

Downsizing

Adjusting the scale of your life to better meet your needs

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NC) Have you had the talk? More seniors are at the stage where they're discussing with family and friends how they might want to update their lifestyles. Downsizing, moving to a smaller living space with fewer possessions, is one option that can take different forms. For some, it may mean transitioning to a condo unit; for others, it may mean joining a retirement community.

Downsizing isn't a step down. We live in a culture that conditions us to think of bigger as better. But quality of life is measured by how it's lived, not how much we have. Downsizing simply means taking the opportunity to adjust the scale of your life to better meet your needs. It helps you focus on what's most important and let that take centre stage, with fewer distractions.

It's normal to feel overwhelmed. The logistics of a move, along with a change in lifestyle can feel like a lot for many seniors.

"Many people think downsizing means giving something up, but we often see the opposite," explains

Christine Mackenzie, a senior director at Aspira Retirement Living who helps seniors navigate the transition to retirement living. "Change can open the door to new friendships, improved health and a renewed sense of independence."

It's alright, and important, to lean on your support structures when you're making a major change. Family members can help by organizing some of the logistics, as well as helping you sort through belongings and make decisions about them. If you start thinking about decluttering now, it can lighten the load when you have to make important life decisions. When and if your situation changes, you'll feel like you have more control.

How to deal with giving up possessions. Letting go of treasured belongings can feel like surrendering a part of yourself. We naturally form emotional connections with certain items, many of which may be associated with important memories. In some cases, an object may feel like all you have left of someone or somewhere important.

- You can let go of something without throwing it away. Giving an item to someone close to you can be a way to share its memories, stories and emotional value with them. It also means that object is being cared for by someone and you can still be near it when you visit them.

- You can try looking at your possessions from the outside in. Start by imagining you don't own any of your items. Then, for each object, ask yourself if this is something you'd very much want to have. This can help you look at your things more objectively and get a clearer sense of your priorities.

- Sometimes, a picture really can last longer. For some things, the memory or nostalgia of the item are truly what's important. For objects like these, you can take a photograph of it to preserve the memory. Flipping through a photo album can take you back through the same happy memories without the clutter.

Downsizing can be a way to live life more on your terms while maintaining greater independence.

Forgetfulness or something more?

(NC) As we age, it's normal to experience some changes in memory and thinking. But it's important to pay attention to them, these changes can also be an early sign of more serious conditions, such as Alzheimer's disease.

It can be hard to tell the difference between normal aging from and early Alzheimer's symptoms. This can keep people from an early diagnosis, meaning that many Canadians don't get the care they need in time.

Here are five early signs of Alzheimer's disease that Canadians should know:

1. Memory changes. Forgetting things more frequently or having difficulty remembering recently learned information.

2. Difficulty with familiar tasks. Having trouble remembering how to complete familiar tasks, such as preparing a meal.

3. Disorientation with time and place. Getting lost in a familiar location or forgetting what day of the week it is.

4. Misplacing items. Frequently losing items or putting them in unusual places, such as leaving your keys in the fridge.

5. Language changes. Forgetting simple words or substituting words that don't fit into a conversation.

Diagnosing Alzheimer's early is essential

An early diagnosis can make a significant difference for someone living with Alzheimer's disease. It can open the door to more support and interventions that can let individuals and families better plan for the future.

There are options available for people living with Alzheimer's, including disease-modifying therapies (DMTs) such as lecanemab. They have the potential to slow the progress of the disease because they're designed to target its root cause. These treatments are more effective the earlier they're used, which is another reason why early diagnosis is so important.

By staying aware of potential signs of deteriorating brain health in yourself or those close to you, you can be better prepared to respond early. If you or a loved one is experiencing these symptoms, you can speak with your doctor or a qualified health care professional to learn more.

For information and support about Alzheimer's



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disease or other dementias, call the Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon's Dementia Helpline at 1-800-936-6033. Service is available Mon. to Fri., 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.