

THE LONELY DOG FACILITATION GUIDE



The Lonely Dog - a Forever Forward Project LLC Production

Written and Directed by Jacob Seltzer

Produced by Kathleen Sheridan Russell

Starring Brady Gentry as Connor

Facilitation Guide created by the University of Virginia's Gordie Center with assistance from Kathleen Sheridan Russell.

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ALASDAIR'S STORY



When Alasdair patted his beloved dog Obi on the morning that he left for his freshman year at the University of Southern California (USC), no one would have guessed that would be the last time he rubbed his Golden Retriever's tummy. Alasdair was a bright, charismatic, athletic freshman when he eagerly joined a fraternity at USC. But being a pledge was not what he expected. He spent countless hours engaged in demeaning pledge tasks such as unclogging toilets, doing laundry, and cleaning brothers' rooms. He was sleep deprived, missed numerous classes, suffered academically, and went to basement lineups where pledges were ranked. Alasdair then sustained a severe head injury at a fraternity event that went unreported and untreated. This led to his tragic and untimely death.

THE LONELY DOG FILM

The Lonely Dog is a 15-minute film inspired by Alasdair's story and is intended to generate discussion about what constitutes hazing, why members feel so much pressure to participate, what makes it so difficult to challenge "tradition," and how to take positive steps to make the pledging process a true bonding experience. Request the free viewing link here: www.gordie.org/form/the-lonely-dog.

In the film, Connor and his roommate Roshan, two relatable and enthusiastic young men, excitedly join a fraternity with high hopes and expectations. In the beginning, they laugh and joke about the activities they are expected to participate in but over time, the constant chores and tasks start to take a toll on them mentally, academically, physically, and ultimately, tragically.

The events shown in this film reflect activities expected of members of many types of student organizations, ranging from fraternities and sororities to athletics teams to marching bands and other organizations. New members nationwide feel obligated to engage in these demeaning acts as the price they have to pay for membership. By showing relatable, realistic characters, the film drives home the message that hazing can happen to anyone, and hazing has consequences.

BEFORE YOU PRESS PLAY

- ✦ Request the free link to view/show the film here:
www.gordie.org/form/the-lonely-dog.
- ✦ Watch *The Lonely Dog* **before** showing it to your audience and review the background information on page 2.
- ✦ For virtual showings: prepare interactive components using an anonymous online audience response platform (e.g., Mentimeter).
- ✦ Review the discussion questions in this guide to help you feel more confident in leading a discussion. Pre-select questions based on your audience. In an hour-long presentation, you will not be able to discuss all the questions if your audience is engaged.
- ✦ Think about how you will lead the discussion after the film. Options include:
 - Conduct open discussion with the entire audience, using your chosen prompt questions.
 - Break the audience into small groups for discussion, using your prompt questions, and report back to the larger group.
 - Use an online audience response platform (e.g., Mentimeter) to poll the audience. The software aggregates responses anonymously and displays a summary onscreen. This serves as a prompt for further open discussion and is ideal for virtual screenings.
- ✦ Prepare any supplemental materials for your presentation, such as school/community resources for support after viewing the film.

GUIDE: HOUR-LONG PRESENTATION

- 1 Introduce yourself and the purpose of this presentation. (1 minute)
 - “We are watching the film *The Lonely Dog* today and discussing hazing and its consequences.”

- 2 Introduce the film, emphasizing that some scenes may be disturbing to audience members: (2 minutes)
 - “The film is inspired by true events and includes degrading and dangerous acts, including **overconsumption** of alcohol and bodily harm.”
 - “If at any point in the program, you need to **take a break/step out**, please do so. We’re happy to talk with you privately at the end of the program.”
 - “The film focuses on fraternities and is just one person’s story. Hazing can occur in many organizations, such as athletic teams, bands, student groups, and workplaces — anywhere a **hierarchy** is present.”
 - “What **questions** do you have before I play the film?”

- 3 Show *The Lonely Dog*. (15 minutes)

- 4 Lead a discussion using the prompt questions in this guide. (30 - 40 minutes)

- 5 Wrap up. (2 minutes)
 - End on a **positive** note: “I hope that the film and our discussion will spark further conversations on how to look out for each other and prevent a similar tragedy.”
 - Direct audience members to **resources** at your school or campus and within your community.

