

Zeta Psi Fraternity

Brotherhood Building Activities

1. “Personal Coat of Arms”

Supplies needed: Pencils, Blank sheets of paper

Suggested time: 15 minutes drawing time, 60+ minutes sharing time

Activity Agenda:

10 minutes

Distribute blank sheets of paper for each member. Ask each brother to draw his own personal coat of arms. It is up to his own creativity and imagination and artistic skills to come up with his personal rendition. The drawing should include symbols which represent some personal values, how the fraternity fits into his life, and significant influences in his life. An open motto should accompany his picture.

20-30 minutes

Each brother takes a turn and describes his coat of arms and symbols to the entire group.

20 minutes

Large group discussion questions:

- What are significant things you learned about others as a result of this exercise.
- Was this difficult? Why?
- What types of symbols did people use?
- Did anyone use non-fraternity symbols? Did that surprise you? Why or why not?
- What were some similarities and differences seen in each person’s coat of arms?

2. The Brick

Supplies needed: One brick, painted with fraternity symbols, Greek Letters, motto, founding date, etc.

Suggested time: 15 minutes introduction time, 2-3 minutes for each member

Activity agenda:

At one of the first meetings, the new member class is shown the painted brick. The chapter president or new member educator tells everyone that throughout the orientation period, they should be looking for this particular brick. It could be anywhere on campus, in the fraternity house, in the student center, etc. The brick will be at eye level and it can’t be missed.

Through the orientation period the initiates should casually ask if they've found the brick yet (don't hound them, for in reality, the brick is never physically hidden anywhere).

During one evening of pre-initiation week, the officers of the fraternity assemble the new member class and ask if they have found the fraternity brick. The answer will be "no". The new members should be instructed to go into a room (preferably a basement room if available) where 4-5 full-length mirrors are placed on one wall. The lights should be dimmed or the room should be lit with candles. The new members should be instructed to stand as a group facing the mirrors, thereby facing themselves.

Chapter officers and initiates stand on the sides and in the back of the new member class. President (or New Member Educator), with the brick in hand says:

"Since the group was unable to find the brick I wanted to bring the brick to you. The reason couldn't find it physically is because it was never really hidden. The brick is really a symbol of our brotherhood.

"I told you that it is at eye level. When you speak with your brothers you will always look him straight in the eye. You may not always see things eye to eye but you should be man enough to confront each other and air things out face to face.

"I also told you that the brick can be found anywhere. Brotherhood is not confined to the walls of the fraternity house. The house is merely a building. A fraternity is built on friendships and our common purposes of: (adapt to your fraternity creed).

"This brick is also a symbol of our fraternity unity. The brick is made of mortar, stone and water. And, like the brick, we are a fraternity of brothers with unique backgrounds, values, and experiences.

"As you gaze into the mirrors you can see that the new member class is not a single unit. You are a part of a greater whole. You will always have initiated brothers and alumni at your sides for support."

The president continues with:

"Each of you has helped to build the fraternity in his own way. This brick will also symbolize the foundation you will establish for future members of the fraternity. What will you contribute to the fraternity?"

Each brother and new member then passes the brick and tells:

- 1) Contributions he, as an individual, can make to the fraternity
- 2) What the fraternity means to him
- 3) Whatever is on his mind

The brick is then ceremonially placed in the room as part of the wall or floor (or adapt to you particular situation).

Source:

Michael Arthur, former Educational and Leadership Consultant, Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity, Colorado State University, 1989

3. People Bingo

Supplies needed:

Pencils

Pre-printed Bingo sheets. Bingo sheets should be 8 ½ x 11 inch sheets of paper with 25 squares. Each square identifies something about the people in the chapter. (interesting

facts about members should be written in the spaces (i.e. I have a pet, I played varsity sports in high school, I want to enter politics, etc.)

Suggested time:

20 minutes

Activity Agenda:

Disseminate pencils and bingo sheets and state the rules. Members should mingle with other members. Members should seek out fellow chapter members and if one of the items listed pertains to them, ask them to sign their names in the appropriate space on your bingo sheet. No participant may sign their name to more than two blank spots. Sheets should be retained by the members to remind them of others traits. Be creative when creating your bingo sheets.

4. **Reverse Gavel Pass**

Supplies Needed:

Chapter Gavel

Suggested Time:

1-2 hours

Activity Agenda:

Depending on size of the chapter, you might want to break the group into smaller groups of 10-12. This is an intense sharing exercise that will require a great deal of time. The traditional gavel pass involves the passing of a gavel and each member speaking his mind. With a reverse Gavel Pass, the person that holds the gavel does **NOT** speak. When a brother gets the gavel, 11-12 others tell him how much they value his membership in the fraternity or what they appreciate most about him. Allow each individual to share for 2-3 minutes. When all have spoken to the member holding the gavel he passes it to the next participant. Continue until all members have been “appreciated.”

5. **Let me in!**

Supplies Needed:

None

Suggested Time:

30 minutes

Activity Agenda:

Ask one member to volunteer. Instruct the rest of the chapter members to form a circle and put their arms around each other, shoulder to shoulder. Instruct the single volunteer to try to use any method possible to get into the circle.

Ensure that the member does not hurt himself or other chapter members. This exercise usually results in the single volunteer trying to push and shove members and attempt to tear apart the bonded arms.

