

A photograph of a person balancing on a wooden structure in a dusty, open landscape. The sun is bright in the upper left corner, creating a lens flare. The structure is made of wooden poles and has a net-like structure hanging from it. The ground is dry and rocky.

Being Dusty

Living the Principles

by Jai'prakash

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cover image

The artwork "Love Life and Death",
conceived and built by Werner Strauss,
offered people a space to give tribute to their loved ones.
This photo was taken on a cool evening
shortly before the artwork was burned.

AfrikaBurn, 2016
photographed by Shirley Lohmaier

BEING DUSTY

LIVING THE PRINCIPLES

by Jai'prakash

CREATED: 21 MAY 2018

Last revision: 21 June 2018

Edition: 1

A guide to bringing the Burn to your daily life, by contemplating the meaning of the 11 principles which guide AfrikaBurn outside of the boundaries of Tankwa Town.

Chapters:

• Finding Myself in The Middle of Nowhere •	- 1 -
• Bringing the Dust Home •	- 8 -
• Radical Self-Expression •	- 14 -
• Radical Self-Reliance •	- 22 -
• Each One Teach One •	- 27 -
• Radical Inclusion •	- 31 -
• Radical Gifting •	- 36 -
• Communal Effort •	- 40 -
• Immediacy •	- 43 -
• Decommodification •	- 48 -
• Participation •	- 51 -
• Civic Responsibility •	- 54 -
• Leave No Trace •	- 57 -
• Leave It Better •	- 57 -
• This Is Your Life •	- 59 -

To the creators of Burning Man,
the creators of AfrikaBurn,
and the burners through the decades who kept the vision alive.

And to the friends who inspired me and supported my own journey,
I love you all.

● FINDING MYSELF IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE ● (a lengthy preface)

I was properly introduced to this thing called AfrikaBurn towards the end of 2011 when a friend was planning a trip to South Africa from Australia for the following year.

"Let's meet at AfrikaBurn," she'd said in her message to me.

Not really sure what I was getting into, I simply said, "Okay".

Given that, by that stage of my life, I was already an honorary hippie, with a few of my friend circles extending into the holistic and esoteric side of life, the existence of this event had filtered into my world through Facebook photos and the occasional mention. It was, however, on the periphery of my attention and hadn't previously struck enough of a cord to actually attend it. As they say, perhaps the time wasn't yet right.

With it now fully in my radar, I did some cursory research on what AfrikaBurn was. There was very little information outside of the official website and a paltry number of amateur-quality videos on YouTube. It was heading into its sixth year and was still relatively underground and certainly not as well known as Burning Man.

In my little research quest, I found a fair number of exciting videos and articles on Burning Man which significantly whet my appetite. There was artistry, colourful people, amazing costumes, and general freedom of expression, which really appealed to the creative and hippie in me. I signed up to the newsletter on the AfrikaBurn website, and, when the first round of tickets were released a short while later, I grabbed one.

Over the months to come, if anybody had been documenting my journey to the desert, they would have noticed that my behaviour and actions would be very aligned to the principles. There was the immediacy with which I booked my ticket; the self-sufficiency of a backpacker who basically hitchhiked to the desert; the immersion into the community, unabashedly exploring, engaging with strangers like they were friends; basic giving of gifts, both tangible and ephemeral; being part of the event by volunteering for work shifts; ever conscious of the natural environment; and the general creative expression of a geeky actor.

This was not because I had read and committed to them. On the contrary, aside from the excitement inspired by those few videos and skimming the website, I retained very little details into what the festival, as we knew it then,

was about nor how to really prepare myself for it. I am not a planner; I tend to dive in and figure things out as I go along, and too many details tend to overwhelm me and I tune out.

My life already revolved around many of the principles because of who I was and the way I was engaging with my world. By this stage, I'd been on many spiritual and metaphysical retreats, I was a massage therapist, an actor and dancer, and a backpacking traveller. I was quite capable of travelling light, and knew that I could sleep anywhere and comfortably survive without a daily shower.

I was fully prepared to dive right into this new adventure. The only concern was how I would be able to get enough food and water with me to last the five days of the event. In my previous travels, there was always access to water and food. Apparently there wasn't anything being sold at this event. At the time, not even ice was available. How would I live?

Now I say I'm not a planner in that I don't sit and make extensive lists, strategise, organise, and coordinate. I often wing it with a minor bit of preparation. In this case, I was panicking a little, trying to figure out how little me could fit a week's worth of food and water into my backpack. What I did do was make contact with new people and friends who had already been there. My way of preparation was to find out what other people did, and adapt accordingly. I kept hearing this saying that the "playa will provide". These experienced Burners pretty much all assured me that it will be fine.

And it was. Things worked out, as they tend to. A few months after that faithful ticket purchase, the day before I would hitch a ride from Cape Town to the Karoo, my backpack laden with warm clothing, some dried rations, and about 10 litres of water, I met with a friend (who went on to be an integral part of the DPW in the years to come) and she confidently told me that I was going to die on my meagre rations.

Not having any way to carry more on my person, we came to an arrangement. Having more storage space in her vehicle, she would bring my additional food and water when she arrived two days later.

"The Playa will provide" means that you will get what you need, whether you realise it or not, and whether you want it or not. This isn't about free loading. In my experience, the caring and generous nature of burners isn't taken advantage of. The more connected you are with the experience, putting in your heart and effort, the more you will be "taken care of". The more you sponge off the system, the less likely that the system will sustain you.

I came to understand it as the more spiritual notion that "God or The Universe or Spirit will provide". More so than that, Spirit — replace with the term you use

— rewards action. Do your best to take care of yourself and you will be met halfway. And sometimes more than halfway. I have experienced a very strong energy of holistic synchronicity fostered by the Burn.

And regardless of whether you are atheist or theist or anything in and out between, it would be hard to deny that Burn experience is different to daily life experience. You can walk away from that week-long event completely transformed, not just because of what physically happened but the emotions evoked, the heart connections, and the awakenings, whether you call it spiritual or not. It's not just about what we do, it is about whom we become.

As much as we do want to be completely self-sufficient, it is important to realise that we do not live in isolation. All my equipment and luggage, costumes, the food and water, my ride to the Burn, all of these were made possible by people more capable at creating and planning than I am, while I participated in the ways that came more naturally to me.

Prior to my trip, I did look at all the volunteer positions that were available. Honestly, I thought I was going to be bored. From what I read and saw, it looked like a great fancy dress party, which was very exciting and all... but what was one to do for five full days in a desert?

I had to keep myself busy and so I signed up for some volunteer shifts, absentmindedly demonstrating communal effort and plopping in a bit of participation.

Of course, as anyone who has been out there will testify, there was no time to be bored. And, that first Burn, I participated in a very different manner to what I had envisioned.

I arrived to a city still in the process of becoming. It was exciting, it was new, the air was laden with possibility. I'd already made friends with the people I had travelled with, who were part of a theme camp called Desert Magic.

The ease of making friends really stood out. I'm fairly easy going and can strike up a conversation with most strangers on a whim. But generally there's more effort required to get people to engage meaningfully. People in the world I knew were usually more reserved, sometimes suspicious, and on their guard.

At least, that's the case in the city. Backpacking was a different story. Solo travellers connect with others more readily. And perhaps this was what I was experiencing on this first day.

I was with backpacker-type travellers. Not hotel travellers. Oh dear lord, hotel travellers can be a bit stuck in their own worlds. Backpackers on the other hand – they are out there, exploring, eager to meet people, eagerly to have new experiences. These were the people I was meeting on my way to the desert,

and in the desert itself. (I'm being facetious by the way; hotels and hotel dwellers can be very awesome too.)

The night fell and with it a very calm and almost complete darkness. The first day at the Burn in 2012 was very unlike the first day now. Back then, the city was still developing even after the gates opened.

