

WHAT IS HAZING?

Based on the definition provided, when does an activity cross the line into hazing? The following **three components of the definition of hazing** are key to understanding hazing:


1. **Group context** | Hazing is associated with the process of joining and maintaining membership in a group.
2. **Abusive behavior** | Hazing involves behaviors and activities that are potentially humiliating and degrading, with potential to cause physical, psychological and/or emotional harm.
3. **Regardless of an individual's willingness to participate** | The "choice" to participate in a hazing activity is deceptive because it's usually paired with peer pressure and coercive power dynamics that are common in the process of gaining membership in some groups. **Circumstances in which pressure or coercion exist can prevent true consent.**

HAZING IS...

"Hazing is any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them regardless of a person's willingness to participate."

(Allan & Madden, 2008)

WHAT MIGHT HAZING LOOK LIKE?

- Ingestion of vile substances or concoctions
 - Being awakened during the night by other members
 - Singing or chanting by yourself or with other members of a group in public in a situation that is not a related to an event, game, or practice
 - Demeaning skits
 - Associating with specific people and not others
 - Enduring harsh weather conditions without appropriate clothing
 - Drinking large amounts of alcohol to the point of getting sick or passing out
 - Sexual simulations or sex acts
 - Sleep deprivation
 - Water intoxication
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- Being screamed, yelled, or cursed at by other members
 - Wearing clothing that is humiliating and not part of a uniform
 - Paddling or whipping
 - Forced swimming



REMEMBER: Hazing is not necessarily defined by a list of behaviors or activities. Focusing solely on a list of behaviors fails to sufficiently address context and power dynamics involved.

WHAT IS HAZING?

Questions to Ask About an Event or Activity

- Is this part of gaining membership in a group?
- Could this potentially cause physical, psychological, or emotional harm, including feelings of embarrassment, humiliation, or degradation?
- What are some of the social, emotional, or personal consequences of these behaviors?
- Are people involved being pressured or coerced to participate?
- If someone doesn't want to participate, could that jeopardize their standing in the group?
- What are the power dynamics operating in the group? Are there status differences or an imbalance of power among group members involved in the activity?

Why should I care about hazing?

While hazing is done by individuals, it is part of, and shaped by, institutional and group culture.

Individual values, beliefs, behaviors, and expectations of group members influence if, when, and how hazing happens.

Conversely, whether and how hazing happens will have an effect on the values, beliefs, behaviors, and expectations of the individuals involved in an institution or group.



REMEMBER: We all have a role to play in hazing prevention.

While hazing may have the strongest impact on the people immediately involved, the people surrounding them are likely to observe and hear about it. Everyone is affected when a group, organization, or community feels potentially unsafe.

Observers of hazing can play a critical role in intervening and preventing hazing and offering support to hazing victims, as well as engaging constructively with those who instigate and perpetuate hazing.

What can you do if you observe or hear about hazing and want to speak out against and/or report hazing?

What knowledge and skills do you need to recognize hazing and intervene?

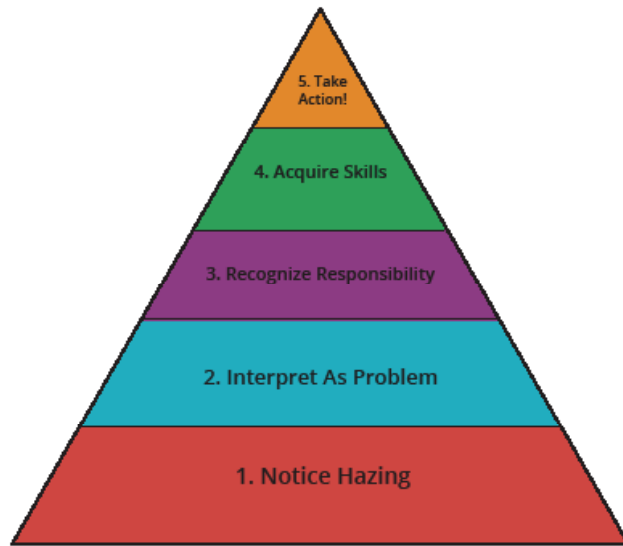


Each of us has a responsibility to make a difference by being informed about hazing and committing to hazing prevention

