda Scagnetti Clement is a Professional Organizer and Senior Relocation Specialist. Since 1998 she has helped organize people's homes, offices, and senior relocations. She is a member of the National Association of Professional Organizers and Past President of the Arizona Chapter. She has authored *Downsizing and Moving Tips for Seniors*.

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SAFE HOSPITAL STAY

- 1 Have a safer hospital stay by being an informed patient and caregiver.** There is no need to apologize for asking questions.
- 2 Go to the hospital with the best reputation and report card if you have a choice.** Choice is not always possible since insurance carriers now direct a patient to a hospital that has a contract with that provider.
- 3 Sign a consent for a procedure only when you understand the risks, benefits, and alternatives of the procedure.** Keep asking questions until you have everything you need to make the most informed decision.
- 4 Know what medicines you are getting in the hospital.** Medication errors are among the most common mistakes made in the hospital.
- 5 Appoint one person (with an alternate) for communications with the doctor, and to give consents for procedures.** This person can relay information to family members and friends. The doctor cannot make multiple callbacks to various concerned family and friends.

Sharon Conley, MD is an experienced hospital physician, a former hospital patient, and a family caregiver. Having seen the “hospital stay” from so many views, she shares this information and many more tips in her booklet, *55 Must Know Tips for a Safe Hospital Stay*.

Sharon Conley MD

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NUTURING YOUR SPIRIT

- 1 Have an attitude of gratitude.** Take time to count your blessings. Remember that what you appreciate, appreciates.
- 2 Keep a journal.** This is a great way to express your innermost thoughts and feelings. Each entry serves as a snap shot that captures the essence of who you are.
- 3 Memorize inspirational quotes or phrases to encourage yourself.** Repeating them frequently throughout your day keeps your spirits high.
- 4 Do what makes you happy.** This can mean playing with a grandchild, baking cookies, taking a walk, drinking a cup of tea, or whatever makes you happy. When you feel happy, this rejuvenates your soul.
- 5 Believe that your life just gets better and better.** You'll find that your belief goes a long way to making it so.

Tanya Guerrier is an inspirational writer and the award-winning author of *Free Gifts Every Day*. She is also the creator of the virtual prayer group: Let Us Agree to Pray. Tanya has a practical approach to spirituality that is basic, yet insightful. She believes that the best way to nurture your spirit is to “keep it simple.”

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MAKE YOUR MOVE

- 1 Plan your move.** Determine when you want to move and create a timeline of tasks leading up to moving day. It's never too early to start the sorting and elimination process.
- 2 Bring only items that are truly useful, beautiful, and that you love.** Overstuffing your new home can be hazardous and unsafe.
- 3 Take multi-purpose furniture that can do double duty.** End tables with drawers, a sleeper sofa for guests, an entertainment center to accommodate books, photo albums and crafts are practical ways to maximize storage and economize space.
- 4 Decorate practically and safely.** Oriental rugs and glass coffee tables are trip hazards and accidents waiting to happen. Is having them worth a broken hip?
- 5 Get help.** Moving doesn't have to be stressful and you don't have to do it alone. Enlist the help of a senior move manager or professional organizer to guide you through the process or ask family or friends for assistance and get moving!

ARRANGING IT ALL is an industry leader in senior move management and helping people get organized. Whether you are moving across the street or across the country, they ensure that your move will be stress free. And remember, if you don't love it or use it, don't move it!

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MOVING OR MINIMIZING

- 1 Begin with NOW.** It took years to accumulate; it will take time to eliminate and condense. Whether you move or stay this process needs to be done sooner than later.
- 2 Make the tough decisions.** If you haven't used or worn it in years you don't need it. Decide to toss, donate, sell, or find someone in the family who want the items.
- 3 Create a floor plan to see what fits.** Some new furniture might be in order because rooms are smaller and old furniture is too big.
- 4 Eliminate the clutter if space is limited.** If an item does not fit in a closet, shelf, or cabinet it is clutter and needs to go.
- 5 Think outside the box.** This makes transition less stressful. Bring some favorite collectibles. The family can store the rest.

After 17 years in moving industry, Claire LeSage started WITZ END to guide families through the traumatic experience of moving and minimizing the belongings of elderly loved ones. WITZ END helps eliminate the stress and chaos when transitioning seniors to a new environment and moving from the family home. Identifying, naming, and addressing the stress factors, Claire helps everyone make informed, logical, and educated decisions based on facts to accomplish a smooth transition.

