TIPS FOR LETTING GO
Giving Yourself Peace of Mind and Closure
When Handling an Estate

There’s nothing simple or easy about letting go, especially when you are handling the estate of a loved one. People have a tendency to keep too much from the estate, often finding comfort in the “things” and the memories attached to them.

Being able to let go helps with closure and peace of mind, minimizes family strife, and reduces future worries when your children have to carry the burden of making decisions for these items.

When we keep too much, several things can happen:

• A year or two from now, we may ask ourselves why we took so much, as it can take over our homes, space and life.

• Marital strife may take place, because our homes can easily become overwhelmed and cluttered.

• Storage is not a practical long term solution. The cost of storage often far outweighs the value of the items that have been stored. Most clients regret placing things in storage and spending thousands of dollars they wish they could have back. Try to make decisions now, rather than kicking the can down the road. Postponing these decisions will only delay the inevitable.

• Sometimes, people select too much not only for themselves, but for their children and grandchildren as well, thinking they will want grandmother's china in the future. It is a painful realization when they don’t want it, or even if they do, they will only keep a small token. Realize that these items are more important to you and your parents than to the younger generations who have little attachment to anything material.

• Guilt is a terrible thing; try not to let it get to you. If you keep too much, you can feel guilty. If you keep too little, you may also feel guilty thinking, “Mom would be so upset if I sold that,” or “Mom said it was valuable,” or “Mom said I should keep it.”

The bottom line is “What do YOU want?”
It's perfectly appropriate to let go of possessions especially if you don't absolutely cherish them. Sometimes, you just need someone to say it's okay to let go. What was special to mom or dad may not be special to you or your children.

Shift your thought process to determine if anyone in the family wants these items. If not, have an ASEL estate sale professional sell them to someone who will cherish them like mom and dad did; then split the proceeds from the sale with your loved ones.

Remember that those items will make new memories for new people. It is important to be honest with yourself that those items are not special enough for you to keep. They could be very special to the new buyer. If you feel this way, it's time to let go.

Tips to assist you in this process:

- Don't keep items just because. Be thoughtful and minimalist in your approach. Ask yourself: Do you really need it and have a purpose for it?

- The more stuff you keep, the more it becomes a monkey on your back or your children's backs. This is one monkey that has a tendency to get bigger. The stuff doesn't go away; one day, your heirs will need to tend to the same exact items.

- Record a video of the estate as it was when your loved one lived there. Distribute it to siblings before starting to move, distribute, clear out, and sell belongings.

- Still photographs are a great idea, especially of individual items that have meaning to you, but you have no space for them and just want the memory. Photos take up far less space than the actual items.

- If you find old vintage and antique photos, scan them and distribute them to family and heirs. You can also create a memory book or photo album of vintage photos. Go online to a photo memory vendor (like Shutterfly or Snapfish) and create a memory book. Memory books and video take up much less space. They will also be more treasured than scattered photos or slides.

- Give to those less fortunate. Maybe your loved one had a favorite charity. Donate to those less fortunate, whether it is canned goods, clothing, linens, kitchenware, books, etc. If you decide to have an estate sale, discuss this with the estate sale professional.

- Be honest and realistic. You cannot fit your mom and dad's home inside of yours. Have healthy boundaries and realize that space is a relevant factor.
• If you bring in one item, one or two items will have to leave in order to make room.

• Ask yourself some pointed questions:
  → Will I use this item?
  → Why am I keeping it?
  → Do I love it so much I can't live without it?
  → Is there someone who could use it more?
  → Am I keeping it because I don’t want someone else to have it?

• Be selective and limit yourself to only a couple boxes of items. If you see this process getting out of hand, catch yourself and put things back.

• Escort “Guilt” to the door. You don’t need to carry that.

• If the estate needs to pay off debt, take as little as possible, so the remainder can be sold by a professional and proceeds be applied to paying down that debt.

• Select carefully for a future generation. Very few actually keep what is selected for them.