

When to ask yourself if you're *ready* to move

1. Do you really enjoy shoveling out your car after a snowstorm?
2. Are there rooms you haven't visited lately?
3. Does your house's exterior need a paint job — all six colors?
4. Has your cat assumed ownership of your son's room?
5. Are you wincing at the thought of taking down 50-year-old rotted trees and replacing them with new ones you probably won't live long enough to see reach a respectable height?

made a harsh declaration: If we didn't sell the house, the cost of maintenance would deplete our treasury enough to compromise our future lifestyle. Although it was hard to embrace change this time, we knew it was right for us. We made the decision to sell the house and embark on a new adventure.

As for where to go, we wanted to be able to take long walks and have access to public transportation. We wanted to be in a neighborhood of mixed ages, good restaurants, and appealing architecture. We wanted to walk to a café for cappuccino. As our Realtor showed our house to prospective buyers, we scoured Boston for a place that would suit us.

Once, we brought a friend with us to look at a brownstone. He stayed out on the street rather than climb the stairs, as he had suffered a heart attack at 60, the year before. "It could happen to you," he warned. So our criteria took shape:

- No walk-ups (consider friends)
- Indoor parking (no snow shoveling)
- Condo association of 15 units or more (to cut down on fees)
- A concierge would be nice
- An outdoor terrace would be nice
- A fireplace would be nice

Then one Monday morning, seven weeks after the house went on the market, the Realtor brought us an offer on it. Two months later the house was sold, and we relocated to our country place in Rhode Island as we continued the search for a condo in Boston. We had spent 19 years filling up the Newton house with art, furniture, books, dishes, rugs, linens, curtains — the list went on. Because we had chosen to sell the house before look-

ing for a condo, we didn't know if any of our furnishings would fit in.

I decided that if we were leaving this phase of our lives, we'd also leave all the stuff, the accumulation of the family-focused period of our lives. This was an aesthetic decision as well as a declaration of change. To me, furnishings brought from another home often look shoehorned into a new place, and I had a vision of a different style for our nest in the city.

Although we had lived in a Victorian, I never went for period furniture. I had decorated eclectically, using Oriental rugs, tribal textiles, modern art, and antiques. My theory was that furniture from any period was good as long as it was good furniture: Louis XV chairs covered with Suzani textiles, a Chippendale dining-room set with a William Morris patterned rug. They were great pieces, but I had 20th-century modern and contemporary in mind for the next chapter.

We invited the buyers to purchase the contents of the house, and they bought much of it. Then an estate sale was held, and what didn't sell was donated to charity. With the exception of heirlooms, and some of the art, we disposed of our belongings. I truly had no regrets — these things had belonged to me in a different era, in a different space. It was time for new beginnings.

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September brought unplanned changes. Shortly after my sons left for school, my elderly mother was hospitalized, and the end was expected to come soon. Mean-



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