

Hazing: What You and Your Teen Should Know

Despite warnings, injuries and deaths, teens still practice hazing. Groups in middle schools, high schools and colleges subject members to dangerous group-bonding practices. Wanting to be a part of the group, teens endure the hazing.

Hazing presents in many forms. It may be disguised as initiation. Some call it “hell-week” or a “test-of-courage”. The result is the same. Hazing rituals put kids at risk for physical and mental harm – or worse.

Many still believe that hazing is a harmless, bonding tradition. It is looked upon as a rite-of-passage. However, activities often involve humiliation. Alcohol and inappropriate behavior are common. Instead of promoting friendships and respect, it destroys self-image and confidence. Victims are often left stressed and anxious.

Hazing involves power and control. Often, without consent, kids are subject to intimidation. Rituals are done in secret.

Like targets of bullying, teens being hazed are usually silent. Many do not want to tattle on peers. Others fear retribution. Some believe adults are powerless to help. But often, the desire to belong to a select group keeps them quiet.

Parents can help.

- Do your research. Learn about hazing rituals.
- Ask if your teen’s school has an anti-hazing policy. Ask how it is enforced.
- Know the warning signs that your teen has been hazed.
- Talk to your teen about the dangers and myths of hazing.
- Discuss consequences of illegal and wrong acts as part of hazing.
- Treat your teen and others with respect. Discuss respect of self and others.
- Research the organization or school your teen wants to join.
- Encourage your teen’s friendships.
- Keep an open line of communication with your teen. Tell her she can confide in you.

Warning Signs That Your Teen Is Being Hazed

- Excessive fatigue.
- Branding or shaving parts of the body.
- Wearing odd clothing.
- Skipping classes.
- Carrying around “certain” items.
- Withdrawal for usual activities or friends.
- Behavior changes – depression, anxiety.
- Not being able to sit down.
- Having to perform special tasks for others.

To learn more about hazing, log on to:

<http://hazingprevention.org/home/hazing/facts-what-hazing-looks-like/>



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