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Lynn's Top Five Downsizing Can Save You Money!

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storage medium or to the cloud! Be sure to create at least one backup and make copies for family members, and put a copy in your fire-proof safe or safe deposit box. There, you've freed up a couple of hundred square feet already!

3) Old tax returns and other records - Do you really need the paper copy? Whether you keep it on your computer "desk top" or archive it onto another format, go paperless - you will be much happier! Check with your financial advisor - do you even need paper monthly statements anymore? Not only can you shred recent years that your broker provides you online, but think of the closet space and overhead you just freed up by turning them off going forward!

4) The kid years - This is by far the toughest event in every parent's life - sorry, it's not the tearful first day at kindergarten, prom or graduation - it's the tossing of the clay pots, the collages

It all sounded so easy and straightforward: downsize and buy something smaller ... maybe in Rossmoor? Maybe a townhome or condo? And now that you've successfully negotiated yourself through the crazy ups, downs and mazes that involve listing, selling and buying a home in the 2014 Bay Area real estate market, you are exhausted and just ready to be done, right? But wait ... there's more! You need to cram your current lifestyle down - substantially! So after you sign those deals and pour everyone a celebratory Mai Tai, it's time to strategize and embark upon your next challenge: living smaller.

Embarking on this journey can save you a lot of money down the road. Not only does having less mean fewer square feet to pay for living in, but it also means you don't have to pay so much to move. Another benefit? You can avoid paying for storage while you re-orient yourself into your new, more compact lifestyle. So let's chat about five money winning ideas that will keep your moving costs down and erase some carbon footprints going forward!

1) Clear the clutter! Colleague and realtor Janice Colby with Keller Williams says that even before you put your home on the market you should really "tackle one room at a time and divide your items into three piles: keep, donate and toss!" Do you need three shovels? How many knife blocks are you going to hold onto? Can we start over with just a few fresh spices and condiments?

2) Family photo albums - If your husband (like mine) spent more time behind the lens than in front of it as your family grew, then I know you have shelves and closets spilling over with photo albums. Time to take apart those old albums, keep a few originals or negatives of some truly special moments, and then scan and put the rest on a

and maybe that mission project from elementary school! What to do: create one selective memory box for each child and hold onto it until they have a home of their own. It's not easy, but just remember you are not the Smithsonian! And even they have to edit their collections - frequently!

5) Hire help! Getting too emotionally involved as you go through things? Becoming indecisive? The best money you may ever spend is hiring a professional organizer to help you. Not only can they help you edit yourself, they can also help you donate (think tax deduction!), gift to family (something a relative or friend might cherish), and list more valuable items on E-Bay (you may make enough to pay for the organizer and the mover).

And if this isn't you quite yet, just you wait: your turn will come! So start editing now, start thinking before you casually toss that sweater you never use into a drawer already crammed full of things you never see. Let someone else discover that treasure and pay you for the pleasure, or use it as a charitable opportunity; either way, it's a terrific step towards a clutter free life and a great compliment to your plans for financial security and independence.

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[back](#)

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