

# Ready to Downsize... But Stuck?

Discover the 5 Sneaky Brain-Based Traps  
Keeping You Buried in Stuff



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ROOM TO BREATHE ORGANIZING

# "WHY DO I HAVE SO MUCH STUFF?!"

Closets stuffed with coats, clothes, and shoes,  
much of it ignored.

The kitchen crammed with pots, pans, and  
dishes untouched for years.

The basement filled with forgotten castoffs of  
your own, your adult kids, and long-passed  
loved ones.

If that sounds even a little familiar, you're not  
alone...



**After a busy life building a career, raising kids, and pursuing passions, the easiest thing in the world is to accumulate the 10,000 accessories that go along with it.**

Because when you're in the thick of life, who has time to sort stuff?



So years go by. The boxes pile up. And now, here you are, 60s or beyond. And you look around and wonder, "How the heck did it get this way?"

Now, maybe you've tried downsizing your stuff. Poked at it. Peeked in some boxes. Put the 30-year-old exercise bike on the curb. (Bravo!)



But the thought of spending endless days navigating countless does-it-stay-or-go decisions leaves you numb before you even begin. "I'll do it next week," you promise. But next week never comes.

**It's NOT a lack of motivation or willpower keeping you stuck.**

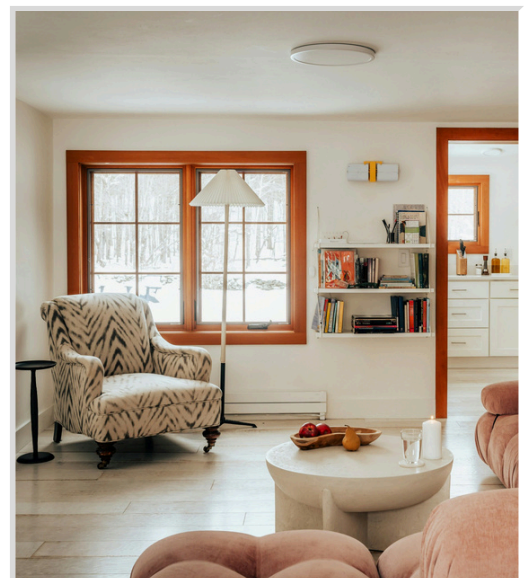
What you might not realize is...

...there are sneaky brain-based traps that make the abyss of old belongings difficult, even painful to face.

And in this guide, you'll discover 5 of these traps along with simple steps that can shift your thinking and get you downsizing right away.

Because life is precious. Opportunities await. And the faster you get past stuff holding you back, the faster you'll enjoy more freedom and fun.

Sound good? Let's get started.



# 1 The “Once Upon a Time” Trap

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## Still holding onto things from a life you've outgrown?

Maybe it's pre-kids backpacking gear. Or the formal dinnerware for parties you no longer host. For Steve, it was dress shirts from his fancy music exec days. Awesome vintage finds, sure, but definitely not relatable to his life now.

**What's Keeping You Stuck:** Identity preservation bias is the tendency to hold onto possessions because they're tied to who we were, even when that version of us no longer fits our life today.

So those dress shirts stay in the closet because they represent a version of you that once felt important or alive. And letting them go can feel like letting *that you* go too.

**Ask yourself:** Do I love or use this item now, or am I keeping it for who I used to be?

Then pick ONE category of belongings (like sweaters or how-to books). Whatever hasn't been touched in 2 or more years, donate or pass on.

# 2 The “Paid Good Money” Trap

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## What’s the elephant in your room?

The \$2,000 treadmill turned clothes rack or the \$400 breadmaker collecting dust? For my dad, Norm, it was the professional VHS-to-DVD capture equipment he bought in the early 2000s that was practically new in the box.

**What’s Keeping You Stuck:** The sunk cost fallacy is the tendency to keep investing time, money, or effort into something simply because you’ve already invested in it – even when continuing no longer makes sense.

So that breadmaker that hasn't been touched in 8 years feels impossible to donate, because your brain keeps focusing on what you paid for it... not what keeping it is costing you *now* in peace, space, and comfort.

**Ask yourself:** What’s this item costing me in terms of stress and space?

Then find ONE item you haven’t used in 2 or more years. Pass it on or list it in Facebook Marketplace.

# 3 "Guardian of The Past" Trap

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## Avoiding diving deep into cupboards and old boxes?

Blame the anticipated emotional hit of handling heirlooms, gifts, and memorabilia. For me, it's my grandma's china tea set I inherited 40 years ago. For you, maybe it's your kids' favorite stuffies, or your aunt's costume jewelry collection.