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AGELESS PET ADVICE

- 1 Read out loud to your pet.** Saying words out loud from a book or newspaper works your brain muscles. Your pet will enjoy the sound of your voice and the companionship.
- 2 Unleash happy talk and laughter.** Speaking upbeat and laughing releases your feel-good hormones (endorphins) and brings out the inner joy in your pet. These positive actions also help lower blood pressure and fight stress.
- 3 S-t-r-e-t-c-h like your pet.** Pets instinctively know how to stretch and loosen up their muscles after a nap. Purposeful stretching reduces muscle tension and stiffness, improves blood circulation and enhances flexibility to reduce the chance for injury.
- 4 Mimic your cat and take power naps.** Thomas Edison, a cat enthusiast, advocated 20-minute naps. These 'cat naps' give your body a chance to relax, recharge, and revive.
- 5 Enroll in a pet first-aid class.** Be your pet's best health ally by learning what to do in emergencies when minutes count.

Arden Moore, founder of FourLeggedLife.com, is an animal behavior consultant, best-selling author, editor, professional speaker, and certified pet first aid instructor. She created National Dog Party Day and hosts the award-winning "Oh Behave!" show each week on PetLifeRadio.com, the Number 1 pet podcast network.

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PICK YOUR BATTLES

- 1 Expect your parent to see you as subservient.** It is a rare parent that turns life control over to their child. You are not viewed as an authority figure, so don't be surprised when your helpful suggestions are resented.
- 2 Give up control.** Who does your parent defer to? If it is a doctor, clergy, or police, enlist their aid.
- 3 Do more of what works and less of what is not working.** If you offer advice and it is rejected, don't waste your time on that approach again. Your relationship is more important than any task or goal.
- 4 Listen for meaning behind the words.** And key in on emotions. Using the emotion may be the door through which your help can be viewed as acceptable.
- 5 Be patient with yourself and your care recipient.** You are each doing the best that you can. Don't sacrifice your relationship because you don't see things in the same light.

The founder of AmericanWay Management Corporation, Janis Deets Nowak has been overseeing care in assisted living settings for the past fifteen years. Founding AmericanWay is the fulfillment of her dream to establish innovative senior living environments where residents and staff alike are able to grow and flourish.

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NURSING HOME TEAMWORK

- 1 Understand that the doctor you choose is important, and is only one part of a large dedicated team caring for your loved one.** First-line clinical team members include: Nurse Aides, Nurses, and various Rehabilitation Therapists. Your physician must be a team player.
- 2 Know about other specially trained teammates.** These include Nurse Practitioners, Physicians Assistants, Podiatrists, Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Pharmacists, Optometrists, Dentists, Audiologists, Nutritionists, and Hospice workers.
- 3 Realize that non-clinical staff also plays significant roles.** These are Administrators, Social Workers, and Activity Directors.
- 4 Relax knowing that various members of the team gather face to face to exchange information daily at the Morning Meeting and quarterly at Care Plan Conferences.** You will be invited to attend quarterly.
- 5 Take your rightful place on the team.** Be part of caring for your loved one.

While nursing homes are much maligned and misunderstood, Kojo Pobee, M.D. is upbeat about them and their vital well-established role in health care. Dr. Pobee has decades of experience as a physician who is board-certified in Geriatrics and a Certified Medical Director. His booklet, *47 TIPS for Finding the Best Nursing Home for Yourself or Your Loved Ones*, is a great starting point in starting your search for a suitable nursing facility.

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FACILITY FAMILY CAREGIVING

- 1 Befriend all staff members.** “Nice” receives better care. An occasional pizza greases the wheels.
- 2 Be willing to point out mistakes.** Exercise tact and wisdom. The staff has challenging workloads.
- 3 Make sure you are aware of all meds offered to ensure they are the ones prescribed.** Mistakes can be made without complete awareness. Ask to see what’s written in the patient’s chart.
- 4 Request help or ideas from your local caregivers group.** Take a few hours for yourself and study up on your loved ones’ condition to be well informed.
- 5 Increase spirits by bringing the family pet to visit.** Most facilities will allow this.

Shirley Poll traveled 100,000+ air miles to care for her mother. She now consults families with aging parents. Her background includes radio, acting, and public speaking. Shirley is past president of Publicspeaks International Inc. in New York City. She has been interviewed by Kiplinger’s, New York Newsday, and Apria Healthcare. She is an affiliate for Barbara Sinatra Children’s Center in Palm Springs, CA. She specializes in providing awareness to the stress, financial challenges, and isolation caregiving can bring. Shirley is a published author.

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Contact the National Family Caregivers Association for caregiving resources.

Contact Shirley directly for workshops and consulting.

MEDICARE ORGANIZER

- 1 Apply for Medicare (Part A, Part B, and Part D) approximately 90 days before age 65.** Do this even if you decide not to receive Social Security benefits yet. There are penalties for not applying.
- 2 Realize Federal Rules do not allow Insurance Advisors and Agents to compare plans for you (although they are trained and often know the differences).** You can authorize them to explain various plans to you if they are certified for those plans.
- 3 Track health care claims.** Keep your claims and other relevant Medicare documents in one convenient, safe place, preferably a Medicare Organizer.
- 4 Plan for future healthcare decisions.** Medicare recommends you prepare "Advance Directives." Contact your local office on aging, state health department, or an attorney to learn about "Advance Directives." Include a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care and a living will.
- 5 Stay current with what Medicare services and choices are available to you.** Record those that best suit your needs.

