

# FAMILY REUNION INSTITUTE'S

## STICKY REUNION SITUATION

### GETTING THE REUNION BACK ON TRACK

March 2016

---

#### The Situation:

We have a family reunion each year and the planning is rotated among four chapters. Two years ago the North Chapter reneged on the planning and we didn't have a reunion. Last year the South Chapter refused to invite the North Chapter, saying if they weren't going to plan it they would not be invited. The rest of the family took sides and the reunion wasn't well attended. We still haven't heard from the West Chapter regarding this year's reunion. What can we do to get the reunion and the family back on track?

---

#### The Fix:



**Suzanne  
Vargus Holloman**

We've had a similar situation in our family more than once, whereby the family members that had committed to lead the planning for the next reunion didn't follow through. Although we were all looking forward to being together, we forgave those who didn't make it happen. That's family love! I suggest that a well-respected family elder that will be viewed as objective, ask the West Chapter about the status of the planning. The elder can also mediate any hard feelings among the family regarding the last reunion.

---

#### The Fix:



**Billy Vargus**

Look, some people are planners, and some are not. Whether you're talking about extended family spread across the country, or just the people who live under the same roof, some are always going to take more responsibility than others. And while you don't want one person—or in this case, one branch or region of the family—to have to always bear the heaviest burden, it serves no purpose to punish the ones who dropped the ball. Excluding the North branch is a mistake, dividing the family, the exact opposite of the purpose of reunions in the first place. And it's not likely that the folks in the North are going to say, "Hey, we got excluded, so let's band together and offer to host the next reunion." It's far more likely that they'll react with hurt and resentment. Besides, you are punishing everyone in that group, even though some of them may have tried really hard to get the others to come together and do the work of putting on the reunion. Just move on, let the willing participants plan the next reunion, invite the Northern folk to come, eat, drink, dance and laugh and be a family. For the folks who did take the time and expend the energy to make it happen, the success of the reunion will be its own reward.

---

#### The Fix:



**Sylvia  
Ford-George**

Reunions are about keeping the family together. Sometimes, family members who we've come to count on to push forward or assist the planning of the reunion are going through personal issues that keep them from honoring obligations and commitments. Often these family members are too proud to admit they are hurting, or that they need help. And that's when other family members have to step in to keep the family in tact—and the reunion together. Call an All Chapter emergency meeting (you can meet by phone), and commit to 1-getting back to the heart of the matter—the family; and 2-planning a reunion this year, even if it's a simple one-day picnic or a two-day with a picnic and a dinner at a restaurant. Identify a common theme that the whole family can get behind (e.g., Family is Everything; We're All In This Together); and begin the work needed to restore family relationships. Don't dwell on what happened in the past and blaming one another—you've already wasted enough time with that. Ask Chapter leaders to forgive and move forward, and begin setting a good example the rest of the family can follow. Explore replacing those who won't with family members who want the reunions to successfully continue. And consider having all chapters assist with reunion planning until everything is back on track.

---