

Shared Voices



Communities connected by MS

Winter 2021

Upgrade by Downsizing

by mona houle, victoria

Downsizing happened by degrees. Like MS's progression.

Moving to smaller, more manageable spaces happened over fourteen years. I went from my dream house with prolific gardens to a house trailer to a small apartment in assisted living. Each time halving the square footage. Every step I sifted through what I thought was the concentrate of my life to distill further.

The last move sounds sad and daunting but I discovered something infinitely valuable: old wine skins are too small to hold a new, richer life, a more meaningful and fulfilling life. No clutter. I found elbow room for my authentic self. I wanted MS to make me a better person not a bitter one—so I was open to change. I had to let go of my choicest bric-a-brac to make room for new wine. I couldn't get new results from old habits. New compassion, peace, patience and love can't co-exist with brittle collections.

Too many nostalgic keepsakes hold me beached on the shores of memory, discontent and depression. I wanted to fill my new reality with fresh ideas to fuel the metamorphosis I was open for.

When it came to difficult parting of some selected treasures, I reminded myself, I wanted an authentic life to spring forth for years. But couldn't until I let go of my ego and made room for it. 'Just see what happens' I convinced myself.

I knew exactly what would fit at the new place because I measured precisely. Sadly, the filing cabinet, the heartbeat of my world, would not. How would I find the courage to throw out twenty-five years of moxie? When I dove in, to my great surprise, I didn't uncover grief and



No clutter. I found elbow room for my authentic self. I wanted MS to make me a better person not a bitter one—so I was open to change.

anguish. I found joy. Thumbing through folders one at a time filled me with gratification. Some projects were realized, some not. I wiled away the whole afternoon cherishing it all. There was so much richness and goodness that only those on a soul journey can understand. The words, images and memories. The humour, generosity and kindness I poured out into the world through those projects astounded even myself. I never saw them as one lump like that. Instead of distress over my declining health and inability to match myself, I felt peace realizing I could take all that love with me. Spirit and passion were still alive and well. That's what matters most. And it would easily fit into 400 square feet. The mountain of paper was yellowing, old and worthless. I felt grateful and fortunate for my life, MS or not. And now that I'm getting the hang of