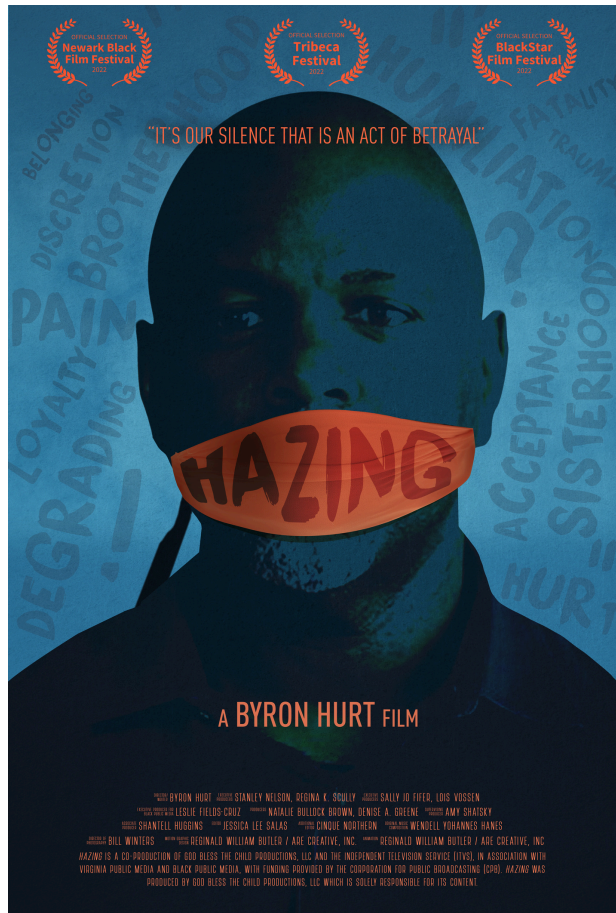




MENTAL HEALTH AND HAZING

HAZING FILM ADDENDUM





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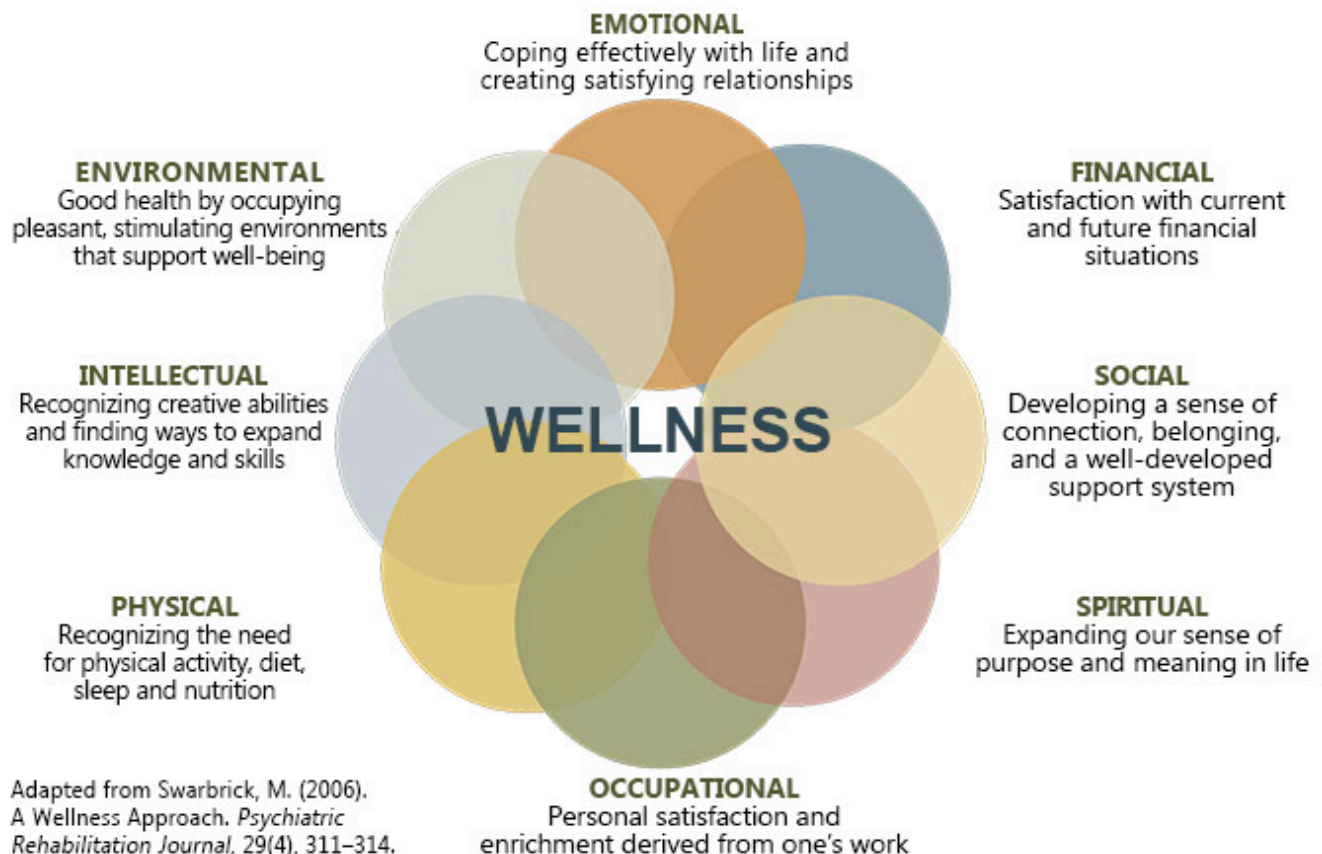
Understanding the Mental Health Impacts of Hazing

