

Hazing Safe Environment Lesson

Outcomes

The learner will be able to:

- ✓ Identify behaviors that constitute hazing
- ✓ Develop skills that will help them avoid uncomfortable initiation behaviors
- ✓ Distinguish between the facts and the myths about hazing
- ✓ Strategize ways to initiate members into a community that are positive and growth-producing

Part One

1. Ask the students to define hazing.
In general, hazing can be defined as humiliating and dangerous activity expected of someone joining a group, regardless of the person's willingness to participate.

Lead a discussion surrounding the hazing experiences that the students have experienced or heard about. Ask the students if they have participated in any kind of hazing of another student or if they have ever been the victim of hazing. Encourage them to be specific about the behaviors they describe because everyone defines hazing differently until they have the facts.

2. Give the students the Pre-Test on Hazing.
3. Once they have taken the Pre-Test, go over these facts:

Myth # 1: Hazing is a problem for fraternities and sororities primarily.

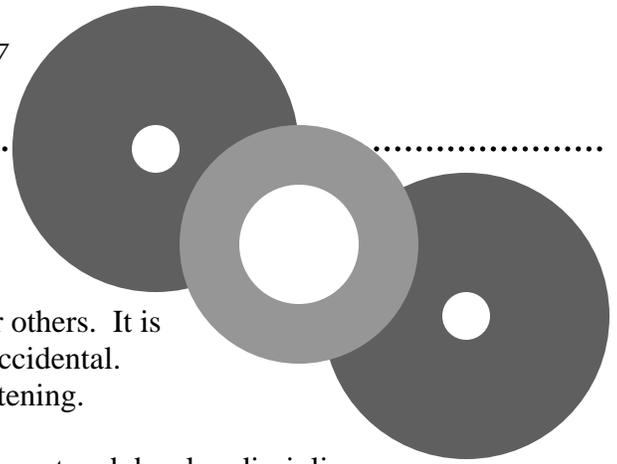
Fact: Hazing is a societal problem. Hazing incidents have been frequently documented in the military, athletic teams, marching bands, religious cults, professional schools and other types of clubs and organizations. Reports of hazing in high schools are on the rise.

Myth # 2: As long as there is no malicious intent, a little hazing should be okay.

Fact: Even if there is no malicious intent, safety may still be a factor in traditional hazing activities that are considered to be "all in good fun." For example, serious accidents have occurred during scavenger hunts and "kidnapping" trips. Besides, what purpose do such activities serve in promoting growth and development of group or team members?

Gather the following items for this lesson:

- Pens for each student
- Writing paper for each student
- Copies of Hazing Pre-test
- Bible for prayer
- Copy of prayer for each student
- Copies of articles on hazing (included at the end of this lesson.)
- "Unless a Death Occurs" video (optional)



Myth # 3: Hazing is no more than foolish pranks that go awry.

Fact: Hazing is an act of power and control over others. It is victimization. Hazing is pre-meditated and not accidental. Hazing is abusive, degrading and often life-threatening.

Myth # 4: Hazing is an effective way to teach respect and develop discipline.

Fact: First of all, respect must be earned, not taught. Victims of hazing rarely report having respect for those who have hazed them. Just like other forms of victimization, hazing breeds mistrust, apathy, and alienation.

Myth # 5: If someone agrees to participate in a hazing activity, it can't be considered hazing.

Fact: In states that have laws against hazing, consent of the victim cannot be used as a defense in a civil suit. This is because even if someone agrees to participate in a potentially dangerous or hazardous action, it may not be true consent when considering the peer pressure and desire to belong to the group.

Myth # 6: Hazing is no big deal.

Fact: Hazing is against the law and a person may be prosecuted for a misdemeanor if involved in any hazing activity.

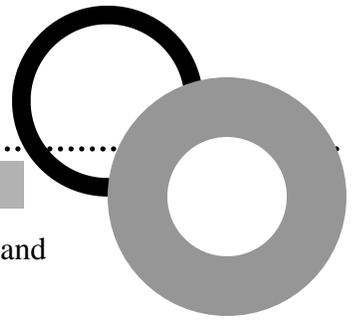
Myth # 7: It's difficult to determine whether or not certain activity is hazing. It's such a gray area sometimes.

Fact: It is not difficult to decide if an activity is hazing if you use common sense and ask yourself the following questions:

- Is alcohol involved?
- Will active/current members of the group refuse to participate with the new members and do exactly what they are being asked to do?
- Does the activity risk emotional or physical abuse?
- Is there risk of injury or a question of safety?
- Do you have any reservation describing the activity to your parents, to a teacher, or other official?
- Would you object to the activity being photographed or filmed for the newspaper or local TV news?

If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," the activity is probably hazing.

Some of this information is adapted from the web site www.stophazing.org.



Part Two

Give the group some statistics that show the extent of hazing in high schools and colleges:

- ✓ According to a study published in 2000 by Alfred University, 48% of high school students reported being subject to hazing by school groups; 43% subjected to humiliating hazing; 30% forced to perform illegal acts; both males and females were involved.
- ✓ A 1999 study of hazing in NCAA sports reported the following:
 - 79% of student athletes, or about 250,000 students, experience hazing
 - 1 in 5 students are subjected to unacceptable and potentially illegal hazing such as beatings and being tied up, being forced to destroy property, or harass others
 - 50 % were required to participate in drinking contests or alcohol-related hazing
 - 1 in 5 students participated in positive initiations such as team trips or ropes courses.
- ✓ Negative consequences of hazing:
71 % of high school students involved in hazing experience consequences such as:
 - Getting into fights
 - Being injured
 - Fighting with parents
 - Doing poorly in school
 - Hurting other people
 - Having difficulty eating, sleeping, concentrating
 - Feeling angry, confused, guilty
- ✓ No group is immune—incidence among different groups:
 - 24 %--sports
 - 16%--peer groups
 - 8 %--music, art, theater groups
 - 7%--church groups