BYSTANDER INTERVENTION

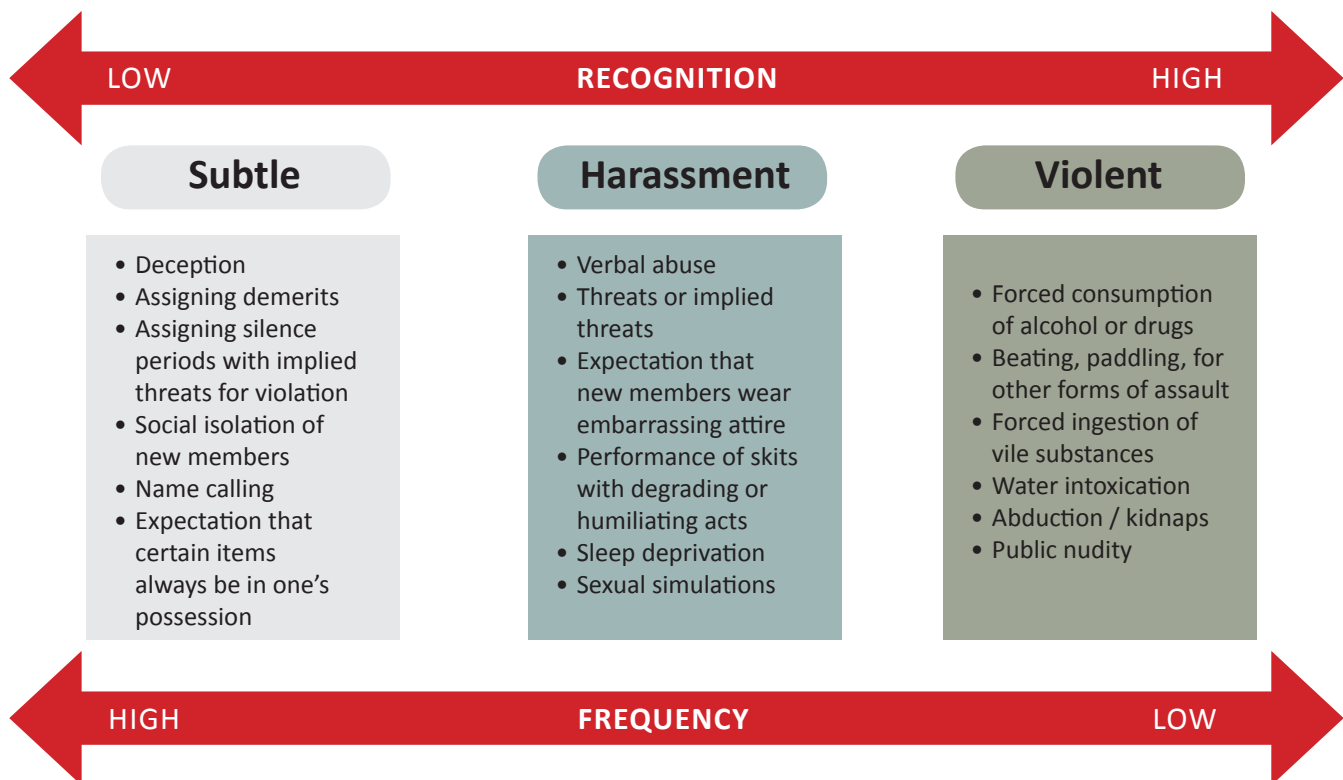
Any situation in which a person observes or hears about hazing and takes steps to support and/or prevent potential harm to those involved or to themselves is known as “bystander intervention” (Berkowitz, 2009; Stapleton & Allan, 2014).

There are five stages of bystander intervention, which build upon each other.



1. NOTICE THE BEHAVIOR

The illustration below shows the range or “spectrum” of hazing as it relates to the type and degree of harm (from subtle, to harassment, to violent), and the typical frequency and level of recognition for each type of hazing.



If we can increase **recognition** of the type of hazing that happen with the highest **frequency** -- those which tend to be minimized as a normal part of group culture -- we can increase opportunities for intervention in all types of hazing, from the subtle to the most violent. It is important to note how the arrows in the visual point in both directions. Hazing can begin at any point on the spectrum and the behaviors can continue in one or both directions.



While not all traditions or initiations will involve hazing, many warning signs and actual instances of hazing are overlooked by those in the community who have the potential to intervene and prevent harm.