Byron Hurt's film HAZING reveals the devastating emotional and psychological effects that can be a consequence of hazing. While many think of hazing as a rite of passage, the film makes it clear that these traditions often leave lasting scars—ones that aren't always visible. Stress, anxiety, depression, and even suicidal ideation are common among those who experience hazing. The pressure to conform, the fear of exclusion, and the internal conflict between personal values and group expectations can make hazing a traumatic experience.

As the film shows, hazing isn't just about physical harm—it deeply affects mental well-being. A helpful way to understand this is through the **8 Dimensions of Wellness**, which show how hazing disrupts different areas of a person's life.

What is Wellness?

Wellness refers to overall health and well-being across multiple aspects of life, including emotional, physical, occupational, intellectual, financial, social, environmental, and spiritual dimensions. These areas are interrelated, with each dimension supporting and enhancing the others.



Hazing's Impact on the 8 Dimensions of Wellness

Hazing can negatively impact the eight dimensions of wellness, leading to potential harm. These effects may vary by individual and may include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

(Based on SAMHSA's Well-Being Wheel adapted from Swarbrick, M. (2008))

- **Social:** Strains friendships, creates pressure to conform, and makes it harder to trust others or stay connected with others. Victims may withdraw from relationships and other group commitments, fearing judgment or further harm.
- **Environmental:** Normalizes unsafe behaviors and fosters toxic group dynamics. Unsafe living or organizational meeting conditions may contribute to stress and trauma.
- **Physical:** Leads to exhaustion, sleep deprivation, injury, or long-term health problems. The body's stress response to hazing can weaken the immune system and increase susceptibility to illness.
- **Emotional:** Hazing increases stress, anxiety, and feelings of helplessness, often leading to struggles with self-worth and isolation. According to the National College Health Assessment (NCHA) Fall 2024, 45.2% of students who experienced hazing reported feeling moderate to high emotional distress.
- **Spiritual:** Can make people feel disconnected from their personal values or beliefs. Hazing may challenge an individual's moral and ethical boundaries, leading to inner conflict.
- **Occupational:** Can interfere with academics and career goals by adding unnecessary stress. The mental toll of hazing may decrease performance, absenteeism, or even dropping out.
- **Intellectual:** Can create mental fatigue, making it harder to focus or make good decisions. The fear of ongoing hazing may distract individuals from academic or personal growth opportunities. According to the National College Health Assessment (NCHA) Fall 2024, 44.1% of students who experienced hazing reported a negative impact on their academic performance.
- **Financial:** Adds costs for required activities, treatment for injuries, or therapy for trauma. Individuals may face unexpected financial burdens due to medical expenses or academic setbacks.

