



## Training Concept: Building Resilience in Potential New Members

The term recruitment *counselor* can be deceiving. A recruitment counselor's primary role is not to serve as a counselor in the traditional mental health sense. Instead, recruitment counselors should mentor potential new members (PNMs) and help them build resilience skills. While recruitment counselors should show empathy toward PNMs and validate their feelings, they should also be comfortable challenging PNMs to view things differently when experiencing rejection, confusion, disappointment and stress. Instilling resilience in PNMs is important because it encourages more women to stay in the recruitment process and keep an open mind.

### Understanding Resilience

Resilience is the capacity to make it through expected and unexpected adversities. PNMs may be facing adversity for the first time during Panhellenic recruitment. How they react and respond to feelings of rejection and disappointment through that process will start to make a guidebook for how they react to other life challenges. In navigating such adversities, PNMs are likely to experience discomfort, develop new skills and, as a result, experience personal growth. Recruitment counselors play a vital role in the development of resilience for PNMs. Bouncing back is a critical life skill for students during their college years and beyond. The work recruitment counselors do to help encourage resilience will support the PNM through primary recruitment and the effects of that coaching will be felt later on.

### Active Listening Skills

Recruitment counselors must prepare to manage different personality types, situations and issues to mentor PNMs effectively. Being a good listener is a primary and vital part of being a recruitment counselor. A PNM needs her recruitment counselor to hear her express her thoughts and anxieties so she can maintain perspective and determine the best decision for herself.

Consider the following activities to help recruitment counselors practice and develop their active listening skills:

#### Talking Monkey in the Middle

Instructions

- Break participants into groups of three and have them stand in a line. The two participants on the outside face each other, and the third person in the middle faces in any direction.
- Instruct the two participants facing each other to start a basic conversation about a recruitment-related topic.
- Instruct the participant in the middle to start talking about any non-recruitment-related topic she chooses and not to engage in the conversation between the other two participants.
- All participants should speak normally (not whispering or shouting).
- Allow the chatter to continue for a few minutes before ending the conversation. Then, have each group member rotate positions so that each person can be in the middle.
- End the activity by asking the reflection questions.



### Reflection questions

- How did it feel to converse while the participant in the middle was speaking over you or in your way?
- Were you able to hear everything your conversation partner was saying?
- How often were you distracted by the random chatter in the middle?
- How can this activity be similar to your interactions with PNMs?
- How can you apply this situation to your PNM group and fairly distribute your attention among each PNM?

## Changing Your Story

### Materials

- A book

### Instructions

- Divide participants into five equal teams and ask them to sit facing the same direction, such as the front of the room.
- The recruitment team leader (vice president of recruitment or head of recruitment counselors) sits in front of the teams.
- The recruitment team leader reads a short passage or paragraph from a book to the teams.
- She then reads the passage or paragraph again but with minor changes, such as changing the red hat to a blue hat or having the character turn right instead of left. Team members call out changes as they notice them.
- Each correctly identified change gives the team a point.
- After the recruitment team leader reads the story five or six times with changes (or more if needed), the team with the most points wins.

### Reflection questions

- How does this activity relate to listening to PNMs?
- When did the changes to the story seem most apparent? Did any of the changes change the plot of the story?
- What can you conclude from this activity about finding the “big picture” in your conversations during recruitment? When should you focus on the details? When shouldn’t you?



## Challenging Ineffective Thoughts

Many times, the immediate reaction PNMs experience when faced with disappointment and rejection is to retreat from the situation and request to withdraw from recruitment. While it is essential to recognize a PNM's choice to withdraw from recruitment, retreating when faced with a challenging situation will not instill resilience into the PNM. Instead, the recruitment counselor should attempt to get to the root of the problem. Is the PNM feeling rejected and expressing that “no one likes her” or that “she is not cool enough to be in a sorority”? As a recruitment counselor, you should challenge your PNM's ineffective thoughts. Just because a PNM did not receive a full schedule or did not receive an invitation from their top chapter does not mean that “no one likes her.” Remind her of the other chapters that saw something in her and that they are excited to welcome her back to their round today.

Recruitment counselors should empower their PNMs to overcome challenges effectively. Recruitment counselors must assist PNMs in viewing obstacles as opportunities for growth and equip them with strategies and tactics to tackle them. Through this guidance, recruitment counselors help PNMs develop the resilience needed to thrive in recruitment. Resilient PNMs can accept that primary recruitment will consist of highs and lows and feel equipped to weather both.

## Additional Skills

Recruitment counselors also should have the ability to:

- Ask open-ended questions
- Be a role model
- Handle stress appropriately
- Mentor
- Multitask
- Paraphrase and summarize
- Provide a resolution to conflict
- Use body language and eye contact appropriately

Recruitment counselors should avoid the following:

- Projecting personal experience onto a PNM. Remember, recruitment is about the PNM and her experience. If the PNM has questions about the chapters visited, encourage her to ask those questions during the recruitment rounds.
- Overstepping boundaries, such as not allowing a PNM to draw her own conclusion or make decisions.
- Overlooking or missing a more serious issue that needs help beyond the recruitment counselor's skills.



## Applying Skills in a Situation

A recruitment counselor must prepare to offer their best advice in any situation but must recognize when outside guidance is necessary. If a PNM threatens extreme action, the counselor must immediately contact the fraternity/sorority advisor or another campus professional.

Use a role-playing approach in the following situations:

1. A PNM wants to withdraw from recruitment because her best friend was invited back to a chapter they both wanted, but she was not.
2. A PNM likes two or three chapters equally and needs help determining her top choices for the next round.
3. A PNM has a difficult major and believes sorority membership will hinder her academic success.
4. A PNM wants to move into a sorority house immediately, but her favorite chapter cannot offer housing, whereas another chapter can.
5. A PNM learns she has only one invitation or chapter to visit for the next round. She believes this is a bad sign and will not receive a bid or that the chapter is not a “good chapter.”
6. A PNM has been told by her family that sorority life is not right for her, but she truly wants to join.
7. A PNM wants to participate in other student activities but thinks the time commitment will be too much.
8. A PNM has concerns about sorority finances and needs to know whether she can afford it.
9. A PNM believes a particular chapter or the entire community projects a stereotypical image and does not want to be “labeled.”
10. A PNM is concerned about hazing and being forced into humiliating or uncomfortable situations.
11. A PNM comes from a small hometown and worries this will affect her sense of belonging in a large chapter (or vice versa — the PNM is from a large hometown and does not feel comfortable in a community of small chapters).
12. A PNM does not want to join the chapter to which she is a legacy, but she feels family pressure.
13. A PNM is an introvert and is having trouble adjusting to the highly social nature of recruitment. She is scared she is not making a positive impression.
14. A PNM has expressed that her primary goal in joining a sorority is to “find good parties” and have social opportunities.
15. A PNM has been told her attire must be name-brand and that what she wears will significantly affect her chapter placement. She worries her appearance will keep her from receiving a bid.
16. A PNM does not have a letter of recommendation for a specific chapter/s and thinks this will prevent her from receiving a bid.
17. A PNM has discovered her recruitment counselor’s affiliation and feels negative about that chapter.
18. A PNM has been released from recruitment and is distraught.
19. A PNM shares with another PNM that a sorority member has contacted her outside official recruitment events. This chapter member has convinced her that she is guaranteed a bid.
20. A PNM shares with you that she is in a GroupMe with other PNMs and members of a specific chapter, and they have been communicating regarding the current recruitment process.



21. A PNM was embarrassed by inappropriate conversation from chapter women during a recruitment event. She wonders whether sorority life is for her and is considering quitting recruitment.