



## Bystander Framework

*Developed by Hank Nuwer,  
Author and researcher about hazing and related topics*

### **Learning Objectives:**



1. To recognize the cognitive and emotional aspects that cause bystanders to either positively intervene in a potential crisis, to negatively participate or turn their heads to the situation as it unfolds
2. To understand the dynamics of “groupthink” and how individuals may behave when confronted by group members as opposed to how they ordinarily may behave as individuals
3. To understand that bystanders should primarily respond in crisis situations out of a respect for their personal and fraternity values and beliefs
4. To understand that lack of response in a hazing crisis may lead to civil and/or criminal penalties for themselves, peers and advisers
5. To show understanding of personal empathy awareness



### **Technical Requirements:**

Flip chart and markers  
LCD projector, laptop with Power Point installed  
Power Point presentation  
Props as needed for psychodrama skit



### **Handouts:**

What is Hazing? (in Resources section)  
Terms and Definitions  
Skit script

### **Time Needed:**

50 minutes

### **Group Size:**

Any group size is possible

### **Physical Setting:**

Chapter room is ideal or, if performed at a school, access to a small black box theater would add to atmosphere (but is not necessary)

### **Room Setup:**

Session coordinator at front, audience seated on floor; additional space alongside the session coordinator for skit performers to move.

### **Preparation:**

Look up the university and state hazing policies and add them to the What is Hazing? handout in the Resources section to create a handout that includes all three. Be sure to review these in advance to gain a clear understanding of each and any differences between them.



Ask five members to participate in a short skit: Female to play older, working class mother (Marge); Female to play younger-looking gymnast (Libby); Female dressed as a male to play hazer on gymnastics team (Jared); Two females to play hazers on the gymnastics team (Mary and Trish). Characters should dress their parts.

## **INTRODUCTION (10 minutes)**

*The facilitator(s) should introduce himself/herself, welcome and thank everyone for attending the session.*

Even the best-intentioned female fraternity leaders and members may not recognize the dynamics of hazing as they occur. Unfortunately, even after a situation has spiraled out of control and events are scrutinized by chapter, school or even law enforcement investigators, those dynamics may cause chapter members to rationalize away what has occurred. Denials and cover-ups can additionally ruin a chapter's reputation in a heartbeat and embroil the school and/or accused chapter in costly litigation or criminal procedures.

But how can this happen? Our organization prides itself on the quality of the people it selects. Surely if potentially dangerous or degrading practices known as hazing begin, one or more bystanders will step in to say "Stop, enough."

Oh, if only that were true. Deep down, we all know it is not, and today we will examine those behavior dynamics a bit more closely to understand what does and doesn't work to motivate bystanders to take action.

Think a minute how you behave in given groups. How might you talk, dress or even act differently in these groups?

- Your chapter
- Your family
- Your non-Greek club or team
- And in a crowd of thousands at a sports event
- Have you ever observed someone who just seems to bask in the attention of the group—even in a needy way, say someone like the proverbial "class clown" or the fan at a ball game who calls out insults at the top of his or her lungs?
- What do most group members do about such a person?
- What have you observed must happen before the people all around this person speak up?



Good. What qualities do you think a person has who would speak out in such situations? Let's list the qualities on the flip chart.

Let's look at a specific situation. You are on a public bus when a group of bullies start taunting a man with disabilities on his way to a job at a fast-food restaurant.

- Is it possible no one will step up?
- What might cause people to keep silent? (*List on flip chart.*)

Supposing one person does say something.

### **In preparation:**

- Look up the university and state hazing policies. Put them on the What is Hazing? handout for participants to keep.
- State hazing policies can be found on [www.stophazing.org](http://www.stophazing.org).
- Do not print/read the entire law – summarize it to create a more clear understanding.

- Are others more likely to chime in?
- Why or why not?
- What do you think the taunters are thinking when others point out their bad behavior?
- How might they react?
- Might they react differently, and maybe even in a threatening way, if they had been under the influence of alcohol when they got on the bus?