Hazing's Impact on the 8 Dimensions of Wellness (continued)

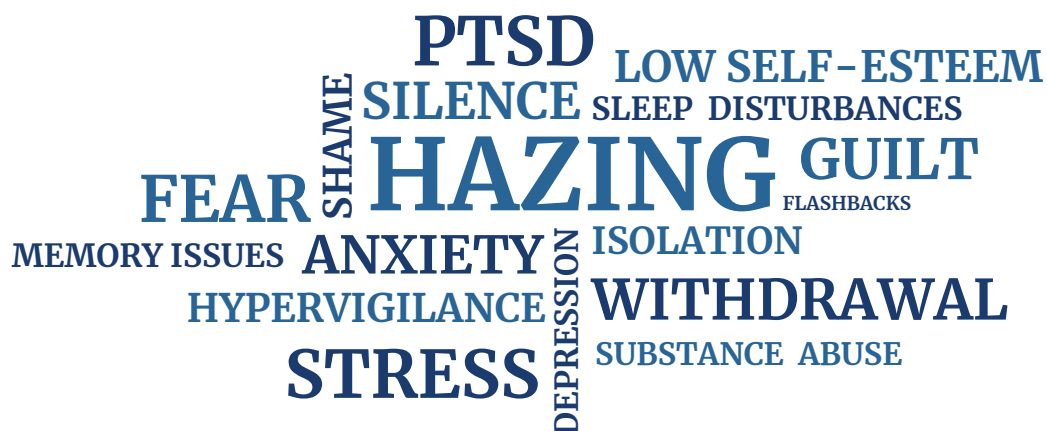
Hazing's impact on the **8 Dimensions of Wellness** illustrates the deep interconnections between hazing and well-being. When one area is compromised, such as experiencing emotional distress, it can ignite ripple effects across multiple dimensions. For example, someone suffering from anxiety due to hazing may struggle academically (intellectual), withdraw from friends (social), and lose motivation in their career or studies (occupational). Recognizing these connections reinforces why hazing prevention is essential for protecting students' holistic well-being.

The Hidden Harms of Hazing

- The psychological distress from hazing can lead to academic struggles, social withdrawal, and in some cases, mental health issues such as “Depression, post-traumatic stress, [and] poor self-esteem” (**Finkel, 2002**).
- Many people who experience hazing feel **guilt and shame**, making it harder to seek help or speak out.
- The desire for community and belonging on college campuses can create a powerful drive to participate in group traditions, even when they involve harm. The pressure to fit in and secure a sense of connection often outweighs personal concerns, making it difficult for students to opt out, even when they recognize the behavior as wrong.

Other studies show that hazing survivors often experience:

- Increased substance use and difficulty sleeping (**Allan, Kerschner, & Payne, 2019**).
- PTSD-like symptoms, including hypervigilance, flashbacks, and trust issues (**Finkel, 2002**).
- A higher likelihood of engaging in **risk-taking behaviors**, such as alcohol abuse (**Finkel, 2002**).



Mental Health and Hazing Facilitation Guide

Suggested Facilitation Format

To guide a meaningful and intentional conversation around *HAZING* (or selected clips), facilitators may consider the following flow:



1. Welcome & Framing the Session: Begin with brief introductions, an overview of the session's purpose, and setting community agreements for respectful and empathetic dialogue. Share the content advisory and remind participants to care for their mental and emotional well-being throughout.