There was light and sound emitting from a single tent way out there in the distance on the opposite side of the....what was it called?....Binnekring. The music sounded good and my new friends had all gone their separate ways, either exploring or in their tents. So, on my own, I decided to go see what this musical party-sounding tent was all about.

I wandered relatively unlit (all I had was my headlamp) out into the darkness and literally bumped into a girl. She stepped back and said, "Hey!"

I said, "Hey. Sorry."

"No problem," she responded, slipped her arm into mine and we walked together, like old friends, across the desert to the single party tent, chatting up a storm.

We entered the tent and organically went our separate ways and never saw each other again. We didn't exchange names or even pleasantries. That's what you do when meeting strangers. But we clearly weren't strangers. Nobody is strange on the Playa.

That was one of the key takeaways from my first Burn; I was among friends. I was in a place where I belonged. I was accepted. I was home.

By the next day, after an early morning meander and yoga session, I was walking around with naught on but a soft blue top hat and a light button down top (practically formal wear in my books). I ran into two girls from the day before, who were dressed only in skirts. We bonded over our half naked-ness and spent much of the rest of the event together.

As a performing artist and a nudist, radical self-expression came very naturally. But for the first time, I could let my guard down and completely be myself in a public place with no hang-ups, no reservation, and no discomfort.

And that's how much of the week went; walking around nude, gifting out sweets, with two topless girls who have since become very dear friends. (Of course, by day three – the day of Critical Tits, I think – when we saw more nude people, my friends and I were all, "Psh, that's old hat. We were naked before it was cool.")

For me, these connections were the most important that first year. Connecting with people who saw me as me, and accepted me as me, and who celebrated

my expression and were inspired by it. This was the freedom I'd sought most of my life.

AfrikaBurn didn't *change* me per se. It gave me a space to more completely *be* me. It gave me an abundance of people out there who I could connect with and relate to. It showed me a society and community that was closer to being the ideal I preferred.

I didn't realise at the time that the way I lived my life was quite naturally in sync with the principles of AfrikaBurn. And so I fell into the way of things very easily.

Heck, back then, I couldn't even tell you what the principles were.

They have been formalised into written guidelines but if we all lived our lives with authenticity, embracing our innate nature to care and connect and be shameless, the natural way we exist, without the rules layered upon us by society and religion, we would organically be living the Burner way.

Over the years to follow, I've become more conscious of the principles and how they are revealed in my own life. Seven Burns later, I am not one of those people who look forward to AfrikaBurn. It has become a place that I do enjoy and seem to keep coming back to. But it's not my only haven anymore. I've since found more friends and Burn-friendly spaces as well as the confidence to be more and more me in what we call the default world.

The principles have been more purposefully applied in my own life. I have become more aware of where and how I apply them in the daily world, and this book is aimed to structure that awareness and, so doing, hopefully help you apply them more in your lives too.

Everything that I write is from my perspective and has nothing to do with the organisers of AfrikaBurn or any other Burn. They are my own take on what the principles mean. As you read, I invite you to contemplate each principle for yourself, too, adding your own take to my perspectives as you apply them in daily life.

Everything good that we have come to experience, the stuff that fills our hearts with joy and makes our eyes sparkle, deserves our respect and our appreciation, and deserves to be spread to the rest of our existence. AfrikaBurn was a gateway. It shouldn't be reserved for only one week out of fifty-two. Instead, let's embrace what we discover in that week, and expand it to make all of our world an amazing place to live in.

For more of my experience and some photos from my first Burn, read:
jaiprakash.me/middle-of-nowhere

● BRINGING THE DUST HOME ●

If you're reading this, you are probably very aware of what AfrikaBurn is.

On the other hand if, by some obscure chance, you've got a confused scowl on your face as you gloss over the words "AfrikaBurn" and "Burning Man", let's first make sure we are on the same page before getting into the meat of it. Don't worry, I'll keep it super brief, with a minimal of boring bits.

A few decades ago, in the mid eighties, a wooden structure in the figure of a human male was burned on a beach by Larry Harvey and Jerry James. The burn attracted a group of curious watchers.

It became a tradition. A symbol for a new culture, one that developed beyond the existing capitalist dog-eat-dog way that was consuming the American people, and pretty much the rest of the Anglocised world.

The tradition evolved into Burning Man, an event held annually in the Nevada desert of the USA in Northern America. Calling it an "event" is extremely vague, but there really isn't a word yet to describe this type of gathering. What do you call an event where a little metropolis is established, complete with homes, coffee shops, pancake places, yoga studios, workshop and education spaces, party joints, and a host of other activities, sub-events, and massive and exotic artwork?

Since that humble beginning, it has evolved into one of the most intense, life-changing, bucket-list off-ticking festivals to be at in the world.

AfrikaBurn is a much smaller but nonetheless as awesome version of Burning Man, held in the Karoo desert of South Africa. It came into being in 2006, 20 years since Burning Man's birth, and has grown to be one of the biggest regional Burns, and is still seen as what Burning Man used to be like in its earlier days; more intimate and heartfelt.

This is a place that people come, once a year, to express themselves, be free from the hierarchic, money-driven rat race, and connect with like-minded folks of their tribe. It's a place to party, to dress-up, to be creative and artistic, meet amazing people, and unleash our weirdness. It is a place to play, to discuss and address social issues, and inspire that sense of community we have come to enjoy as Burners. It's a place to lift the human spirit and, so doing, improve our overall social existence.

As the event and following grew, the ten principles came into being, guidelines to help shift the behaviour of people accustomed to a much harsher world, so as to forge a stronger and mutually respectful community, and stay true to the Burning Man vision.

There's a rich history to Burning Man and Afrikaburn.
More details on the event and the principles can be found on the following sites.
Go take a gander:

<https://burningman.org/timeline/>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burning_Man#History
<https://www.afrikaburn.com/about/what-is-afrikaburn>
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AfrikaBurn>
<https://www.afrikaburn.com/about/guiding-principles>

By 2014, AfrikaBurn hit the mainstream in South Africa. It has since grown to just less than 15,000 participants and continues to be a bucket list event item among both South Africans and Internationals.

But why has no other event in South Africa garnered the same press and presented the same or better radical experience than AfrikaBurn?

One of the reasons is because it isn't simply an event for the sake of entertainment. Its underlying vision is to invent the world anew. And this vision comes to life through the guidance of these principles which the entire event holds sacred.

Other non-burn events may have some notion of inclusivity or communal effort or self-reliance or radical self-expression but I've yet to come across one that encapsulates all of them in the same measure as any other Burn event.

We often make a distinction between the Burn world and the Default world, with the latter being more restrictive, less inclusive, more rule based and not operating as fully on the founding principles as the former.

However, defaults change. What was a default in the world back in 2012 isn't the same today. We are continually growing individually and as a people. I have been to every AfrikaBurn event since my first one, and I've watched my own life change and become more and more in line with my Burn experience.

It certainly hasn't reached the same level but, for the most part, I am still able to live out the principles in my regular life even more so today than when I arrived wide-eyed and awestruck to Tankwa Town oh so many suns ago.

Make no mistake, AfrikaBurn is by no means a perfect place. There are still lots of things we need to learn and grow into as both participants and organisers. The principles still serve as that ideal to which we hold ourselves

accountable without necessarily attaining a level where we can live them all fully in every moment. We are still flawed individuals unlearning a lifetime of contrary rules and restrictions, but we are all doing our best.

AfrikaBurn and other Burn events are a taste of what life can be like away from our current default world. The standalone events themselves are unsustainable. We cannot exist in the desert, away from regular society indefinitely, without becoming exclusive ourselves.

What the Burns do give us is a taste of our potential as a people. We can revel in it and enjoy it for a week before returning to our regular lives, or we can start bringing the experience and learnings back, to start changing our regular lives and the people and environment we interact with, creating a new default.

Ultimately, living a Burner life away from the Burn is the dream. Imagine being able to enjoy the experience of the Burn all year around!

Well.

