

MYTHS & FACTS ABOUT HAZING

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

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/or organizations. Reports of hazing activities in high schools are on the rise.*

Myth #2: Hazing is no more than foolish pranks that sometimes 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 #3: As long as there's no malicious intent, a little hazing should be okay.

Fact: *Even if there's 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 the growth and development of group team members?*

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 an activity, it can't be considered hazing.

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

Myth #6: It's difficult to determine whether or not a certain activity is hazing—it's such a gray area sometimes.

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

Make the following inquiries of each activity to determine whether or not it is hazing.

1. *Is alcohol involved?*
2. *Will active/current members of the group refuse to participate with the new members and do exactly what they're being asked to do?*
3. *Does the activity risk emotional or physical abuse?*
4. *Is there risk of injury or a question of safety?*
5. *Do you have any reservation describing the activity to your parents, to a professor or university official?*

6. *Would you object to the activity being photographed for the school newspaper or filmed by the local TV news crew?*

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

Will Keim has a similar approach to making decisions about hazing:

1. *If you have to ask if it's hazing, it is.*
2. *If in doubt, call your advisor/coach/national office. If you won't pick up the phone, you have your answer. Don't B.S. yourself.*
3. *If you haze, you have low self-esteem.*
4. *If you allow hazing to occur, you are a "hazing enabler."*
5. *Failure to stop hazing will result in death...*

Will Keim, Ph.D., "The Power of Caring"