

FAMILY REUNION INSTITUTE'S

STICKY REUNION SITUATION

WHAT'S YOUR FAMILY BEEF

June 2017

The Situation:

Over the last two reunions we've noticed some growing tensions between some of the teens and two of the older cousins. The older cousins (in their 40's) beef seems to be personal, over money that was borrowed and never paid back. The teens beef seems to be more normal kid stuff, although it's not something one would expect among family members. This year's reunion is in a couple of months. What can we do to settle all tensions so that everyone has a good time at the reunion.

The Fix:



Doug and Myrna Harris

It is highly unlikely that the tensions between the adults and teenagers could be resolved in two months. Most often in cases like this the issues and resentments lie beneath the surface and it is difficult to know the source, depth and breadth of what is being said. A single intervention could open a host of issues that no one is prepared to address, much less resolve. Positive messages about the family and the reunion in general can make a difference, but a serious intervention with any of the family members is not advisable. The time is too short and the information too limited.

The Fix:



**Suzanne
Vargus Holloman**

In terms of the teenagers, given it is "normal teen stuff," look for opportunities to pair the ones that are at odds with each other. For example, if you have an event with assigned seating, sit them next to each other. Assign the teens to perform chores together at the reunion. If you have any activities just for youth, add an icebreaker where all of the youth interact one-on-one with each other. These strategies may help the teens to get to know, and better appreciate, each other.

Should the ill will between the older cousins translate into a public display of animosity, you may want to consider having a beloved family elder ask them to minimize their interactions during the reunion for the sake of the family.

The Fix:



**Sylvia
Ford-George**

Unfortunately, just because you're family doesn't mean there won't be conflict or unbecoming behavior among family members. If you're lucky, beefing family members will welcome having a negotiator help settle things. If you're lucky.

With the kids, meet with them during the reunion and speak to them about being respectful and helpful to one another. Talk to them about the conflicts they face everyday and discuss resolutions. Speak to them about how family should be a safe place, a safe haven. See if that makes a difference in their behavior. Ask those who were having conflict to shake hands now that they have a better understanding of what's expected. (This is something that could be done every year to help reinforce the behavior you want to see.)

With the adults it's a little tricky. Speak to them individually to see if they're agreeable to meet to resolve the conflict for the sake of the reunion. If they are not, and you can't get them to stay home, get them to agree to squash the beef for the sake of the reunion.