You'd probably grow bored of it eventually and want to create an even better default ☺

For now, though, while we as a people and global society still have so far to go, we can improve our lives and engagements bit by wonderful bit so that life away from the Burn is not as jarring and we are able to live more in the moment and not pine for the next Burn.

Each of the following chapters focuses on one main principle and how it affects your life. I have arranged the order of the principles to best help with the flow of my ideas, with the application of some principles building on previous ones.

As you read this, please keep in mind that the principles are an apotheosis. In a perfect culture and society where every person is honoured, where we are all confident and hold no shame, and where we have the utmost respect for ourselves, our people, and our world, there will no longer be a need for these guidelines. By applying them more in our lives, we are pushing ourselves to be better people, while existing in a society that's a little bit dark and immature and needs so much of our love and care to evolve.

As you grown, please be gentle with yourself and those around you, too. Everybody is in their own level of learning and growing. Be aware to not judge harshly those of us and our tribe who are a little behind in their learning compared to you.

The principles may be ideals that we could work the rest of our lives integrating into our daily routine. Some principles may be easier to implement than others. And each one of you will connect with what I say in a different way. You may not agree with everything I say, but I do invite you to give

everything a fair chance. Find the parts that you resonate with. Find your own way to implement parts that you don't agree with. Discuss, contemplate, allow yourself some introspection.

Everything that I present here is to help you more fully experience the Burn in your regular life. I'm not here to criticise but I am here to challenge. Mindsets may need to be adjusted. Attitudes may need changing. Beliefs may be questioned. You may feel your sense of self pushed. It may make you uncomfortable. I hope that it does.

We cannot have a different reality without changing the default way we behave and think. You are living the life you are living, engaging with the people you're engaging with, experiencing what you are experiencing because of the way you have led your life up to this point. If there's anything that you want to change, you start by changing yourself.

Our minds stretch when they are forced into a place of discomfort. If something in this book pushes your buttons, it means there's something in you that doesn't want to be looked at. It's a chance for reflection and growth. And sometimes that's difficult when we've lived our entire lives one way and now find that way no longer serves us.

There are no absolute answers here either. If you think you will know how to live your life better from reading this or any other book, you are going to be disappointed. We are all different and we've had varied upbringings in different cultures, different qualities of schooling, different social groups, different financial status, and have different filters and frames of reference. I do try to be as simple as possible but there is no way I can meet everybody where they are at. Question everything I have written and take nothing at face value. Fit my words and meaning into your frame of reference and adapt them to work in your life.

It's up to you to ensure that you get the most out of what I have to say by mindfully reading and debating and feeling into it all, from your standpoint, and for your personal life journey.

● **RADICAL SELF-EXPRESSION** ●

Everything starts with you. Because you are really the only thing that you have control over.

Or, more specifically, you have access to that control, even if it's not always total control.

Hormones, fatigue, hunger, chronic physical and mental illnesses all affect our ability to fully manage ourselves in every moment. No matter what your situation, do your best with where you are at.

It starts with taking responsibility for your behaviours and not settling for excuses. When you get to know yourself, you get to know what is negatively influencing you in a given moment and can work with that situation better, whether it's taking a break to centre yourself, getting some rest, having a meal, or leaving the task or conversation until you're otherwise better equipped to handle it.

This is something to remember as you work through each of these principles. You can only do what you are capable of, in this moment in time. And what you're capable of today, you may not have been last year, and it may be a percentage of what you will be capable of next year, or vice versa.

So take it easy, be gentle with yourself, and don't force anything. Express what you feel in your heart, to the extent that you are able to.

I am often told that I'm so brave and courageous for being able to walk around in public with no clothes on. I find that to be the weirdest compliment. It makes as much sense to me as being so brave and courageous for being able to put food into my mouth.

Walking around with no clothes on is the most natural thing to do. More so than feeding oneself. We must learn and practise the motor skills required to use our fingers to pick up and place a morsel inside our mouths. We are born with the ability to be naked.

What's brave is overcoming the shame that is taught to us by our parents and teachers and community. We are taught to subdue ourselves and fit in instead of stand out. And it becomes our responsibility, should we choose it, to progressively rid ourselves of that shame.

It's a weird world we live in which thrives on advertising and movies that glorify difference while our culture punishes us for doing just that. People are criticised or ridiculed for having radical hairstyles, or body art, or clothing that doesn't conform. Groups form around brands, and products, and lifestyles, and fashions, in too many cases to the exclusion of groups devoted to other brands

or lifestyles. Radical expression in our default world is largely limited to certain times and certain places and often certain people.

And we allow ourselves to be repressed, in varying levels, because we also desperately want to belong and not be excluded.

On the playa, people dress up or down as they choose. There is no requisite as to what you must wear or how you must express yourself. If you want to wear a high-end, classy ball gown, you do so. If your partner wants to wear a shabby, tattered potato sack, they do so. If you both wander out together, hand in hand, nobody bats an eyelid. You will most likely receive compliments on your respective attire. And it doesn't matter what your or your partner's genders are. Clothes are clothes. They are for decoration. And keeping you safe from the elements.

Notice that I'm not bringing gender into this because I don't like labels when they're restrictive. Your clothing choices, your hairstyle choices, all your expressive choices, they're choices you make in order to feel better, more confident perhaps, more radiant perhaps, more comfortable perhaps. What these choices of expression are not is a definitive label.

On the Playa, a straight man may freely wear a summer dress because, the gods know, it's very comfortable and an ideal garment for hot days.

The default world, on the other hand, will attempt to label your gender and often your sexual orientation and sometimes your culture by the expression you exhibit.

I'd like to say Fuck the default world and wear what you want but our society outside of Burn is a long way off from having that level of acceptance in terms of clothing or body decoration. And they can be bastards about enforcing their views.

But you can still find ways to express yourself and experience a bit of freedom in the world away from Burn.

Get creative in your dress. If you work in an office with a dress code, add a little dash of hippie to your work wear. Maybe a tie-dyed scarf. Or mismatch your socks. Or get really daring and wear a multicoloured lacy pair of panties.

As creative as you get with costuming at the Burn, figure out how you can creatively push boundaries in your regular life. Please do this with awareness. Not all families, communities, offices and corporations are as tolerant. The object is not to get you hurt or fired. It's to extend the boundaries enough so that they start shifting.

Pushing boundaries work best with smaller changes that you gently increase as people get accustomed to them. As gruesome as this analogy is, think along

the lines of slow boiling a frog. Human society adjusts better to slower change than to a sudden radical one.

Be true to you while you honour the culture established in your office or your home or your school. As you make your expression a norm, people will associate it with you and you can start playing more with that expression.

I have friends who dress in tie-dye and colourful casuals and fairy wings while attending business meetings with suit-wearing people. They are able to do this because they've established who they are and how they express themselves, while also delivering their services at a high level, proving to our more prudish members of society that comfortable and fun dress does not change service quality.

Their careers are extensions of their expression and they also choose to work with the people who accept them as they are. There's no pretence and no space for fake-ness.

It starts with your own acceptance of your unique self. The more comfortable and secure you become, the more you will express your inner self, and the more others will have no choice but to accept you for you.

Over time, I have become more and more comfortable in my own skin and in what I choose to wear. I enjoy colourful clothing as much as I enjoy no clothing. I am comfortable wearing virtually any garment whether it's a double-breasted suit, a dress suit, jeans and shirt, a Thai pants, a Thai skirt, or a centaur costume. I am also very open about my love for these outfits.

The interesting thing I've noticed is that many people do want to express themselves more but are too scared of being ridiculed or shamed. Granted, I don't spend as much of my time with people who are entrenched in the corporate culture where the rules of dress can be very strict, but when I did flit into that world, my quirkiness was not rejected. On the contrary, I was accepted as "the quirky one".

And people got curious about it. I would be the one wearing high heels in the office, or posing for photos with fake breasts under my shirt.

I "get away with it" because I'm comfortable with it. I have learned to laugh at myself and so I can't be ridiculed. That energy is picked up and, honestly, I can't remember anybody saying anything negative about my appearance or nudity in at least the last fifteen years.

