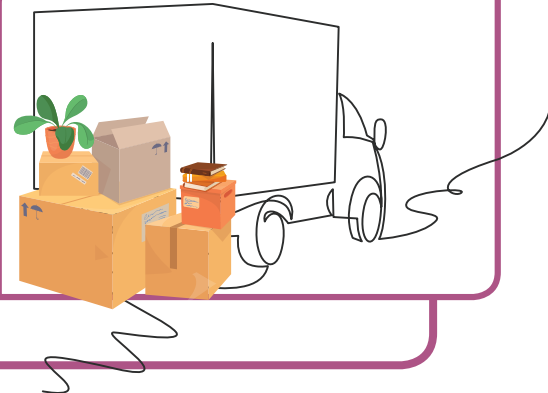




Over the last decade, I've been watching friends and neighbors pack up and relocate in order to be closer to their children. It's now my turn and I'm feeling very anxious. The physical work involved in moving and setting up a new home scares me. But that's only one aspect. Am I capable of making new friends at this age and stage? I'd appreciate any advice and encouragement that you can offer me. I would love to hear from those who have been there and done that. Thanks in advance!!



### **Sarah Spero**

You're moving? Join the Club!

I'm discovering that moving has three different components:

1. The decision to move.
2. The move itself.
3. Living within the new reality.

There's a great expression that we have all heard again and again: "You're supposed to move before you have to." Good for you for recognizing this and for doing something about it. At our age and stage, we have to realize that we are either going to be part of the problem or we are going to be part of the solution.

How we navigate this challenge will define its success. Are we moving toward something or away from something else?

We then have to create this reality. That might mean hiring professionals to help us sort through the: keep, pack, toss, throw, wrap, give away, repeat.

Moving closer to family? Your children are not responsible for your happiness, nor should they be. Raise the bar by lowering your unrealistic expectations as much as you can. It will make the rewards so much richer. Create the necessary boundaries for the most beautiful life of giving possible. Finding new ways to relate to children and grandchildren will become a genuinely glorious experience, if you allow it to happen on its own. Don't force, don't ask, don't compare and don't complain.

Be good to yourself. Be honest and remember your deep breathing exercises from labor. You're giving birth to a new circumstance.

There is another sensation you must acknowledge. Allow yourself to mourn. That is part of the adjust-

ment process and if you can't let go of the past you won't be able to make room for the future.

We all want to belong, yet who and what you were there, doesn't really matter here. No one cares. Give yourself the gift of time to fit in and to find the people, places and things that make you feel comfortable.

Moving into a 55-plus community? The advantage is obvious. Everyone there has gone through exactly what you are experiencing now. Ask advice and share notes. Offer to host the *Shabbos* afternoon class!

If you don't have any sisters in your new city, create new ones. Say hello to the neighbor, the person in line at the supermarket, the bank, the library and the pizza shop. And if you don't usually frequent those places, start now. Go to *shul* (in my case they'd be pulling out the *shofar*) and smile, smile, smile.

When they ask you how you like your new community tell them how much you love it. Then practice loving it. Open yourself up to new adventures. Be a friend. Join a class, visit a nursing home, volunteer for something and play Jewish Geography with anyone who will play with you.

Remember that the most important thing you will unpack in your new surroundings is your attitude.

Welcome home!

*Sarah Moses Spero is a current resident of Baltimore, Maryland, having recently moved from Cleveland, Ohio. In her previous life, she was an event planner and jack-of-all trades. Her business included invitations, graphic design, typesetting, and calligraphy. What makes her heart sing, however, is being a wife, mother, and grandmother. She also does some writing and likes to hum on the side...*

## Shani Schwebel

We had planned to move in 8-10 years, anticipating our senior years. A real estate agent knocked on our door and offered a price we could not refuse. Within weeks we had signed a contract. My husband and I were both in agreement. It was not a difficult decision for us. As an aside, I had heard that if one waits till they are 100% sure, they will never move! And we all know that moving does not get any easier as we get older, quite the contrary. It's comparable to a *shidduch*. At some point, we just have to jump in! Quite a number of our dear friends had relocated to the Five Towns and we knew that would be our destination. Thank G-d we were successful in finding a well-situated apartment that works well for us.