Warning signs that may indicate that a person experienced hazing

- Changes in behavior and communication that may correspond with the timing of a person becoming involved with an organization
- Disrupted patterns of behavior: not attending classes, change in grades, becoming difficult to reach or other changes in patterns of communication, not coming home as/when expected, not eating meals as usual, change in personal hygiene, only associating with certain people
- Describes activities that would meet the definition of hazing, but refers to them as “traditions” or “initiations”
- Chronic fatigue
- Symptoms of depression
- Friends, roommates, staff in organization or school, parents or siblings express concerns about change in behavior
- Unusual photos posted on social media

Warning signs that may indicate hazing in organizations or institutions

- Recent official reports and conduct cases on hazing
- Unofficial reports and social media about hazing
- Reputation for hazing
- Is information about group process for induction discussed and presented publicly?
- Is there a leadership statement on hazing and is it clear and accessible?
- Is information about hazing and its prevention available or easily accessible?
- Are hazing policies and reporting procedures easily accessible and do they convey clarity and consistency of information, processes, and consequences for hazing?
- Does organization openly inform community members about hazing investigations and incidents?*
- Is information on hazing presented to members/students at orientations, college residential assistant trainings, etc.?
- Is information on hazing presented to community members (alumni, parents, local organizations, and schools?)
- Does the organization provide training programs for group staff and leadership?
- Does the organization have a committee, task force, or group established to coordinate hazing prevention efforts?

2. INTERPRET BEHAVIOR AS A PROBLEM

At its most extreme, hazing causes death and sometimes extreme physical injury. Even supposedly mild forms of hazing can cause psychological and emotional scars, many of which can be hidden or difficult to share openly with others.

Other consequences of hazing include:

- Damaged relationships
- Resentment
- Unnecessary stress
- Decrease positive learning and social interaction
- Unsafe environment in schools, campuses, and organizations
- Anger
- Mistrust
- Interference with personal growth + self-esteem
- Diminish potential benefits of participating in a group
- Loss of institutional time and resources responding to hazing incidents

3. RECOGNIZE RESPONSIBILITY TO INTERVENE

You may think it's not your place to intervene in hazing if it doesn't directly involve or affect you in an immediate way -- as in, "That's not really my business" or "I sure hope *someone* does something to make sure that doesn't happen again."

You may think there isn't anything you can do to actually make a difference to prevent hazing, as in, "What could I possibly do to get other members of my group to think about this differently?" or "Where would I even *begin* if I wanted to get my group to think differently about hazing?"



Taking responsibility to intervene in hazing involves shifting your attitude about where your responsibilities lie, not just for yourself and your own wellbeing, but also relative to other individuals, to a particular group with which you may or may not be involved, and to your community. It takes awareness of those around you and tremendous courage to believe that you can make a difference to change the culture of hazing in a group or organization. But everyone, including you, has a role to play in intervening to put a stop to hazing so that we can all live in communities shaped by mutual respect and safety.



When we expand our understanding of the problem of hazing to include the larger community - and not just a select group of individuals - we also expand the possibilities for solutions to that problem.

4. DEVELOP SKILLS TO INTERVENE SAFELY

A friend or loved one who has recently affiliated with a group is becoming increasingly distant or behaving in ways that seem out of character (e.g., change or unusual sleeping patterns, lack of hygiene, drop in grades).

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO INTERVENE?

- **Start asking questions early.** Initiate a conversation by telling the individual you have noticed a change in their behavior and you are concerned.
- **Provide information.** Discuss your understanding of hazing and the potential for harm.
- **Let the person know you care.** Share information about where to report hazing.

These conversations can increase awareness of hazing, draw attention to the problem of hazing, and illuminate a hazing culture that may not be highly visible to others.



Three methods of effective intervention include:

- Confrontation
- Shifting the focus
- Shifting attitudes

CONFRONTATION | Engage people in thinking more critically about hazing. For example, you could:

- Express concern and caring about a person and what is happening
- Talk about the specifics of why you are concerned
- Describe how what is happening makes you and others feel
- Ask the other person if they understand your point of view
- Brainstorm with the other person about what can be done to address what is going on.
- Offer support and encouragement for change
- Agree on a plan for follow-up (Berkowitz, 2009).

SHIFTING THE FOCUS | Disengage from the hazing by focusing elsewhere. For example, you could:

- If a person engages you to participate in hazing, find a way to ignore, not engage, or show that you will not participate.
- If a person persists in urging you to participate in hazing, shift attention away: change the subject and talk about something else to convey that you are not interested or available.
- When hazing comes up, reframe or revise a remark or behavior and shift attention towards positive alternatives to hazing.
- Instigate discussion about positive values and non-hazing approaches to group bonding.

