

Avoiding High-Pressure or Cult-like Groups on Campus.

The university setting presents us with remarkable opportunities to engage with new ideas, groups, clubs, and traditions. Such opportunities help to make these years unique and deeply meaningful.

As students consider the many opportunities with which to engage, it is helpful to be aware that there are groups and individuals within every city that use high pressure and/or cult-like tactics to recruit individuals into unhealthy organizations.

Common characteristics of High-pressure, Mind-Control, and/or Cult-Like groups include:

- Aggressive recruitment that makes you uncomfortable
- Members act as though the group is perfect, agreeing with all orders, claiming to have all the answers, and offering “instant friendship.”
- Refusal to take “no” for an answer; guilt is used to make individuals feel badly about turning down invitations.
- Leaders who are controlling about what members think, how they should act, and how they should feel.
- Encouraging members to disconnect from their family and/or friend groups, and to spend time only with members of the organization.
- Excessive emphasis on bringing in new members into the group and raising funds.

(Further information and resources can be found through organizations such as the International Cult Studies Association <https://www.icsahome.com/home>)

Support Resources If You Encounter a High-Pressure, Mind-Control, or Cult-Like Group:

- Columbia University Office of Religious Life: (212) 854-2184
- Columbia University Public Safety: (212) 854-2797
- Columbia University Counseling and Psychological Services: (212) 854-2284