The actual physical move was not easy. Although I'm not a hoarder, moving from a nice-sized house to an apartment, there is plenty to empty out. Furniture and household items were given to extended family in Lake-

wood, other items landed up in thrift shops, especially LifeThrift on 5th Avenue in Brooklyn, a thrift shop benefiting Chai Lifeline. Pinter's *seforim* store in Boro Park was helpful, as well as Mr. Bohensky, the "JunkMan" who totally cleaned out the house at the end.

I learned a great deal from my beloved grandmother, Mrs. Rose Stubenhaus. She would wisely advise us, "Change with the changes" and when dealing with transitions would announce, "We're off to a new adventure!" This approach has served me well!

*Shani Handler Schwebel was a Camp Naarah baby. Her immediate family created and ran this beloved camp. It's in her blood!*

*Shani had been working with ESRA, a Brooklyn-based publication which closed up 5 years ago, selling ads, for over 25 years. She's now busy cultivating new friends in her new hometown!*

## Miriam Liebermann

Moving is a big deal. There's no way around it. Physically and emotionally, there's a reason why it's considered among the top stresses of our lives. So how do we ease the process?

Start downsizing right now. When you even begin to contemplate the move, or even before, start going through your closets and slowly empty out whatever is unnecessary. If you haven't worn a garment over the last few years, no need to hold onto it. Contact your local thrift shops and *chessed* organizations. It was important to me that all my items find a welcoming home. I had recently cleaned out my dear mother's apartment, so I was a bit experienced at this, though it's never easy.

Packing up *seforim* and books is a daunting task. Don't do it on your own. Recruit your adult sons and grandsons to help out. With extra hands on board, quite a lot can be accomplished on a single Sunday afternoon. Put on music and have a packing party! Label every single box. Color code them, keep track of which color will land up where. There are now packing professionals who will do this for a fee. Check that out.

May I interject here, there are some of us who are so anxious to prove our independence, that we take it to the nth degree. I understand. However, moving can be challenging on all levels. We need help. Yes, please do recruit your children and grandchildren to help. When you thank them for their help, before and after, you may want to add these words, "May this act of *chessed* and *kibbud av va'eim* be a huge *zechus* for you and your family." Truth is, this is a huge *mitzvah*. Why should we deprive them of this opportunity? We need the help. They need the *zechuyos*, the merits. And this is incredible *chinuch* for the younger set. One day, they will be helping

their own parents in a similar fashion.

For the sentimental ones among us, take photos of your home before you dismantle it, room by room. I actually headed over to the park across the street, Riverside Park, which I had visited almost every single day for decades, to say good-bye to each tree! I also bid farewell to each hippo -- the playground down the hill is home to 6 hippos which spout water during the summer season. I spent huge amounts of time in that playground with our children and then *boruch Hashem*, with grandchildren. I cried. I grew up in this home. This was the playground and park of my childhood also. That's ok. Normal to be emotional. Are you teary-eyed? I hereby validate you!!

So you moved. Now what? Now it's time to integrate into your new community.

You'll have to do your homework. Join the neighborhood *Tehillim* group. Attend *shul* on *Shabbos*. Join the local *shiurim*. Attend the popular exercise classes. Find out where the women your age are and make sure to join them. We all need friends; we need to belong. Meet your neighbors. When you meet a woman who seems compatible, invite her over for coffee. Invest in the relationship. We don't need scores of friends, but we all benefit from having several friends that we can count on.

*Hatzlacha rabbah!* Though remember always, as wonderful as our new homes are, we are still not home sweet home. May we soon merit to complete our final move, to Yerushalayim *Habenuya*.

*Miriam Liebermann, MSW, shares her passion for life through her writing, her inspirational talks, her Tzipisa l'Yeshua tam-bourine workshops and her involvement with JWOW! Miriam is the author of The Best is Yet to Be, To Fill the Sky with Stars and Saying Goodbye' coauthored with Dr. Neal Goldberg.*

## Faigie Horowitz

This transition consists of several parts. Dismantling a home of decades is a big job, physically and emotionally. You will find beautiful memories of joyful times and mementoes as you move through the process. Give yourself time and take photos of items you discard or give away. Do enjoy the experience and record the history of your family life. It took me almost a year to do the job of packing up a home of decades. I did it in stages. There were surprises and joyful parts to the experience.

Enlist help from your children and grandchildren if you can. Invite them for a *Shabbos* and hold a packing party after you sort and pack *Motzoei Shabbos* and Sunday. Before heading home, they can help with drop-offs at *gemachs*, Jewish libraries, and other places that will accept your no-longer-needed items. The physical *shlepping* can be substantial. Hire help if necessary.

