

FAMILY REUNION INSTITUTE'S

STICKY REUNION SITUATION

HELP! OUR REUNION IS GOING TO THE DOGS

July 2016

The Situation:

My cousin brought her dog to the reunion last year, saying he's like her child and he was too sad for her to leave at home. It was one of those little terrier dogs that she carried in her purse for about the first 15 minutes they were there, and then she let him out and he became a terror, chasing and barking at the younger children, getting into the food and drinks, licking everything in sight. I thought it was disgusting, and this year we stated on reunion materials that no pets were allowed. My cousin now says if her "child" can't come she's not coming. The family is divided, half didn't mind the dog but the rest did. We've been having reunions for over 20 years now without pets and we don't want to turn it into an animal reunion. If she gets to bring her dog again this year, you can bet other family members will follow suit. How can we resolve this so that everybody's happy?

The Fix:



**Suzanne
Vargus Holloman**

Of course we want as many family members at the reunion as possible and want all of the family members to feel welcomed. We also want to accommodate family members' needs. However, there are times when situations at family reunions can't be resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

When a decision can't be made that's a win for everyone, then in general the deciding factor is to make a decision that benefits the larger group rather than one individual. Quite honestly, I'm surprised that given the havoc the dog created for several family members, especially children, that you would even consider allowing the dog to attend. Keep to the "no pets allowed" policy and don't open the door to this dog or any other family members' pets. Hopefully, this family member will find other accommodations for her "child" and attend.

The Fix:



Doug Harris

I, too, agree that the good of the group must take priority over an individual. One option would be to suggest that the cousin with the terrier bring her dog with her, but not to the reunion events. The dog could stay in her room (assuming the hotel allows pets) and she could visit him every so often, perhaps with family members who would want to visit him as well. It might be a real treat (and lasting reunion memory) for children to visit the little doggie in his room.

The Fix:



Billy Vargus

"I love animals. Especially dogs. I volunteer at the local SPCA. But a reunion is for people, not animals. If your cousin is allowed to bring her pet, then other people will want to do the same, and of course, you can't say "Yes" to one and "No" to the other. And if one little terrier was able to terrorize (or is that "terrierize") the kids at the previous reunion, just imagine what would happen if that was multiplied. Even if everyone somehow controlled their pets--which you can't guarantee, as you learned the hard way--it would become more about keeping the animals in check than enjoying each other. Where do the pets go while everyone is taking a tour of historical sites, or gathering at the bowling alley?

The Reunion Committee has made a decision, and everyone has to abide by it. And if one cousin fails to show up because of that, so be it. It's better than losing the large contingent of family members who were bothered by the dog. Besides, they have doggy hotels now, where your cousin's terrier will be treated like a king or queen. (They're not cheap, but, hey, your baby is worth it, Cuz!) But it's really bigger than one person's pet, anyway--it's about the basic principle of having a set of rules, and everyone has to respect them.
