

Emily Myers ([00:00](#)):

I'm Emily Myers, and this is the Brick Underground podcast covering everything you need to know about New York city real estate. In the past few months, we've taken a look at the city's looming eviction crisis. We've considered what some of the lasting impacts of the pandemic might be on the city's real estate. We've talked about new development deals and also, what it's like to close on a property at this point in the pandemic. Well, finding a new apartment—whether you're buying or renting—might just be easier than ever right now with the emphasis on remote 3D tours that you can do from the comfort of your living room. And if you're renting the high vacancy rate, in theory, makes the process much less competitive.

Emily Myers ([00:41](#)):

But if you're anything like me, you're very happy to scroll through listings, but the idea of actually moving, fills you with dread. It's just another overwhelming task in what has been an overwhelming 12 months. So how do you move in New York city with the least stress possible? And what kind of timing should you give yourself? And also how do you get and stay organized throughout the process? Well, to help answer all those questions and more I'm joined by Janine Sarna-Jones, a certified professional organizer and the founder and president of Organize Me a company that offers move management, unpacking services, and hands-on organizing for homes and offices, Janine, hi.

Janine Sarna-Jones ([01:19](#)):

Hi. So nice to be here today.

Emily Myers ([01:22](#)):

Great to have you on the podcast. So where do we begin? I mean, I imagine there are high-end moves where you take care of everything and then other moves where clients ask you for more targeted help. So what's keeping you busy right now?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([01:37](#)):

Right now we're basically focused on move outs and estate clearances.

Emily Myers ([01:44](#)):

Okay. So what we're hearing about the exodus is, in your sort of experience, still taking place?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([01:51](#)):

To some degree. Yes. I think people who didn't flee or I guess they have fled and they're kind of making the next plan—what's the post pandemic life going to look like—they're still leaving. We've also done a few move-ins. Some people have come in and to take advantage of upsizing or just coming to New York. So yeah, that's definitely not as much as the people who've left.

Emily Myers ([02:22](#)):

So what's the first thing then to consider when you're anticipating a move in New York city?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([02:27](#)):

Basically, the details of making a move, go far beyond just finding a moving company. It's about, what's actually going to go on to the truck. What things will work in your new space? I mean, I think some people are probably looking to upsize and in which case it's easy for us, if you have more space from where you moved from. But we also, if people are coming back

into the city after being out, you know, they probably have accumulated a of stuff that they couldn't fit into their New York city footprint.

Emily Myers ([03:04](#)):

What are your tips then for people about negotiating that? I mean, is it a question of where is this couch going to fit in my new apartment or is it a case of, I need to get rid of, you know, all these books?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([03:17](#)):

It really does depend on the situation. You know, we, I can give you a couple of examples. We had a family who had renovated their apartment. They came back in the fall. They had so much stuff. You know, it was really kind of mind-boggling because I have kind of a measure of, you know, a family of four would have X amount of stuff and it could be maybe 10% more, but this was at least 50% more. And it was overwhelming to me, but we dealt with it the best that we could. And I would say that ideally, if you have a really realistic idea of how you want to live, you can do a really good job of paring it down to what's important to you and then letting go of things that you just have because you have them not because they mean anything in particular to you.

Emily Myers ([04:20](#)):

And that's interesting. So it's, it's basically excess baggage. Is there a category then where you can advise people to pare down ahead of a move?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([04:30](#)):

I would say if it's something that you don't love, like if you got a, you know, a vase from Aunt Petunia that you've never put out, it's been hidden in the closet, just in case Aunt Petunia comes to visit, which is not going to happen right now because Aunt Petunia is definitely not coming to New York city during the pandemic. Let it go.

