



Facts About Hazing

Hazing happens when the conduct of others threatens or causes physical or emotional injury to a person as a condition of being accepted into a group or team.

Certain aspects of this behavior—the abuse and imbalance of power; intentional harm doing; repetition—tell us that **hazing is a type of bullying**. Hazing is bullying with a group dynamic and may occur due to institutional indifference or a lack of awareness regarding the practice.

Hazing is considered a felony in several U.S. states, and anti-hazing legislation has been proposed in other states. Hazing incidents have often become high-profile news stories and controversial court cases.

Some of the teen groups that may practice hazing include:

- ◆ Clubs
- ◆ Sports teams
- ◆ Leadership groups
- ◆ Cheer and spirit groups
- ◆ Bands
- ◆ Military groups
- ◆ Special activity groups
- ◆ Gangs
- ◆ Church groups
- ◆ Grade level groups (Upper classmen or older students)

The practice of hazing is not confined to a single gender. It is practiced in aggressive and brutal ways by both boys and girls.

There are some adults who coach, direct or supervise teen activities who also use hazing practices to team build, discipline and manage the groups they are in charge of.

Experts at stophazing.org have determined that hazing can occur on a variety of levels:

- ◆ **Subtle acts of hazing:** *These behaviors may seem harmless to some with no serious consequences or be considered annoying or silly. At minimum the acts still break reasonable standards of trust, respect and personal dignity. The acts may include: social isolation; depriving standard group privileges; assigning demeaning names; openly embarrassing; ridicule; put-downs; playful threats; causing feelings of annoyance, intimidation or discomfort; expecting demonstrations of loyalty.*
- ◆ **Harassment Hazing:** *These behaviors cause emotional or physical distress. Depending on the target's perceptions and end results, these acts could rise to the level of violent hazing. The acts may include direct threats; verbal abuse; sexual innuendo; aggressive name calling; directing crude or humiliating acts in public; requiring servitude; expecting demonstrations of compliance.*
- ◆ **Violent Hazing:** *These behaviors are more likely to cause immediate or long-term physical or emotional injury or harm, disability or even death. The acts may be criminal in nature, and include: forced or excessive consumption of alcohol, water or other substances; dangerous dares or high risk physical activities; nudity; sexual assault; theft; threats of blackmail; destruction of property; injury of a person or animal; exposure to extreme weather; demonstrations of loyalty, compliance and secrecy.*

Hazing activities that involve alcohol are always more dangerous. Alcohol affects the reasoning and judgment of those involved. Dangerous risk-taking increases on both the part of



those conducting the hazing and those being hazed. Overconsumption of alcohol in a short period of time has resulted in death by alcohol poisoning.

Hazing can have consequences of injury, loss and damages for many different people:

- ◆ **Victims of hazing:** *shame; humiliation; anger; mental anguish; physical injury; disability; death; a criminal record*
- ◆ **Those who haze:** *school or team suspensions; expulsions; criminal charges; sexual abuse charges; juvenile detention; incarceration; lost scholarships or school privileges; civil suits; loss of future opportunities*
- ◆ **Parents of the victims or those who haze:** *anguish; anger; frustration; loss of a child to death or to criminal charges; time-consuming and costly criminal trials or civil suits; judgment or rejection by other families for reporting or for having children who participated in hazing*
- ◆ **Adults who are in charge of teen groups that haze:** *suspension; lost jobs; criminal and civil suits; costly settlements; ruined careers and tarnished reputations*
- ◆ **Schools where hazing happens:** *damaged reputation; loss of trust, respect and loyalty of teens, parents and the community; diminished student programs or activities; suspensions from sports leagues; loss of winning records; loss of personnel; high profile court cases and costly settlements*

Acts of violence that may be a part of hazing can inspire:

- ◆ Secrecy, resentment
- ◆ Distrust, disrespect
- ◆ Anger, disillusionment
- ◆ Shame, fear, remorse
- ◆ Traditions and cycle of violence
- ◆ Irreversible damages and losses, including deaths

Hazing is promoted by certain kinds of attitudes:

- ◆ **Adults who condone hazing may think:**
 - It happened to me and I survived.
 - This is a tradition and outsiders just don't get it!
 - This is the way you build a team and loyalty
 - I can't/don't want to be the one to question a tradition.
- ◆ **Teens who have been hazed may think:**
 - I proved myself, I showed courage, I did what it took to belong
 - I earned my place, I earned something special
 - I can't change how things are done
 - I am bonded by a secret
 - Next time I get to do the hazing...it will help me feel better
- ◆ **Teens who are doing the hazing may think:**
 - It was done to me and now it is my turn to do it to others
 - This is a tradition, what's the big deal?,
 - This is the only way to prove a person's is worthy and loyal
 - I can't change how things are done, I'm just going along with the group
 - It's supposed to be a secret
 - I'm safe I already belong



Teens that have been hazed often continue on to haze others, to be able to do to others what was done to them. Some see it as a way to soothe or justify their own experiences. Others don't believe in or want to participate in the hazing of others, but do so under coercion or threats from the group. Shame can also play a role in hazing as many teens continue to participate in the practice to avoid the exposure of what was done to them—all in the name of belonging.

Get Connected. Visit StopHazing.org --an on-line resource for accurate, up-to-date hazing information for students, parents, and educators. The site offers an extensive links page to begin and support your search for more information regarding hazing.

Read about hazing in any of researcher Hank Nuwer's books, including *High School Hazing*, a resource that relates the problem of hazing to public schools and teens ages 13-17.

Six Key Actions to Help PREVENT and STOP Hazing:

1. **Don't ignore or deny rumors about hazing** that may be happening at your school.
2. **Open exploratory and informational conversations** about hazing with other adults and teens at your school to find out if you have a problem.
3. **Don't make excuses for hazing or defend it by calling it a tradition.** Hazing is dangerous, may be illegal in your state and comes with serious consequences for everyone who is directly involved or allows it to happen.
4. **Make or take a stand** against hazing with other adults (including parents) and teens at your school.
5. **Help teens face their moment of truth.** If they know they may be secretly subjected to the unsanctioned practice of hazing they must be ready to ask themselves if they can honestly trust the group not to:
 - ◆ Abuse them in emotional, physical or sexual ways.
 - ◆ Expect their loyalty at a personal price.
 - ◆ Encourage them to break the law.
 - ◆ Expect them to damage property.
 - ◆ Ask them to hurt other people or animals.
 - ◆ Risk their lives.
 - ◆ Use alcohol to make them sick or more reckless.
 - ◆ Blackmail them
 - ◆ Demand their secrecy to hide the dangerous and disrespectful things that have been done to them or others in the name of loyalty and belonging.
6. **Report hazing when it happens.** Reporting hazing can be a very difficult but courageous thing to do. Any adult or teen in a school community, who takes a stand against the dangerous, undignified and in some cases illegal treatment of others is helping to prevent the potential consequences of physical or emotional injury, death, personal loss and financial damages. Reporting hazing when it happens can help prevent or break the cycle



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