

# FAMILY REUNION INSTITUTE'S

## STICKY REUNION SITUATION

### TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS AT THE REUNION

March 2023

---

#### The Situation:

What suggestions do you have for keeping a family with a toxic relationship from attending the reunion? Lately chaos follows them wherever they go, but we'd like to have a safe, calm, drama-free reunion. Is it okay to not invite (or uninvite) family members, and what if they show up anyway?

---

#### The Fix:



**Doug Harris**

In my opinion it is OK to not invite (or uninvite) family members who behave the way you describe. Why should one family ruin the reunion for everyone else? However, a conversation should be had with the head(s) of the disruptive family as soon as plans are finalized, and all communications should state unequivocally that same-day registration and payment will not be honored. It's best if the person delivering the message is an acknowledged at-large family leader or elder. The following points should be made:

1. The messenger represents the family at large.
2. The pattern of chaos has been going on for XX years.
3. People have commented frequently on their behavior; it makes the majority of family members uncomfortable.
4. It's best all-around if they do not attend.
5. They are still family.

The messenger should make it clear that the purpose of the conversation is to inform, not discuss.

Identify appropriate family leader(s) or elder(s) to be on alert should they come anyway. They should be ready to restate the above points, without elaboration, and ask them to leave. If they refuse, the leader(s) or elder(s) should warn them that if chaos (i.e., drunkenness, loudness, arguments, insults, or disruption of any kind) starts, the police will be called. They should be ready to monitor and confront the disruptors at the first sign of chaos. If chaos erupts, they've been warned, and the police should be called.

There is always the unexpected. The bottom line is leaders must always be ready to do what they think is best.

---