Emily Myers ([04:52](#)):

Okay. Is that your principal decision-making tip?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([04:55](#)):

Well, I would say there's a couple of different rules of thumb that we would use. Like sometimes you'll go into someone's closet and they have memorabilia clothes, things that they would never in a million years wear. So I would say this is memorabilia. You don't have to let it go. If it's something that really like takes you back to when you were 22 and living your best life, fine! Put it in a, a box, a memorabilia box that, you know, when you go to that box, that's when you can revisit and transport yourself to a different time.

Emily Myers ([05:32](#)):

That's interesting. Actually, I can't believe I've actually done something like that because I'm normally, you know, wanting the advice, but I actually do have a box of sentimental stuff you know, from my kids and, and I went to it the other day and I was like, why is this in here? And I actually started paring down what was in my sentimental. So maybe maybe that that's helpful to someone you know, you can, you can have your box of sentimental stuff and then you can revisit it. Exactly. Okay. So obviously there are additional challenges of moving in the COVID times, you know, how do you guide your clients during this pandemic?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([06:14](#)):

For the most part, I would say it's just finding out what the building requires that can be the most complicating thing. And for us, it's also making sure that my team knows that you can walk if you don't feel safe, because it's definitely important that everyone stays safe.

Emily Myers ([06:36](#)):

How can people who are moving? How can they get ahead of some of these issues in terms of safety? Is it about going to your board and asking exactly what the moving requirements are? Those kinds of things?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([06:51](#)):

Well, if their building hasn't communicated what they are, but I can tell you, we had to move a client out of a senior apartment complex on the Upper West Side. And it wasn't until maybe a day before we were moving. And I was told "just so you know, you can only have two movers at a time in the building." Okay. What if something's really huge? And we need like three guys to move it? It was a surprise because I figured if you already knew that we were moving, we had set everything up. I had given them the certificate of insurance information for the movers, but we worked it out. So my team member stayed in the apartment to direct them. Then she would leave while they worked on what they were doing. And if they had a question, she would come back up and one of the movers would leave. It was like, it was a puzzle to answer your question, giving us the information that's required. A lot of buildings have been very good about it. They've actually written up called COVID policies.

Emily Myers ([07:58](#)):

Is there any other advice that's unique to the city here?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([08:02](#)):

You have to also think about your building and whether or not they need you to reserve the elevator and how much time do they give you? I've been in some buildings where they give you to a two hour window. It's like, "Hey, hi, how are you supposed to get all of this stuff out of this building and two hours," you know?

Emily Myers ([08:27](#)):

And is it easy to get an extension to that usually? Or...

Janine Sarna-Jones ([08:30](#)):

It depends. I say, be prepared to grease the palms of the super and the Porter who's managing the elevator, make them super happy and think that you're the best person because you appreciate them so very much.

Emily Myers ([08:47](#)):

That's great advice. Okay. So can I just see if you've got any other hacks for people who are moving in New York city at the moment?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([08:56](#)):

I would say a checklist is King. You know, we have a checklist for changing your address. You know, all the different places that you have to think of. There are so many things that you never think of. There's like the pre-move phase where you are, you haven't set a date yet, but

one of the suggestions I make is, try to move in the middle of the month if you can, not at the very beginning of the month or at the very end of the month, because those are the busiest times for movers. And ironically, I just did an interview with my, the mover that we work with a lot. And he said his January has been as busy as his June with the pandemic. It's a very strange time to move. So be prepared to wait or be prepared to do it as close as you can to the middle of the month.

Emily Myers ([09:46](#)):

Actually, you mentioned the certificate of insurance and I know that's a proof of insurance. So it means that your movers or any other company doing a major delivery or work in the apartment has an insurance policy that covers liability and loss. Is that something that you're involved at all in or is that the resident?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([10:06](#)):

No, I have managed to all of that. If if the resident hires us to help them with the process, I deal with all of the details, you know, the paperwork that's involved. There are some things obviously that I can't do, but you know, I'll spell out what they have to do. Please sign here, sign there. And then we're done.

