



HAZING PREVENTION ARTICLE # 3

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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.

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. This month's tips will focus on **Team Retreats**. As many winter sports come to a close and spring sports begin, many programs schedule team retreats to get the season started. Team retreats can be very effective...they can also be places where the most egregious of hazing can occur. Here are some tips to help you schedule a successful team retreat!

Tip #1

Make a plan! It is not true that just by providing a space for people to be together that positive connections will happen. In fact, often times when there is a void in direction that is when we find the greatest problems occur. It's important that every minute of your retreat is planned and carefully thought out. The place to start planning is by thinking about what specific outcomes you want for the retreat. For instance, if you are looking for your team to just get to know each other better, then your activities will need to focus on providing safe appropriate opportunities to learn more about each other. Be specific about the outcomes you want and you will have an easier time finding activities.

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Tip #2

Set a strict behavior code. With any team activity, there should be a very strict behavior code that you are willing to enforce regardless of who might break the code (including coaches, parents and alumni). Along with a zero tolerance for hazing you should include training for your athletes on what hazing is, and what they need to do if they see it occur or are fearful that it might occur. This information should be provided to your team well in advance of the retreat as well as the day of your leave. And, most importantly, all adults who take part in the retreat should model good behavior and hold to this code.

Tip #3

Allow space for sharing personal experiences, but set ground rules for what information gets shared. Being away from campus life with your team can afford players the space and time to share personal experiences that can invoke strong feelings for the athlete sharing, as well as those hearing the information. It can seem, in the moment, that the team is supportive and understanding regardless of the information being shared. Often is the case, however, that when athletes get back to campus sometimes that personal information gets shared without permission. It's important to let athletes know that although the hope is that everyone's privacy is respected, they shouldn't share anything they don't want others outside the team to know. Do not make promises of confidentiality that you have no way of controlling. And, never threaten athletes to ensure they keep information private. As benign as your intentions might be, it sets a precedent of secrets which can prove detrimental to you and your team down the road.

Tip #4

Always allow time to process activities. Just like in competition, everyone will approach and react to activities differently. At the conclusion of each activity you should first allow athletes to come together and reaffirm their connection as one team that supports each other. Then, take the time to truly process the activity by asking them one or two very specific prompt questions about the activity. Remember not everyone feels comfortable sharing what they think in front of a group, so you can also allow them to journal their responses and/or get into a pair or small group to share. By doing this, it will provide them with a chance to truly think about how the activity can make them a better athlete/ teammate and how they might apply what they have learned in a sport or life context.

Tip #5

Retreats are only the beginning. Don't leave the good feeling that your team gets from the retreat at the retreat. Remind your athletes that whatever growth or learning happened at the retreat it will continue if they stay committed to what they learned while there. Always leave with a theme or mantra and follow that up activities throughout the season to reinforce the learning.

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Additional Resources:

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

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

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

Coaching Peace: <http://coachingpeace.com>

Articles of Interest:

The Neuroscience of Good Coaching:
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_neuroscience_of_good_coaching

Positive Teams are More Productive:
<https://hbr.org/2015/03/positive-teams-are-more-productive>

30 Team Building Activities for Sports
<http://www.signupgenius.com/sports/team-building-activities-sports.cfm>

Sports Team Building Exercises:
<https://www.livestrong.com/article/83166-sports-team-building-exercises/>

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