**What's Keeping You Stuck:** With emotional object attachment, the brain forms strong associations between objects and the people or moments tied to them. So letting an item go can activate some of the same pathways as loss, making it feel surprisingly close to grief.

That's why letting your aunt's jewelry go doesn't feel like decluttering. It feels like betrayal. (Hello guilt...)

**Ask yourself:** If my loved one knew this item was causing me grief, would they want me to keep it?

Then choose ONE sentimental item, take a photo, and record a quick story about it on your phone. Then donate or pass it on to someone who'd really love having it.

# 4 The “Just In Case” Trap

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## **Did your parents live through the Great Depression?**

Chances are you’ve inherited some of their “might need it someday” wiring. Paint from that 2003 home renovation project? Check. Piles of towels dating back 20 years? Check. For Susanne, it was the stacks of antique wooden folding chairs stored in her garage that helped her feel secure.

**What’s Keeping You Stuck:** Scarcity bias is the tendency to hold onto things “just in case,” because the brain treats future uncertainty like a real, present risk – even when it’s unlikely.

So those extra chairs stay stacked in the garage. Not because they’re used, but because letting them go can feel like losing control.

**Ask yourself:** What’s the worst that would happen if I let this item go?

Then select ONE non-emotional category like linens or old bathroom tiles, and donate at least half (or even all!) of what you don’t need.

# 5 The “Zonked at the Door” Trap

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**Ever stare at a cluttered basement like a deer in the headlights? Where do you even *begin*?**

All those bins and boxes represent hundreds (even thousands) of decisions you’ll need to make about what stays or goes. It’s exhausting just thinking about it. So no surprise you just want to throw your hands up and shout, “Fine! Stay for all I care!”

**What’s Keeping You Stuck:** Decision fatigue is when the brain’s ability to make good choices wears down with each decision – like making nonstop “stay or go” calls.

So when you’re sorting a space bursting with decades of life, your brain doesn’t just get tired, it defaults to “keep” as the easiest way out.

**Ask yourself:** If this item disappeared, would I even notice?

Then grab ONE box and set a timer for 15 minutes. As you unpack, sort each item into a keep, donate, or trash pile.



# Bottom line?

**Once you store something, intentionally or not, you've mentally tagged it: "This is important."**

Fast forward several decades and imagine everything in those boxes, bins, drawers, and cabinets clamoring, "You need me!"

Now *everything* feels essential :(

And when you've got the 5 traps working against you too, it's no wonder downsizing a room or your entire home can feel paralyzing.

Just keep in mind...



# The 5 sneaky traps are only the beginning

**There's more going on beneath the surface.**

For instance, you're not the same person you were when you acquired many of your belongings.

You've grown and evolved. Which means much of what once mattered might not anymore.

It's a natural winnowing process that reflects who you are today. And that winnowing can feel empowering if you curate what you keep.

But if you're letting things pile up in the background, well, that's another big reason why your stuff is weighing you down emotionally and physically.



# So how do you downsize when you're stuck and swimming in stuff?

**Start with small steps to build momentum. Then, the more you release, the lighter and more in control you'll feel.**

But if you'd rather not tackle this – or the 5 sneaky traps – on your own, I can help.

Together we'll make thoughtful decisions about what serves your life now... and what gets passed on or donated to people who'll truly love and use it.

- You'll feel supported every step of the way.
- Your home will be organized and easy to maintain.
- Your space will feel lighter and calmer right away.

If that sounds good to you, it's easy to get started!

**CLICK HERE FOR YOUR FREE 30-MINUTE  
LIGHTER LIFE RESET SESSION**



We'll talk about your project, your needs and goals, and map out a path that feels completely doable. I can't wait!



## MEET MICHELE

Hey there, I'm Michele. I've been helping folks downsize since I was a kid. First, helping my mom clear my grandparents' and great-aunties' homes. Then I did my parents' home, then my own, and now my clients.'

I started Room to Breathe Organizing because I love how people feel light and free after. And they have a lot more time for the things they enjoy.

In my spare time, you'll find me writing, hiking, and exploring historic house museums :)



"Working with Michele was so fun!

I needed help with my craft room, where I'd been sewing Civil War re-enacting costumes for the past 20 years. She worked quickly and peacefully. And there was zero judgement of my chaotic corners and huge stash of fabrics and notions.

Now I can actually spend my time crafting instead of cleaning!"

- Susanne Toomey

Michele DeLima, Owner

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