



Excerpted from
The Money Pit Podcast:
Hosted by
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TOM: Well, our next guest prefers a term called "right-sizing," which means to use the space you have in the best way possible. Here to tell us how to do just that is Gale Steves. Gale is the former editor-in-chief of Home magazine and the author of Right-Sizing Your Home.

Hi, Gale.

GALE: Hi there. How are you?

TOM: We are excellent and I understand that you live in New York City and you also have a house in the country. And I guess living in New York City, you really do need to get used to surviving in small spaces. Is that where the idea was born?

GALE: Well, I guess I've been right-sizing most of my adult life. I was telling someone before that my bathroom – my master bathroom – is slightly larger than a twin-size mattress, so that's a really easy visual for most of us to pick up. And I've been coping with small spaces.

But I found, when I was working on this book – and I interviewed about 300 families in all walks of life – that the one thing everyone said they needed was more space. And even if they lived in a McMansion, they needed more space.

So I really felt maybe it was time for us to stop, take a look at our home and see what we have. Are there places that you're not using? Are there rooms that are overused? And as life changes, can your house change along with your life?

LESLIE: Now, with the economy changing, why do you think it's so important to think about right-sizing? Is it because people can't afford to move and we just sort of have to figure out how to make do with what we've got?

GALE: Oh, that's a good question, Leslie. I think most of us are not in a position to move and we all need to find more space. So, right-sizing is about rethinking your home.

I'll give you a good example. Some of us have spouses or ourselves who are suddenly working from home when we hadn't planned on it. So where are you going to find that room to work at home and you need a home office quickly? That's a – it's that. And I believe, also, that many people can't sell their homes, so they know they're going to be there for a while. So why not improve if you can't move? That's kind of my mantra. (Leslie chuckles)

TOM: We're talking to Gale Steves. She is the author of a new book called Right-Sizing Your Home.

So Gale, this sounds just like a big, fat organizational project. What's different about right-sizing as opposed to just cleaning out the clutter?

GALE: Well, it's two things. First of all, you can really know what your space is – and I'm talking about managing your space if you have a naked room. But most of us – and I'm not talking, you know – I'm talking about taking everything out of it and most of us can't do that. But if you do take out the clutter, you're going to be able to see the space better.

I encourage people to start by making a floor plan; actually seeing what the room is. And then it's easy to imagine what it's like without furniture because you've got a little basis to start. But getting rid of that clutter is a good idea.

LESLIE: Now how do you sort through all the clutter? I mean working on my new show, \$100Makeover, we've seen a lot of people with a ton of clutter who just don't want to get rid of things. So how do you sort of start to pare down things and realize what the essentials are?

GALE: Well, here's how you start – and most of us have no idea how clutter accumulates. I mean does it come in the mail with you?

LESLIE: It's the Clutter Fairy.

GALE: Does it walk through the door from the garage?

TOM: The Clutter Fairy, huh?

GALE: I mean all of a sudden, you turn around and you've got four egg-beaters and you have no idea how they got there. And that's for, you know, just name it; something just multiplied during the night.

What you do is you don't start with a whole room; you start with one drawer or one cabinet or part of a closet. And try to sort things so that you have things that you really use; things that, "Hmm, maybe"; and stuff that, you know, if you lose 25 pounds, you're going to wear. That should get out of your closet (Leslie chuckles) because you're probably not going to use that for quite some time.

But what I'm saying to people is, "You may not be able to do this yourself." So I invoke the idea of using a GF; a good friend. It might take a glass of wine or a cup of coffee but you can't do it yourself. Most of us do not have the courage to go through our closets or even our kitchen, which is usually a good place to start with decluttering.

TOM: So you want to pick a clutter-buddy?

GALE: A clutter-buddy is good. And if you don't have one or someone you really trust, you may have to call upon a professional organizer. And there're all kinds and they can help you with small projects through big. But starting to get rid of the stuff really frees you up and it'll be amazing how much space you find as a result.

TOM: Gale Steves, the editor of *Right-Sizing Your Home*. Thanks so much for stopping by *The Money Pit*. Great advice.

If you want more information on Gale and her book, you can head on over to her website at Right-Sizing.com. That's Right-Sizing.com.

LESLIE: Alright. Thanks again so much, Gale.

GALE: Thank you.