JoAnne Poncio, Medicare Advocate Expert, focuses on helping people understand the complex Medicare program. She is the founder of MedicareOrganizer.com where her clients can get organized and find the help they need with Medicare. She has also written the booklet, *Understanding Medicare – 65 Tips to Get You Organized*.

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PROTECTING YOUR ASSETS

- 1 Maintain accurate records.** Ensure you have a complete list of all investment, credit card, and bank accounts. Review your monthly statements to make certain there is no unauthorized activity.
- 2 Check your credit report every four months (January, May, September.)** Each person is allowed one free yearly credit report from each agency. Go to www.annualcreditreport.com
- 3 Protect yourself, your money, and your identity.** Provide personal information, especially your social security number, to only those you trust. Do not answer questions from unsolicited phone calls or mailings.
- 4 Prepare your estate.** Make sure your will, trust documents, power of attorney, and medical directive are up-to-date and accessible to a trusted person (generally your executor). These vital documents are needed for various reasons, including hospitalization and long term care. If Great Aunt Tilda is not allowed to visit you in the hospital, now is the time to spell out your requests.
- 5 Ask for assistance.** Often-times seniors find themselves running out of money quicker than they expected. Contact a daily money manager to assist with budgeting, bill paying, and financial issues.

Melissa Sorensen has been providing daily money managing assistance to her clients for over 10 years. With knowledge and patience, she creates peace of mind through plans tailored for each person's situation.

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GRIEF

- 1 Take inventory of your emotional state.** The crushing news of a death triggers shock and confusion. Determine what you need and who can provide comfort and support. Friends, family, and professional people are all potential resources when you are overwhelmed and need stability and guidance.
- 2 Gather legal and financial documents and review them.** Discussions with family members should include personal concerns and wishes, as well as the handling of estate issues. Expect some conflict and engage professional help if matters become difficult.
- 3 Stabilize your daily schedule.** Enlist help from others but remember that you're in charge. You have to live with the decisions.
- 4 Join a grief group or find a support system.** Comfort can come from several sources. Choose people who are good listeners and offer objective ideas.
- 5 Claim this painful time for growth and solace.** Journals, memory books, and quiet time help you to heal and begin to move forward.

Award-winning author, speaker, and certified grief and loss facilitator Judy Strong knows first-hand the feelings of sadness, fear, anger, and desperate desire to control the situation. She experienced it following her husband's unexpected 1991 death. Judy founded Survive Strong Resources, a grief recovery program helping newly bereaved with many issues arriving after loss.

Judy Strong

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HOW TECHNOLOGY HELPS

- 1 Try an iPad.** An application like Facetime is an easy, computer-free way to communicate with grandkids! Audible and other apps with variable font sizes help make reading a pleasure again.
- 2 Imagine reporting a fall with a 2-way speakerphone on a pendant or belt clip that works within 600 feet of the base.** For added safety, a watch is available as a sophisticated fall detector and an alert if there's an emergency.
- 3 Establish a "geo-fence" with GPS shoes to locate loved ones in real-time.** This is especially helpful in the early stages of Alzheimer's and dementia.
- 4 Automate your home for convenience and safety.** It can ease the difficulty in reaching or twisting drapery or blind cords, deadbolts, or lamp cords. Locks, lights, and shades can all be controlled with the push of a button.
- 5 Enjoy TV again.** Hear voices clearly with no blaring commercials with a small box that sits under your existing TV.

CloserCare was founded in 2009 after realizing there is a wealth of technology for seniors, yet very few people know these solutions exist. CloserCare uses technology to help keep people living more safely and comfortably in their homes, referring to it as Connected Independent Living.

Justin Tsuchida and David Neumaier

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CARING FOR YOURSELF

- 1 Take time for yourself.** Make yourself a priority. Schedule time for RE-creation. Find a friend, family member, or hired caregiver and get away from the situation. Go for a walk, go for lunch, just GO.
- 2 Utilize community resources.** Knowing what is available saves time and frustration. Begin by contacting your Area Agency on Aging.
- 3 Keep a list by the phone noting all the items that family or friends can do to help.** You'll then have an immediate answer when they ask how they can help.
- 4 Give yourself permission to cry.** Tears reduce tension. Caring for a loved one can be frustrating, time-consuming, emotionally draining, and just plain heartbreaking. You have every right to cry. You will feel much better after you do.
- 5 Pray.** Almost 75% of caregivers say they use prayer as a way to cope. Many questions arise when caring for your loved-one: Why them? Why me? Why would God DO this? Praying for guidance, strength, patience, kindness, and wisdom are all very helpful.

Shelley Webb is a Registered Nurse and Geriatric Care Manager. She writes about health, eldercare, and caring for the caregiver. She was blessed to have cared for her father in her home for 4 years.

Shelley Webb, R.N.

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