Emily Myers ([10:26](#)):

Kind of, I guess, talking about logistics of a move. What kind of timeline should you have in mind? I mean, is there an equation for every 100 square foot factor in a certain number of days for getting organized? Is there, is there a, is there a mathematical solution to some of this or is it a bit more nuanced?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([10:44](#)):

Well, the square footage has nothing to do with it. There's basically two things. The first thing is what's the volume, 'cause it would amaze you what a person can fit into a one bedroom apartment. I mean, in some cases it could fill up a whole moving truck. So that's the first thing. The second thing it's about the decision-making—the client's ability to make decisions determines so much. It's and it's probably the most exhausting thing for people is, you know, the yes and the no, and the maybe, you know. It takes the most time and it's the most frustrating for clients because half the time they are not quite sure and haven't made a decision yet and it adds time to the project.

Emily Myers ([11:40](#)):

That's interesting, you should say that because of course COVID has created so much uncertainty with working from home and, you know, people also kind of looking for lifestyle solutions through their housing and you know, whether that's moving out of the city or finding something bigger or Jonathan Miller, the appraiser has, has talked about this co-primary residence of phenomenon where you've got sort of two options. Maybe you have an apartment in the city or a place outside and a place out city, which are both fully equipped to balance living in either place. I mean, for those who are lucky enough To do that, but, yes, decision-making has obviously been sort of upended a little bit. Do you find that that stasis like sort of inability to make decisions can kind of hamper a move?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([12:35](#)):

Yes, Absolutely. That's the simple answer. Yes. It's 'cause we, we love to have everything. So you were asking before, like how much time do you need? I say it's never too early to get in touch with me. I've had clients who didn't move for a year. One, a couple of, we moved from

on Long Island to an, from a home that they lived in for 50 years. We moved them into an apartment in Queens. I think I spoke to them two and a half years before we actually moved. It was almost three. And we would like touch base every few months, you know, to see how they were doing. There's so much stuff that has to be done and decided upon and all these little details that you would never think about. And I'd love to be involved very early on in the process in a perfect world, people who are even renovating, they would get in touch with us before they, the contractors come in to start to work.

Emily Myers ([13:40](#)):

What I'm sensing here is that yes, stuff is the big issue. Are there problems during the pandemic with getting rid of things? I mean, donations are not so easy are they? What's your advice then to people who actually want to get rid of things, but don't want to put it in a landfill, perhaps?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([13:57](#)):

It's been pretty brutal. I have to say with the donations, what we've done is we've often partner with Junkluggers. They are probably one of the greenest junk companies I've ever worked with and they actually have a warehouse where they separate through garbage from things that are donateable. And and we also do a lot of prep for them to say, you know, here's the clothing that's all donateable. And here are the books that are all donateable and here's the housewares that are all donateable. And they've been amazing. It is an investment, it does cost the client something. But if you, a lot of my clients, they do care about the landfills and don't want to just throw things in the garbage.

Emily Myers ([14:49](#)):

So we do have actually lots articles on moving, renting, buying, and selling in New York city. If you had to brickunderground.com, something we've covered in detail is actually how rent reforms two years ago should make it easier to get your security deposit back at the end of your lease. And we also have lots of articles on renovating and maximizing your space, which are important issues when you live in New York and we love answering your questions. So please do get in touch either via the website or @BrickU on Twitter and @BrickUnderground on Facebook, I'm talking to professional organizer, Janine Sarna_Jones, founder of the firm organize me, which has been moving new Yorkers for 20 years. You must have some stories...

Janine Sarna-Jones ([15:33](#)):

I love helping people with major transformational experiences and moving is probably one of the most stressful things that people can experience. And my whole motto is, you know, we want to reduce stress in the transitions. We all face.

