

FAMILY REUNION INSTITUTE'S

STICKY REUNION SITUATION

HONORING DECEASED FAMILY MEMBERS

December 2020

The Situation:

Our family has had more than our share of Covid-19 deaths this year. We're wondering if you have any ideas or suggestions on how to honor those who have passed and to help heal the family at the next reunion (whether live or virtually).

The Fix:



Doug Harris

One of the ways to honor those who have passed would be to set up a Facebook or website page showing their photos and obituaries. Invite family members to share their thoughts, memories and stories about them. Obituaries often tell us things we didn't know about a person we may have known all our lives, and hearing stories from others about a person gives us a fuller picture of who that person was.

The Fix:



**Suzanne
Vargus Holloman**

Your concern for your family is heartwarming! The passing of a loved one is difficult; it is likely that it has been even more complex with deaths resulting from COVID-19. This is due to several reasons such as the inability of family to be with their loved ones during their illness because of coronavirus restrictions. In addition, families haven't been able to grieve and mourn their loss in traditional ways. Our traditions of collective mourning have been compromised, so you are to be commended for recognizing the special healing needs associated with these deaths.

Many families have a memorial service at their reunions. The format for the memorial services varies, but typically photos are displayed and a program book with life stories/obituaries are provided. A family member that was close to the deceased is asked to speak about them.

If the reunion is virtual, develop a virtual memory book or blog. Or you can add memories of your loved ones to your existing family Facebook page or webpage. Ask family and friends to contribute their memories and stories. [LifeWeb 360](#), is an online platform for creating memorial scrapbooks. It also provides a resource guide for families to use for conducting virtual memorial services.

You may also want to consider having a grief support meeting at the reunion. This will allow family members to support and encourage each other as well as share strategies for coping with grief.

The Fix:



**Sylvia
Ford-George**

I agree with Doug and Suzanne. Whether the death was covid-related or not, honoring family members who've passed this year is important for the healing of family members who were unable to have the homegoing services, family visits, food drop-offs and planning moments that helped provide a sense of dignity, healing and respect.

My suggestion is to plan an event or activity that celebrates your loved ones lives, rather than concentrate on the how or why of their passing. Keep it light and remember the good times. We recently celebrated the first anniversary of my sons' passing with a *Paint, Sip & Trivia* activity. We painted his picture, asked and answered questions about his life, laughed a lot, and had a great time remembering the good times we had with him. You could hold a similar activity. You could also plan a treasure hunt, asking family members to find or identify items that were near and dear to your loved one. Or, you could hold a candle light service (using flameless candles) where the individual obituaries are read and a prayer is made on behalf of the family at large. Whatever you plan, I hope it provides honor to the departed loved ones, and peace, comfort and the feeling of completeness for the family.