After a few minutes ask everyone to take a seat. Allow the volunteer to stand up for a few moments. Ask the volunteer how he felt trying to get into the circle (expect answers like tired, frustrated, angry). Then ask the member, "Why didn't you just ask your brothers to let you in?" Ask volunteer, "Why did you immediately assume you had to fight to get into the circle?"

Ask the following processing questions of the whole group:

- How does this activity relate to our chapter?
- How does this activity relate to our Greek system?
- Let's look at the leadership positions in the chapter, do you think it is difficult to get to these top positions? Why, why not?
- Do you think we have cliques in this chapter?
- How would this activity relate to cliques?
- How do we emphasize chapter unity?

Source:

Alpha Gamma Rho, Pre-Initiation Activities

6. The Inter/National Fraternity

Supplies Needed:

One large map of the United States and Canada
Straight Pins

Activity Agenda:

This activity is a good reminder for older members and a good learning tool for new members. Display the map(s) in a visible area. For each chapter in your own inter/national organization cut out a small pennant and write down the Greek chapter letters and/or school name. Both new and initiated members should read through the fraternity's chapter roster and pin a pennant where the school is located.

Conduct an educational program on your national organization; history, founding principles, national philanthropy, national officers, headquarters staff, services offered to chapters, etc.

Conclude the program singing a national song, or using the national fraternity grip to symbolize being a part of a larger whole.

7. Respect Line

Suggested Time:

60-90 minutes

Activity Agenda:

Ask each member to either explain what respect means to him as an individual, what it means to respect a brother, or self-respect. After each person has shared, define respect

from Webster's Dictionary for the group. Hold a group discussion on respect using the following topic starters.

- How is respect earned in your chapter?
- Are there certain leadership positions that command respect? Which ones?
- Are all leaders treated with equal respect? Why/why not?
- What are common activities that brothers do to brothers that are not respectful?
- What are behaviors that demonstrate respect?
- How we confront brothers who do not respect other brothers?
- What are characteristics of a respected brother?
- How can we change so we have an environment of respect in the chapter?

This is an activity can be adapted for discussions on ideals brotherhood, love, self, sacrifice, friendship, learning, wisdom, commitment, and social.

8. Senior Charge

Supplies needed:

A room with a fireplace or small bonfire

Suggested Time:

60-90 minutes

Activity Agenda:

Before the chapter gathers, all seniors should write a personal letter to the chapter thanking them for the experience, what he has learned, what he values as a member of the fraternity, etc.

All seniors take a turn and read their letter to the chapter. When each has finished reading he should throw his letter into the fire symbolizing the end of his undergraduate membership in the fraternity. Make sure seniors make a copy of their letter, one to keep and one to throw in the fire.

One senior should serve as closing spokesperson to give a positive charge to the membership. The closure should be inspiring and though provoking. (For example a topic might be "What do you want your fraternity to be like when you leave?") The continuing fire could represent the continuation of the chapter, each senior has contributed to the fire but now moves on and will be an active alumni member of the fraternity. If your fraternity has an induction into an alumni club or alumni membership, this could be a good activity to have prior to the induction. Alumni members could be invited back for this activity to talk about how they are still involved with the fraternity.

9. Community Service

Suggested Time:

A full day of serving the community; at least three hours

Activity Agenda:

The chapter philanthropy chairman could play an instrumental role in this brotherhood building activity. Provide membership with an opportunity to serve the community

through one on one, hands on community service. Members could go to a hospital and visit children; play with inner city children at a community service center; deliver meals to housebound elderly citizens; visit clients at a homeless shelter; any activity that gets members to act with a different population. Brothers will find that by working together for a common purpose, helping others, and giving of themselves that they will become closer through intense personal service.

After working directly with your chosen population (children, the elderly, etc.) Gather the chapter for a discussion on community service using the following processing questions:

- *Why was a community service event used to build brotherhood?
- *How did you make an impact on someone's life today?
- *How were you affected by this experience?
- *Do you feel closer to your brothers as a result of this experience?
- *What did you learn about each other?
- *What did you learn about yourself?
- *Why is community service an important component for a full fraternity experience?
- *How did you feel working with a population less fortunate than you?
- *Is community service a regular part of your life now?
- *How will you continue serving your community in the future?

10. What are we looking for in a Brother?

Supplies Needed:

Paper, Pens or Pencils, Markers

Suggested Time:

30-40 Minutes

Activity Agenda:

Distribute paper and writing utensils. As a large group, members should brainstorm a list of 10 qualities they want in a friend. The facilitator writes the 10 qualities down, so the entire chapter can see the list. This should take around 10 minutes.

The members should then list those 10 qualities on their own paper in their own order of importance, the most important (number 1) to the least important (number 10). The group should then share their lists with each other in small groups of 8-12.

After the small groups discuss their own priority list re-group as a chapter and use the following questions to lead a discussion:

- *Why did you order the qualities as you did?
- *Are these the same qualities we keep in mind during rush? Is that sometimes forgotten?
- *What do you have to offer your friends?
- *What does the chapter have to offer prospective members?
- *Are we good to our members? Do we take our friendships for granted?
- *How do we keep friendship in our mind at all times, not just during rush?

Brotherhood Building Activities National Interfraternity Conference