What did rattle me for a long time was people assuming I am gay. My flamboyant ways and exuberant expressive gesturing, in the eyes of the default masses, clearly define who I want to have sex with. It's weird how that perception was the one that bothered me the most. And it was simply because

that was an aspect that I hadn't found security in myself about.

At first, I wanted to change myself, figure out how a proper, upstanding heterosexual and masculine man dressed and acted. And while I certainly did find outfits that made me shine and look amazing by default standards, this attitude didn't sit right with me. It's only been recently that I've finally accepted that I am uniquely me and my expression doesn't dictate my sexual orientation. And mostly, I'm concerning myself less and less with what other people's prejudices are.

That, my friends, is key to radical expression. It's about you, not anybody else.

And the more you accept yourself, your quirks, your uniqueness, your "flaws and imperfections", as society would have you believe, the more you will shine your radiant light.

Unfortunately, this doesn't mean that everybody out there, including the people who love you, will accept your expression. Always be aware of your environment and the people around you, of course. Gauge how far you can push those boundaries without harm coming to you.

And be aware of the laws in your region. Some of these can be very conservative.

The main thing you may need to shift is your own mindset. And, in so doing, start shifting the mindset of society.

Unlike at AfrikaBurn, if I walked out to the mall in a ball gown, I will get stares and, possible jeers, and maybe there will be people who would ridicule me. But there's a very small chance anybody would actually force me to go home and change. At least, it won't be people who don't know me. Family and friends who aren't as comfortable with people staring might say something to me. They won't be doing it for my good; it'll be so they aren't embarrassed and, to their mind, that I won't be embarrassed.

The feeling of embarrassment stems from shame, and shame stems from feeling guilty for doing something wrong. How sad is it that we are made to feel that wearing certain clothes are wrong?

It's "wrong" that I wear a ball gown, or, gods forbid, a mini skirt, being a hairy-legged, male-bodied person.

But not much more than twenty years ago it was wrong for a female in India to wear jeans. And today jeans on a young woman is a more common sight than a sari. (Skirt-wearing men are also a more common sight locally but it still holds a stigma.)

The point is that things change when more people make it a norm. In India in the late nineties, the culture shift happened because MTV made its way to that country, bringing with it the culture of white and black Americans for whom jeans was a common garment on any gender. As more and more young Indians wore jeans, it became the norm. Not everybody liked it but there was nothing those naysayers could do anymore. They quickly became the minority and their power was lost

To bring more freedom to self-expression in our society, we must give ourselves permission to be more free. We must accept in ourselves that it isn't wrong to dress in a way that makes us shine. No item of clothing is ever wrong to wear.

As more people stretch the boundaries in what they wear, being more unconventional in their dress, the normality will shift. And, ironically, the people who previously jeered will join the new trend.

Once again, I advise to be cautionary with how you do this in public. While wearing certain dress isn't wrong, while being naked isn't wrong, we do still live in a society that does criminalize certain dress and nudity. Be aware that if you do break the law in your area, whether as a rebel or a freedom activist, there may be repercussions that you should probably first prepare yourself for.

If breaking laws are not your thing, instead hang out naked and dress in outlawed clothing with trusted friends, in the safety and privacy of your or their homes first.

Having a safe place to just be yourself does wonders for the soul. I can't tell you how grateful I am to have the kind of friends who are non-critical of my expression and many who will join me in being the weird, non-conforming individuals that we are.

I've spoken a lot about expression in the forms of dress and nudity because these stand out for me, and have a greater level of stigma in the common world. But radical self-expression comes in many forms.

Your body art, your hair styles, the sounds you make, the music you play, the art you create, the way you walk, or dance, or flop spectacularly about, the way you perform your job, these are all ways to express yourself.

The underlying principle is for you to accept your uniqueness and do things in a way that feels good to you, and fills your heart with joy.

Going back to why many friends call me brave, I believe, is because many adults have forgotten that they were all at one stage extremely "brave" and radical in their self-expression... as young children.

Learn from kids. They don't need to be told to express themselves; they know

to do so. And, yes, sometimes even kids have to be reigned in because their expression knows no boundaries.

As adults, we understand limits, we understand respect and consideration. And so we express ourselves in spaces that allow us to. We know when we need to push the boundaries and when we need to hold them.

Encourage your inner child by playing more. Join an art class, or expressive movement class, or a dance class. Create clothing, or furniture, or jewellery, or ornaments. Do some tie-dye. Expand your horizons by hanging out with different people. Hang out with more creatively expressive, freer people.

There's an exuberance to doing something imperfect, just for the sake of it, to express and enjoy. The art you will create, whether it's a performance, or a piece of pottery, or a polymer clay ornament, or a summer scarf, will almost certainly ignite your soul and fill your heart with bubbles of joy and passion. It's incredibly liberating to fuel that inner drive, creating and expressing without expectation, and allowing yourself to have fun.

There are numerous classes and workshops in most cities, and even smaller towns. If nothing else, find groups of Burners in your area or connect online. They will definitely help you bring out your inner spirit.

● **RADICAL SELF-RELIANCE** ●

Out in the desert, without any commerce available, we are encouraged to be prepared, and are responsible for our own subsistence. We must bring our shelter, our clothes, and food and water, and anything else we may require to survive the duration of the event.

This principle is very clear cut that we must rely on our own resources. We are encouraged to do things for ourselves instead of forking over money to somebody else to do it for us. And, indeed, many burners are very capable people, able to work with their hands, and have the ingenuity to make what they need, from clothing to equipment to living space.

Imagine living your daily life not expecting nor needing anything from anyone else!

The reality is that not everybody is perfect at everything and this is why we exist as a community, sharing the load, playing to our respective strengths.

So why have this principle when there are people out there who can benefit from taking care of us and doing things for us?

I invite you to take a moment and answer that question for yourself before reading ahead.

In today's world, most things are done for us. Our housing is created for us, our clothing is created for us, our food is killed and harvested for us, and often cooked for us, too. And as technology improves, our lights are turned on for us, our doors and windows are operated for us, our cars are driving for us.

In urban areas, our plumbing needs are taken care of, garbage is removed regularly, hot water is on tap, electricity gives us a fairly comfy and cushy life.

There is very little that we wind up doing ourselves.

You get a better sense of value for something when you have to work to have it. For most of us this means working at making or saving money in order to get something like a weekend trip or fly in a balloon or a nice lamp or new kitchen floors. And because of this we often want to spend as little as possible because we know how much work we did to make the money, but we don't necessarily know how much work it takes to provide us with an experience or an item.

Let's take kitchen flooring as an example.

I've often come across people who haggle over how much it should cost to lay tiles. These are the people who seek out cheap labour, and expect high quality. Imagine if these same people took the time and effort to tile their own floors. There's a chance they may screw it up, but they will also gain an appreciation.

Having an idea of the labour that goes into something gives us a much better sense of the value in somebody who has the creativity, skill, and experience to do the job. And we can show better respect to the people who make these tasks their livelihood.

A few years ago I had the privilege of being invited to spend time in a little, remote village in Pondoland in the Eastern Cape. It was very off the beaten track, several kilometres from any road, with no electricity or plumbing. Water for everything came from a surprisingly clear river nearby, the toilet was a long drop, food was cooked over an open fire, and the huts were expertly made from natural resources, held together with mud and dung. Oh yeah, and cellular telephone signal did not make it into the valley, and there was no Internet.

Not unlike AfrikaBurn, it was one of the most amazing experiences I've had.

Many people lose the sense of value of the benefits that come with urban living, and much of our life is taken for granted until there are power cuts or the taps run dry.

There is also a sense of purpose and pride that comes with doing stuff for ourselves. Whether it's fixing your roof, building a table, making a meal, or thoroughly cleaning the bathroom, the pride we experience from accomplishment is actually quite extraordinary. There are studies that correlate the release of dopamine with achievements, no matter how small.

