

Parents Are Hard To Raise S03 Episode 126 Transcript

[00:00:00] The world's becoming a dangerous place for us women. Lipstick Bodyguard looks just like an innocent little lipstick but it will instantly drop any attacker to his knees so you can get away unharmed. Lipstick Bodyguard, fear no evil. Get yours today only at LipstickBodyguard.com.

[00:00:37] Moving our aging parents and sorting through a lifetime full of memories can be quite a daunting task. That's where a Certified Senior Move Managers can help. This week on Parents Are Hard To Raise Diane's special guest expert, Mary Kay Buysse, executive director of the National Association of Senior Move Managers tells us how to ease the pain of downsizing the family home. Join 180 million monthly subscribers who can now listen to Parents Are Hard To Raise on Spotify.

Diane Berardi [00:01:20] Welcome to Parents Are Hard To Raise. Helping families grow older together without losing their minds. I'm elder care expert Diane Berardi.

[00:01:30] Moving is one of the top stressors that a person can experience in a lifetime, right along with divorce loss of a job or loss of a loved one. Whether you move frequently or almost never, moving is an intensely emotional experience. The burdens of the physical move combined with the underlying psychological issues: loss, anxiety, fear, can be overwhelming for any of us. But when you then pile on the additional stressors of having to condense a lifetime full of cherished possessions into a few small boxes and then leave your familiar surroundings behind, along with your friends and neighbors and it's... Well, let's just say it can sap any joy out of what could otherwise be a very exciting new adventure and stage of your life.

[00:02:22] Now imagine you're having to go through all of this as an 80-something in frail health and the thought is just unimaginable. Thank goodness there are professionals trained to help.

[00:02:34] My guest expert this week has been helping seniors move to their next stage of life for two decades now, and as a gerontologist herself, she understands the special needs of seniors.

[00:02:45] Mary Kay Buysse is the executive director of the National Association of Senior Move Managers a consortium of over 1000 professional Senior Move Managers in the US Canada the UK and Australia. Mary Kay, welcome to Parents Are Hard To Raise.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:03:04] Thank you Diane.

Diane Berardi [00:03:06] We're so glad to have you and my top question for you is what exactly is Senior Move management?

[00:03:14] Well, senior room management is a professional field that helps older adults particularly, thus the word senior, to downsize and move in later life. They are the general contractor, the project manager, of what's really a significant task. Taking a home of 30, 40 or 50 years and then or 2000 square feet 20 five hundred square feet a typical American home and downsizing to perhaps 400 square feet in a typical assisted living apartment in the United States today.

Diane Berardi [00:03:54] Where do you begin? [laughing]

Mary Kay Buysse [00:03:56] Right right.

[00:03:57] Well, you begin at the beginning. And the one thing I guess I really would like to make clear is that you really work alongside the older adult and they're interested family members. You are the project manager for sure.

[00:04:15] But there's no doubt that the older adult in the family are leading the charge here, so nothing is being done that's not you know being guided by those people. So really the senior move manager does all the hard stuff. They do all the space planning. They do all the connecting with other providers, the moving company, the estate planning company... I'm sorry, the state sales company. All of those individuals. So they do the packing. They do the unpacking. They all of those tasks the physical tasks. And the emotional tasks, they work with the older adults make sure that only the things that they want to go, go. But they also help them sort of, sort through their things. You know, what's really a memento or what's something that can go. They really talk to them about you know, What's have you use this? Or, Let's just identify the key pieces you keep with you. So those are all those kinds of things and it's a long process and it it can be challenging for families to do this on their own.

Diane Berardi [00:05:31] Oh gosh yeah. How long does it take you think from start to finish? My gosh, I guess depending on the size of the house.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:05:39] Exactly. Exactly. And it you know it depends on the individual who's moving. What are their capacities at their time, what's their stamina? This is not something you know that you can do in two days.

Diane Berardi [00:05:55] Right.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:05:56] Don't forget, this took this family, this older adult, you know 30 40 50 years to build this home, and it is a home, it's not just a house. It's a home.

Diane Berardi [00:06:08] Right.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:06:08] It took them that long to build it. So to honor all that went on in that home, it can't be downsized and de-cluttered and moved in to three or four days. It is... It is a process.

