

How to Avoid Nightmares When Moving an Aging Parent or Senior

Adrienne E. Simpson, President of Smooth Moove Senior Relocation Services, Inc. in Stone Mountain, Georgia, hopes to help other seniors and families avoid moving nightmares by anticipating many specific downsizing and relocation needs of seniors ahead of time. Ms. Simpson started her four-year-old company after she was personally overwhelmed by the physical work and time commitment required when moving her mother from Georgia from Michigan. Below Ms. Simpson answered some common questions about moving seniors...

Q: Ms. Simpson, Can you explain how moving needs are different when you are moving an older parent?

A: Seniors don't move because they want to. They move because they have to. They move for three reasons: failing health, loss of a spouse, or a house that is overwhelming with responsibility. When a senior moves they typically downsize. They don't take everything with them. They have to make difficult decisions on what to keep, sell, donate, and give away. The downsizing process is overwhelming, emotional, and traumatic. It's what makes moving seniors different.

Q: What is the biggest mistake adult children make with regard to moving an aging parent?

A: Waiting too late, allowing their parents to delay the event until they are in crisis. When the move is done during crisis, the senior loses the ability to make critical decisions on what will happen with personal property. The children make all the decisions and often decide that everything is junk and discard everything.

Q: Ms. Simpson, can you explain how you manage the difficult process of assisting a senior to help them determine what household items to keep, donate or give to family members?

A: I help by first being a mediator. Typically the senior and children will disagree on what items will go to the new home. I become the objective decision maker. Seniors will fight because they believe the children want to either take or trash their things. Seniors listen to me because I have no interest in what happens to their belongings. I start by allowing them to select three items that can be purely sentimental to go with them, no questions asked. After that everything else must serve at least one purpose. Preferred items serve multiple purposes like a cedar chest can provide storage and can also be used as a coffee table. Items considered heirlooms but can't go to the new home are delivered to loved ones. Items not antique, not heirloom, or not filled with memories but have value are selected for sale. Items with no value but useable are delivered to charity.

Q: Do you think it is important to have other family members available to assist during a move or is it unnecessary and why?

A: Yes. Family should be on-site for a very short period of time. Our process requires that the family member, if possible, not have the senior on site on move day. The family member will

meet my crew, give them instructions, and then leave. Typically the senior is gone before we arrive and return after the new home has been assembled. This is because the decision to move is emotional and difficult; watching strangers handle prized possessions is even more difficult and upsetting to the senior. We want them to remain calm. This is an excellent opportunity for family bonding, running move day errands, and for the senior to begin to get acquainted with their new community/home.

Q: What is the best thing a senior can do to prepare for a move?

A: Start early, don't wait for the crisis. A move made when not in crisis is a move that allows the senior to transition into their new home quicker, easier. A move made in crisis is more difficult for the transition. The senior is not only adjusting to the life changing event but also adjusting to becoming part of a new community. As for the physical part of moving, the best thing they can do is to call Smooth Moove, find a comfortable chair, relax and let us do all the heavy work.

Q: Ms. Simpson, what are your top three general moving tips?

A: 1) Decide what you are going to keep; 2) De-clutter and organize early. If having an estate sale do not throw away anything; 3) If packing yourself, get the best moving supplies you can afford. Do not get boxes from the market or liquor store.

Q: Do you offer advice to families on finding the best senior/assisted living locations for their parent's particular needs?

A: No, because typically seniors don't move more than 20 miles from where they currently live. This way they can get the assistance they need and still be part of their old community. They can keep their church, doctors, hospital, and some friends. If they move further, it is to be near family. When contacted about various communities, we can offer opinions that have been shared with us by past clients.

Q: What specific services do you offer that are unique to Smooth Moove?

A: We offer a full range of "soft" services. Home packing and full re-assembly. Reassembly includes making beds, hanging window treatments and pictures, cabinets, shower curtains, putting household items in their proper place, not simply placing items on the floor. Same day multiple deliveries, free charity delivery, free moving supplies, home clearing and cleaning, estate sales, and home renovations.

Q: Ms. Simpson, how do the costs of using your company compare to using a general mover?

A: Because I am a mover my fees are regulated by the Georgia Public Service Commission. Our fees are the same as a general mover. Due to variety of services we offer and that our fees are hourly, our final costs may be higher because we are spending more time in the homes.

Thank you Adrienne.