The emotions of setting up a new home can be positive. You will enjoy a more pared-down existence now that you have purged your home of the stuff unworthy to make the trip. Certainly, you have budgeted for some new home goods and furnishings that will enhance your new home. You don't have to decorate all at once, but you will want to turn your new abode into a home, your home, with your personal touch. You chose the place with care. Now you will fix it up for the convenience and enjoyment of yourself and your husband, not necessarily for major hosting.

The challenge of making a new social circle for yourself will require initiative. The men find a *shul*, *shiurim*, and *chavrusos*; they have an easy way to forge a natural circle. For a woman, attending the local women's center for classes is smart. You don't want to be dependent on your children for your social life. I tell midlife women who move to Lawrence, and there are many who move here to be close to children, to go to the Amen Group for daily *davening*, *shiurim*, *Rosh Chodesh*, and spe-

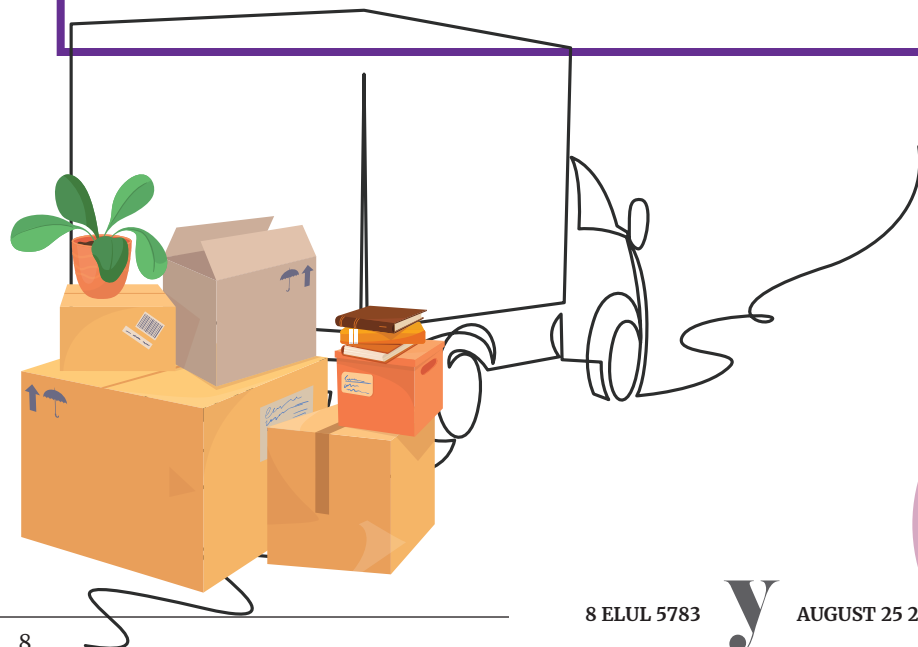
cial events. It's a base for building friendships. Volunteering at community events, offering to host a *shiur* or meeting, inviting someone to go walking with you in a pretty place, learning new technology at the local library, and trying out some crafts will bring you in touch with people who will share your interests as well as location. Build from your interests but don't restrict yourself. I did these things. I also started a writing group during the first few weeks of my move here. I'd always wanted to try creative writing and realized that a group would help me do that. That initiative garnered me close friends as well as an avocation that eventually turned into another career.

I had the time, however, to invest. It was 2008 and I had been laid off during the recession so I could invest in my new community. If one finds a job in the community, be it a part-time position or a voluntary one, it will provide you with more opportunities to build relationships. It will also give you a schedule, a routine to your day.

Having both a schedule as well as ample time for spontaneity and flexibility will give you freedom and fulfillment. Build a life. Show your grandchildren how you are growing and living a life of purpose and meaning.

Recording and gathering one's family history is also fun at this point when one has more time. It's also an imperative as we get older. Get the photos you've always wanted from your relatives. Your grandchildren can help you make photobooks of your ancestors. Preparing for engaging activities with your grandchildren also takes time and effort. Sharing interests with our generations and fostering diverse interests that are worthwhile is pleasurable and of value. But that's a whole other topic.

*Faigie Horowitz, MS, is a content writer, activist and co-founder of JWOW! She serves as the rebbetzin of Agudas Achim of Lawrence, NY*



If this discussion interests you, you can connect with the Jewish Woman of Wisdom group at [jewishwomenofwisdom.org](http://jewishwomenofwisdom.org).