

FAMILY REUNION INSTITUTE'S

STICKY REUNION SITUATION

PLEASE STOP ASKING IF WE'RE HAVING KIDS

September 2016

The Situation:

My cousins and I love going to our family reunion and spending time with our family members. What we don't love is the family elders (of which there are many) who constantly ask us about having children so that the family line can continue.

Our grandparents had 12 children. There are 45 grandchildren, but only 30 of us have kids. The rest of us are either working or in college. We're traveling, enjoying life, and not ready to have children. It's annoying to keep being asked why we don't have kids, like there's something wrong with us. And it wouldn't be bad if they just made one comment each reunion, but they've made it a point to talk about family legacy and continuing our family line throughout the entire reunion. We're thinking of skipping the next reunion and planning a get-together for ourselves if they don't stop badgering us. How do we get them to stop?

The Fix:



Doug Harris

Perhaps the 15 members of the family who don't have children can ask for 10 minutes to speak as a group to the entire family during the reunion about how they feel when family members (young or old) ask them about having children. They should address the need to stay away from the topic of children, unless asked to comment or give advice. A spokesperson can be identified, or they can each take turns with their comments. Injecting a little humor into the message would "help the medicine go down." Most often in these situations the offending parties have no malicious intent, and have no idea that they might be stepping into "private territory," or hurting anyone's feelings. If there is a family newsletter or website, one or more of the childless members can write about this issue. My wife's best friend (also childless) suggests this response when an individual pries inappropriately: *"I'll forgive you for asking that question, if you'll forgive me for not answering."*

The Fix:



Sylvia
Ford-George

I agree with Doug that there probably is no harm intended. Elders from big families feel a sense of pride when they see all of their offspring gathered together. As years go by and the number of members begin to dwindle from the passing of some and the minimizing birthrate among others, elders begin to feel a sense of loss and wanting, and no one wants their family to "die out".

Don't stop going to the reunion. Instead, work together towards helping family members see that legacy is not just the number of members in the family, but in the work you put forth, the good that you do, the love and care you provide to one another, and the history you share.
