

FAMILY REUNION INSTITUTE'S

STICKY REUNION

GETTING CHILDREN INVOLVED IN THE PLANNING

March 2020

The Situation:

We have a lot of younger children (5-10 years old) in our family who want to be more involved in the planning of the reunion. What planning activities do you suggest would be appropriate for their age group?

The Fix:



Doug Harris

This situation is analogous to learning to ride a bike. Before you take on the full task, you need encouragement and practice with training wheels. I suggest giving the children options. For instance, would you rather have a clown come in for the Reunion, or a magician? The job for the adult planners is to make sure choices are practical. For example, the availability and cost of a clown and a magician should be determined before offering the choice. The possibility of a tie— and how it would be resolved—should be considered in advance. Should a choice be forced, should there be two events, or one be selected for the current Reunion and another for the next?

Another option for choices is kids' meal selections; e.g., chicken nuggets or hot dogs. Perhaps there could be both but rather than assume what they want, ask. You might ask which games they would like to play during special sessions. The idea is to give narrow choices; not open ended options.

The adult planners must think about (1) how they will collect the childrens' preferences, and (2) how far in advance they need the information in order to make it work. Keep the following in mind;

- Differences between 5 and 10 year olds can be significant in many areas, including recreation, entertainment and food choices, as well as communications abilities.
- Many kids are proficient at playing games on their phones and computers, but not all can actually communicate without direction.
- Parents must not only be an integral part of the process, but must help facilitate getting answers from their kids.
- The entire experience can be good for developing thinking and team-building skills.

The Fix:



**Suzanne
Vargus Holloman**

Thank you for recognizing the need to include children in the planning of your family reunion! I suggest that you start by surveying the children of the members of your planning committee as they should be readily accessible. The planning committee members can develop 4-5 key questions to ask their children and report back. The children could be asked questions about formal and informal activities. As Doug suggested, provide specific choices for the children's feedback. However, be open to additional suggestions from them.

Consider organizing a committee consisting of children to assist in making the final decision as to which activities to choose. It will probably only require one virtual meeting of the committee to

finalize the choices. Present the feedback from the informal survey of the planning committee members' children. Show the children the websites for activities, where available, to help them make their decisions. Also, ask children in the family that live in the town where the reunion will be held to participate in the meeting; if they have attended these activities, they can share their experiences.

If possible, prior to the reunion, have a fun activity for the children in the geographic areas with large concentrations of the family. As a result, it will create excitement in the children who will then look forward to gathering again at the reunion. In addition, any children coming to the reunion for the first time will already know other children – this will minimize the amount of convincing parents have to do to gain their children's interest in attending.

At the reunion, acknowledge the children's committee. This is a great way to affirm the children while preparing them to be the reunion planners of the future!

The Fix:



**Sylvia
Ford-George**

Younger family members are often very excited about the reunion. They're eager to attend, (thereby motivated to constantly inquire about it), and genuinely enthusiastic about meeting, greeting and interacting with family members. There are planning activities they can do with instruction and supervision. (Just be ready to kindly change an assignment if needed.)

Before the reunion they can suggest kid-friendly activities to occur during the reunion; remind older family members of the upcoming reunion (and ask if they turned in needed information); and get in touch with cousins their age to check that they're coming and get them hyped-up for it.

During the reunion they can be greeters; help with set-up; distribute handouts and walk gifts and awards to recipients; and help with cleaning-up. Also during the reunion, don't forget to give them kudos in front of the family, for all of their help. The goal is to encourage them now while they are interested, and hope they stay involved as they age.