

FAMILY REUNION INSTITUTE'S

STICKY REUNION SITUATION

TRANSITIONING FAMILY GATHERINGS INTO A REUNION

December 2018

The Situation:

I haven't been able to convince my family to have a reunion because most of the family always gets together on major holidays. Is there something we can do during the holidays besides eating and playing games to make it more like a reunion, and help convince family members we need to have one?

The Fix:



Doug Harris

Since there is an established tradition of family gatherings on holidays, maybe you should just change the name. Rather than calling it a Reunion, why not call it (your family name) (whatever holiday) Get Together; for example: The Smith Family 4th of July Get Together (or Barbeque or Celebration). Then go through the same steps you'd take to plan a reunion, such as:

- Form a planning committee, preferably with a representative from each branch of the family.
- Contact people who have hosted holiday gatherings in the past, and get their agreement and ideas on a whole family event.

- Assign tasks.
- Gather and organize contact information for all who would be invited; develop a detailed plan for contacting everyone multiple times.
- Don't be dissuaded by people who say, "we always just made phone calls," or "we let folks know by word of mouth."
- Decide whether one, two or three days would be preferable.
- Identify a venue that would accommodate however many would be expected to attend, (past holiday gatherings were probably limited by the size of a host's home or back yard).
- Plan activities, preferably assuring there is something that would appeal to every age group.
- Think about doing something that hasn't been done before, such as reviewing family milestones, or research on family history and/or DNA, so it doesn't become just another barbeque.
- Be aware that there will always be people who resist change. You probably already know who they are, so develop strategies for getting them on board early on.

The above is not an exhaustive list, but a good way to start planning.

The Fix:



**Suzanne
Vargus Holloman**

Congratulations on your determination to have a family reunion. There's no doubt that once one occurs, your family will be grateful for your persistence!

If your family meals are held at a family member's home, you could suggest taking it to another venue, such as a park for one of the summer holidays. A park setting would provide a wider range of games for all ages. Gather the family together for a 30 minute group talk on genealogy, starting a family scholarship, health tips, etc.

Moving to a larger venue would require more of a planned effort by a small committee, introducing the concept of a committee effort. In addition, gathering the entire family for one discussion plants the idea of formal family conversations. Hopefully the family will see the benefit of a family discussion and desire to discuss more than one topic, providing the seed for a reunion.

The Fix:



**Sylvia
Ford-George**

Getting the family to commit to getting together is one of the first hurdles when planning a reunion, so let me commend you and your family members for being able to accomplish that. Now it's time for you to identify what it is about reunions that you'd like to see your family do.

It seems as if your family get-togethers cover some of the basic activities of a reunion—family, food and fun. So what do you consider the missing elements: lodging at a hotel, exploring other cities and locations; tours and sightseeing; discovering more about your family history; more days of togetherness? Once you've determined what you'd like to see happen, try to incorporate that into your holiday get-togethers by introducing/merging new activities into what your family is already doing.

Reunions are invaluable, however there is a definite price involved, so be sure to consider the cost. Keeping it at a reasonable/reachable level for all is one of the biggest reunion planning hurdles. If it's necessary to increase the cost to achieve your new activities, you'll want to do so gradually or risk the ability to get the whole family onboard.