2. Viewing the Film or Clips: Show the full documentary *Hazing* or selected clips, depending on the time available and the goals of the session. If showing only clips, consider choosing segments that align with your discussion themes.

3. Transition to Reflection & Discussion: After the film or clips, allow for a few minutes of individual reflection or journaling. This gives participants time to process before engaging in group discussion.

4. Facilitated Group Dialogue: Use the discussion questions provided (and adapted as needed) to explore reactions, themes, and personal connections. Remain flexible and responsive to the group's energy and needs.

5. Wrap-Up and Resources: Close with a reflection activity or opportunity for final thoughts. Share campus and community resources again, and thank participants for their openness and courage in engaging with a difficult topic.

Notes for Facilitator

1

- Adapt the following Activity and Discussion Questions to craft a discussion session that meets the needs of the audience and the allotted discussion time frame.
- Anticipate that participants may share personal experiences and stories related to mental health challenges.
- Remember that identities (e.g., race, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual identity), lived experiences, social and cultural dynamics shape how individuals perceive mental health and engage in discussion.
- When showing this film, it is important to create a supportive, engaging, and comfortable space. Mental health is a deeply personal and nuanced topic, and this film may evoke strong emotions in viewers.
- Share a content advisory before viewing the film, and encourage participants to prioritize their mental health and well-being throughout the discussion. Provide resources for support, such as counseling services or crisis hotlines, and remind participants that it's okay to step away if needed.
- Share campus resources, reporting avenues, and support services available to students, such as counseling centers, mental health hotlines, peer support programs, and crisis intervention options. Ensure participants know where and how to seek help if needed.

Content Advisory Sample Language

“Before we begin, we want to acknowledge that Hazing explores difficult and potentially distressing topics, including physical, emotional, and psychological harm, as well as real-life accounts of hazing-related tragedies. Some content may be upsetting or triggering. We encourage you to prioritize your mental health and well-being throughout the film and discussion. If you need to take a break or step away at any time, please do so. Support resources are available, including **[insert campus resources]**. If you or someone you know needs immediate support, you can contact the **[insert campus resource]**. Your well-being is important, and we encourage an open, respectful, and supportive conversation.”

Facilitator Checklist for HAZING Screening & Discussion

- ☐ **Prepare the Space** – Set up the room intentionally—consider lighting, seating arrangement, and access to exits for those who may need to step away. Create a welcoming environment that fosters openness and reflection. Have a plan for how you'll engage the audience, whether through icebreakers, reflection prompts, or group norms.
- ☐ **Prepare as a Facilitator** – Review all materials ahead of time, including the film or selected clips, discussion questions, and any key themes. Decide which clips/timestamps and discussion questions to prioritize, and which to include if time allows. Consider how the discussion might shift based on the group's dynamics or time constraints.
- ☐ **Prepare Support Resources** – Gather information on campus counseling centers, mental health hotlines, peer support programs, and crisis intervention options. Ensure participants know where and how to seek help if needed.
- ☐ **Share a Content Advisory** – Before the film begins, acknowledge that the content may be distressing and encourage participants to prioritize their well-being. Remind them that it's okay to step away if needed.
- ☐ **Provide Reporting Avenues** – Share information on how students can report hazing incidents confidentially or seek guidance on their options.
- ☐ **Set a Supportive Tone** – Emphasize that this is a space for learning and reflection. Encourage respectful dialogue and remind participants that everyone processes these topics differently.
- ☐ **Have Staff or Peer Support Available** – If possible, arrange for counseling staff, peer mentors, or trusted individuals to be present for support during and after the discussion.
- ☐ **Check-In Before and After** – Offer an opportunity for participants to share thoughts, feelings, or concerns before closing the session. Provide a follow-up resource list for continued support.

