



DEPAUW UNIVERSITY

Est. 1837

Myths about Hazing Campus Living & Community Development

Myth: The definition is so vague that anything can be considered hazing - it's really open to interpretation.

- **Reality:** Read the definition and then ask yourself the following questions:
 - Does the activity involve mental distress such as humiliation or intimidation?
 - Does it involve physical abuse (e.g. removal of clothing, marking on the body, or sleep deprivation)?
Is there a risk of injury or a question of safety?
 - Would you have any reservations describing the activity to your parents or a university official?
 - Is alcohol involved?
 - Would you be worried if the activity was shown on the evening news?
 - If the answer to any of the above questions is "Yes," the activity is probably hazing.

Myth: New members want to be hazed.

- **Reality:** Occasionally there are new members who say they want to be hazed. But generally most do not want to be humiliated, intimidated, or physically abused. "Wanting" to be hazed usually means desiring an intense, challenging experience, or means they have the expectation that hazing is okay and needs to happen for them to be respected. It is not necessary to haze new members in order to challenge them or respect them.

Myth: Hazing only "a little bit" is not really that bad.

- **Reality:** While there are more and less severe forms of hazing, even low level hazing crosses the line. Even a "little" hazing is still hazing and can have an unintended negative impact on new members. And if the action meets the definition of hazing, the group will get in trouble if caught.

Myth: Hazing builds unity among new members.

- **Reality:** Hazing may create unity among new members, but often there are costs as well. The effect of hazing on a group can be like the effect of a hurricane on a community: residents feel closer to each other afterward but some may be suffering. Would anyone suggest that it is good for a community to be hit by a hurricane? Hazing oftentimes fosters mistrust between new and current members, leads to dissension among current members, fosters poor commitment of members who resent being hazed, and undermines long-term commitment by alumni.

Myth: Hazing is the only method for holding new members accountable.

- **Reality:** While holding new members accountable may be important, there are effective ways to do so without hazing. Effective parents, teachers, and bosses all know ways to hold others accountable without humiliating, degrading or physically hurting them. These skills can be learned.

Myth: Hazing is okay as long as it is not physically dangerous.

- **Reality:** Mental hazing can be brutal and leave lasting psychological scars. Some hazing victims report that the mental hazing they endured was worse than being physically abused. Mental or psychological hazing can lead to depression, anxiety, and even suicide.



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Myth: Hazing is a way to improve the attitude and character of a new member.

- **Reality:** Hazing often generates anger and resentment. Plus it teaches that "values" such as deception, coercion, and intimidation are acceptable means for achieving your goals.

Myth: A little hazing should be okay, as long as there's no mean-spirited or injurious intent.

- **Reality:** Regardless of intent, some group bonding activities designed to be "all in good fun" still may raise some serious safety concerns. For example, serious accidents have occurred during scavenger hunts. And when members are drunk, they sometimes subject the new members to more than they originally intended.

Myth: Hazing continues because everyone in the group supports it.

- **Reality:** Many group members may not approve of hazing but go along with the activity because they mistakenly believe everyone else agrees with it. This "reign of error" helps to perpetuate hazing. The strongest supporters of hazing are often the most vocal and dominant members.