[00:06:24] And I guess you look at every item you talk to them and say... Because what do you do with the stuff that maybe the family doesn't want and the person does right take with them? That's...

Mary Kay Buysse [00:06:34] Well, one of the things that's been really helpful in this digital age is, our senior move managers will take an inventory of the entire contents of the home.

Diane Berardi [00:06:43] Okay.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:06:46] And for families that are spread out around the country, Senior Move Managers can even put that online so that family members can go to a secure Web site or somewhere else... you know, that a password protected you know site, where the family members can go on there and look and see what they might want and what they may not want. Here's the deal though. Most people don't want our stuff.

[00:07:11] Even the people who we have loved and cherish and they love and cherish us. Nobody wants our stuff.

Diane Berardi [00:07:17] It's true. [laughing].

Mary Kay Buysse [00:07:18] Yeah, it's true. And you know they love us but they don't love our stuff. And you know it's just... That's just the way it is. So the biggest challenge Senior Move Managers Face in this time and place is where does the stuff go that people don't want? Because even charities are brimming are overflowing.

[00:07:39] Goodwill, Salvation Army and you know all of these other charities local charities they're just they're packed to the gills. And so that's an ongoing challenge for everyone.

Diane Berardi [00:07:51] Yeah I would imagine. I remember moving an office and I tried to donate to churches.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:08:00] Yes. Exactly!

[00:08:00] Right. I mean, schools... You know, and I'm like, Oh my gosh! Yeah. But yeah, everybody has this stuff.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:08:11] Well, it's hard for us you know to reckon with that. Something we've held dear, whether it's a piano or a vase, a porcelain figurine, a set of china. Any of those things that were dear to our hearts. You know we have to understand both our parents who are in their 80s and 90s and boomers ourselves, us in our 50s and 60s, that our children, the Millennials, don't want this. And they don't want our parents Depression era stuff.

[00:08:40] It's just a different world. You know younger people now can outfit a whole home through Target and IKEA.

[00:08:51] They don't want their Lenox China. You're not even registering for this stuff anymore when they get married. And you know it's just... It's, it's a different world. Amazon, you know Prime Day was yesterday. Guess what. People outfitted a whole apartment. Right?

Diane Berardi [00:09:07] Right. Right.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:09:08] So, yeah. So it's not like past times when we built up our home over time we saved for whatever it is that we wanted. You know, pianos that were a centerpiece of life in the 50s, 60s and even the 70s. Nobody wants your piano.

Diane Berardi [00:09:29] Really?

Mary Kay Buysse [00:09:30] Not even the preschool down the street. No they don't. They just take up too much space. They need a lot of maintenance with tuning, whatever. Unless it's a Steinway or a Baldwin nobody wants it. You can't give it away. So... But tell that to Mrs. Jones who'd spent you know four years in the 1960s making monthly payments on that piano for 20 dollars a month. You know it's something very dear to her. But...

[00:10:01] So these are all hard questions. And the senior move manager is trained to go through the House in a loving, compassionate way where they're honoring this home that was you know, people lived in and grew up in and cherish to this day.

[00:10:19] But you know this is difficult work. Going into senior move manager is not for the faint of heart. You are not only dealing with someone's lifetime of possessions, but as you said earlier, you are dealing with people at a very fragile time in their lives. And these are older people, often who as you said, the move is precipitated by a loss of a spouse or some declining health in their own life. So these are all very you know it's a difficult time to enter a family's life.

Diane Berardi [00:10:54] Yes.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:10:57] And so that's why we're so proud of our Senior Move Managers. They really just do an excellent job. And most of them have come to this through a very personal experience with their own parents or grandparents and saw just how daunting it was.

Diane Berardi [00:11:10] Yeah. I was going to ask you, How did this whole senior move management start? Because you know why do we need need you now, and we didn't need you 20 years ago?

Mary Kay Buysse [00:11:23] Right. Right. Well, you know so many factors. You know for one thing, we're just not having as many children. So there aren't these families of a kids helping out you know. The other thing is, there's more single people. There are 47 percent of the U.S. population is single right now, whereas in 1960 it was 25 percent.

Diane Berardi [00:11:50] Wow.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:11:50] So you know the other thing is we are aging along... This for the first time in the history of the world, two generations are aging simultaneously.

Diane Berardi [00:12:02] Yes.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:12:02] So you're seeing a 92 year mom or dad alongside a 65 year old son or daughter.