Hand out any support/educational **materials**.

TIPS FOR PROMOTING DISCUSSION

PROMOTING DISCUSSION

- **Anonymous audience feedback tools.** Use anonymous interactive software tools (e.g., Mentimeter, Poll Everywhere, etc.) that provide real-time audiences responses to gain greater engagement. Audience members can participate from their phones and you can set responses to display word clouds, charts, and scroll through open-ended responses. These platforms work well for in-person and virtual programs.
- **Virtual presentation break out rooms.** Participants may be more willing to discuss the film in a small group first, followed by large group discussion.
- **Virtual presentation polling.** Anonymous polls can gather quick responses to close-ended questions and are available in most virtual platforms.
- **Virtual presentation chat.** Encourage individuals to use the chat if they do not wish to share their ideas vocally.

HELPFUL HINTS

- **Set a positive tone.** Your response to the first answers can set the tone for the rest of the conversation. Vocalize potential responses to prompt answers if there is lack of participation (“Some people might think...”).
- **Thank people for their participation.** Use verbal and non-verbal cues, like eye contact, nodding, and repeating questions and responses. This encourages continual sharing, especially for the more difficult questions.
- **Affirm** the barriers to intervention and changing culture.
- **Know available resources on campus and in your community.** Consider contacting potential resource centers in advance to learn more about what types of services and support they can provide.

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (SELECT 1 OR 2)



Option 1: In one or two words, what is your reaction to the film?

- **Potential responses:** Emotional, sad, scary, heartbreaking, preventable, tragic.
- **Discussion point:** Students can identify how easily the situation got out of control with a terrible outcome when no one deliberately wanted to hurt Connor, they just didn't think about or understand the possible consequences of their actions.



Option 2: What struck you most in this film?

- **Potential responses:** How much the guys had to endure. How they wanted to leave, but didn't feel like they could. You could predict something bad was going to happen.
- **Discussion points:**
 - The situation got way out of control with a terrible outcome when no one wanted to deliberately hurt Connor.
 - The current members didn't think or understand the possible consequences of their actions.



Option 3: Which character in the film did you most relate to? What about them made them relatable?

- **Potential responses:** Connor, Roshan, the mom, the dog (Buddy).
- **Discussion points:**
 - Both Connor and Roshan seem like typical college guys who were looking for a place to belong. They knew that their situation was becoming intolerable, but they didn't know how to get out of it.
 - Students may empathize with Roshan and consider how devastated they would be if a friend was injured because they didn't speak out.
 - Students may say they hadn't considered how their death or a life-changing injury would impact their family or their pets.

HAZING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(SELECT 3)

See hazing teaching points on page 15.



Question 1: What in this film would you describe as “hazing”?

- **Potential responses:** Forced activity (drinking too much, eating non-foods or spoiled foods), being forced to engage in embarrassing public activity like walking around campus in your underwear.
- **Discussion point:** Hazing includes a spectrum of behaviors, from intimidation to harassment to violence. It’s much more than you may initially have thought.



Question 2: The definition of hazing is “any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them, regardless of a person’s willingness to participate” (*Allan & Madden, 2008*). With this definition in mind, what other activities that you saw in the film would be considered hazing?

- **Potential responses:** Sleep deprivation like staying up all night to watch the fire, demeaning activities, forced servitude such as having to clean gross bathrooms and do other people’s laundry, doing countless pushups, or encouraging students to miss class to engage in the group’s activities.
- **Discussion points:**
 - Other forms of hazing that are not depicted in the film include scavenger hunts where trespassing is required, embarrassing costumes, degrading skit nights, or carrying “pledge packs” with random and sometimes illegal items that must be shown to current members at any time.
 - Hazing activities often develop and perpetuate because the planners don’t think about the hidden harms inherent in some activities. Some of these activities might seem harmless, but could cause emotional harm for some people, especially when experienced over time.

HAZING QUESTIONS CONTINUED

? **Question 3:** Why do you think Connor felt so much pressure to engage in all the activities? Why do you think that he didn't quit?