Of course we're not talking about a bus here but rather a supportive chapter environment such as ours. We have two groups—the older members, typically second-year students and upper-class members—and the new members who view us as the kind of high-status and even glamorous organization they'd like to be a part of for the rest of their lives.

Now we all know none of the already initiated members is going to say something like this: "I want to put the new members through hell just so I can get a big laugh at their expense and show off what a power-hungry bully I am." No, we know no one would say that.



But is it possible someone might rationalize even bad behaviors such as making a new member drink until a bottle drains or dropping off the new members far from campus, under the protection of such justifications as "tradition, chapter training, and unity building?" (*Write these three words/phrases on the flip chart.*)



- What are our chapter events that fall under these three categories?

Now we'll imagine an outsider sees what the new members are going through.

- How might the outsider see so-called "tradition" and "unity building" through very different eyes? (*Add a fourth word, "abuse," on the flip chart.*)

Each year, from 1970 to 2007, according to author Hank Nuwer's "The Hazing Reader," at least one Greek-related or athletic team-related death through hazing has occurred, and often many more collegians than that have forfeited their lives.

- Do you think there was a connection with "tradition, chapter training and unity building" for most or all of these deaths?
- Does an event, once it starts, seem to have a life of its own?

Now, to be sure, deaths from hazing in sororities are far from as common as deaths from hazing in male groups, but they happen as we all know. But aside from the deaths, if even one new member thinks she is being "abused" or "disrespected," why do you think our national organization and so many of our alumnae believe this ought to be a concern for our chapter(s)?

### **BYSTANDER MODEL (20 minutes)**



#### **Note to the Facilitator:**

- Distribute Terms and Definitions handout.
- Use computer and projector to show Power Point presentation to enhance discussion and term understanding. Facilitation for each slide follows. Access the Power Point on [www.zetataualpha.org](http://www.zetataualpha.org) → Sisters Only Site → Guide Supplements → *My Sister, My Responsibility*.

*Slide One:* Given our national organization's long tradition of leadership, let's discuss the ethical responsibility a bystander has to prevent hazing.

*Slide Two:* Does anyone know what major office Benjamin Harrison held? Yes, he was the president of the United States. But for a time he also was the leader of his Phi Delta Theta chapter at Miami University of Ohio.

Although it was an unpopular thing to do, he arranged for the dismissal of his brothers who dishonored the chapter and then refused reasonable requests to reform. The loss of men came close to shutting down the chapter, but instead Harrison's actions inspired a better class of member to become Phi Deltas in the bond for life.

*Slide Three:* What you see is a 1975 drinking initiation of a social club at the University of Nevada that again and again poured alcohol down the throats of pledges. Author Hank Nuwer was a graduate student then, and like dozens of other students and faculty members, walked past this dangerous initiation without taking action. Some time later, in a repeat of the initiation, pledge John Davies died and another pledge had brain damage.



- What might someone do in such a case to step in? More than eight of 10 deaths from hazing stem from alcohol as a direct factor.
- How many of you have personally seen a classmate or stranger pass out at a party?
- How did it make you feel?
- How many were bothered at the time?

*Slide Four:* Jessica Zimmerman was a pledge in a very large sorority at DePauw University that over time had broken itself into factions, or "families, as they liked to term these smaller splinter groups. Zimmerman was made to drink, was burned on the inner thigh with a cigarette, and had to do demeaning things at a fraternity house (whose members, to their credit, refused to go along with the abuse).



- Is there any way to empower a new member to refuse a hazing?
- Why is a new member unlikely to object?

*Slide Five:* OK, now let's cut to the chase. How can a bystander make a difference and act in a crisis? Author Roger Steare gives us three things that a proactive bystander might think about (in order of importance) before he/she acts.



- How do any or all of these make it likely someone will act in an emergency or crisis such as an alcohol overdose?

Let's take a minute to decide what's right from wrong. If we remember the old adage of those taking a medical oath to "first do no harm," how can that help us in a tough spot to determine if an action has the risk factor to hurt someone emotionally or physically?

Think of situations in the past where you feared doing something you had not tried before or took on a challenge someone else said you weren't capable of doing.



