



## **Keepsake or Forsake? Four Steps Help Tell the Difference**

If you're feeling a desire to simplify your life, maybe you've accumulated so many possessions over the years that your surroundings seem jam-packed.

Reducing your possessions usually takes some effort. To make it easier, use the following 4-pile system and share it with a trusted, "cold-eyed" friend who supports what you want to do:

**Pile 1 - Junk:** This is for empty containers, worn-out or seriously broken items that can be discarded.

**Pile 2 - Charity or sell:** These things are good and useful, but not for you. If you are honest, you really don't want, need or use them anymore (here's where the friend can really help). Many charities have thrift stores that gladly take donations. If you have enough items, you could hold a yard sale and make a few dollars. Several Web sites offer tips and techniques for a successful yard sale: <http://www.uRummage.com>, <http://www.garagesalezone.com> and <http://www.YardSaleSupplies.comand>.

**Pile 3 - Keep:** These are things you still like and use. Subdivide this pile into items that will be used, stored or displayed. Be realistic about how much room you really have.

**Pile 4 - Emotional attachment:** These items are usually the hardest to decide on. Here are several ideas for what to do with them:

- **Minimize:** If you are saving, for example, your crumbling wedding bouquet in a big box, clip off three or four dried blooms and a strip of the ribbon, arrange them on a lace background in a small shadow box, and hang the box on the wall.

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- **Postpone:** Put the items in a container and seal and date it six months from now. By then, you will be a little more used to the idea of “letting go”. While you can still keep the items, you can also take the container to charity *without opening it*. There’s a good chance you won’t miss what was inside.
- **Offer items to others:** Give relatives a chance to enjoy these things, but don’t pressure them to accept. For instance, you don’t need to *insist* your children make a home for Aunt Minnie’s chipped china cup collection.

After the throwing or giving away is done, you may still be ready to simplify even more – for example, moving from a large home to a smaller condominium or to a new location more convenient for the activities you enjoy now.

If you let go of a family home, be aware you may experience a kind of grieving. It is perfectly natural -- a lot happened in your home! Remembering and acknowledging the past helps you get ready for the next chapter in your life. Memories are portable, and live inside you long after the house belongs to someone else.

Whether you move or not, you can find more ideas for simplifying your surroundings from: *Clutter Control: Putting Your Home on a Diet* by Jeff Campbell, *Clutter’s Last Stand* by Don Aslett and *Choosing Simplicity: Real People Finding Peace and Fulfillment In A Complex World* by Linda Breen Pierce.

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*Cathy Rosebaugh is a Certified Senior Advisor and Seniors Real Estate Specialist with Alterna Home Solutions. If you have questions about this article, please contact Cathy at 919-460-1061.*