



HAZING PREVENTION ARTICLE # 2

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The atmosphere you establish within your team will determine what behavior is acceptable and unacceptable by your athletes. **Culture is the soil where character can grow.** A positive and safe atmosphere builds character. A negative culture creates conditions where destructive behaviors can flourish, including hazing.

Hazing 101

Any act committed against someone joining or becoming a member or maintaining membership in any organization that is humiliating, intimidating or demeaning, or endangers the health and safety of the person.

Hazing includes active or passive participation in such acts and occurs regardless of the willingness to participate in the activities! Hazing creates an environment/climate in which dignity and respect are absent.

Hazing isn't a rite of passage. It is a crime.

Please help us provide you with specific resources and tools about preventing hazing by taking a few minutes to answer this very short survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/OSAHAZING>

FIVE TIPS

Building positive and safe cultures within a program should be a priority for all coaches and administrators. Each month we will share FIVE tips to help you develop safe, positive programs in the areas that have the greatest impact: Team Culture, Parent Engagement, Policy Development and Communication.

Tip #1

Be careful about making freshmen carry equipment. I know it sounds like blasphemy to say that the time-honored tradition of having freshmen carry equipment is problematic, but it is. Here's why: When a coach sets up a rule that only freshmen carry equipment, he or she makes it about one group being "less than" another. It sets up a power dynamic that can be detrimental and creates a culture where some players appear to be valued more than others. If you don't appear to value the freshmen, it sends the message that it is okay for older players to belittle them, too. And that sets the stage for hazing. Instead think about instituting a servant leadership model whereby the leadership qualities that are valued are one of humility, service, and sportsmanship.

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Tip #2

Structure team retreats! Everyone believes that if a team goes away into the woods together for a weekend, players will bond. It doesn't happen that way. While it's important to allow your athletes to determine their own rituals and traditions, they shouldn't do it in a silo. These choices should be facilitated by staff and monitored by staff. Retreats should be viewed as classrooms. Each minute away should have a purpose. Your daily practices have plans, and so should any type of retreat. Without this type of structure in place, it becomes easy for hazing to surface.

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Tip #3

Watch the language you use. So much of the language we use in coaching is automatic. We don't think about its impact. But it has tremendous impact. For instance, when we say things like, "take off the skirt," or "stop playing like a girl," we teach male athletes that there is nothing worse than being referred to as a girl and that girls are weak. In addition to demeaning women using this, and similar language with your players also teaches them that it's acceptable to degrade each other—the first step to condoning hazing. Teaching our players to be mentally and physically resilient should be done by inspiration not intimidation or denigration.

Tip #4

Teach athletes to SPEAK UP. Often, we tell athletes that they need to "have each other's back" but we don't take the time to define what that means and it can lead to blind loyalty. Letting athletes know that when they see something that is harmful to others or to them it's not just okay to speak up, but expected. By doing this you ensure that you aren't the only set of eyes and ears making sure that hazing doesn't occur. On BAD teams, no one leads. On AVERAGE teams, coaches lead. On GREAT teams, players lead. Help your players lead by reminding them they have a voice.

Tip #5

Talk about hazing all the time. If you don't make this a topic you address, then it could eventually happen. You must take the time to let your athletes know that it is something that is unacceptable. And when you see something that looks like hazing or you think could set up fertile ground for hazing you must address it immediately.

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Additional Resources:

Stop Hazing: <http://www.stophazing.org/>

Hazing Prevention: <http://hazingprevention.org/>

Inside Hazing : <http://www.insidehazing.com>

Making Caring Common: <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/>

Articles of Interest:

Frequent Mistakes in Hazing Prevention: <http://hazingprevention.org/avoiding-frequent-mistakes-in-hazing-prevention/>

Hazing Prevention in the US Armed Forces:
https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/tools/TL100/TL168/RAND_TL168.pdf

Hazing Statistics: <https://www.stophazing.org/frequently-asked-questions/facts-and-statistics/>

History of Hazing Incidents in Sports: : <https://espn.go.com/otl/hazing/list.html>

More hazing sports than was originally thought: <http://usatodayhss.com/2016/study-hazing-high-school-sports-college-sports>

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