

# FAMILY REUNION INSTITUTE'S

## STICKY REUNION SITUATION

### NO TALKING ZONE

June 2018

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#### The Situation:

Help! Our reunion is turning into a no talking zone. Everybody has their face in a phone or tablet. There is no "real" interaction or conversation. How can we turn this around?

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#### The Fix:



**Suzanne  
Vargus Holloman**

Ah, the challenges of communication with today's modern day technology! Families are busy in this fast-paced society and technology can help with that. The family reunion is a time to break away from the day-to-day routine and spend quality time together. But for many, separating themselves from their device is difficult, even producing separation anxiety. So be reasonable in terms of the extent to which you expect family members to unplug. Begin to build a culture that encourages family members to unplug. When appropriate, announce once or twice during the reunion that it's time to put the devices aside. Make the announcement in a humorous fashion, maybe even accompanied by a

demonstration. With each reunion, build a stronger culture for minimizing the use of devices.

My millennial daughter, Stephanie Holloman, suggested that you try to identify activities that force the family to separate from their devices. For example outdoor activities, such as a volleyball game, will keep some family members on the move and away from their devices. Those that are watching the game will hopefully be attentive so that they don't miss any champion-level moves. And if the games are held in a remote area, there may be the unexpected bonus of limited wifi reception limiting technology usage.

Also think about ways to use technology for good. One family relayed to the Family Reunion Institute that they have an inter-generational tech activity. The youth in the family share with the elders how to better utilize the technology on their cell phones. Another idea would be to have a workshop on creating genealogy charts electronically.

And, don't forget the impact the use of technology is having on the communication skills of young adults. If you have workshops on searching for a job or on job skills, address the fact that the use of "text" language isn't appropriate in the workplace.

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#### The Fix:



**Doug Harris**

I, too, talked to family millennials. They mentioned many of the physical activities mentioned by Stephanie as a way to divert attention away from their phones. But I was also told that there have been studies to show that the "I Generation" (the one behind the millennials) actually experience physical symptoms, such as accelerated heart rate and anxiety if their phones are removed from them for even a short time. This phenomenon has become an issue in workplaces (where supervisors are between a rock and a hard place). Are they doing research on the

phone, or texting friends? It's a problem in churches as well. Are members reading scripture, or playing games? There is no pat answer to these issues. One thing is certain, though. With the I generation, it is not enough to tell them it is rude, improper, or disrespectful to be on their phones. For them cell phones are not only a lifestyle choice, but a necessity in a world where they must be in touch every moment. God forbid they should see the latest tweet after everyone else. This is the world they live in. It is what they have experienced, expect and demand. My take is that the older generation must adjust and seek ways to compromise with the younger generations. I don't know what the compromises should be, but I do know the world is changing and we must change with it.

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