Diane Berardi [00:12:11] Right.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:12:12] So all of these reasons you know kind of made a perfect storm of a why we need outside professional help. Can a family do it themselves? Yes. They can do it. It's being done day in and day out at you know everywhere.

Diane Berardi [00:12:28] Right.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:12:29] But. For those families who need the help, Senior Move Managers are here. And what we're concerned about is that when families say they can do it themselves, what are they doing? Do they just hire a dumpster and back it up into the driveway? Yeah. And buy, you know go to Costco and buy two dozen boxes of black garbage bags. That's really not how this should be done at this particular time in someone's life, because if you do hire a senior move manager and you go through it

thoughtfully, compassionately, methodically, there is so much less regret. So many families tell us that when they didn't use a senior move manager at an earlier time for a different relative, there was profound regret and remorse with how hasty the downsizing and the move went.

Diane Berardi [00:13:24] I was going to say, I would imagine it's a decision and you just... You're trying to pack things and it's just so crazy. All right. Yeah. Right.

[00:13:35] Because you know the people who are doing it are boomers. They know get a couple weeks of vacation. Do they honestly want to spend their two weeks of vacation in their parents basement going through stuff that no one has looked at for 30 years? You know they want to go on a trip with their own kids. Right?

Diane Berardi [00:13:53] You're right.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:13:53] So why not look to somebody who's doing this day in day out who knows all the ins and outs of it? We hire professionals for everything else in our lives.

Diane Berardi [00:14:07] You're right.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:14:07] Why would we leave this to a dumpster and two dozen garbage bags. I just don't know.

Diane Berardi [00:14:13] You're absolutely right. And we're going to continue talking with Mary Kay Buysse, executive director of the National Association of Senior Move Managers. But first, if you're a woman, or there's a woman in your life there's something you absolutely need to know.

[00:14:29] I want to tell you about my friend Katie. Katie is a nurse and she was attacked on her way home from work. She was totally taken by surprise. And although Katie is only 5 feet tall and 106 pounds she was easily able to drop her 6 foot 4, 250-pound attacker to his knees and get away unharmed.

Katie wasn't just lucky that day. She was prepared.

In her pocketbook, a harmless looking lipstick, which really contained a powerful man stopping aerosol propellant.

It's not like it was in our grandmother's day. Today just going to and from work or to the mall can have tragic consequences. The FBI says a violent crime is committed every 15 seconds in the United States. And a forcible rape happens every five minutes. And chances are when something happens, no one will be around to help.

It looks just like a lipstick. So no one will suspect a thing. Which is important since experts say, getting the jump on your attacker is all about the element of surprise.

Inside this innocent looking lipstick is the same powerful stuff used by police and the military to disarm even the most powerful, armed aggressor. In fact, National Park rangers used the very same formula that's inside this little lipstick to stop two-thousand pound vicious grizzly bears dead in their tracks. It's like carrying a personal bodyguard with you in your purse or your pocket.

Darkness brings danger. Murderers and rapists use darkness to their advantage. We all know what it's like to be walking at night and hear footsteps coming at us from behind. Who's there? If it's somebody bad, will you be protected? Your life may depend on it.

My friend Katie's close call needs to be a wake up call for all of us. Myself included. Pick up a Lipstick Bodyguard and keep it with you always.

Announcer [00:16:27] You're listening to Parents Are Hard To Raise. Now... Thanks to you, the number one eldercare talk show on planet Earth. Listen to this and other episodes on demand using the iHeart Radio app. iPhone users can listen on Apple podcasts and Android users on Google podcasts.

[00:16:48] Want a great new way to listen to the show? Have an Amazon Echo or Dot? Just say, Alexa, play Parents Are Hard To Raise podcast.

Alexa [00:16:58] Getting the latest episode of Parents Are Hard To Raise. Here it is from iHeart Radio.

Announcer [00:17:04] It's as simple as that.

[00:17:05] You're right Dolly. There are so many really cool new ways to listen to our show. It's hard to keep track. You can join the 180 million listeners on Spotify. You can listen in your car, at the gym, or pretty much anywhere on your smartphone with Apple podcasts and Google podcasts. You can get us on Apple TV, Direct TV, Roku. And like Dolly said, you can even ask Alexa to play the show for you. It's great because you don't have to be tied to a radio anymore. You can listen when you want, where you want, for as long as you want. And if you're listening to the show on one of these new ways please do me a big favor. Share this new technology. Help someone else learn about the show and show them a new way to listen.

