

Of course, all these feelings are natural and are part of everyone's college experience. You will find the ways to work through your problems. Johns Hopkins University offers support in all these areas. However, any of these experiences may make you vulnerable to the seeming concern and care of these high-pressure groups. They will use your pain to exploit you and to get you increasingly involved in their organizations.

WHAT QUESTIONS CAN I ASK TO MAKE SURE I KNOW THIS IS THE GROUP FOR ME?

How do I feel about the invitation? Do I feel comfortable saying, "No"?

Will they explain their religious beliefs, taking time with difficult concepts or practices?

May I talk to my family and friends about my involvement with this group?

May I attend sporadically if I want, and may I balance group involvement with my studies?

Is this group recognized by Campus Ministries? If not, why not?

Is the group expecting me to recruit new members? How do I feel about that?

Does the group encourage me to think for myself?

Am I able to be myself?

Am I allowed to disagree?

HOW YOU CAN RESPOND WHEN APPROACHED BY HIGH PRESSURE GROUPS:

Do not give out any of your personal contact information.

Say you're not interested and walk away.

Ask for written information and tell them you will contact them if you're interested.

BE YOURSELF!

Investigating religious groups and their beliefs is an important way to learn about yourself and what you believe. Ask lots of questions. Be skeptical, and don't accept vague and evasive answers. You would not have been accepted as a student at The Johns Hopkins University if you could not think for yourself. If you believe you might be vulnerable, find the support you need. There are people all over the Hopkins campus who are willing to talk to you need and to provide you with the support you need.

Call us at Campus Ministries, and we will be happy to provide you with information or connect you with the people who are able to help you. For support or additional information please contact:

(410)261-1880

Rev. Albert Mosley (Chaplain):
AMosley5@jhu.edu

Kathy Schnurr (Associate Chaplain):
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You Want Me???

HIGH-PRESSURE RELIGIOUS GROUPS AND HOW YOU CAN RESPOND



Campus Ministries

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GETTING INVOLVED WITH RELIGIOUS GROUPS

There is a rich and diverse community of faith traditions and religious beliefs at Johns Hopkins University: Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Baha'is, Sikhs, Jains, Unitarians, and Buddhists. The chaplains office provides official recognition to over 30 religious groups on campus. This makes for an exciting environment of cultural and religious exchange. The atmosphere of Hopkins' religious life is open, inviting, and sensitive to your needs as a student. We want you to be involved, to try new things, and to find the support you need.

A variety of groups offer programming to suit your needs and will invite you to their events and worship services. They will provide ways for you to explore your spirituality, serve, and make new friends. Joining these groups will be an important part of your college experience.

Although only recognized religious organizations are allowed on the Hopkins campus, there are some groups who attempt to recruit Hopkins students anyway. Some of these groups may not have your best interest at heart. Their strategy often involves high-pressure techniques, and they will attempt to separate you increasingly from your life with family, friends, and your studies.

This brochure is designed to give you some ideas on how to respond when a group asks you to join or attend an event.

HOW CAN I TELL IF A GROUP IS A HIGH PRESSURE GROUP?

The most important way to know if a group is not for you is to observe how you feel about an invitation. If you feel pressured, you probably are! If you feel uncomfortable and you are having a hard time saying "no", you may be the target of a high pressure group. In addition, if a group demonstrates any of the following characteristics, you may want to be suspicious:

- The group seems perfect. Everyone agrees and follows orders with little question;
- The group has "all the answers" to your problems;
- You are asked to recruit members soon after joining;
- You feel ashamed or guilty, and the group talks about your unworthiness;
- The group encourages you to put its meetings and activities before all other commitments, including studying;
- The group speaks in a derogatory way about your past religious, social, or political affiliations;
- Your parents and friends are defined as unable to understand or help you with religious, political, or other matters;
- Doubts and questions are seen as signs of weakness or lack of commitment. You are shunned if you persist in these doubts;
- You are invited to a retreat, but they won't give you an overview of the purpose, themselves, or activities before you go

HOW CAN I KNOW IF I'M AT RISK FOR JOINING ONE OF THESE GROUPS?

The techniques used by high-pressure groups can often be subtle and sophisticated. They are NOT going to tell you that their eventual goal is a TOTAL life commitment, including a rejection of your past, your family, and your friends. More than likely, they will begin by pretending to be sensitive to your struggles.

You are most vulnerable when:

You're in transition. There are many times in most people's college experience when they feel isolated and cut-off from family and old friends. Starting in a new place can sometimes be very lonely. Sometimes, a representative of these groups will claim to be your only true friend.

You're hurting. Your college experience hasn't turned out like you planned. It's been harder to make friends. School work is more challenging than in high school.

You're disillusioned. The beliefs that you were taught in your past do not seem sufficient for your problems today. You are confused by the variety of religious perspectives. You wonder what is really true.

You're unsure about your future. Your college interests are changing. You don't know what "you want to be when you grow up," and you're having a hard time making decisions about what to study or what direction to go in life.