

Opposed To Hazing

I am opposed to hazing. I wish I could say that it doesn't work. Unfortunately, it often does. No sense in trying to debate why here. But it has too many negative side effects. True, minor hazing does not have the same risks as major hazing does. Whatever "minor" or "major" means. The problem with hazing is the paradigm it is based on. Until that is corrected, it will only continue. Let's use the analogy of a man who considers women to be sex objects. Put him in a work environment that has a certain number of women. Over time, his paradigm will result in certain behaviors that will lead to problems. There are bound to be certain behaviors to which some of the ladies actually react positively. Or at least appear so. But others will take offense. Now, is it the ladies who take offense who are in the wrong? How about the ladies who reacted positively to "minor" sexually overtone behaviors? Thus encouraged, he advances to more "aggressive" behavior. Where does it stop? If a particular woman is fearful of losing her job and does not report the behavior is she at fault? Is she the problem?

A different thought. If hazing is how we teach respect and love, should individuals haze their fiancé or fiancée? How about making them shine our shoes? How many pushups will convince us that they love us? Maybe having them eat some concoction until they puke will endear us to them. Certainly they need to be carrying a gig book. If all that sounds wrong, then you get my point. Whether it is marriage or brotherhood (sisterhood), we are talking about a lifelong relationship. Why do we think hazing is right in one and wrong in the other?

One more thought. How about our Founders? Delta Chi's 11 Founders were not hazed. Are they individually any less of a Delta Chi because of that? How about at the chapter level? Are those Founders not "real" Delta Chis? To say in response that what they experienced was a form of hazing is simply wrong thinking and a disservice to them.

I have a saying that fraternity (sorority) is about nurturing brotherhood (sisterhood), not testing it.

While I could go on, I really doubt if I can change the mindset of those who haze. I wish I could. For those who are opposed to hazing, you are in the right. While I can honestly empathize with your frustration and disenchantment, I can only ask you to realize that true brotherhood and sisterhood are truly wondrous and worth standing up for. I have been trying for many, many years and I often question if I have had any impact at all. But I still try. In every chapter there are the good guys, the bad guys and the swing team. For whatever reason, the bad guys seem to always have the loudest voices, the most forceful personalities, the most whatever. Usually the good people give up and walk away and leave the chapter in the hands of what I have come to call the "dark side of the force".

The swing team only gets to hear from the bad guys.

Believe it or not, the difference between success and failure is not night and day. Like Kevin Costner's character in Bull Durham said, "The difference between the majors and the

minors is one hit a week." A marginal difference. Start working with the other good guys in your chapters. Develop/refine your position with those who agree. Use points like the ones I made up and add more. Bad habits can only be broken by replacing them with good habits. Leaving a void (stopping hazing without doing something in its place) won't work. Example: use a Matrix Board instead of signature/gig books. Start talking to the swing team and win them over one at a time. Surprisingly, some of the "bad guys" are really swing teamers in disguise. Trust me, this will not be an easy process. Especially when you get to the point where the hard-core bad guys have to be confronted. They have spent a lifetime honing their bullying and persuasion skills. You probably have not. Then you will have to collectively stand your ground. Get your Greek Advisor or even a Sociology professor to help you with the following exercise.

"If hazing is how we teach respect and love, should individuals haze their fiancé or fiancée?"

Have the chapter members stand in the center of an empty room while the moderator reads a series of value statements. After each one the moderator says, "If you believe "x", please go to that corner, if you believe "y", please go to this other corner, if you believe "z", please go to... (There are some value statements with more than two opinions.) Don't do this exercise until after you have talked to the swing team and given them food for thought.

If the chapter really has a small core of hazers who are dominating the chapter, they will quickly see that the majority of the membership disagrees with what they are doing. It also has the effect of showing the "good guys" that they are not as alone in their values as they first thought. The risk, of course is that you end up with the majority of your chapter going to the wrong corner. If the facilitator is any good at this, that will be a rare case indeed. They should start with clearly bad (but not outrageous) stuff first and set a tone. Discussions should be held during the process and volunteers from each corner should be asked why they chose that corner.

For those of you who have given up on your chapter and especially those of you who have been hurt either emotionally or physically, I am truly, truly sorry. Personally, I think you need to report the chapter to the authorities. Otherwise other innocent people with be subjected to the same things. Or possibly worse. Be careful not to expose yourself to revenge tactics. While many members will view you as anti-fraternity/sorority I personally feel that you are more of a fraternity/sorority person than they are. They have truly acted in direct opposition to the very values to which they have given lip service and are false to what they claim to value. One more point. I can easily picture, had your chapter actually been true to the values of the Founders of their organization, that you would have had the experience you rightly expected and rightly deserved. I am very sorry that was not the case.