- Where did you find the well of courage to proceed?
- How did it make you feel to succeed—or if you failed, to at least have given a wholehearted try?

Think about people in the public eye.



- What examples can you give of men/women who acted decisively in the face of overwhelming challenge or odds?
- What was it about them and their decisiveness that you admired and would like to imitate?

People get thrust into positions of responsibility, sometimes ones they don't even seek. If someone can save a life or even something not quite that noble, society often rewards that person by labeling him a hero or heroine.



- Why might someone who teaches ethics believe that ethical human beings have a responsibility to act decisively when a problem of possible harm to another presents itself?
- Who are some of our most distinguished alumnae?

OK, those are excellent. For a moment, let's consider the career of Westminster College alumna Deborah Platt Majoras, named principal deputy for the U.S. Justice Department Antitrust Division in 2002 and chairman of the Federal Trade Commission in 2004. In the latter position, she was thrust into the role of stepping forward to protect consumers.



- How does she represent our values when she takes on individuals and companies that employ false or deceiving business practices?
- Do you see a direct connection with what she does to our fraternity's values demanding high standards of conduct?

Let's next discuss Geralyn Lucas, an ABC 20/20 producer when she contracted breast cancer at 27 and authored the brave, bold book "Why I Wore Lipstick to My Mastectomy," which became a source of inspiration for many others battling cancer.



- What value or values would you say this famous battler represents?

When it comes to "Famous Firsts," how about examining the accomplishments of the Michigan, Alpha Gamma Chapter member Margaret A. Brewer, the first woman brigadier general in the U.S. Marine Corps.



- Do you think her road to the top was easy?
- Why not?
- What values that we hold dear may have helped her stand out to become the first to hold this lofty rank?

*Slide Six:* Author Roger Steare gives us three things that a proactive bystander might think about (in order of importance) before she acts.



- How do any or all of these make it likely someone will act in an emergency or crisis such as an alcohol overdose or observing a group being hazed.

*Slide Seven, Eight, Nine, Ten:* Now why might someone in a chapter NOT do the right thing and act. Let's discuss each of these three terms.

**Note to the Facilitator:**

- Draw attention to the handout and go over the bystander effect, groupthink and pluralistic ignorance. Discuss each.

## **BRINGING IT TO LIFE (15 minutes)**



Let us step back from our own chapter to consider hazing in athletics. Just as an athlete visualizes success on the field, there is much value in visualizing how we might act in a bystander situation.

Let's imagine for a moment that you are an intern working with coaches at a small high school where hazing is rampant. Watch this skit carefully. Then let's talk about ways you might try to get bystanders to act if you were assisting coaches with anti-hazing programming.



## **CLOSING (5 minutes)**

The case this one is based on had a happy ending. The hazing victim actually became involved to get a hazing law passed in her state. She also went on to play college ball and to do well academically in college.



- How did you feel toward the victim and perpetrators as the skit went on?
- Were the two worst hazers likely bad people or did they just have misguided notions about tradition?
- Do we always have to have a death to cause real harm? Or do some victims suffer true stress for what they have agreed to go through even if no death occurred?

Let's close by reciting *The Creed* as a group to reiterate the focus and values of the organization.

### **Note to the Facilitator:**

- Call performers to the stage. The performers either have memorized their parts, or they read from a sheet.
- Each actor needs a copy of the Skit Script handout. Be sure to ask all "actors" in advance. Hold a read-through session or practice if possible before the workshop.
- Distribute the What is Hazing? handout while everyone is waiting for the skit to begin. This is to provide a reminder of the policies of the organization, university and state.

## Bystander Framework: Terms and Definitions

### **Bystander Effect**

Perhaps the most famous of all bystander cases is the Kitty Genovese case in the New York borough of Queens. Not only did bystanders not intervene when she was attacked, sexually assaulted and ultimately stabbed to death, but many misinterpreted her screams and the attacker Winston Moseley's actions as a lovers' quarrel and none of their own affair. Moseley was a sick man and just wanted to target any woman for his own brutal gratification.

