

# FAMILY REUNION INSTITUTE'S

## STICKY REUNION SITUATION

### SAME OLD SAME OLD

March 2017

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#### The Situation:

Is there an easy way to get my family to stop holding the reunion in the same old city, at the same old park, with the same old issues every single year? Do you have any advice to help me get them to branch out a little?

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#### The Fix:



**Doug Harris**

First, to my knowledge, there is no easy way. Assuming that the person making the inquiry has some kind of leadership role in family reunion planning, I suggest an email survey. In this age of technology, it would be the simplest thing to do. If the writer is not a leader, he or she should identify a leader open to change and work with him or her to push the survey forward. The results of the survey will speak for themselves. If the majority want to keep the meeting as they have been, so be it. If the majority wants change, hard data dispels "alternative facts" to the contrary. More than likely there already is an email list. If not, one should be built immediately.

Do's and Don'ts:

- Do not assume anything.
- Do choose wording and options that are neutral.
- Do explain that the purpose of the survey is to find out what the family is thinking.
- Do not imply or make statements that might suggest you have an agenda, such as "It's time for a change," or "We're tired of going to the same place all the time."
- Do include questions about the reunion other than location.
- Do offer an option to complete the survey anonymously.
- Do seek input and assistance from at least one or two younger family members to design and implement the survey. They provide technical expertise as well as their generation's perspective and language.
- Do not send the survey without (1) having someone who is competent proofread the survey and (2) having someone who is not on the survey team read it for clarity and any prejudicial statements.
- Do ask family members to forward the survey to other family members. If someone receives two copies of the survey as a result, that only underscores the importance of completing it.
- Do make a full report of results available to all family members.

And, if the result is that the majority of your family members are happy with the reunion as it is, plan a family vacation and invite others—who like you would prefer to go somewhere different and new—to join you.

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