

## Storage blues: What to do with parents items



**Q:** I am tired of paying storage unit fees. I need to deal with my deceased parent's treasures, but I'm having a hard time.

**A:** Dealing with an estate not only involves financial matters, but also the emotion of what to sell or donate and how best to do it.

Charities appreciate gently used clothing, furniture and household goods. Many will transport larger items. Try to support not-for-profit organizations that align with your values. The IRS permits individuals to deduct 'thrift store' values of non-cash donations when itemizing deductions, so save receipts.

Yard sales attract shoppers whose goals are to find bargains. Don't feel insulted. If you're still grieving, estate sale businesses will organize, price and run the estate sale. They charge a commission, but that may be less painful than doing it yourself.

Memories that are worth preserving don't belong in a storage unit. Offer the relatives photos, scrapbooks and quilts. Scan and store pictures, update screensavers and display the fun memorabilia.

Artwork is difficult to value and may be consigned. Art auction

houses are better for high-end art and require a history of the piece and artist. Prints and art show purchases often end up in garage sales. When in doubt about the authenticity of the art, consult an independent appraiser. A piece of artwork referred to as "paint-by-numbers," was sold for over \$8,000 because of an estate appraiser. Experts can differentiate garage sale items from valuables.

Keep only things that you truly love. Don't feel guilty because you're selling or donating. Items will never replace the memories so don't hang on to items for comfort or security. If you really can't part with the stuff, pack it away for 6 months then try again.

The solution to organizing is to start small so you won't feel overwhelmed. Dedicate 30 minutes every week and consider getting help. There are professional organizers who can help you with the storage unit and progress right over to your closets.

It's not just about you. Consider your family and minimize useless stuff. Decide what is valuable, donate items that aren't being used, and put the rest of the stuff on the driveway for the bargain hunters.

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