Since then, the term "bystander effect" has been used to explain why the more people there are observing a crisis, the less chance those seeing it will correctly interpret what is happening and take action.

### **Groupthink**

Famous Yale University psychology professor Irving L. Janis originally applied this term to the actions of political cabinet members who are unlikely to come together to challenge their leader's actions or decisions in the interest of keeping their group's camaraderie undisturbed.

The term works well when describing chapters that indulge in reckless hazing behaviors during pledging. Such chapters seem emboldened the more times they haze or if they have even gotten away with such "traditions" for years. These display near-delusional feelings of invincibility, thinking that all will survive even the most dangerous acts such as belting down the contents of a bottle of alcohol, and they will disregard their national organization's moral qualms and edicts about hazing in the interest of keeping the chapter's harmony intact. After a new member is put in harm's way and actually harmed, groupthink frequently ends in denials or even cover-ups, most commonly referred to as a wall of silence.

### **Pluralistic Action**

Sociologists employ this term in regard to college students when students think their peers probably perform risky behaviors more than they do and/or that everyone in one's chapter thinks that doing something risky is just the normal course of things.

## Bystander Framework: Skit Script

### Cast of characters:

- One female to play older, working-class mother (**Marge**)
- One younger-looking female to play the role of gymnastics team rookie (**Libby**)
- One female dressed as a male to play hazer on gymnastics team (**Jared**)
- Two females to play hazers on the gymnastics team (**Mary** and **Trish**)

**Libby** is seated alone on a chair. Mother, **Marge**, watches her from a little distance, worried to the point of collapse.

**Marge** (*approaches audience*): Three weeks Libby's been like this, not talking, not eating. I hardly recognize my daughter. She's lost 15 pounds. Every night I go to bed crying, scared my little girl might do something....might harm herself.

**Marge** strides up to her daughter: Libby—no more. You tell me what's troubling you.

**Libby**: Forget it, Mom. I'll be ok.

**Marge**: Whatever it is it can't be that terrible. Some guy break your heart? You get cut from the gymnastics team? What, what? It isn't normal for a 14-year-old to sulk around the house like this.

**Libby**: I've been skipping school, Mom. OK? You happy now you know?

**Marge**: Ditching school? Why? Lib—why?

**Libby**: It's the halls, Mom. The stares. The whispering. Everyone knows.

**Marge**: Knows? Knows what?

**Marge** and **Libby** freeze. From upstage come two female gymnastics team members (**Mary** and **Trish**) and one young man (**Jared**). They come in view, laughing and talking. Then they freeze. **Libby** walks up to them. **Mary, Jared, Trish** stay frozen, as does **Marge**.

**Libby** (*addressing them in turn*): You—you took my ... bubblyness from me. You—you took my happiness. Yes, yeah. I was naive and so what? Did you have to make me grow up so soon, so quickly? Did you have to take my dignity?

*She approaches the male. Jared extends his hands as if imploring her forgiveness. Mary, Trish and Marge stay frozen.*

**Libby**: No, no (*to Jared*). You can't take back an action once it's done. You taught me that—I got to live with it now. (*to Mary*) You can't give me back my innocence. You took that.

**Mary**: It was only an initiation. As a rookie I went through it.

**Jared**: How were we supposed to know you'd—you'd been so sheltered before?

**Libby**: Initiation? Try criminal hazing—that's a better term. Or maybe sexual assault? (*She speaks sadly—without vindictiveness*). Yeah, try that term on for size—both of you. Try getting into college. Try getting a decent job. How would it feel to go on a sex offender's list when you're only 17 or 18—seeing your name in shame on the Internet. How about the guys and girls in six cars who were watching what you had me do? Ask me about shame, ask me. I know. The halls are full of my shame.

*Libby freezes.*

**Trish**: Look at her, the little sanctimonious prude. Look at her.

**Jared** (*quietly but firmly*): Shut up. Just shut up. (They leave.)

**Marge** (*watches them leave and approaches audience*): How...do...I...get...her...back? (*She goes to Libby, comforts her, and walks off.*) I didn't know. I didn't know.