

# Healthy Connection Discussion Guide

All members deserve a brotherhood where healthy connection is the priority, not the exception. By putting one another's well-being first, we can ensure that hazing is not part of the equation in our organization. Use this discussion guide to facilitate a chapter discussion on the value of treating members with the dignity and respect they deserve through building healthy connection and eliminating unhealthy behavior, like hazing, from our brotherhood.

## Introduction

Members may believe that hazing others or participating in hazing activities themselves can lead to stronger bonds, greater trust among members and a higher sense of belonging or worth in the organization. But research findings consistently show that hazing has the opposite effect. When hazing occurs in a group, it creates division and a lack of unity. Groups that develop new traditions, practices, or rituals based on the organization's principles and mission have greater success because of their shared commitment to mutual respect and inclusion in the process.

## WHAT IS HAZING?

Hazing is defined as any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them, regardless of a person's willingness to participate.

Any action that has potential to cause embarrassment or harm to another member can be considered hazing, whether it was presented as optional or a requirement. Hazing threatens the health and safety of members because of its intimidating and harassing nature and increases the potential risk for lasting consequences, both physically and mentally.

## WHAT CREATES UNHEALTHY CONNECTION?

*Allow members time to respond.*

Imbalanced power dynamics are at the core of unhealthy connections in a group. Whether it be new member classes, officers, individual members, within chapter families (big/little), or even alumni members, unhealthy hierarchy between these relationships can create an environment that fosters gang-like loyalty and solidarity within the organization that runs counters to the positive, leadership lab experience we intend to create through our organization.

[StopHazing](#) uses [One Love's 10 signs of an unhealthy relationship](#) to distinguish the components that lead to unhealthy connection in a group environment. These signs are: 1) intensity, 2) manipulation, 3) sabotage, 4) guilt, 5) possessiveness, 6) deflecting responsibility, 7) isolation, 8) belittling, 9) volatility, and 10) betrayal. These attitudes and behaviors may be an early indicator that a member's safety and wellbeing is in jeopardy. If left unchecked, these actions could put yourself or another member at risk of significant harm.

## WHAT DOES "HEALTHY CONNECTION" MEAN TO YOU?

*Allow members time to respond. Answers may include friendship, trust, support, sisterhood/brotherhood, transparency, honesty, etc.*

Adapted from [One Love's 10 signs of a healthy relationship](#) framework, [StopHazing](#) identifies the key factors that contribute to healthy connection within a group. These signs are: 1) comfortable pace, 2) honesty, 3) respect, 4) kindness, 5) healthy conflict, 6) trust, 7) independence, 8) equity, 9) taking responsibility, and 10) fun! Together,

these 10 signs represent components needed to bond in positive ways and create healthy connections to promote belonging, inclusivity, and well-being of members.

### WHAT DOES TREATING MEMBERS WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT LOOK LIKE?

*Allow members time to respond.*

Dignity is the foundation of respect, and treating others well involves both acknowledging their dignity and respecting their character. All members deserve dignity and respect, regardless of their academic class, leadership position, or status in the organization.

Examples of treating members with dignity are seeing members as more than just a number, honoring their lived experiences, being transparent about our membership experience during recruitment, and holding members accountable for their actions.

Examples of treating members with respect include being open and accepting of their values, beliefs and opinions; providing flexibility for work schedules; honoring prospective members' academic work/life balance; sharing event details in advance; and clearly communicating rules, expectations and responsibilities.

### HOW CAN WE BUILD HEALTHY CONNECTIONS IN OUR CHAPTER THAT ARE FREE OF HAZING?

- Host casual hangouts (lunch/dinner plans, coffee breaks, etc.)
- Create optional study hours in the library or chapter facility
- Lead a new member or chapter retreat
- Plan member class meet-ups (potlucks, movie nights, game day watch parties, book club, etc.)
- Attend an athletic event together
- Organize a group workout or exercise class
- Host a resume workshop
- Promote leadership roles and committee work within the chapter
- Coordinate a philanthropy event

## CONCLUSION

Healthy brotherhood is a choice! We owe it to ourselves and our members to create a brotherhood built on mutual dignity and respect for one another. If you have concerns about unhealthy activities, events, or so-called traditions occurring in your chapter or in your community, be an upstander and seek out help and support. There are resources available to you to report hazing and prevent harm before it occurs :

- Call 911 immediately if someone is injured, involved in illegal activity, or in danger of life-threatening harm.
- [The National Anti-Hazing Hotline](#) is an 24/7 anonymous telephone line for anyone to report a suspected or recent hazing incident to 888-NOT-HAZE (888-668-4293).
- [Hazing Prevention Network](#) provides an online hazing report form to submit hazing concerns anonymously. The more details you can provide regarding the conduct, the better it can be investigated.
- Contact your campus fraternity/sorority life office, student conduct, or campus security to report hazing practices involving an organization, sports team, student group, or individual in your community.
- Contact the General Fraternity at (540) 463-1869, [headquarters@sigmanu.org](mailto:headquarters@sigmanu.org), or complete the [Incident Report Form](#).

## References

- [Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors: Building Healthy Groups to Prevent Campus Hazing](#)
- [One Love: 10 Signs of Healthy Relationships](#)
- [One Love: 10 Signs of Unhealthy Relationships](#)
- [Stop Hazing: List of Group Activities](#)
- [Stop Hazing: 10 Signs of Healthy & Unhealthy Groups](#)