- **Potential responses:** He had put too much time in already. He was too invested in the group to quit. He wouldn't be able to join another group. He knew they were almost done with the process.
- **Discussion points:**
 - Hazing is about coercion and power dynamics. Members of any organization with a new member process feel like they don't have the power to say no to the active members.
 - New members feel pressure to engage in servitude activities like doing laundry or washing dishes, which is a form of coercion that de-sensitizes them and can lead to more dangerous activities.
 - A student-athlete being hazed by their team may worry how they will pay for school if they leave the team and lose their scholarship.



ALCOHOL DISCUSSION QUESTION

(SELECT 1)

See alcohol teaching points on pages 16-18.

? **Question 1:** Connor, Roshan, and the other pledges were very intoxicated. At what point should someone call 911 for a potential overdose?

- **Potential responses:** Won't wake up, blue skin, not breathing, etc.
- **Discussion points:**
 - Review the PUBS Signs of Alcohol Overdose and show the Gordie Center's [PUBS video](#) (1 minute).



Alcohol overdose can have any of these four PUBS signs:

PUKING while passed out

UNRESPONSIVE to pinching or shaking

BREATHING is noisy, slow, shallow, or has stopped

SKIN is blue, cold, or clammy

See even one? Save a life. Call 911!

***UNSURE? Call Poison Center 1-800-222-1222**

- For people with darker skin tones, check for pale/blue lips or nail beds.
- While you're waiting for help to arrive:
 - Stay and monitor closely. If the person has passed out, position them onto their left side and prop up their head. Never put a backpack on someone who has passed out. The [National Poison Center Hotline](#) provides free, confidential medical advice 24/7/365.

BYSTANDER ENGAGEMENT DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (SELECT 2)

See bystander engagement teaching points on page 19.



Option 1: What are the barriers to intervention in a situation like Connor's?

- **Potential responses:** You don't want the group to get in trouble, you don't want to be a snitch, you're afraid you'll be punished by the group.
- **Discussion points:**
 - Conformity: If no one else seems to be concerned, it can be difficult to be the first person to bring attention to the problem. If other new members are hiding their distress to look "strong," this can add social pressure to conform. If other new members are required to take on additional tasks when one member opts out, the pressure to conform increases.
 - Obedience to authority: Group leaders may forbid new members from choosing not to drink or for not completing mindless tasks like tending the fire all night. Many students fear punishment as a result of going against group leaders.
 - Ambiguity: If you're not sure it's really a problem, it's hard to speak up. People are afraid of being wrong and it is often unclear if events have gone too far once you have been desensitized to abusive behavior.



Option 2: What can groups do to create a culture where everyone looks out for each other?

- **Potential responses:** Have sober monitors, reduce the number of potential problem events, focus on responsibility to make members' experiences positive.
- **Discussion points:**
 - Leaders should discuss their expectations for membership, when to intervene, and how to get support when there is a problem.
 - Discuss group expectations ahead of time around cutting off a drunk member or other behaviors that require intervention. This makes it easier to follow through in the moment. Some groups have a subtle system, like a shoulder tap.

BYSTANDER ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONS CONTINUED

- ?** **Option 3:** What can you do if you suspect a friend is being hazed?
- **Potential responses:** Share why you're worried about them, tell them it's not ok to be treated that way, focus on what you've noticed about their physical or mental health.
 - **Discussion points:**
 - Encourage open conversation.
 - Remind the friend of your support.
 - Encourage them to reach out to parents and other friends.
 - Provide information about counseling and reporting resources on campus.
 - Continue to check back in with them.
 - Show the Gordie Center's [bystander intervention video](#). (1 minute)

CHANGING HAZING CULTURES DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (SELECT 3)

See hazing teaching points on page 15.

- ?** **Option 1:** How do the issues raised in the film relate to your school's student culture?
- Alternate wording:** How is this relevant to you and your friends?
- **Potential responses:** Students may know someone who has been injured or hospitalized due to hazing or alcohol misuse, students may report being bothered by hazing but not knowing how to respond.
 - **Discussion points:**
 - About half of high school students experience hazing and over half of college students in student organizations have been hazed. It is all too common and not fully recognized until a tragedy occurs.
 - Students may be concerned about friends or their own mental health, but are not sure where to turn for help.

