

FAMILY REUNION INSTITUTE'S

STICKY REUNION SITUATION

ANNUAL THROWDOWN

August 2018

The Situation:

Two of our family members argue every time they come to the reunion. Outside of telling them not to come anymore, what can we do to prevent it?

The Fix:



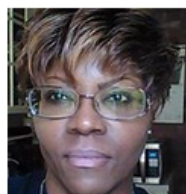
Doug and Myrna Harris

When I asked my wife what she thought of this situation her response was: "Sit back and enjoy the show." Sometimes that's all you can do, but there are other ways to address this issue. One is to have a family elder (or someone who has a good relationship with both parties) explain to them individually before the reunion that the family would like to have a peaceful reunion this year. Ask each not to respond to the taunts and provocations of the other. If the elder sees an

argument brewing between the two, then he or she should approach them with a reminder that they agreed not to fall into their old patterns.

Another suggestion is to announce to the two argument prone family members that since they argue at every reunion, the family is going to set up a fundraiser where people will bet on the day and time they will argue. My family often does 50/50 fundraiser contests where 50% of what is raised goes to the winner and the other half goes into the family reunion coffers. This runs the risk of offending the two parties, but if they have a sense of humor and are approached about it in a jovial way, you can get their cooperation. You might set it up so that if the two parties do not argue, they win the 50%.

The Fix:



**Sylvia
Ford-George**

I don't understand why someone would want to pay to attend an event, where they will purposely show their worse side, embarrass their immediate family members and themselves, and continue to be a bad role model for younger family members—year after year. We all know that family reunions can sometimes bring out the worst behaviors in some family members—but that should be the exception and not the rule. I too agree that a family elder (or a group of them) should meet with the two arguing parties and let them know their behavior is not acceptable, no longer wanted at the reunion, and if they can't behave, they should just stay home.

The elders could also try to get to the bottom of whatever the beef is about, and in doing so, may be able to help them resolve their issue.

If the family has a code of ethics it should be reviewed to see if it covers this issue, make sure it gets communicated along with other materials for the reunion. If not, (and if the family doesn't have such a code), ask the two arguing parties to help create one. Let them know that the code of ethics should encourage family members to be respectful of themselves and others. Once it's completed make sure they get a copy, understand what it means, and pledge to abide by it.

Reunions are not cheap and people often travel many miles to meet, greet and spend time with family. Sometimes the reunion is the only vacation some family members get. And while circumstances may occur to keep the event from being 100% casualty-free, that mishap should not be arguing family members.