In our modern world, we get most of our little dopamine kicks from small achievements in games or acknowledgements on a social media post. And many of us have got a little lazy because it's easy to not move from our bed while we stream a movie and order a pizza. We no longer need to fend for ourselves. We don't really have to fight to survive in the traditional sense.

And we lose a lot of our sense of purpose and value because of this.

In the desert, you get to again feel that dopamine boost from the bigger achievements. Setting up your camp, cooking, the planning and organisation that comes with being at AfrikaBurn.

We tap into the primal survival areas of our being knowing that we have successfully lived a week in harsh conditions without the staples most of us get in our city lives. It's a rush that we want to hold on to, but our survival needs are taken care of back in the default world. Most of us go back into jobs that are not always exciting, back into a comfy world that doesn't challenge our self-reliance muscles as much.

Most of us.

The party and community engagement aside, this is what a lot of our country are doing all year round, surviving without the staples that some of us take for

granted. And let me tell you, these are some of the most alive people I've had the fortune of engaging with and living with.

There is a vibrance that shines through a person who isn't sedentary and who is mentally and physically capable of survival. Our caveperson brains kick in and react positively.

This isn't to say that life is better away from the rat race. Well, in some ways it really is, but there's also a lot of struggle out there. You can't keep taking care of yourself and your family when your efforts are not producing as much as you are putting in. Finding a balance where we are working together as a community for the better of all our members is still a dream for our modern society.

There's also another level. When you take initiative and responsibility, you set yourself apart from a large number of this era's people who are quick to shirk responsibility. We have become a society that is quick to blame others instead of taking charge and rectifying the situation. I have seen this a lot in the business and political world. More time is taken trying to find out who was at fault than to solve the problem. Yes, it's important to know why something went awry so it can be prevented in the future, but pointing fingers doesn't need to happen to achieve this.

The underlying idea behind this principle is to become a more complete and capable functioning member of the community. When everyone is doing their bit and not sponging off anyone else, the entire community benefits.

We also get to learn more about ourselves the more we push ourselves. We grow our capabilities by doing. And we gain knowledge and acquire skills through taking steps towards being more self sufficient.

And you discover your own inner resources the more you need them. We are a very adaptable and capable people. And our design is very efficient. If we don't make use of any part of ourselves, that part atrophies. On the other hand, the more we use any part of ourselves, that part strengthens.

This is most evident in our muscles. If we play sports or go to gym, our bodies are stronger and more agile and we have more stamina than if we lead sedentary lives.

It's the same with our brains. The more we rely on calculators, the less able we are to do simple maths in our heads. Before the days of mobile telephones, we could remember dozens of telephone numbers. Now a days, most people don't even know one.

The application of this principle in daily life is easy. Simply do more things for yourself instead of relying on technology or other people. There's numerous

videos and tutorials on the Internet that can teach you anything you want. Alternatively, add in the human element and learn from a friend, or get interested and engage with your plumber the next time they're fixing your geyser.

Self reliance is more than doing something for yourself. It's taking pride in what you do, no matter how small the task. And then when you do have somebody else do it for you, you will also seek out a quality that you would expect had you done it yourself.

Personally, I have grown so much in my own attitude and capabilities over the years. I have always been somebody who got my head stuck in and my arms dirty when needed, but I also discovered so much more about myself the more I purposefully applied this principle.

And I still have a long way to go too. I keep uncovering parts of my life where I have been unconsciously irresponsible. Like all the principles, we will never really get to an end. We just keep levelling up.

● EACH ONE TEACH ONE ●

As we become more comfortable and confident in our own expression and our abilities, it comes time to look outward, and realise that everyone in existence is in some way or the other learning to become more comfortable and confident in their own way.

The more we accept this, the less judgmental we will be of other people. Nobody has gone through the same experiences and situations as you have. While you may think it's obvious to be respectful of the environment, another person may not even be aware that the environment is being harmed.

A few years ago, I went to Bali. In all the media, you always see such amazing beaches and architecture and the artfully constructed rice paddies. What you almost never see in the publicity of this little island is the garbage.

My sister and I arrived in the south of the island, exhausted after a very long flight, eager to relax and perhaps dip our weary, bloated feet in the cool ocean a short walk from our villa. We were appalled to be greeted by a beach laden with plastic and metal trash.

And this experience continued for the full 3 weeks that we were there. The pretty rice paddies were littered with plastic wrappers. The streets and even the gardens of the quaint homes were covered in trash. It was very peculiar that a people who had such a marvellous artistic eye for architecture and aesthetic, could also so comfortably allow their land to be so dirty.

We theorised that it was because western consumerism had come too quickly for the locals to adapt.

This theory was confirmed for me a year later when I made that trip to rural Eastern Cape and found the locals doing the same thing. As I said, everything was mostly natural. But the inhabitants did have contact with the commercial world when they walked to the little towns, to pick up supplies.

And as natural as their life was, there were still Snickers wrappers being blown across the land.

It turned out that the locals were simply behaving as they always had. Previously, they would peel a fruit, and throw the skin where they stood. Naturally, the skin would either decompose where it lay or be picked up by an animal.

The introduction of plastic covered chocolate bars did not change this behaviour nor the understanding of their environment. The same process. Peel the chocolate bar and drop the wrapper on the ground. It would be picked up by an animal or blown away by the wind. Either way, to the mind of the locals,

it disappeared just like a banana skin or a citrus peel did.

The damaging effect of the plastic on the natural environment was such a foreign concept to these people that any attempt to explain why they should throw their wrappers into a bag that then needed to be carried to the nearest town to be disposed off was disregarded.

The education process needed to be more long-term with far more structure than I could offer in the time that I was there. Also that I was the only person there who couldn't speak Xhosa was a severely limiting factor.

This is a more extreme example which goes to show us that not everybody has the same understanding that we do, and we cannot make assumptions on anybody's level of knowledge. Here we have two cultures who are very self-sufficient and creative, able to build amazing structures and homes, in some cases better than what we get in commercialised cities, and they had absolutely no idea about the hazards of the trash they so casually threw on the ground and in their waters.

The people who upset you in your own environment for whatever reason, may also require an education.

I've seen Burners be aggressive judge and jurors against people just on the AfrikaBurn Facebook group. This is not Burner behaviour. Out in the Tankwa, we seem to have a bit more compassion for our fellow people. Maybe it's just me, but I do feel that we make more of an effort to share knowledge and let people know why their behaviour may be a problem.

It's not about upholding laws or being authoritarian. It's about getting people to the same level of understanding that you have about why some things are not done.

A recent example that springs to mind was when I was on Ranger duty at the last event and came across a man casually peeing just off the Binnekring. Now, I'm a firm believer in watering the foliage, so ordinarily I have no reason to stop anybody from relieving themselves on the ground. However, a pee spot in the middle of a heavy traffic route is not necessary. And this is what I explained to the man who was adamant that the toilets were too far away and he could pee where he wanted to.

He better got the idea when I pointed out that the main reason it's a bad idea was because it's not pleasant to walk barefoot in somebody else's pee. Pointing out a young barefoot girl a few metres away from us drove my point home. He walked off without another word. What he took from that interaction, I won't know but I did at the very least plant a seed. It may germinate and grow and perhaps he will be more cognisant of other people in the future. Or it may die and his behaviour remains more self-serving.

It can take a fair bit of patience sharing knowledge and perspectives with other people. It comes with practice. And it's important for your sanity to understand that there's no guarantee that because we choose to share knowledge that others will choose to receive it either.

Out in the common world, there are numerous opportunities to share knowledge and insight with others. And in a world that is so filled with judgements and pre-conceptions, it's even more important to be able to share with compassion and care.

As Burners, we all have knowledge and wisdom to share. I believe that withholding knowledge is sinful. Likewise, chastising somebody for not knowing or acting out of integrity with themselves or the community is as sinful. We are each others parents and children.

