

“Don’t be kak, be lekker” - AfrikaBurn’s Code of Conduct

To be read with:

On Consultation

AfrikaBurn has grown up with the maxim “**Don’t be kak, be lekker**”. Yet, what if someone doesn’t realise they’re being kak? Or what if we all have a different number on the glycaemic index when it comes to being lekker?

We recognise our people have different lived experiences because of race; ethnicity; mother tongue; religion; colour; age; disability and illness (physical or mental); sexual orientation; gender identity; gender expression; parental status; marital status; socioeconomic status or background; political affiliation; neuro(a)typicality; or physical appearance and we celebrate our unique differences.

Like our 11 principles, the contents of this code of conduct are concepts and behaviours we expect our team - be they remunerated team, voting or non voting members, volunteers or directors - to work on applying in their daily lives. Specifically, the code of conduct applies to our interactions in various areas of our shared lives, including social media and during our events and activities, when boundaries of work and play can be blurred.

We recognise that AfrikaBurn is an evolutionary team and a learning culture and we strive to get it right. We also acknowledge that we don’t always get it right, and so this code of conduct is an attempt to expand, articulate and clarify “**Don’t be kak, be lekker**” with guidelines on how to course-correct and move on.

The being of lekker:

We, before me

Our greatest responsibility is to our community. Seek to understand the bigger picture and align your efforts accordingly. Pull together, don’t pick apart.

Be of service

Aim to lighten the burden of others - help make something better, more robust, easier. Offer your skills where appropriate; where your offer is accepted, honour this commitment.

Volunteerism

It’s our backbone, and should be encouraged wherever possible (including our own labour). Time is our greatest gift, use volunteer time wisely and gratefully.

Consultation

Share early and ask for input often. The method of consultation will vary – please see **On Consultation** – but everyone has a voice at the table. Seek out the gorilla spotters and dissenting voices.

Licensed to drive

Empower others by doing a great job of your own work and recognising the ideas and contributions of others. Consent sits high on our list of considerations - don't impose anything on others that you would not want imposed on you. Be realistic in your expectations of others, be realistic about your own capacity and limits.

A learning culture

Try new ways of doing, hold to the experiment and recognise "failure" as a learning opportunity. Making mistakes is ok, own them quickly and honestly, don't make the same mistake twice. Trust the process. Honour the outcome.

Practice acknowledgement

Take responsibility. Give credit. Do your very best to see the invisible work others do to make things happen.

Generous critique

Be kind, respectful, clear, constructive, and focused on outcomes and values rather than personal preferences. Listen well when receiving feedback. Use the giving and receiving of feedback as a growth opportunity.

Understand your position

Recognise the weight and power you carry as an individual due to the fixed and flexible attributes of your identity and your role in the organisation; and the impact it has on others. Strive to act more equitably, step out of the way to centralize others. Colour in a power flower if this paragraph triggers you.

Cultural custodianship

Each of us is an ambassador for AfrikaBurn, the principles which underpin it and the positive change it seeks in inventing the world anew. Be clear and upfront when you are speaking for yourself. Don't get caught up in speaking for AfrikaBurn – and don't share information you are party to that's not in the public domain.

Being kak is like:**Mind your language –**

"Need/must/should": These words are commonplace in South African discourse, but they reek of blindness to power and position. In a society where most needs are not met it is not ok to tell someone you "need them to do" something if they are in a position of oppression or marginalisation.

"Hey guys", "In the old days", "normal" and other exclusionary defaults don't serve a radical organisation - it's so unintended, yet any language that is unwelcoming, or for e.g. male defaulting —whether or not it rises to the level of harassment—is strongly discouraged.

Talking over people and making corrections or “well, actually”s that dominate or undermine when the error is minor, irrelevant and not crucial to the overall conversation. If correction is essential, use language that leaves room for the idea that you might be wrong or missing some context, too.

Microaggressions

Much exclusionary behaviour takes the form of subtle -isms, small things that make others feel unwelcome. For example, saying “It’s so easy my mom could do it” is a subtle -ism with tones of both sexism and ageism. Regardless of intent, these comments can have a significant demeaning impact, this includes “colour blindness”. Character assassinations and judgment, presenting opinion as fact, anecdotal ‘evidence’, and subtle innuendo all stack up to psychological violence.

Pulling rank

Undermining people especially when done publicly is a short-cut to disengagement. Low level undermining – e.g. office gossip, resistance to requests, circumventing process also negatively impacts confidence and outcomes. Follow process whoever you are, cognitive and implicit bias are real.

Assigning blame, outsourcing challenges

Accountability is essential but finger pointing is not a good look.

Grey areas that cause grey hairs

Revising decisions

It’s appropriate to relook at decisions when new information is presented but until that happens respect why and at what level it was taken, especially if you opted out of a decision-making process, aren’t a close or directly affected party, or personally disagree.

Intention

We are an intentional community, it is good practice to set intention and work with intention. Claiming intention to do all the things is not the same as doing all the things actions speak louder. Claiming good intention can minimize feelings and police the reactions of others, it also identifies who is being centred. Not intending a negative consequence – doesn’t change the impact of that consequence.

It’s what you don’t say that counts

We all have it, we all do it, and we don’t have to be NLP experts to know that body language is important and not everyone can manage a poker face (why would they?). Facial expressions, posture, gestures, using a space are all part of body language. Pay attention to your own and others.

Boundaries

We are a team, we are an organisation, we are a community. Being privy to information, data and facts doesn’t automatically give an individual the privilege to share the information throughout the community. Know and keep your boundaries.

Calling it out

If you see a subtle or an unsubtle-ism, you can point it out to the relevant person, either publicly or privately, or you can ask a People Team member to say something.

If you are a third party, and you don't see what could be biased about the comment that was made, feel free to talk to the People Team. Please don't say, "Comment X wasn't sexist!" or "That's not what they meant. You're being too sensitive."

Similarly, please don't pile on someone who made a mistake. We all mess up – just identify the issue and move on, help the offending person do better.

The People Team

You can go to ANY of the following team members about:

Psycho-social support, feeling overwhelmed, experiencing harassment, requiring mediation, and reporting a grievance.

They will help to address and escalate the issue appropriately and confidentially, both formally and informally.

Brian Little
Catherine Williams
Tim Doyle
Lisa Triani
Lorraine Tanner
Sam Bendzulla

Do the hard yards

None of us are perfect: all of us will from time to time fail to live up to our very high standards. What matters isn't having a perfect track record, but owning up to your mistakes, working on your blind spots and committing to a clear and persistent effort to improve.

If you are approached as having (consciously or otherwise) acted in a way that might make your teammates feel unwelcome, listen with an open mind and heart and avoid becoming defensive. Remember that if someone offers you feedback, it likely took a great deal of courage for them to do so. The best way to respect that courage is to acknowledge your mistake, apologize, and move on — with a renewed commitment to do better.

That said, repeated or severe violations of this code can and will be addressed and can lead to disciplinary actions, including termination.