Mental Health & Hazing: Watch-Reflect-Discuss Activity

Throughout Hazing, Byron Hurt highlights real-life consequences of hazing on mental health. These clips can serve as starting points for deeper discussion:

- **54:30 - Summary: The secrecy surrounding hazing prevents individuals from processing their trauma, leaving them to struggle with mental health issues and isolation.**
 - *Byron Hurt: "By the time I finished my pledge process which took eight weeks, I was depressed. I was really trying to process and sort out everything that I had just experienced and there wasn't really anybody to talk to about it because you're not supposed to talk about hazing publicly."*
 - **Discussion Question:** How does the culture of silence around hazing impact the mental health of those who experience it? What can be done to create safer spaces for open conversations?
 - **1:12:42 - Summary: Many people rationalize hazing as a bonding experience, reinforcing the idea that suffering builds strength rather than recognizing its harmful effects.**
 - *"There's this internalized belief that pain makes us stronger. To tell these stories that we've survived. To go back and reminisce on it and laugh about it, to say we go through this. It's a form of trauma bonding."*
 - **Discussion Question:** How does the concept of trauma bonding make it harder to challenge hazing traditions? What are some alternative ways organizations can foster genuine connections?
 - **1:19:14 - Summary: Survivors of hazing often justify their experiences, accepting psychological harm as necessary and continuing the cycle for future members.**
 - *Dr. Stacey Patton: "Something happens in the brain where you rationalize it. Doesn't matter that I might have some psychological issues over some bad memories, maybe some bruises here or there. I am here. This worked. So let me perpetuate the cycle."*
 - **Discussion Question:** What factors contribute to individuals rationalizing and perpetuating hazing? How can this mindset be disrupted to prevent future harm?
-

Additional Discussion Questions

The following are general discussion questions that can help supplement your facilitated conversation around the film. These are flexible prompts designed to meet a range of group needs and timeframes. For each question, sample responses are provided to help facilitators anticipate themes that may arise and feel more prepared to guide a thoughtful, informed discussion. Feel free to adapt or build on these based on the tone, context, and goals of your session.

- **How do hazing experiences impact mental health in the short- and long-term? What symptoms of trauma stood out in the film?**
 - Potential Answers:
 - Short-term impacts: anxiety, depression, withdrawal, shame, guilt, and physical injuries.
 - Long-term impacts: trust issues, PTSD, substance abuse, struggle in relationships, lasting emotional distress.

Discussion Questions (*continued*):

- **Looking at the 8 Dimensions of Wellness, which areas seem to be the most affected by hazing?**

- Potential Answers:
 - Emotional: Anxiety, depression, PTSD
 - Social: Trust issues, isolation
 - Physical: Injuries, exhaustion, substance abuse
 - Intellectual: Academic struggles, disengagement
 - Spiritual: moral conflicts, loss of personal values
-

- **What are some ways that student leaders, administrators, and peers can better support mental health in hazing prevention?**

- Potential Answers:
 - Students: Encourage open conversations about mental health
 - Administrators: offer mental health support resources, provide bystander intervention training, and enforce reporting policies
 - Peers: validate experiences, encourage reaching out for help, and foster inclusion without pressure
-

- **What policies or practices would make the biggest difference in reducing hazing-related mental health issues?**

- Potential Answers:
 - Holding organizations accountable by enforcing anti-hazing policies with consequences
 - Requiring hazing prevention education that includes mental health
 - Providing anonymous reporting options to reduce fear of retaliation
 - Offering trauma-informed support services
-

- **How does the fear of social exclusion keep hazing going? What are ways to build belonging without coercion?**

- Potential Answers:
 - Why hazing continues: Fear of exclusion, fear of being judged, believe hazing the cost of belonging.
 - Belonging without coercion: Team-building activities (e.g., group dinner, group outing to a sporting event or campus performance, community service) make sure everyone feels valued/heard, making education leadership development focused.
-

Additional Key Film Clips & Discussion Prompts

The timestamps below highlight additional moments in HAZING that can serve as discussion points. Facilitators can choose which timestamps align best with their group's needs and objectives. These moments can help guide deeper conversations about the impacts of hazing, personal accountability, institutional responsibility, and cultural influences. Consider pausing at selected timestamps to check-in with participants, pose discussion questions, and encourage reflection.