SHIFTING ATTITUDES | Engage in extended discussions and trainings. This includes actions + activities that:

- Increase awareness of hazing
- Facilitate a change in a person or group's attitudes about and emotional and cognitive perceptions of hazing
- Instigate a change in an offending person or group's understanding about why hazing and their specific behavior is problematic.

IT TAKES THOUGHTFUL INTENTION AND CARE TO ENGAGE IN BYSTANDER INTERVENTION IN WAYS THAT ARE SAFE AND THAT PROMOTE THE MUTUAL RESPECT WE ALL NEED AS MEMBERS OF A GROUP OR COMMUNITY.

The following are important steps for being safe and respectful:

- 1. Take care of yourself.** Be sure you are safe. Get support from your peers or from adults as needed. Find another person to be an ally with you.
- 2. Give respect** to the other person(s) by listening to what they have to say openly and honestly.
- 3. Listen for underlying issues.** Although there is no excuse for abusive behavior, it is sometimes a sign that a person is hurting inside.
- 4. Notice what increases or decreases defensiveness.** Pay attention to responses that convey openness and willingness to listen and those that show resistance to what you are saying or doing.

CONDITIONS THAT PROMOTE EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION

- 1. Having a relationship of some kind (even temporary) with the person(s) you are confronting.** It is easier and more effective to build on a prior connection or relationship with a person or group you are trying to confront.
- 2. Seeing something that needs to be changed or improved.** Pointing to specific behaviors that are problematic and can be changed is more effective than vague, overarching, or general comments and criticisms about hazing.
- 3. Being involved in the situation in some way.** You are on more solid ground when you let people know how you are involved and that the situation matters to you.
- 4. Willing to help the person (or group) understand the effect of their behavior on you and/or others.** Show that you are willing and able to be a part of the solution.
- 5. Communicate in ways that decrease defensiveness.** Decreasing defensiveness can help others be more open to gaining understanding and insight that will help them shift their attitudes and behavior.
- 6. Engage in “open talk.”** Use a conversational style that emphasizes genuine interest and openness and conveys mutual respect and understanding

(Adapted from Berkowitz, 2009).

5. TAKE ACTION

Bystanders can intervene **directly** in an actual hazing situation AND they can intervene **indirectly** by working to disrupt attitudes, behaviors and dynamics characteristic of a hazing culture.

DIRECT INTERVENTION | Direct intervention includes actions that:

- Let others know that **you do not intend to participate** in hazing when it is taking place or could take place
- **Encourage others not to participate** in hazing
- **Discourage others who are hazing** from continuing with what they are doing
- **Pose alternatives to hazing** when members of a group are planning induction processes

INDIRECT INTERVENTION | Direct intervention includes actions that:

- **Increase discussion** about hazing and **expand awareness** so that more people notice hazing when it happens
- **Change people's understanding of hazing** as a problem.
- **Improve awareness of hazing policies** so that more people understand expectations and consequences for individuals who haze.
- **Educate about hazing prevention** and what individuals can do to address the problem of hazing.
- **Support people who experience hazing** by talking with them about what happened and connecting them to people who can help
- **Educate people who haze others** by talking with them about what happened, discussing alternatives to hazing, and connecting them to people who can help
- **Support others who want to prevent hazing** by joining with them to find solutions.

POSITIVE ALTERNATIVES TO HAZING

Attending a movie or concert together | Mentoring | **Group outings or activities like bowling or sharing a meal** | Ropes courses and problem solving games with trained professional guidance and supervision | **Leadership training that focuses on ethical leadership and positive group bonding** | Service projects that involve the whole team or membership (not just the new members) | **Physical "challenge by choice" activities, organized and facilitated by trained staff** | Attending a campus or community event together



Don't wait or hesitate to be involved in hazing prevention. Start where you are - increase your understanding of hazing. Build your awareness of hazing in your group or community. Ask questions. Begin a conversation about hazing with your peers. Implement positive alternatives to hazing. The time is now to play your part in ensuring that you, your peers, and other members of your group, organization, or community can participate in living and learning environments free from hazing.

REFERENCES & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



www.stophazing.org



www.clerycenter.org

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