Before stoning somebody for not knowing something, take a breath, calm your tits, and grant yourself a moment to teach them, gently. Plant the seeds. That's all you can do. Some may die but most will take hold.

And our world gets better as more people evolve. As we start taking more responsibility in our life, we can start taking more responsibility for our greater environment as well, both by inspiring others, and sharing our knowledge and insights.

The world doesn't change by wagging our fingers self-righteously. It changes through mature leadership. We can always take time to show compassion.

● RADICAL INCLUSION ●

On the Playa, we are all on equal footing. There is no us and them. What groups come to be are inclusive and members come and go at will and as needed. The divisions that exist as to who belongs to certain theme camps, to the Rangers, or Sanctuary, or DPW are practical divisions. They exist to create order, not exclusion.

It's not that perfect either. Because this notion of grouping is so ingrained, we do still find some exclusivity happening at AfrikaBurn, too. But we're actively working to include everyone, we are open to discuss and engage with everyone at the same level.

We are all part of the same family, same people, same species, same planet. Anyone can partake.

In the default world, these divisions for order exist too. However, they have become far more exclusive. For you, it's important to recognise where you're upholding this exclusivity. This could start in your own household where you may keep certain rules for your children that don't apply to the adults. Some of these rules are practical, some may be authoritarian.

Telling somebody that they're too young to know something when they are the ones who've taken initiative and asked for the information creates an unnecessary division. Information is so easily accessible these days that it's more important to be honest and include children in discussion if they want to be included than to try to forbid them attaining the knowledge they seek in a responsible manner.

I use this example to show you that inclusion can be this radical. We aren't always aware of the people we may be excluding from our experience.

Another example in the default world can be found in peak hour traffic. How many people do you get frustrated with because they are not driving as fast or as slow as you are? Do you show them the same consideration that you would on the Playa? Even if they are not able to show you that consideration in return?

There was a situation this year where a cyclist who was distracted whacked into a pedestrian who was equally distracted. It was almost hilarious watching them both, with open gashes and minor injuries, apologising profusely and accepting responsibility for the accident.

It was funny because it almost never happens in the default world, where most people are quick to make it the other person's problem. This is the "us and them" mentality at play. The more we become a society of "just us", we

start forgiving more readily, taking more responsibility for our own actions, and helping others.

It's a great challenge out in the default world, yes, but we are burners. We are up for it. And we can take it up a notch by showing that radical inclusion is unconditional.

Even from the condition of saying "Thank you".

Ooh, how radical can we get? Will you show love, care, and consideration, including a person who doesn't show gratitude for that care or return any consideration?

We create so many rules around how to engage with people, having to re-learn the art of allowing and acceptance. We think that we need to figure out how we can include somebody who doesn't conform to the same gender pronouns usage as us, or how we can include somebody who doesn't have the same manners as us, or how we can include somebody who doesn't have the same ethics as us.

If these are the conundrums that rattle about your head, I would ask you to observe the behaviour of dogs.

Most humans think that they are superior to household dogs. Yet the vast majority of humanity can learn from their ability for unconditional love and acceptance of each other, and of humans. Unless they've been taught or bred to hate, they usually don't.

A toy-pom puppy will play with any other species of dog. She will interact, without prejudice, with any human being, regardless of their gender, or race, or nationality, or number of limbs, or body modifications, or any other differences that we, as humans, may notice.

But inclusion does not equate to condoning behaviours that don't serve us. That same dog will avoid the people who treat her badly. She may also develop associations so that if it was a male representing human who hurt her, she will be cautious around other male humans. But this caution doesn't mean she won't ever accept another human male into her world ever again. She doesn't create steadfast rules that are never to be broken; she develops habits and behaviours that protect her and she adapts where she discovers that these habits don't serve her.

The lesson here is two-fold.

First, is that we can adapt. And secondly, understanding that one person does not represent a group. As Burners, we know this. We are accepting of people regardless of the country they originate from, or the religion they have chosen. We know to accept people on an individual basis when it comes to race,

nationality, gender, and spiritual practices.

Yet we may divide people on other rules.

The practice of inclusion extends well beyond what people look like but also who they intrinsically are.

Like the car they drive, or suburb they live in, or their city, or whether they like pets or not, or whether they like children or not, or what foods they prefer, or even the mood they're in, or the deeds or misdeeds they've performed in their lives.

How capable are you of being inclusive of a person who committed rape?

Will you be willing to allow that person a chance to reform, to teach them, to show them love regardless of their past actions?

I've decided to go with this extreme example because it is a major touch point in my own life.

To be able to forgive and apply the principle of Each One Teach One with somebody who has committed what may be considered a vastly heinous act is, to me, the epitome of radical inclusion. And, once again, I must emphasise that this is not about condoning! Appropriate action does need to be taken with anybody who performs an injustice against any member of our global community. But the perpetrator is still a member of that same community.

There was a meme that made the rounds some time back about an African tribe where when one of its members did something bad, a collection of the tribe surround the person and reminded them of all the good they have done and are.

Whether that meme was based on fact or not, that sentiment holds for the vast majority of us in the common world. We are all just making our way through the day, doing our best while we deal with deadlines, money pressures, family pressures, work pressures, and everything else that capitalist life throws at us. We are not inherently bad people. And if we can remember that, when somebody bumps you or cuts in line or throws a cigarette butt on the ground, instead of getting angry and judgmental, we can engage our compassionate side and, instead, engage directly and, hopefully, positively with the person.

Or not. Determine the situation and where your own energy is, and decide on the spot what action may be best.

There are no rules to dealing with every single person. The best way I encourage you to live this principle is to think of everyone as a member of your immediate family. Open your heart to them and accept them in the default world as you would at AfrikaBurn. You may not agree with their dress sense or

their haircut or how neat or untidy they are. If they were a member of your immediate family, you would love them regardless.

How you choose to express that love is up to you. It can be as simple as a smile, even when the smile is not returned. Or offering them a hug if they look like they need one. Take the time to look into people's eyes, and treat them like a person, treat them like they matter. That simple gesture is enough to lift anybody's spirit.

I have a very playful energy. And I find that when I am in a good space and I allow that play to extend to other people, whether I know them or not, I have very rewarding engagements.

In the desert, everyone trusts everyone else. For a brief space in time, we treat each other like fellow humans, fellow people of the same species, the same tribe, the same family. Extend that concept in your everyday life, your workplace, your classroom, your grocery store, wherever you can.

● RADICAL GIFTING ●

In an ideal world, we would do things because we want to, whether that is the career we choose to the random acts of service and kindness we show our fellow Earthlings.

AfrikaBurn operates on a gifting economy. There is no minimum or maximum value placed on any gifts, and gifts are given without condition. This means that we are not bartering. There is no exchange made at all. This is the concept we take back into the common world.

In a world ruled by money and a “what’s in it for me” mentality, the concept of unconditional gifting to strangers is very foreign and not so readily understood. But when we stop seeing each other as strangers or as people who would take advantage of our generosity, the idea of gifting starts taking better hold in our minds.

Whatever we choose to radically contribute to others, we do so out of the goodness of our hearts, and expect nothing back in return. Not even gratitude.

Gifts can be as perceivably big or small in the eyes of both the giver and the receiver. Something that may be simple for the giver like a sip of water or a word of gratitude may have the hugest of impacts on the receiver. And likewise, something that may have taken a lot of energy and dedication on the part of the giver may not tremendously affect the receiver. Knowing this helps us remove our preconceived notions of what we are giving and how it may be received.

Of course, we do live in a world where people may very well attempt to take advantage and this is where our sense of self and being secure in our boundaries is important.

This is not unlike what happens in Tankwa Town.

Before you arrive in the desert, if you planned on gifting something, you would most likely have thought it through, decided on how many resources you had to budget, and roughly how many people you could cater to. If you didn’t do this, you’d wind up without the necessary material in the desert or wouldn’t be able to reach as many people as you would prefer.