[00:17:48] So Mary Kay, it kind of sounds like this might be expensive. How much do senior move management services cost?

Mary Kay Buysse [00:17:58] Well, that's a really great question Diane. Most Senior Move Managers will charge by the hour and they will give you a written estimate based on an initial interview and a walk through your home. So that's you know that's for sure, at least a NASMM member will. That's part of our code of ethics. How expensive are they? Well how much do you want them to do? A lot of families say, I can do this, this and this, and my brother can do this, this, and this. But we really need help with this. Can we hire you for this one piece? Absolutely. You can go to the senior move manager and say this is the amount of money we have. And she'll tell you what she can do or he can do with that money.

[00:18:46] Yeah, they'll take on the hardest jobs and let the family do something else. What happens is 90 percent of the time, the family sees how efficient and how expert the senior move manager is, very quickly, and often then will hand off the whole job to the senior move manager. So that's why they also charged by the hour. Because often the job will expand once the family... Because they're not sure. This is something that's new to a lot of people. So once they you know can see for their own you know with their own eyes what's going on and how the senior move manager works and their team comes in, and it's very efficient, and they're just wonderful. So we can work with any budget.

Diane Berardi [00:19:35] OK.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:19:36] Bottom line.

Diane Berardi [00:19:37] And you could do everything or just pieces of it, like you said.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:19:40] Exactly. Exactly. And it's you know there's a lot involved. There's a lot of moving parts to a move shall we say. Yes. Many more than people realize. Once you start making a list of all right things that need to be done. Boy it can... It can be challenging.

Diane Berardi [00:19:59] Yeah, I mean, first of all we don't even realize how much we've accumulated.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:20:04] Exactly. Exactly, because we're around it all the time. The other thing that I would like to mention is that Senior Move Managers, just like a moving company will pick up the boxes in one place and put them in another. Right?

Diane Berardi [00:20:18] Right.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:20:18] The senior move manager works with the older adult in the family the weeks before the move. And guess what, they also work with them after the move. They don't leave you know the day of the move and say Ok have a nice life Mrs. Jones.

Diane Berardi [00:20:33] Right.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:20:33] They will work with the family for those weeks that follow, to make sure that everything was done the way they all intended it to be done. So if the TV was set up on the wall and a part of the assisted living apartment that you know just doesn't work for Mrs. Jones anymore, they'll come back in and redo it.

[00:20:55] And now, the other thing is our Senior Move Managers have really close relationships with all of the senior living communities in the U.S. and Canada. So they have those floor plans. They have them already in their database of floor plans on their computers and they know exactly what can fit where.

[00:21:17] And just picture this... They're going through Mrs. Jones's kitchen and what they'll do is they'll take painter's tape, blue painter's tape, and they will cordoned off the two or three cabinets that will be in assisted living. Mrs. Jones might have 12 cabinets in her in her kitchen of 20 or 30 years. But guess what. There's three in... So Mrs. Jones can visualize. The other thing is a lot of our Senior Move Managers, they will use a magnetic space planning system on the coffee table or at the kitchen table of Mrs. Jones's house even though they've maybe got the computer version of their apartment at you know Sunny Acres assisted living. They also will work with her at her kitchen table and let her see why that sofa can't go along that wall or whatever. And a lot of times you know if the older adult has dementia and can't be part of their process, certainly a son or a daughter is or or a grandchild or whatever. And so there's just those kinds of things.

[00:22:30] Another example that comes to mind why a senior movie manager works and... We had a client recently who, one of our members had a client on East Coast recently who

was an executive wife, and traveled the world with her CEO husband. She was now in her early 90s, her husband had passed away a few years before. And she collected miniature teapots throughout her world travels. You know 40 years with her husband's employment. And she knew she couldn't take them all but she loved them all. So the Senior Move manager made digital photos of each of the little miniature teapots and then had them made into a poster. Had it framed and had it hung over her little Dinette set in her senior living apartment, so that she could look at them every day, all day. But they literally didn't take up an inch of space because they were in a poster, on the wall. Like, would we think of that? Probably not.

