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individuals, their families, and professionals, such as doctors, CPAs, and estate planners who look after the client's best interests.

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By Betsy Philips, CSHP.

A time will come in our lives when decisions need to be made about where and how we will spend our senior years.

Sometimes a house becomes too much to maintain, the stairs too hard to climb, or the taxes just too high. Often more hands-on care is required due to a growing

medical concern or perhaps social isolation may be an issue. As a senior housing

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Telling Mom and Dad what they should do will likely lead to them digging in their heels and refusing to consider housing alternatives. The worst-case scenario, which is unfortunately very common, is that a decision is delayed until there's a crisis. The family is forced to react, instead of being able to execute a plan that was previously agreed upon.

The best thing that we can do as professionals is to shift the conversation from what the client can't do or what they should do to what they *want* to do, where they *want* to be, and how they would like to be remembered. These kinds of discussions are what is known as legacy coaching.

Planning is the key

Never push someone to sell their home.

Only ask them to think about their options and to prepare for the future. The home may only need modifications to allow for aging in place. In that case, refer them to specialists that have been vetted, who are experts at aging in place home enhancements.

If a move is necessary or desired, the key to a successful transition is to find what will be the next new home — a place that will bring a senior some joy. Finding the right fit is critical, whether it's a senior apartment, assisted living or even a continuing care community.

A good specialist will take the time to learn about what their clients love. Maybe they crave access to nature or opportunities to socialize. Maybe their priority is to find an apartment that will allow them to keep their pet. It's easier to let go of the past when the future is bright. And it's preferable to do so while you still have control, rather than during a time of crisis when someone else will decide for you. Finding

somewhere new to love is the best way to help seniors move forward without fear or

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except for urgent repairs. Making expensive cosmetic improvements to a long time homeowner's home is usually not a good use of time or money. Proper decluttering and minor staging will often do the trick.

Many seniors are overwhelmed or physically incapable of sorting through decades of belongings. However, a senior real estate specialist has vetted relationships with professional downsizers and other providers who will do the heavy lifting.

When vetting partners such as downsizers or packers, look at how they communicate with seniors and their families. Look for partners who are both skilled and compassionate about their trade and the community that they serve. They need to lead with their hearts, and not their pocketbooks. While many dread this change for years, if done correctly, people often find themselves surprised by feelings a sense of freedom, joy, and satisfaction.

The CSHP designation is held by a Realtor who has special training and experience in assisting long time homeowners. They understand the emotional and logistical challenges, and we are familiar with all the best partners to ensure a smooth journey that will leave families overjoyed, and not overwhelmed.

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