Other Options

Option A

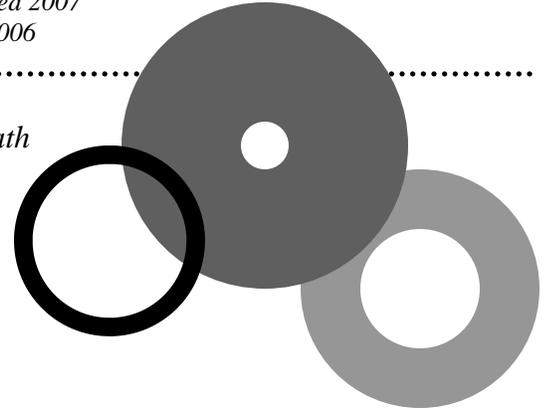
Distribute articles and/or editorials about hazing incidents. Some have been provided with this lesson, but it will be important to have current information.

Divide the students into groups if your group is large and give each group a different piece to read and discuss. No doubt there will be some disagreement over whether or not certain incidents are actually hazing. What should the punishment be, if there should be any at all?

Option B

If you are able acquire it, show the video *Unless a Death Occurs: Hazing Examined*. It is a documentary available as a DVD for \$29.95 (April 2007) from:

Kris Miller
Mountain Lake PBS
One Sesame Street
Plattsburgh, NY 12901
Phone (518) 563-9770
Fax (518) 561-1928



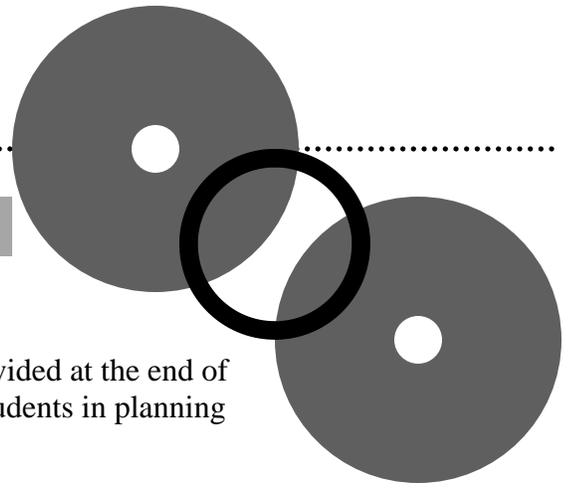
Synopsis of the video:

Unless a Death Occurs: Hazing Examined is an incisive documentary on the pervasiveness of hazing on America's high school and college campuses. In particular, this film traces the tragic steps of Walter Dean Jennings, a Plattsburgh State University freshman, who ultimately paid his tormentors the highest price for admittance into a fraternity banned by college authorities.

The story, although grim and wrought with painful scenes of violence and humiliation, is also a powerful testimony to a university's and community's pledges to not let a death occur without sustainable intervention.

Based on plea agreements structured by Richard Cantwell, District Attorney for Clinton County, New York, the film is granted unprecedented access into normally secret events. Interviews conducted with eleven fraternity brothers responsible for the hazing death of Walter Dean Jennings provide firsthand accounts of the event. It allows for in-depth analysis of the conditions that sustain hazing behavior.

The analysis is provided in part by two national experts in the field of hazing, Professor and journalist Hank Nuwer of Franklin College, along with Professor Elizabeth Allan of the University of Maine. They are supported by interviews with District Attorney Richard Cantwell; Officers of the Plattsburgh Police Department; William Laundry, Dean of Students for Plattsburgh State and many others. The documentary reflects the effort of an entire community to face tragic facts, to learn and to caution others against similar behaviors. What emerges is a passionate and emotional argument toward ending hazing in America.



Part Three

Closing Prayer:

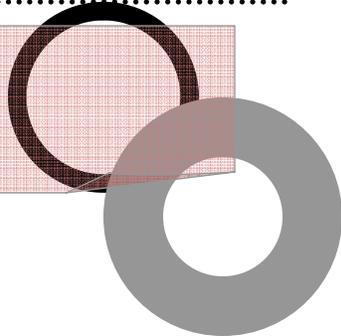
Design a prayer experience using some of the resources provided at the end of the high school lessons, You may choose to engage your students in planning this prayer experience.

Hazing Pre-Test

Write TRUE or FALSE in each blank.

1. _____ The only organization in which hazing occurs is in the military.
2. _____ Fraternities and sororities on a college campus often experience problems with hazing.
3. _____ Hazing is not usually a problem for religious groups.
4. _____ Hazing in high school is on the rise.
5. _____ Instances of hazing are usually exaggerated and made to seem worse than they are.
6. _____ Hazing amounts to foolish pranks by foolish people.
7. _____ Teaching discipline through hazing is generally very effective.
8. _____ Hazing is pre-meditated and not accidental.
9. _____ Hazing is not an effective way to teach people loyalty or respect.
10. _____ It's hard to determine whether or not certain actions can be classified as hazing.
11. _____ Hazing is against the law.
12. _____ If someone agrees to participate in a hazing activity it can't be considered hazing.
13. _____ Sometimes hazing requires people to perform illegal acts.
14. _____ One negative consequence of hazing is poor grades in school.
15. _____ An NCAA study of student athletes indicated that 79% of them experienced hazing.

Hazing Pre-Test



Answer Key

- 1.False
- 2.True
- 3.False
- 4.True
- 5.False
- 6.False
- 7.False
- 8.True
- 9.True
- 10.False
- 11.True
- 12.False
- 13.True
- 14.True
- 15.True