

# HAZING

## Alternatives to Hazing to Promote Group Bonding

Some students who haze contend that hazing results in positive outcomes for:

- the group (e.g., *increased closeness*)
- the individuals who are hazed (e.g., *personal growth from overcoming challenges*), and
- individuals who engage in hazing (e.g., *pride in continuing traditions*)

However, hazing is not guaranteed to achieve these outcomes and always carries the risk of negative effects. By contrast, non-hazing activities exist that do achieve the positive outcomes while avoiding the risks of hazing.

### Positive strategies for achieving group unity

Strong group unity and a sense of individual accomplishment are important for groups throughout society to achieve. Many businesses, for example, invest considerable resources to foster effective group processes and enhance individual motivation. And they generally do so through positive, encouraging strategies that build people up rather than tearing them down.

Let's say you are a proponent of hazing. Now imagine that you have graduated and are in your first job as a sales representative for a major corporation. At a staff meeting your boss asks for suggestions on how to strengthen the functioning of the sales team. You recommend that he blindfold the team members, make them form a line, and then scream insults and threats at each of them. Would you argue that such an exercise would lead to increased sales? Wouldn't it be better if you could recommend a set of constructive, group-building strategies that you learned as a member of a group while in school?

### Failure to change ... a failure of imagination

Some members of groups that haze say that one of the biggest barriers to changing their practices is that they don't know what else they could do that would accomplish their goals.



*How can you create the most positive outcomes for your group, team, or organization?*

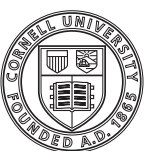
However, if their goals are to increase group unity, promote individual growth, instill positive values, and foster an identity with the group, then there are options.

A program of activities aimed at replacing hazing will likely need to incorporate some level of challenge or intensity. It may also need to incorporate non-hazing mechanisms of self-governance for holding new members accountable to the expectations of the group.

### Better ways to bond

Please keep these things in mind as you plan activities:

- Some of the activities listed below may be more relevant to groups of a particular gender or to a particular kind of group. No one strategy works for every group.
- Activities cannot include consumption of alcohol or other drugs by new members.
- Traditions can be created as well as inherited. While the first year of an activity doesn't constitute a tradition, future cohorts of members will see it that way.



- Some group activities can be non-hazing or hazing, depending on how they are done. For example, having new members do skits can be a non-hazing activity, but if members verbally degrade the performers or throw food at them, then it is a hazing activity. Similarly, scavenger hunts are not inherently forms of hazing (as any day camp counselor can tell you). But when the list includes things that must be stolen or would likely be humiliating or embarrassing to obtain, then it becomes hazing.
- Having current members participate along with new members in certain activities, such as cleaning the chapter property, can shift the activity from being hazing (i.e., servitude) to non-hazing.
- Sorority & Fraternity Life has a fund established by Tony Cashen '57 which provides grants of up to \$300 for chapters to use for non-hazing group-building activities.

### Community service & philanthropy

- Divide the new members into two groups with current members as team leaders and conduct a Collegetown clean-up on a Saturday morning. Contact your Common Council representatives to let them know about your good work.
- Serve meals once a week to homeless community members at Loaves and Fishes, or distribute food through the local food pantry.
- Require new members to perform a set amount of community service hours in support of community agencies. Have the new members appoint leaders within their group and develop a plan through On Site Volunteer Services or Cornell's Public Service Center.
- New members collect money on Ho Plaza to give to the International Red Cross' disaster relief efforts.

### Service learning trips

- New members and selected current members spend spring break working in an underserved community building a home with Habitat for Humanity. Use the first half of the spring semester to plan the trip and learn about the community you will be serving. Have current members with construction skills conduct workshops for new members to enhance their abilities.
- Work with Cornell's Public Service Center to explore service learning opportunities.

### Mentoring

- Set up a "big brother/big sister" mentoring program. Assign the mentor responsibility for teaching about the values of the organization and monitoring the new member's participation and academic performance (to ensure expectations are met).
- Have the mentor take the new member out to dinner or to an athletic, entertainment, or cultural event at least three times.

