

NATIONAL FAMILY REUNION INSTITUTE'S

STICKY REUNION SITUATION

FAMILY FEUD

NOVEMBER 2023

The Situation:

My family was scheduled to have a reunion in 2021, but the reunion got postponed due to the pandemic and we have not been able to reschedule a date since then. I'm on the committee but the reunion seems to have fallen off the agenda and the other committee members' are not talking about it. I'm frustrated. I was asked to be on the committee after some disagreements and hard feelings arose between committee members at the last held reunion. Now I'm in a predicament where I feel like I'm leading the event. I've been working hard to get my family familiar with each other and in a better place. I've even created a family GroupMe, but hardly anyone participates in the group. I'm frustrated and can't figure out why improving our family's relationships and getting on with the reunion isn't more of a priority than it is. Can you please give me some advice?

The Fix:



Doug Harris

My advice is to reach out to the younger members of your family and ask them to help you. Since this had fallen "into your lap" and working with the prior committee members seems futile, try a new approach. Set up a meeting or call young members. Ask what they want to do, how they want to be communicated with, and how they can help. Invite them to be on the Committee.

You said you tried GroupMe and few participated. Sometimes older members are reluctant to try anything new—especially when it comes to technology. GroupMe requires you to download the app. Zoom requires you set up a camera. Some old people are content to use their phone as a phone only. Period! Download, Zoom and app may be words they have heard but don't understand. Perhaps you can get young people who live near older members to volunteer to set up their phone and/or computer for the next GroupMe or Zoom meeting.

The Fix:



**Sylvia
Ford-George**

I agree with Doug. Encouraging younger family members to get involved in the planning now is necessary and important—especially if they've not taken sides on whatever the "reunion issue" is. The future of your reunions lies in their hands. That being said, there's a need to at least try to get the current planning team to reconcile and work towards rebuilding the family bond—and *the reunion*.

Whether you like it or not, I'm guessing you were asked to help out for a reason. You probably have the ability, diplomacy, leadership and/or demeanor to bring the family together to settle the issue. We don't know what situation created the disagreement, but

it does need to be resolved. The fact that the committee keeps attending meetings (even though the reunion is not on the agenda) feels like they may want to get together—but need someone to take the lead in bringing resolution to the issue so they can get back to the planning.

Without knowing what actually happened, we're unable to pinpoint an exact resolution. That being said, assuming the issue was created by one or two people (and then sides were taken), bring the initial parties together, discuss the issue, see if you can come to some common ground around resolution, and identify steps the committee needs to make to see that it doesn't happen again. Once the initial parties have made amends, speak with the larger group about how the issue will be handled going forward and have the team make a gesture of resolution to signal moving forward in peace.

We applaud you for working hard to get your family to a better place. We're sure you don't want your legacy to be that there are no more reunions. So keep working to get to that better place—no matter how bumpy the road or how long it takes.