This is the same process to apply in your daily life. Check your budget, and be firm with yourself. Give where you can and where you choose, but don’t let yourself overextend, lest you injure your heart or your bank balance.

I realise that, in the default world, this is harder to do because when people are more pushy or you are under emotional duress, it may seem easier to over extend than to say “no”.

I've seen it at AfrikaBurn too where people spend so much of their time and energy giving. They are excited to be contributing and the joy of seeing their recipients' faces light up is incredible, but they are so tired and don't get to experience the Burn fully themselves.

I recommend, at least when it comes to your time and your money, that you plan out your gifting. Keep spontaneous acts of gifting for when you are sure of your time and that your resources will not be exhausted. Of course, you know yourself and what you are able to contribute, and when.

In daily life, as in Tankwa, we must be conscious of our capability to gift, too. Some days, we are most definitely not the giver. Some days we need to open up and receive.

The aim with gifting is not to outshine other gifters, nor is it more about the recipient than about you. Remember that we are all in this together. As much as you give, allow yourself to receive too. Without receivers, there can be no gifting.

Some time ago, an older actor friend was talking to us younglings about his marriage. We were all in awe at how long he'd been married. I can't remember exactly how many years it was, but I do remember the advice he gave us. He said that contrary to what many people say, a successful relationship is not 50/50. It's actually 80/20.

He said each person in the relationship gives 80% and only expects 20% from the other. If all people are doing this, there will never be resentments or disappointments, and each person in their giving will experience the joy expressed by the other in their receiving.

In Burn space, we practise the concept of self-sufficiency, being 100% reliant on ourselves, and not needing anything from anybody else. This puts us in what people in the default world would call an unrealistic position where we are ready to give completely without expectation.

This is an enviable ideal which implies we are able to attain all of our resources on our own.

Obviously, this isn't always possible. Resources are often finite, but you can still find aspects of your life in which you are more abundant than others. For example, if you are good at giving massage, you could gift massages to people in old-age homes, or to your friends.

You get to choose what you want to gift and who you want to gift it to.

The caveat is to determine whether your gift is wanted.

I recall tales related by a friends who all had similar experiences, giving time,

money, and effort to help people who were disadvantaged and were disheartened by these people either trying to take more than was offered or being unappreciative. Perhaps you've experienced similar in your gift giving endeavours.

The thing to remember out in the world, as at AfrikaBurn, is that simply because a gift is on offer, nobody is obliged to take it. It is a good idea to get clarity first whether the person you want to gift to actually wants your gift, and that they want it in the same way that you want to give it.

As a simple example, a person may be hungry but due to a gluten allergy they may not be able to eat bread, in which case, while handing out loaves of bread seems like a good idea to you, not everybody may be able to take advantage of your generosity.

It's as easy as asking, "How may I help you?" or "May I give you a loaf of bread or a packet of rice?"

Gift giving in the default world does come with a load of extra admin because we still live in a society where people are distrustful, and opportunistic, and can be quick to blame instead of taking responsibility. Be aware of your environment and possible repercussions when you go about your radical gifting.

This also applies to generosity in the workplace or in your neighbourhood. Once you've determined what it is you want to share with your colleagues or your neighbours, check that they want it, and that there are no rules in place that could result in negative repercussions.

In other words, it's probably not the best idea to hand out joints in the office cafeteria.

● COMMUNAL EFFORT ●

We have always worked best as a tribe, with each person doing their part to take care of or advance the community.

Our world at large, on the other hand, is very confusing.

Anglocised society tells us to leave home and make it on our own because everybody is out to get us.

At the same time, we have developed a society in which we are very reliant on everyone else in order to survive. Should the Apocalypse hit, very few people actually have the ability to take care of themselves. We live in homes constructed by other people, eat food killed or harvested by other people, our clothes are created by other people.

Look, we are a communal species and we actually do thrive much better in a community, where everyone plays their part, expressing their strengths for the greater good. The people who are more predisposed to farming or gathering or hunting provide the food for the entire tribe. Likewise, the people who are able to make clothing provide that. Relying on the people who are more capable than us is not a bad thing; it's making intelligent use of the resources we have available to us.

The issue is when we relinquish responsibility and take for granted the importance and value of the rest of the community.

This is why we tend to stifle our self-expression in the common world. Often it results in us being shunned and ejected from our community, whether that community is your household, your extended family, your school environment, your work environment, or friend circle.

At AfrikaBurn, we have accepted that we are part of a complete community and we treat each other as part of that community. We are Burners by virtue of being out there together in the desert.

Keeping the example from previous principles, think of the Burner community as you would your immediate family. We show respect and care to each member of the family and they, in turn, show us care and respect. We help them where we can, lending our skills to compliment theirs. We take care of them when they are sick or fatigued or hungry or have taken too many shrooms.

We are there for each other.

In the non-Anglocised world, families and cultural communities are still hugely valid. In South Africa, if you haven't yet experienced it, go to the Indian African

suburbs or the Black African suburbs or the Coloured African suburbs. You will find neighbours who know each other and who look out for each other. You will find communities who work together and act together. When there's a funeral or a wedding, almost the entire suburb shows up.

As more and more of our country shifts to a more Americanised way of living, the communities becomes more insular and exclusive. In the predominantly middle-class areas of most towns and cities, neighbours often don't know each other, birthdays and weddings and funerals are kept small, and people tend to keep to themselves.

This is not the way we behave at AfrikaBurn. Sure, there's still a bit of default world mentality that seeps in, but for the most part, everybody is invited to everything, and everybody has a sense of belonging. We put in effort not simply for ourselves but also for others to experience. And by the same token, we are also ready to put our own efforts into the projects of others.

It is about collaboration and co-operation, and the understanding that we are in this together, making a plan for the best, even when resources are tight.

In the real world, we can do more to assist others, even when there is no direct reward for us.

The sentiment of helping little old ladies across the road has all but died because we've devolved into a society where the little old ladies are just as scary as the two-ton speeding gas guzzlers we would previously have protected them from. But the more we keep to ourselves and only offer our effort to close friends, the more we perpetuate this scenario, and the more distant our society becomes.

When I practised Aikido, we would clean the dojo before and after sessions. It was actually really great when we were on retreats, with people from all over the world, at different ages of life, and different levels of expertise, all working together, sweeping and washing the mats.

There was no sense of hierarchy. The high level black belts swept alongside the beginners. It's an attitude fostered by the Japanese culture which doesn't differentiate between what we consider menial and high-level tasks in our more Anglocised world.

This same culture, for all its faults, is one of the best examples of community in our world. They show how our respective expressions can come together.

Accept that we're in this together. We create a better and more efficient world when we co-operate and collaborate, whether in business, creative projects, or co-habitation.

● IMMEDIACY ●

We have become a very head-strong people who don't always go with the flow that calls to us.

There is no time like the present. At the event, if you don't grab the opportunity that's present there and then, often you don't get the chance again. Most people don't have any time-keepers to remind them of events, there's no instant direct messaging system to let people know where friends are or what activities are happening where.

At the event, when you feel like doing something, you do it. Or you don't. Feel like going somewhere? Go there. Or don't. Allow things to happen, without feeling too large a need to direct.

There's always balance to this. And you must find that balance in your own way.

I, for example, have always been a very go with the flow type of person. An opportunity comes my way and, if it seems interesting and I am able to, I take it. Some of the most amazing adventures I've had have been the results of unplanned leaps. And many of those leaps have led to more leaps and more adventures.

My most favourite memories and most favourite people and many of my skills and learnings have come from going with the flow. Conversely, some of my worst memories and experiences have also come from a lack of planning.

I am reminded of the insight we can take from high achievers, particularly in sports. Top players achieve an impressive number of tries in rugby or goals in soccer. Their wins are high. But that number is dwarfed by their "losses".

If we had to focus on how many hoops Michael Jordan, a world famous basketball player, missed compared to the number he got, we might wonder why he's bother playing basketball at all. The insight here is that if he hadn't kept going when he missed, he wouldn't have become a super hot player.

