

# FAMILY REUNION INSTITUTE'S

## STICKY REUNION SITUATION

### SAME OLD REUNION YEAR AFTER YEAR

October 2015

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#### The Situation:

Our reunion is the same year, after year, after year—which is why it's not well attended. The older family members plan the reunion and they're happy with it even though younger members have complained about there not being activities they can enjoy. How can we get them to let us help with the planning, or at least offer activities that we can enjoy?

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#### The Fix:



Doug Harris

Conduct a survey of all family members (via email and snail mail to make sure all generations are included). Ask questions such as "what reunion activities do you enjoy most?" and "what activities would you like to see added to our reunion?" When the older generation sees the number of people who want to see change, and what they've suggested, it should be persuasive. Instead of individuals saying "this is what I think," hard data from everyone can be used to plan your next reunion.

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#### The Fix:



Bruce Rush

The first thing I would do is recommend this family consider skipping a year until the next reunion. When it is held year after year, apparently too many people feel they aren't missing anything by not attending. It's much more likely that some significant family developments (e.g., deaths, births, weddings, etc.) will occur during a 2-year window.

To set about accomplishing this change to a biennial reunion, I would urge the younger generation to select a spokesperson, or group of spokespersons, to meet with who they

consider key influencers and gatekeepers in the older generation one at a time. That way, they stand a better chance of getting the elders to listen, open up, and actually embrace potential changes. Once they identify which elders will support change, get those elders to support scheduling a meeting (face-to-face or conference call). At the same time this lobbying is going on, the younger generation should endeavor to create or update a comprehensive family directory, emphasizing the collection of e-mail addresses & cell phone numbers. Such directory updating should also identify to which family generation everyone belongs. That will give young and old some sense of who their audience is.

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#### The Fix:



Sylvia  
Ford-George

A couple families facing this situation resolved it when the young folks (20-30 year-olds) planned events to take place during the reunion when there were no scheduled activities. One group planned an after-party at a family members home. The other identified local spots where they could hang out and have fun. Activities included music, food, games and dancing. The morning after, they talked about the great time they had. The elders saw how they came together to plan the event; how it seemed to bring the young folks together; and how much fun they had. This resulted in the elders feeling a little left out (how ironic), and their agreeing to listen to the young folks more in the future and let them help with the planning of reunion events.

Bottom line? Family reunions are for the whole family to enjoy, and planning members should find ways to include activities for everyone. The family reunion is a tradition and if you don't won't it to end when elders are gone, you need to find ways to encourage young folks to stay involved, and continue to build a legacy that strengthens, upholds and endures along with the family.

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