

# FAMILY REUNION INSTITUTE'S

## STICKY REUNION SITUATION

### HELP! FAMILY MEMBERS DON'T PAY UP

January 2016

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#### The Situation:

I love my family but I am so tired of dealing with them not wanting to pay for the reunion that I am really considering quitting the reunion planning team. It's too much stress. It seems like every family I know who has a reunion, has this problem. People don't go to Disney World, or the amusement parks, or a hotel thinking they don't have to pay, so why can't they pay for the family reunion—or just stay home! What can we do to make this stop. Please help.

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#### The Fix:



**Doug Harris**

My family has encountered the same situation. One way to approach this is to make the reunion "a la carte." Set a specific price for each activity, have different colored wristbands for each one, then monitor closely. Choose someone who is not "wishy-washy" and able to "speak the truth in love" to confront those who have not paid. This goes against tradition in families where the rule has been that as long as one has food (or other resources), you're obligated to share. Some people may be used to taking advantage of the kindness of family members. But times (and people) have changed. Rules must be clear, consistent, and enforced. Try to keep a balance between love and fairness for all concerned.

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#### The Fix:



**Sylvia  
Ford-George**

This is by far one of the most talked about, frustrating, mind-boggling, Sticky Reunion Situations—for families. (You don't get this much from class or professional reunions.) And usually it's the same family member or family-group that tests family bonds and boundaries. Every family has members who legitimately may not be able to pay. However, those who do this habitually know that what they're doing is wrong...they're just taking advantage.

To encourage family members to do the right thing, make sure all reunion communications clearly and frequently identify payment information and instructions. In your correspondence provide family members with an opportunity to let you know before the reunion if they need help attending so arrangements can be made ahead of time. And feel free to add a cute tagline on the correspondence that drives home the message that you're serious about being paid, such as "You gotta pay to play and stay."; "Being family is free...the reunion ain't."; "The reunion brings us together. Not paying keeps us apart."

If this doesn't work, going a-la-carte, as Doug suggests, is another way to go...as long as you have someone guarding the entrance to make sure those who have not paid don't sneak in. In addition to having someone on the door, have someone available who can pull the person aside to discuss their situation and handle it appropriately. Before the reunion, discuss possible situations and what the appropriate responses and outcomes will be. Don't forget to have a "Plan B" for those who legitimately can't pay but want in.

Two additional suggestions. 1 – Create a fund to assist or support family members who really need help. For every dollar our family raises or receives for the reunion, 25% goes to the education fund and 10% goes to a family fund to help pay for those who may need assistance. 2 - Ask family members who are financially able and willing to assist others to identify themselves early on in the planning, and contact them for support as needed.

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