Emily Myers ([15:52](#)):

Actually we haven't touched on kids and pets, but I'm sure they provide lots of additional situations. I mean, how, what's your advice for moving with, with I don't want to lump kids and pets together, but I'm sure they present messy situations. So how do you, what's your advice to people with, with those situations?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([16:15](#)):

Well, when it comes to kids, ideally they aren't around when it's dangerous, you know, it's best to have other plans during the moving process. I love it when people go on vacation with their families and just let us get to it. The younger, the kids are the more important it is to keep them occupied elsewhere. And for pets, you know, I've done jobs where, you know, the

movers are packing and we've got a dog that's hanging out with us, you know? So it kind of depends on, on the dog's personality, but I do know it, it's very intriguing to them. What's going on, you know, things you've moved my bed? Why? Where's my dish?

Emily Myers ([17:07](#)):

Wow. That's a interesting addition to your day when you've got to deal with the dog. What do your clients tell you that they've learned from working with you and sort of, I'm hoping that this can pass on a tip to our listeners sort of. So, you know, the next time I move, I'm doing x,y,z.

Janine Sarna-Jones ([17:25](#)):

My favorite is when people say, I never want to move again without you, but I, I love love it. When somebody comes back and says, you know, we kept the system that you guys set up for us exactly the same way. So the closet is organized exactly the same and you know, it just followed it. So some of the things that people have told us is that we helped them feel cared for. We helped them feel more relaxed through the whole process. I would say if people are getting ready to move and can't use somebody like me, they can still reach out. It doesn't have to be so torturous as long as you're methodical. And you, you know, just go through the steps. I have a checklist, you know, that I often share with clients who would prefer to do some more of the work themselves. Like a really great move is one where you did not feel stressed out about anything. And the easiest way to make that happen is to line everything up beforehand. And then when it happens, be methodical as you go through and start to set up your home for the way that it'll serve you in the future.

Emily Myers ([18:54](#)):

Actually, do you have a system whereby you, you start with the bedrooms and move to the kitchen or is there a process in which to do things?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([19:04](#)):

The kitchen is probably takes the most time of any room. It's—Unless you are a book lover and have tons and tons of books—the kitchen takes forever to kind of get everything situated into a way that you can actually find everything. One thing that we do, and I would recommend that people do, is that as you're unpacking things and put things, putting them away into cabinets, and they're not exactly in the same places where they were in your old place, put post-it notes outside of the cabinets or on the drawers. So you don't have to like search through, you know, and we do that at the end of a project. We kind of label things so that when they know where things are, they can just take the post-it notes and often chuck them.

Emily Myers ([19:53](#)):

So actually when you're unpacking boxes, do you also sort of suggest you know, just getting things in closets and then reorganizing them later?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([20:03](#)):

Yes, but generally, if, if people had things that were hung in a closet, they're going to be hung in the same position, unless your closet is vastly different than your original closet. In which case, hopefully beforehand, we've talked about where things are going to go. Some people are very, very particular about how they want their closet set up. And sometimes if they're not, the team will organize it. So it looks beautiful and color coded and everything is nicely folded and like a file. The other suggestions I make is, you know, think about the moves and parts. So there's all of this stuff that you have to get beforehand before anything happens

with movers or packing or any of that. You've got to get your stuff, your paperwork together, like find out from your insurance company, if they cover you while your stuff is in transit, or if it's in storage.

Emily Myers ([21:10](#)):

So that's something you would have to specifically ask for. That's probably not covered and you would need an extra...

Janine Sarna-Jones ([21:15](#)):

You might need to or alternatively, if you decide to buy stuff or insurance from the mover if it's, if you want the actual value of an item, if you're, it's super, super precious to you, and you're worried that it might break or be damaged, then you can purchase insurance from the mover, but you need to know what the value is. So go through and look at your stuff. The stuff that actually has some value. Write down how much, how much would it cost to replace that item. You know, so it could be, we had one client who moved here from London and we set them up and I don't know what they did, but there was this like \$6,000 table that was chipped. It was like a big gouge was taken out of it. She loved this table, but she did not purchase extra insurance for things like that. They had had it for a few years and it was 6,000 pounds. So it's not \$6,000. Yeah.