Ray Galbreth
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PS I expect that I will now be told that some chapter of Delta Chi is a hazing chapter doing much harm. While I wish it were different, I also wish that I be told. Specifics will help us in addressing the issue.

In response to this being posted on the internet, an individual asked what I thought should be included in a pledge/associate member program. Here is my answer:

In general, I think that the number one characteristic we have to change is that initiation far too often signals the end of an effort rather than its beginning. Initiated members should work harder than any of the AMs (pledges) at making their chapter and their fraternity better. Who should care more than them? If they are not, then the role model they are providing is a major, self-perpetuating problem.

Activities should be done together (AMs and Initiates) BTW, notice that I avoid the use of the term "active" as it is too often simply a misnomer.

Ropes courses done as a total group are an excellent example. We also need to recognize that guys are competitive and while it is natural to form teams on the basis of AMs vs. Initiates, we can do so on on a "vertical" basis rather than a "horizontal" basis. (Each team having segments of every class or floor or color of hair, etc. In the end, who do you want to "lose" anyhow? Progressive games, where each inning, or every series of downs, one or two or three members switch sides after starting with AMs vs Initiates or even Initiates vs. Alumni are symbolic of the merging/assimilation that should be taking place.

Big brothers should actually "walk through" **everything** together with their little brothers. Doing **everything** that is expected of the little brother.

Instead of signature books, use a matrix board. A matrix board makes it clear that not only do the AMs need to get to know the Initiates but that the Initiates need to get to know the AMs. If you don't know what a matrix board is, download the Associate Member **BRIEF** (under Resources) from www.deltachi.org. We are rewriting that **BRIEF** so I cannot recommend it totally as it now stands.

I don't believe that the AMs need to know anything that the graduating seniors don't know. (If you gave the graduating seniors the same tests you expect the AMs to pass, the majority would fail. What does that say to you??) The educational process for your freshmen should focus on how to adapt to college and how to get better grades. Limit the memorization of fraternity facts to a few basic items. Continue to expect the learning of material throughout the years.

People support that which they help create. They also support that which they have done themselves. To ask your chapter to change is a hard thing to do. Some of the older members (and some of the alumni) will have a truly hard time supporting something new. In response to that, I would make two points:

1. If hazing had never existed in the Greek system and I came along and suggested that the youth of our society (the AMs) needed to be abused in order to truly respect their “elders” (the Initiates) and to truly value being an “elder” one day, would you expect that idea to be met with open arms? More likely, I would be accused of heresy much as I am when I speak against hazing. Human nature resists the concept of change.

The four stages of change:

a. Euphoria (“Things are going to be better!!”)

b. Doubt (“This doesn’t ‘feel’ right, I’m not sure about this.”) This phase is where most people cut and run for the “comfort” of the known, albeit failing system. We simply are willing to put out more effort to stay in a known but bad situation than to venture into a better but unknown one.

c. Role playing (We go through the motions and pretend to have a full understanding of what the new situation is like.)

d. New equilibrium (We internalize the new situation. We “learn” it.)

2. If the current system is so “right” and so “effective”, why do so many go “inactive” (either in fact or in spirit)? What is our “batting average” for keeping a member truly involved for four years? Are we meeting their needs? I don’t think we are. And that is why they keep leaving. We usually label them “driftwood” or simply say something like, “They need to focus on their grades so they can get a better job.” I truly believe we are lying to ourselves and refusing to see the reality of the situation. Somehow, we need to change that.

We all have four basic needs:

1. To survive
2. To be loved
3. To feel important
4. Variety

Look at each activity that your chapter is currently doing, analyze which need(s) it is meeting and replace any activity which is hazing, illegal or potentially harmful with a new activity which meets at least the

same number and level of needs but is not hazing, illegal or potentially harmful. That would go a long way in helping your chapter and your fraternity. Again, on www.deltachi.org we have “Building Better Brotherhood”, “The Party Continues” and other resources. I bet there are collectively hundreds if not thousands of ideas on the various Greek websites. How about asking each member (initiated and associate alike) to find one idea that can help make your chapter better? If your initiates aren’t willing to make the effort, then that should tell you something about the true “effectiveness” of the current program.

I have typed more than I planned to and, no, I have not given you a cookbook recipe for what a new model may look like. You need to work on that yourself. As I said before, people support that which they create. Change is based not only on content but on process. And a process that continually engages the chapter membership and the associates is one which will be supported more than one which is dictated from on high.