Diane Berardi [00:23:34] No. Right.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:23:35] But for someone who's doing senior moves all day, every day, that's just par for the course. That's what they do.

Diane Berardi [00:23:43] Do you find most people take their furniture?

Mary Kay Buysse [00:23:46] What people take their furniture?

Diane Berardi [00:23:48] You know, seniors...

Mary Kay Buysse [00:23:49] Oh, they want to take a... Yeah, they usually they will take a couple of you know cherished pieces. Yeah you know... Walk down the center hall of any assisted living or independent living and you'll see that armoire that is just delightful, you know. So we do want those key pieces. Because they are important to them. But it's just we can't take everything.

[00:24:15] Yes. Very rarely you know do you walk in and see a completely newly outfitted senior living apartment. But that you know these assisted living facilities they encourage that. They want them to be surrounded by the things they like.

Diane Berardi [00:24:32] Yes. Sure. And I would imagine we as adult children, we're busy and you know you're right, a two week vacation we will be rushing in probably wouldn't have the patience that a senior move manager would have. I could just see my mom... My dad saves everything. It would be, you know... I go there and say, You know Dad we got to get rid of some of the stuff.

[00:25:01] "Well, I never know, I could use that." You know he has five lawn mowers, that don't work, but he might need a part one day. [laughing].

Mary Kay Buysse [00:25:08] You know that's a great point, Diane. Because one of the other really valuable pieces about hiring a senior move manager is it allows the adult children to be you know the partners in this process with their parent. They don't have to be the bad guy or you know the person who says no, that won't fit. No, you have five lawn mowers. No you can't take. You can't...

[00:25:35] So a lot of times, just in general, individuals will take advice from a third party much better than they will from someone close to them. You know there's a lot of baggage between parents and children, even when the parents are 90 and the children are 70 or 65.

[00:25:57] In fact there's more baggage, you know.

[00:25:59] So we leave their baggage at the front door when you hire a senior move manager. And the other thing is because they're doing this all the time, they can tell your dad you know what has worked for them in the past. He's much more open to probably hearing that, you know, than he is from your opinion, frankly.

Diane Berardi [00:26:18] Right. Right.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:26:18] He knows this is not what you do and you know to defer to people who are experts.

[00:26:26] We do it in every other part of our lives.

Diane Berardi [00:26:27] Right. You're right. And I always say on this show, Go to an expert. Because that's what you need to do.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:26:36] Right. And I think boomers you know the oldest baby boomer is 73 and I think we are going to be a little different from the Greatest Generation, the silent generation, people in their 80s 90s now, because we have outsourced. We were the first generation that did daycare for our children. You know we are used to outsourcing landscaping services, and taking our clothes to the dry cleaners. Don't forget none of that was done by those prior generations. So I do think we are going to see some more open minds about hiring a service at this point in someone's life.

Diane Berardi [00:27:19] And now for our listeners, Mary Kay, how do they go about finding a senior move manager in their area?

Mary Kay Buysse [00:27:25] Oh that's a great question. So our Web site is NASMM.org and we have a find a senior move manager function right on our Web site. The first thing you see when you open up the Web site and you click on the map whether you know it's United States, Canada Europe, whatever. And you can put in a zip code and everybody who serves your area pops up with all their contact information. We try to make it as seamless and easy as possible.

[00:27:58] Thank you so much, Mary Kay, for being here.

Mary Kay Buysse [00:27:59] Thanks for having us. Diane.

Diane Berardi [00:28:01] This was great. Very interesting information. And I know everyone knows someone who has to move their parents. So this was excellent opportunity to them information.

[00:28:14] Parents Are Hard To Raise family, I love getting your e-mails and questions, so please keep sending them. You can reach me at Diane at Parents Are Hard To Raise dot org. Or just click the green button on our home page.

[00:28:25] Parents Are Hard To Raise is a CounterThink Media production. The music used in this broadcast was managed by Cosmo Music, New York, New York. Our New York producer is Joshua Green.

[00:28:35] Our broadcast engineer is Well Gambino. And from our London studios, the melodic voice of our announcer Miss Dolly D.

[00:28:42] We love our parents but parents sure are hard to raise.

[00:28:45] Thank you so much for listening. Till next time, may you forget everything you don't want to remember and remember everything you don't want to forget.

[00:28:53] See you again next week!