

ALTERNATIVES TO HAZING

Sometimes, organizations that haze new members are confused about how to change these practices. There are many creative ways to change from a hazing to a non-hazing organization. The following are some specific examples of ways to eliminate hazing and make membership a challenging but positive experience:

When organizations are challenged to eliminate hazing practices, some members are often resistant to this change. In many cases, those who are most vocal against eliminating hazing are those who are bitter and angry about the hazing that they themselves endured (but don't admit this publicly) and expect that others should be abused in order to gain "true" membership in the group. You will also find that some of these folks are likely to be bullies of the group--people who enjoy a "power trip" at the expense of someone else.

Of course, if you try to eliminate hazing in your organization, you will likely encounter many elaborate reasons for why this will be devastating for your group. While there will be some staunch supporters of the status quo, there will be many who can be convinced of the negative effects and potential risks of hazing. Believers in the supposed "benefits" of hazing may be more likely to change their opinion if they can envision some alternatives. The supposed "benefits" of hazing follow in bold with non-hazing alternatives to accomplish the same goal listed alongside.

1. FOSTER UNITY: Have the members of your team/group/organization work together on a community service project. Visit a ropes course to work on group cohesiveness, communication and leadership skills. The group might work together on a facility or grounds improvement project. Another option for fostering unity without hazing is for the members to work together to plan a social or athletic event with another group. Plan a retreat of several days or one day for members to get to know each other.

2. DEVELOP PROBLEM-SOLVING ABILITIES: Have new members involved in discussions about team/club/group challenges and ideas to improve.

3. DEVELOP LEADERSHIP SKILLS: Encourage participation in activities outside of the organization. Encourage new members to get involved in organizational committees and/or leadership roles. Develop a peer mentor program within your group for leadership roles. Invite school/community/business leaders into the organization to share their experiences.

5. INSTILL A SENSE OF MEMBERSHIP/LOYALTY: Plan special events when the entire chapter gets together to attend a movie, play, or church service. Plan a "membership/players circle" where team or club members have a chance to express what membership/involvement means to them.

2. PROMOTE SCHOLARSHIP: Take advantage of your school/college/ university academic and tutoring services. Designate study hours for members of your organization. Invite school/college/university or community experts to discuss test-taking skills, study methods, time management etc.

6. BUILD AWARENESS OF TEAM OR CLUB HISTORY: Invite an older member to talk about the team or organizations early days, its founding, special traditions, and prominent former members.

7. KNOWLEDGE OF THE SPORT SYSTEM: Invite leaders of local, provincial or national sport governing bodies to talk about the overall sport governance system in their community, province and country.

8. AID CAREER GOALS: Use community and college resources for seminars on resume writing, job interview skills; various careers.

9. INVOLVE ATHLETES/PARTICIPANTS IN THE COMMUNITY: Get involved with campus and community service projects. Plan fund-raisers for local charitable organizations.

10. IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH OTHER ATHLETES: Encourage new members to plan social or service projects with others; work together to plan joint social or service activities.

Adapted from stophazing.org by Bruce Wood M.A., RespecED for Sport, Culture and Recreation