- **20:12**

- *Rasheed Ali Cromwell- "People feel that in order to have some type of worth or self-value, you got to pledge to get it."; sense of belonging/sense of value/power/status*

- **Discussion Question:** How does the pressure to tie self-worth and belonging to pledging impact an individual's mental health, and how can organizations help members develop a sense of value without harmful initiation practices?

- **22:45**

- *Byron Hurt- "Of all of the Black fraternities on campus, it was commonly known that the Ques pledged the hardest. And therefore they got the most respect."*

- **Discussion Question:** How does the belief that enduring extreme pledging leads to greater respect affect the mental well-being of those undergoing hazing? What long-term psychological effects might this create?

- **23:04**

- *Byron Hurt- "I pledged for a total of eight weeks, four weeks underground and another four weeks above ground. Underground means nobody knows you're pledging."*

- **Discussion Question:** How does the secrecy surrounding underground pledging contribute to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and distress for those involved?

- **23:14**

- *Byron Hurt- "I spent many days and nights in this apartment. Our big brothers spent hours and hours making sure that our line was on point. Teaching us fraternity history and the poems that we had to memorize, but the biggest challenge to me was enduring our grueling sets."*

- **Discussion Question:** How do the mental and emotional challenges of hazing, beyond the physical aspects, affect a person's ability to cope with stress and trauma?

- **23:47**

- *"A set is where all the people who are on line or who are pleading go to a designated spot where people who are pledging them are there to challenge them."*

- **Discussion Question:** How does the structured nature of hazing rituals contribute to stress, anxiety, and a feeling of powerlessness among participants?

Additional Key Film Clips & Discussion Prompts (continued)

• 24:38

- Byron Hurt- *"If you made a mistake online, if you messed up reciting the Greek alphabet... our greeting, our big brother would devise all sorts of tortuous barbaric things to do to us and they said it was all in the effort to break us down in order to make us stronger."*
 - **Discussion Question:** How does the concept of "breaking someone down to build them up" impact their mental health, and what are the risks of normalizing emotional and psychological abuse in this process?

• 24:58

- Byron Hurt- *"As a young man, I trusted my big brother, and I believed that the risks associated with pledging were worth it, but privately, I questioned the purpose of the abuse."*
 - **Discussion Question:** How does misplaced trust in authority figures during hazing create lasting psychological distress, and what impact does this have on personal and professional relationships later in life?

• 25:06

- [song] *"Why are we beating on each other? Where did it come from? Hazing is really violence and it's dumb son. The older men move in silence, 'cause the trauma they went through was a war without the armor."*
 - **Discussion Question:** How does framing hazing as "a war without armor" reflect the trauma experienced, and what parallels can be drawn between hazing and PTSD symptoms in survivors?

• 25:43

- *"There is some incongruence in what we say we are about and what we are actually doing."*
 - **Discussion Question:** How does the cognitive dissonance between an organization's values and hazing practices affect the mental health of its members?

• 26:37

- Byron Hurt- *"It's a part of my life and my life process.. My life journey. So I don't want to reduce the pledge process to just violent hazing, you know through the process is more than just getting your ass beat. It's about bonding with a group of men who you previously didn't know and getting to know them on a very very deep, very intimate level."*
 - **Discussion Question:** How does trauma bonding affect an individual's ability to recognize and address the negative psychological effects of hazing?

• 35:46

- James Vivenzio- *"I remember one of my brothers grabbing me by the leg, begging me to take him to the hospital. The other brothers are just saying, 'he's fine.. Does this all the time. I went to high school with him. Don't worry.' When you have a kid grabbing you, begging you to take him to the hospital because he thinks he's dying like that will change you. That really will. The fact that no one would..."*
 - **Discussion Question:** How does witnessing someone in a medical crisis during hazing impact the mental health of both the individual in distress and those who feel powerless to intervene?