CHANGING HAZING CULTURES

QUESTIONS CONTINUED



Option 2: How could Connor’s tragic fall and aftermath have been prevented?

- **Potential responses:** Not having alcohol be the center of activities, not having activities that involve sleep deprivation, have a sober monitor.
- **Discussion points:**
 - Alcohol always adds risk to any activity.
 - The new members were sleep deprived and not able to make good decisions about how much to drink or to recognize how much balance was impaired.
 - There was no sober monitor to keep the guys from drinking too much or being injured.
 - The new members were de-sensitized to abuse from weeks of meaningless tasks.



Option 3: How could you break a questionable, long-standing “tradition”?

- **Potential responses:** Share your concerns with other members you trust, suggest other activities that could promote group bonding safely, discuss the potential negative impacts of the tradition and whether the tradition exemplifies group values.
- **Discussion points:**
 - Do any of your group activities focus on shame, isolation, fear, secrecy, or create pressure to participate? Focus on the events with the greatest risk of harm first. Start conversations with those you think may also be concerned. There is strength in numbers.
 - It may be easier to convince the group to change an activity rather than to discontinue it. For example, tending the bonfire could be changed to an event on a weekend where a new member is paired with a current member and each shift is a shorter period of time. In the morning, the group celebrates 24 hours of tending the fire with breakfast. This change would create a safer environment to foster unity while still keeping important, recognizable elements from the original unsafe event.

CHANGING HAZING CULTURES

QUESTIONS CONTINUED

? **Option 4:** What was your response when Elijah said to Connor that they could do the same thing to the next pledge class?

- **Potential responses:** Disgust, sad, it's tradition, some things are just hard to change, Elijah wanted the next group to prove themselves like he had to do.
- **Discussion points:**
 - Some people rationalize the abuse of hazing by focusing on the positives of membership.
 - Some people are just glad to be on the other side and forget how bad it was during the process.
 - It's a myth that hazing helps a group bond and forms unity. The research is clear that most people who were hazed did not find the activities to bring the group together and did not feel stronger.

? **Option 5:** Connor said that he didn't want to "do this to other pledges." What activities focused on healthy bonding would you want your group to do more of or start doing?

- **Potential responses:** Events that don't have alcohol, hiking, bowling, attending sports events together.
- **Discussion points:**
 - A healthy organization does not subject their new members to demeaning activities.
 - Focus on activities that are fun, create belonging, show respect, and foster trust and honesty.
 - Consider activities for the entire group, not just new members: service projects, roadside cleanup, mentorship programs, athletic competitions within the group, cooking classes, learning a new sport, etc. Your school has resources through campus rec and student engagement/student activities offices.
 - Show the Gordie Center's [planning meaningful new member programs video](#). (1 minute)

HAZING TEACHING POINTS

Hazing is not just physical abuse.

Violent hazing is the most easily recognized form of hazing, but happens less frequently than intimidation hazing (i.e., social isolation, deception, demerits, etc.) and harassment hazing (i.e., verbal abuse, threats, sleep deprivation, etc.).

All forms of hazing can result in **Hidden Harm**: the mental and emotional scars that result from being hazed and even from hazing others. Hazing can be the trigger that pushes someone past their breaking point regardless of whether they have an underlying mental disorder. You don't know what might break someone.

Hazing can happen to anyone, and can happen in any organization in which there is a hierarchy, including academic clubs, fraternities and sororities, marching bands, and athletic teams.

- 48% of high school students report being hazed and, as a result, many students expect to be hazed in college (*Hoover & Pollard, 2000*).

You can't consent to hazing. Hazers know what will happen and hide information from new members. Those being hazed are blind to the actual risks and can't give informed consent.



Listen to your gut feeling. If you think an activity is problematic, find a way to speak up. If it's an emergency, call 911.

Report hazing to your school or to the National Anti-Hazing Hotline: (888) NOT-HAZE (668-4293).