### Entertainment

- Put on a talent show. Include categories such as karaoke singing, instrumental music, skits, impersonations, and magic tricks. Since it is not the new members' responsibility to entertain the members, have willing members from each year participate and entertain each other.
- Hold a movie night for new members in the Helen Newman Hall swimming pool. Show "Jaws."

### Share common activities

- Have new members join members for meals 2-3 times a week. Have new members sit by themselves and talk freely with each other. As initiation day approaches, invite them to sit with current members once a week symbolizing their gradual entry into full membership.

- Have new members sit comfortably in a circle for two hours in a dark room with only a single candle for light in the center of the circle. Provide the group with discussion questions that they are expected to talk about. Start with non-threatening questions or incomplete statements (e.g., "If I had a billion dollars, I would . . .") and end with more probing ones (e.g., "I'm afraid that . . ." or "If I could live my life over I would . . ."). Option: have each member write a question on a card and put it in a question box. Select one question at a time and discuss it.
- Hold study hours in which new members are expected to be present and studying with current members. At the end of a study period, order pizza.
- Divide new members into two teams. Give them each a box full of miscellaneous materials. Give them one hour to devise a competitive game using all of the items (only rules: everyone must be involved in the planning and no one can get hurt). Have the two teams compete against each other.

### Road trips

- Have members go with new members to Lake Placid for a weekend of skiing (and a ride on the Olympic bobsled run) or travel to New York for a networking meeting with alumni. Rent a bus for the trip.

### Rituals

- Hold formal initiation rites that have a quality of solemnity. Formal attire, candlelight, and symbolic actions (e.g., taking an oath or signing a document) may be integrated into the ritual.
- Invite alumni to address the new member group as part of the initiation. Have representatives from the new member group speak about the meaning of their experience and hopes for the future.

### Accountability practices

- Have each new member meet with his or her mentor weekly to review the new member's knowledge of the group and its members.
- Provide written guidelines for new members outlining the expectations of the group.
- Hold new member review panels periodically in which a small group of members discusses the new member's progress with them. If deficiencies or a lack of commitment is noted, the panel places the new member on probation.
- In serious situations, the organization determines whether or not to terminate the relationship with the new member.

### Outdoor challenges

- Have Cornell Outdoor Education (COE) staff lead new members through exercises at the university's state-of-the-art challenge course (or indoors at the climbing wall).
- Take new members winter camping. Have teams of new members build snow caves to sleep in. Plan the event with guidance and equipment from COE to ensure safety.
- On a snowy weekend divide new members into teams and provide them with cross country skis from COE. Give each team a set of clues to find containers hidden throughout the Cornell golf course. Each container contains a piece of paper with a word on it. The teams must collect all the words and determine the phrase that they form (which is a statement reflecting the underlying values of the group).

### Athletic competitions

- Have new members compete in basketball, volleyball or softball against current members or other groups.

- Have new members compete against current members in bowling at Atlas Bowl, Ides Lanes, or Helen Newman Hall (catch: everyone must use their non-dominant hand).
- Have new members compete against members in laser tag or paint ball.

### History and values exercises

- Have new members learn about the history underlying values of the organization. Divide them into groups and have them prepare Powerpoint presentations about the organization. Make the presentations preparation for the work world by having current members dress formally and inviting alumni to attend.
- Have new members conduct 20 minute interviews with subsets of current members to learn about their backgrounds and beliefs. Hold new member meetings in which each new member delivers a report on his/her interviews in order to "introduce" the members who have been interviewed.
- Have current members and alumni speak to current members about the values of the group and what they hope the new members will contribute and receive as part their experience.

### Resources

- **Campus Activities:** *ccengagement.cornell.edu/campus-activities;* 607-255-4169
- **Cornell Greek Leadership Academy:** *teambuilding@cornell.edu; ct/c.cornell.edu/programs/greek/greek-leadership-academy;* 607-254-4897
- **Cornell Outdoor Education (COE):** *coe.cornell.edu;* 607-255-6183
- **Skorton Center for Health Initiatives:** *health.cornell.edu/skortoncenter;* 607-255-4782
- **Sorority and Fraternity Life:** *greeks@cornell.edu*

*This information is provided by the Skorton Center for Health Initiatives at Cornell Health. [health.cornell.edu/skortoncenter](http://health.cornell.edu/skortoncenter), 607-255-4782.*

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