Additional Key Film Clips & Discussion Prompts (continued)

• 36:11

- Dr. Jackson Katz on gender dynamics- *"It's all about manhood. A lot of hazing rituals are exaggerations of some of the qualities of so-called manhood that boys and men often feel pressured to conform to."*

- **Discussion question:** How can groups challenge and dismantle gendered expectations in their traditions?

• 36:22

- Dr. Jackson Katz- *"Narratives of this are everywhere in entertainment media including Hollywood films. Boys and young men receive all sorts of messages that reinforce the idea that this is how you earn respect from other men. Prove how much of a man you are by drinking more and more and more and how much are you committed to this group? How much are you committed to being a part of this brotherhood that you'll push yourself beyond your limits?"*

- **Discussion Question:** How does the media's portrayal of masculinity and toughness contribute to the normalization of hazing, and what are the mental health consequences of internalizing these messages?

• 36:52

- Hank Nuwer- *"It's like a cult to have psychological influence over the newcomer, blending you to your ethics, your values, your principles, out of allegiance to the greater organization and the leader of that group."*

- **Discussion Question:** How does the psychological manipulation in hazing affect an individual's long-term ability to trust their own values and make independent decisions?

• 37:09

- Dr. Jackson Katz- *"And anybody who would say it's easy to just walk away. It's foolish behavior. It's obvious. They haven't been in that situation."*

- **Discussion Question:** How can individuals and organizations create pathways for members to exit harmful situations without fear of ostracism?

• 37:41

- James Vivenzio- *"If you drop out, it only makes it harder on everyone else. So you almost feel a pull from all your pledge brothers. Like, I can't leave them or else they're gonna have to go through all this and it's gonna be even harder because there's one less."*

- **Discussion Question:** How does the emotional burden of feeling responsible for one's peers create additional mental health struggles for those enduring hazing?

• 38:05

- Bryon Hurts to James Vivenzio- *"Would you do it all over again if you had the opportunity to do it again?" "Absolutely not. If I would have known everything before I signed up for KDR, I would have never signed up for KDR. I would have never even looked towards Greek Life."*

- **Discussion Question:** What factors might influence someone's decision to join a fraternity or sorority, and how can the realities of the experience impact their perspective on Fraternity and Sorority Life?

Additional Key Film Clips & Discussion Prompts (continued)

• 41:58

- Dr. Mary Madden- *"They don't want to get their other members in trouble, but more than that, there's a reward on the other side of it, which is belonging. I did what everybody else before me did in order to be a part of this organization."*
 - **Discussion Question:** How does the mental reward of "earning" membership through hazing override the psychological harm it causes, and how can this mindset be challenged?

• 48:39

- Stacy Hurt-Milner- *"There is an attack on your physical appearance, your background, where you come from,... attacking you as an individual. When you hear hazing, you think of the physical aspect. No one really thinks about the mental aspects of it."*
 - **Discussion Question:** Why is the psychological impact of hazing often overlooked, and what are the mental health consequences of verbal and emotional abuse within initiation practices?

• 52:42

- Jo Hannah Burch- *"Even being here is making me anxious" [being back at the location where she was hazed].*
 - **Discussion Question:** How can revisiting locations associated with traumatic experiences, such as where hazing occurred, impact a person's emotional well-being and healing process?

• 54:10

- Jo Hannah Burch- *"I didn't want to let my pledge sisters down so that's why I continued."*
 - **Discussion Question:** How do feelings of loyalty and group pressure contribute to an individual's decision to endure harmful hazing practices, and what are the emotional consequences of these pressures?

• 54:13

- *"After six weeks, Jo Hannah found the courage to quit but suffered depression and anxiety as a result of her experience."*
 - **Discussion Question:** How can the emotional aftermath of quitting the hazing process, such as depression and anxiety, highlight the long-term psychological impact of such experiences on individuals?