Ready to change your group's practices? Talk about your new membership goals (i.e., learn group history, have fun, bonding), then assess if activities meet those goals. See the [Gordie Center website](#) for ideas on healthy programs to replace dangerous ones.



Save a Life. Make the Call.

ALCOHOL TEACHING POINTS

Tips for a Lower Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC):

- **Pace and space.** Sip instead of chugging, alternate with water, and have no more than 1 standard drink per hour. On average, it takes about 3 hours for most people to eliminate the alcohol in 2 standard drinks from their system.
- **Eat before and while drinking.** Alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream more slowly when food (especially protein) is in your stomach.
- **Avoid mixing alcohol with other drugs.** Some prescription, over-the-counter, and street drugs (e.g., antihistamines and narcotics) can increase alcohol's effects. Caffeine and other stimulants can trick you into feeling less impaired.
- **Use caution when sick or tired.** Alcohol enters the bloodstream more quickly when you are sleep deprived or ill.
- **Be aware of your environment.** Drinking different beverages or at locations that are not typical for you can cause greater impairment due to the loss of situational tolerance.

Helping an Intoxicated Friend:

- If you have any doubt about an intoxicated person's safety, err on the side of caution and **call 911**.
- If you have been drinking, your judgment may be impaired, so enlist the help of a **sober friend** to ensure good decision-making.
- An intoxicated person is not rational, so **do not try to reason** with the person.
- **Avoid being confrontational or aggressive.** Joking, bargaining, and enlisting the help of friends can be more effective. Try to remain calm and quiet.
- If the intoxicated person becomes **violent or uncooperative**, your first priority is your own safety and the safety of those around you. Call for assistance, up to and including 911.
- An intoxicated person who is staggering, vomiting, or passed out may require **emergency care**. While you are waiting for help or determining the need for emergency services, get the individual to a safe, comfortable place, such as a bed, and follow the guidelines listed on the next page.

ALCOHOL TEACHING POINTS CONTINUED

When someone passes out:

- BAC can continue to rise even after alcohol intake stops. **Never leave an intoxicated person alone to “sleep it off.”**
- Once you can help the intoxicated person to a safe place to rest, use the **Bacchus Maneuver** to reduce the risk of aspiration should the person vomit while passed out.
- **Stay with the intoxicated person**, monitoring them every 10-15 minutes for any sign of alcohol overdose (PUBS).
- **Never** put a backpack on someone who has passed out.
- If you see even one sign of alcohol overdose at any time, **call 911 immediately**.
- If you or another sober friend cannot stay and monitor the person, or if you feel uncomfortable with that responsibility, **call 911**.
- Still not sure if you should call 911? The **National Poison Center Hotline** (1-800-222-1222) provides free, confidential medical advice 24/7/365.

GORDIE CENTER When a friend passes out, use **The BACCHUS Maneuver*** until you can get sober help.

1. Raise the person's left arm above head. Pull right shoulder to roll the person toward you.

2. Gently roll the person as a unit. Guard the head as you roll.

3. Tuck right hand under cheek to help maintain head tilt. Drop right knee forward to stabilize.

4. Stay and monitor closely for PUBS. Call 911 if you see even one PUBS sign.

If you observe any ONE of these signs, call 911 immediately.

- PUKING while passed out
- UNRESPONSIVE to pinching or shaking
- BREATHING is noisy, slow, shallow, or has stopped
- SKIN is blue, cold, or clammy

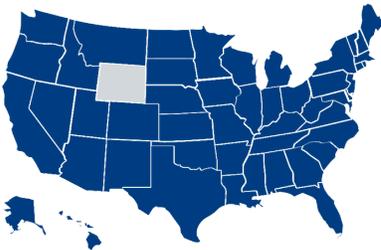
 **gordie.org**

ALCOHOL TEACHING POINTS CONTINUED

DO NOT:

- Encourage the person to eat or drink anything, as muscle relaxation can cause them to choke and it may induce vomiting (which also can result in choking).
- Give the intoxicated person a **cold shower**. The resulting shock could cause the person to pass out and be injured.
- Try to **exercise** the intoxicated person, which could cause falls and injuries.
- Attach a **backpack** or any other weights to an intoxicated person; this can pin them down and unintentionally suffocate them.
- Try to **restrain** the intoxicated person.