Emily Myers ([22:30](#)):

Yeah. Okay. So yeah. What was the additional advice then for, you know, very fragile items, obviously there's the insurance aspect of it?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([22:40](#)):

Well, I would say there's a couple of things. I mean, if you don't buy insurance and you don't have insurance that will cover your items while they're in transit, you get the general insurance that all movers offer, which is 60 cents per pound, 60 cents per pound will not cover all of the things that you cherish.

Emily Myers ([23:07](#)):

Wow. So review your insurance contract?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([23:11](#)):

Exactly. That, I mean, I can't say that enough. It's important to understand.

Emily Myers ([23:16](#)):

You mentioned just earlier move in parts. What do you mean by that?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([23:20](#)):

It's just like you would, with any project, you chunk it and you figure out a timeline for each piece of it. So if it's you know, prepping, getting all the paperwork together, making, checking on your insurance, doing all of that, your due diligence before you even set the moving date, that's a piece of it. That's like, what I would say is move management prep. Then there's the prepping your stuff. And that's literally going through your closets and getting rid of the stuff that you are not going to take with you. You know, going through your kitchen, whatever gadgets or items that you've never used, ever, gifts that you've been given that you hate. Do the work that's involved, which is what I call that prep. And the next phase is moving day is

different than...here in New York generally we have to have a packing day and there's a whole list of things for each day that are different. You know, just now one of my team members just called me to say, "Hey, we just swept the apartment because it's empty now." And even if you're selling a place, you need to leave at broom swept. If you're a renter, for sure, you have to leave it broom swept. So don't leave any crap anywhere around. 'Cause Then you can't get your deposit back. And then there's the unpack and organizing and putting everything away.

Emily Myers ([24:45](#)):

Actually, you did also mention that you're dealing with a lot of estate management and estate sales, I guess at this point. I mean, I imagine that's particularly difficult as a result of the pandemic. What, what are your tips?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([24:59](#)):

Well, we work a lot with executors and often they're, sometimes they're not in New York, you know, the whole process of dealing with somebody's stuff after they've passed away is incredibly stressful. And I guess some of the tips I would make are, you know, make sure that you have everything that you need. Like, we just did an estate clearance of an apartment and we were going to take the, the router and the cable box back to drop it off. And it was like pulling teeth trying to return the equipment. My client, who was the executor, we ended up, she had to then send the death certificate to Verizon Fios. I could not get a straight answer as to what we needed to do. So it took a lot longer. I would say any of us should get our stuff together and have like, this is what happens if I die list. That's my tip. It's for the people who are living, I get your stuff together. So the people have to deal with your stuff after you die, know what to do.

Emily Myers ([26:12](#)):

Wow. So, yeah, but it's interesting you saying it's, it's actually hard to even shut down some services.

Janine Sarna-Jones ([26:19](#)):

Yes.

Emily Myers ([26:19](#)):

I do think that sometimes we think of moving as a logistical feat, but it is also emotional particularly now. So do you have any other advice in terms of everyone's mental health?

Janine Sarna-Jones ([26:31](#)):

Yes. Take deep breaths. In the before-COVID I used to give my clients hugs all the time, you know, just to like buoy their spirits and help them realize that, you know, we're here for you. We're gonna make this happen. Now it's kind of like the virtual hug, you know, while wearing a mask, at least six feet apart, it's like here, I'm sending you a hug.

Emily Myers ([26:58](#)):

That's Janine Sarna-Jones, founder of Organize Me, a move management company here in New York city. Thanks so much. It's been great chatting with you.

Janine Sarna-Jones ([27:07](#)):

Same here. I really enjoyed this. I could talk about moving and all the different things that we do and help people with all day long!

Emily Myers ([27:15](#)):

I'm Emily Myers. Thank you for downloading the Brick Underground podcast. For more information, head to brickunderground.com. The podcast is produced by myself and Jenny Falcon. Terry Rogers is our executive producer.