

**Review condition and maintenance of home and vehicles:**

Air filters

Lightbulbs

Locks on windows and doors

Faucets

HVAC

Smoke detectors -- check batteries

Loose boards or banisters on stairs or porches

Potential tripping hazards around house -- rugs that aren't secured, uneven or loose tiles, etc.

Non-slip mats in bathrooms or handles to get in and out of tub

General clutter around house that could create hazards -- piles that could lead to trips or fires

Yard appearance -- tended and cared for

Water softener pellets if on a well

Vehicles -- start reliably, brakes and tires look good, no service lights on dash, up to date with inspections and registration

**Review important documents:**

Listing of bank accounts, financial institutions, and passwords should you need to access

- consider moving to a password vault with access to you in emergencies

Monthly expenses and income -- able to pay bills? Keeping up with paperwork?

Health insurance status and location of essential information should you need it

Location of medical records -- primary doctors, specialists

Essential legal documents -- Power of Attorney (financial and medical), will, executor, etc.

Location of essential documents -- titles, deeds, passports, birth certificates, etc.

Any key people you should notify in emergency? Lawyer? Investment advisor? Banker?

**Assess nutrition, medications, and memory:**

Check pantry and refrigerator for fresh fruits and vegetables -- still able to cook?

Review medications -- organized and labeled properly?

- consider creating a document of all medications and posting to refrigerator or other central location to assist emergency responders should need arise (also copy in cloud for you)
- note doctors who have prescribed medications -- ensure all medications can be taken together

Ask friends and neighbors of your parents if there have been any changes or concerning behavior

- if you are far away, ask your parents for someone to call in the event of an emergency

Notice personal hygiene -- are your parents still able to bathe and take care of themselves appropriately?

If you see signs of dementia or hearing shortcomings, make doctor's appointment and go with your parents to review their overall health and potential interactions/side effects of drugs

**Check in with your parents in general:**

Do they feel safe? Do they have a plan in case of emergency?

Are they engaging with others and living an enriched life or are they bored? Look for ways to help them engage in the community whether through senior centers, churches, social groups, etc.

Are they feeling lonely or ignored? (Just make sure tending to their physical needs is not overshadowing the time you are spending together.)

Do they need you to run larger errands or deal with bigger projects like moving furniture, replacing appliances, light fixtures, etc.

**Easy ways to begin the downsizing process:**

Most kids do not want their parents' "stuff," but the stories that accompany the "stuff" can be meaningful and important. So, much of the downsizing process is about conveying those stories and history in a way that is validating for all.

A 2500-sf house will take a full 5-7 days to clear out if untouched, so here are a few tips to start the process:

Break down big tasks into manageable chunks -- the goal is one room at a time, starting with the garage -- why the garage? It will become the staging area as you clean out other rooms -- you'll put donations in there, trash, etc.

As going through rooms, create 4 piles: KEEP, SELL, DONATE, TRASH -- put the keep pile far across the room as you sort -- amazingly, the extra effort to put items in that pile makes a difference.

Kitchen -- review pantry and toss expired items

Closets -- if new items come in, old items should go out in a 1:1 ratio (a tip for clothing -- at start of the year turn all hangers one direction and as wear different items turn the hanger the other way. At the end of the year, remove all clothing that was never worn)

Don't keep a special item of clothing, but instead keep a piece of it alongside a photo wearing it. Consider creating pillows or quilts out of other special clothing items.

Reduce paper and books -- digitize old photos and important papers

Encourage your parents to "SHOP in their OWN home" for gift-giving occasions and to start giving legacy items now. The items do not have to be expensive or valuable, but meaningful to your parents or the person to whom they are giving it. Jewelry can be appropriate for granddaughters or nieces, and watches for boys, etc. When giving these items, your parents should include a note as to why the item is meaningful to them or the recipient.