• 55:14

- Dr. Mitch Prinstein- *"The drive to fit in is real. Psychological research shows that the minute that we feel that we might be excluded, our brain sends us pretty powerful signals telling us to change our behavior immediately. Activates the same areas of pain in our brain as physical pain. Social pain=physical pain. People might engage in extreme behaviors to avoid social pain or rejection because fitting in makes us uniquely human."*
 - **Discussion Question:** How does the brain's response to social rejection contribute to an individual's willingness to endure hazing, even at the expense of their mental health?

Additional Key Film Clips & Discussion Prompts (continued)

- **55:46**
- *“Around 11-13, a change in the brain makes us interested in getting “social rewards,” aka feedback, attention, and power or dominance. It gives us a desire or craving for status.”*
 - **Discussion Question:** How does the developmental desire for social rewards, such as attention and status, influence the way individuals may engage in or tolerate harmful behaviors like hazing in order to gain acceptance or power?
- **1:02:55**
 - *Byron Hurt- “It’s gonna be painful to be rejected by this group of men who I love and I’ve known for 30 years now. So I remained quiet tonight, even though I wanted to say something. I felt paralyzed. So if it’s that challenging for me as a grown man, who’s 51 and who knows better, think about how hard it is for somebody who’s actually going through it to speak up.”*
 - **Discussion Question:** How does the fear of social rejection keep people from speaking out against hazing, and what are the mental health consequences of staying silent?
- **1:03:17**
 - *Dr. Walter Kimbrough- “Even if there isn’t a death, there are lots of other negative consequences from hazing, so those are the understudied aspects of hazing. Long-term illness, long-term injuries. We don’t really have any idea of the psychological impact of hazing.”*
 - **Discussion Question:** What are the potential long-term physical and psychological impacts of hazing that are often overlooked, and how can these be better studied and addressed in hazing prevention efforts?
- **1:03:32**
 - *Dr. Walter Kimbrough- “And I think it is presented in terms of those war stories. I think that sometimes has a negative impact because then there’s a younger generation of people who say that I want that, no matter how negative it is, to feel a part of the organization. I want to experience that too.”*
 - **Discussion Question:** How does romanticizing past hazing experiences influence younger generations’ willingness to endure psychological distress?
- **1:26:47**
 - *Brent McClanahan II- “The biggest out I had, man, I try to commit suicide. I was tired... It was just too overwhelming for me. And it wasn’t that I wasn’t trying. There was no trying with me. I actually put the bullet in the chamber, and I pulled that trigger. When that bullet jammed in the gun, that’s when I finally realized, okay, maybe I’m here for a reason.”*
 - **Discussion Question:** How can the emotional and psychological toll of hazing, such as feelings of hopelessness and despair, lead individuals to contemplate extreme actions like suicide, and what can be done to provide support and intervention before reaching such a point?

Final Reflection Prompt

After watching *HAZING* and engaging in discussion, take a moment to reflect on what stood out to you most. How has this film challenged or deepened your understanding of hazing and its impact? What steps can you take, individually or within your community, to help shift the culture and promote safer, more inclusive traditions?

As an action step, identify one concrete way you can contribute to ending hazing—whether it’s speaking up when you see harmful behaviors, educating others about the risks, advocating for policy changes, or creating new traditions that foster belonging without harm. What’s one thing you will commit to doing moving forward?

Final Thought

Byron Hurt’s *HAZING* shows us that hazing isn’t just about individual choices—it’s a cultural problem that we all have the power to change. Ending hazing starts with rethinking traditions, challenging toxic norms, and finding new ways to create meaningful connections. Mental health should never be the price of belonging. As we continue these conversations, let’s commit to fostering organizations that prioritize inclusion, safety, and true community—without harm.

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If you have any questions about this resource, reach out to StopHazing at info@stophazing.org.

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