States With Medical Amnesty Laws:



Medical Amnesty:

Never let the fear of legal consequences prevent you from calling 911. Many states have Medical Amnesty laws that provide **limited legal immunity** for seeking help for yourself or someone else who requires immediate medical attention. Know if your state has a medical amnesty law, and check your campus policies (visit www.medicalamnesty.org to check your state's law).

Obtaining Medical Assistance:

- Call 911 and identify yourself to the operator. State your problem and what support you require.
- Give the specific location of the incident and the phone number.
- Stay with the intoxicated person until help arrives.
- Have someone else meet the emergency personnel outside and guide them to your location.

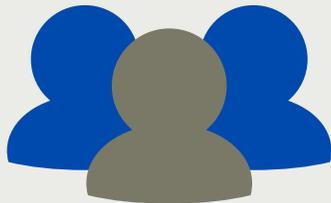
Save a life. Make the Call.



 **gordie.org**

BYSTANDER INTERVENTION TEACHING POINTS

Bystander Effect: Research has shown that people are less likely to help when in a group setting compared to when they are alone. Even if those around you seem comfortable with an activity, chances are, if you are feeling uncomfortable, so are others. If one person speaks up, others will be more likely to take action.



Step UP! 5 Decision Making Steps to Intervention (www.stepupprogram.org):

- Notice the event.
- Interpret the event as a problem — investigate.
- Assume personal responsibility.
- Know how to help.
- Implement the help: Step UP!



Bystander Intervention: The 5 Ds

- **Direct:** Tell hazers to stop what they are doing.
- **Distract:** Interrupt what is happening by talking about an unrelated topic.
- **Delegate:** Ask a friend to step in or report the incident to your school.
- **Delay:** Check in with the victim afterwards and see what you can do to help.
- **Document:** Record any evidence for reporting purposes. Do NOT share on social media without the hazed person's consent.

- **Affirm** positive actions students are already taking to look out for each other.
- When students talk about barriers (like getting in trouble), ask them to **weigh the consequences of intervening**. Short-term consequences, such as having a friend be upset with you, are more easily overcome than long-term consequences, such as preventable injury or death.



FILM CREDIT LIST

A Forever Forward Project Production in collaboration with the University of Virginia's Gordie Center.

Cast:

- **Connor:** Brady Gentry
- **Roshan:** Ameer Ali
- **Elijah:** Evan Adams
- **Mother:** Jessica Goldapple
- **Buddy:** Coral

- **Written and Directed by:** Jacob Seltzer
- **Produced by:** Kathleen Sheridan Russell
- **Executive Producer:** Flash Sheridan
- **Executive Producer:** Bonnie Padwa
- **Executive Producers:**
 - Susan Poppy Luchars
 - Nancy Goldsborough Hurt
 - H. James A. Atwood
- **Executive Producer:** Mary Dwyer
- **Executive Producer:** Kathy Eldon
- **Director of Photography:** Matt Kleppner
- **First Assistant Camera:** Max Riley
- **Second Assistant Camera/DIT:**
Francesca Dimarzio
- **Best Electric:** Quinn Thomashow
- **Assistant Director:** Aspen Miller
- **Co-Producer:** Shannon Kummer
- **Production Designer:** Emily Henninger
- **Truck Driver/Lead:**
Juan Carlos Del Rio Cabral
- **Set Dresser:** Jose Daniel
- **Sound Editor:** Jared Fellows
- **Key Grip:** Hye Young Ra
- **Best Grip:** Kevin Shum
- **Gaffer:** Sam Shang
- **Editor:** Ellie Zarr
- **Postproduction Mixing and Editing:**
Jared Fellows
- **Hair and Makeup:** Madison Federico
- **Costume Design:** Julia Abramova
- **Music Composer:** David Deutsch
- **Set Photographer:** Janelle Smith
- **Dog Trainer:** Joel Norton - Hollywood Paws
- **Location:** Soyhome

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American Humane monitored the animal action.
No animals were harmed[®]
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