Going with the flow of things and practising immediacy instead of a measured plan doesn't mean that all will go well. We can fail and find bad times in whichever direction we take. Being immediate means we do take more chances, and, hence, we do grab more opportunities.

I have found, in general, that my balance is in doing some overall big picture planning while going with the flow in the details. This doesn't always apply. And I must treat each and every adventure differently. That's the way of this principle. It lets us know that no moment, no experience, and no activity is ever the same.

We are never the same.

Anybody who has been to AfrikaBurn more than once understands this. Each time you go there, you go as a different person, with different prominent attitudes, different prominent beliefs, and different prominent issues. You go with different people, and even people you've been with before are themselves different to who they were the year before. The lay of the land is different. The energy is different. The theme is different.

And so you will experience a completely different Burn than you did the year before. Or ten years before.

This is the same for everything. If you are being true, no place you visit will ever be the exact same experience. And no activity you do will ever be exactly the same either. No person is exactly the same each time you interact with them.

Immediacy goes by another term in our world. Presence.

Being present and in the moment you're living instead of in your head, thinking about an email that needs to be written, or organising a plan to achieve a goal.

We are taught that we need to constantly multi-task. The way our world works, this skill has become essential. Until you start simplifying your life. When you have less tasks to give your attention and energy to, you have more of said attention and energy to put on yourself and your current moment.

You would have felt the difference in the week at AfrikaBurn, when all you needed to concern yourself with was what was happening in that week. There were no people to get back to, or activities beyond AfrikaBurn. You would have felt lighter. You would have felt more at ease and more at peace.

And you may not have realised that this was because you were more present. There were fewer distractions and hence you had more energy available to use.

Out in the regular world, we are bombarded daily with media and people crying out for our attention. It's not always possible to tune them out completely but there are steps that can be taken to conserve the limited energy we do have.

Back in December of 2002, I went on my first residential massage retreat. We went out to a place down in the South East coast of South Africa living in a rustic house with quick access to a beautiful remote beach. Cellular telephone towers were more sparse back then and we didn't have signal at the house. It was fantastic.

The time was dedicated to us, and everything we needed to learn, and

practice. We engaged fully with each other without distractions. This was almost 10 years before my first AfrikaBurn but I'm sure you see the similarity in the experience.

I associated these retreats with a lack of communication. And when I did more of them, even if phone signal was plentiful, it became a habit to turn on flight mode (yup, I had an early version of a Motorola not-quite-as-smart-phone back then which had a flight mode feature).

This habit has been a way for me to tune out the noise. These days, I still take mini holidays by turning off my phone. Or putting it on flight mode. Or very simply muting the notifications.

You don't have to go all the way out into the middle of nowhere to make yourself unavailable. You simply let people know that they won't be able to reach you for a few hours or for a day or two. You obviously must figure out what works best for you. Spend that time with yourself, or with your family, or anybody else who energises you instead of drains you.

For periods of time, allow yourself to focus on the things that primarily matter to you.

It's been my experience that crisis is always resolved. I've had clients panic because something isn't working or a deadline was missed or some other minor issue. More often than not, that panic-inducing issue, whether resolved or not, is forgotten a week later. People in the regular world get into a flatspin about so many things. Don't allow yourself to fall down that spiral with them. It sucks up your energy for no reason.

A very good habit to practise is to only allow people to take up your time and energy in small doses. An example of this would be to only respond to emails between 9am and 11am a day, and have a focussed productive session from 11am to 1pm.

As always, adapt a routine that works for your specific situation. It doesn't have to be a daily routine either. Your Wednesdays could look very different from your Mondays. And one week may be more productive than another. Being present allows you to set your boundaries and adapt as and when you need to.

The flip side to immediacy is that when something is in front of you, our tendency is to want to give it attention, whether it's worthy of our attention or not. Social media is a great example of this. When I turned off my notifications in various apps, there was less call to check them.

If I don't have anything else to do or I am eager to see comments on a post I've made, then I do open the various apps more often. But if I'm engaged with

something, when I'm with real live people, or watching a movie, or writing, I have little need to split my energy on something else. Unless, of course, the people or the movie are not taking up my full attention.

Which leads us to the energy that we have available. Different people have different levels of energy available at different times. Think of this like the processing power of your mobile phone. As you open more apps, the processor must divide its attention to each app. Some apps take more power than others, and eventually if you've opened up too many for the processor to cope with, your phone slows down.

More high-end phones allow you to have more apps open at the same time. The lower-end ones need you to clear a few apps from memory before opening more.

This is exactly how your own brain functions. The more you give it to do, the more power it uses, both in terms of processing and energy. The problem is we don't close our apps, we just keep opening more, and keep using our energy without recharging.

You've experienced a situation where you've lived simply enough, at Burn, and would have noticed, whether you were aware of it or not, how much more energy and peace you had. Honour this, and do your best to create more of that experience.

I can't tell you what to do exactly in your life. This is where you take responsibility for your experience, and manage what you are able to. This is where you honour your boundaries and say "no" or "not right now" to activities for which you don't have the energy right now.

Honour your heart, and live the experience now. Honour your time and don't overspend what you don't have. Honour your energy and your brain, and put your focus only on what you need to.

And honour yourself, taking the time and the space to recoup and recharge.

In whatever way you can. As with everything in this booklet, do it bit by bit.

● DECOMMODIFICATION ●

I've never been a brand person, preferring products for their function more than their looks or popularity. As a result, there are very few brands that I am loyal to. I use a product that appeals to me, and that mostly matches my personal values.

Because of this attitude, it's difficult for me to be swayed by advertising and commercialism. I'm certainly not immune but I like to think that I am not as indoctrinated into the mindset of buying stuff for the sake of stuff.

I do like pretty things though, and I know my own capabilities so I know that I might not always be able to make my own stuff. Where I can, I have exchanged services and goods with friends. And when I've been able to afford the nice toys, I've certainly got them.

There is nothing wrong with commercialism. Where it tips over into a negative human experience is when we are exploited by people and companies who value their own bottom line over the people they serve, their customers.

The more we show that we are the ones in power instead of having companies dictate to us, the more likely companies will shift back into a place of service. And, in time, those that don't hold our highest values will fade into obscurity.

At least, that's the dream.

Within AfrikaBurn, we operate on a gifting economy. To paraphrase the Burning Man documentation, in order to preserve that spirit, the Burner community seeks to create an environment that is not influenced by trade, sponsorship or advertising. In a world where advertising did what it was supposed to do by letting us know that a product or service existed and we could decide for ourselves which brand suited our needs based on the benefits and company values, instead of the psychological manipulation that does underlie most advertising, we wouldn't be as exploited.

The Burn is about experience over consumerism. And our world is moving more in that direction with more and more people choosing to gain knowledge and experiences over having more things.

The capitalist culture has created tribes around products and brands, separating people into camps who often, for no compensation whatsoever, fight each other on behalf of the brand they represent. The psychological applied to branding is so meticulous and purposeful, that we often don't even realise how manipulated we are.

When we wind up choosing products based on a name instead of capability, we can rest assured that we have been mentally enslaved by a particular brand.

That makes this principle relatively easy to apply in daily life. Look at the things you have your life.

Are they things that you want?

Do they serve their purpose for you?

If the answer to both these questions is "Yes", you're good.

The next thing to understand is that, just because they serve you, doesn't mean that the exact same product will serve your friend's needs. And that's okay.

We don't all want Mercedes vehicles or Google phones or Sony TVs. The number of products out there under the number of brands out there reflect our own variances in need and preference.

Commerce, while having no place at Afrikaburn, is essential in our default world. What we do need to apply is more awareness and consciousness to how we deal with commerce.

From a business owner's perspective, treat your customers fairly and like people. Observe the other principles of inclusion and community and even gifting best as you can in your company.

As consumers, we can be more vigilant of how unscrupulous companies are still trying to manipulate us or observe values that contradict our own, or the principles here. Choose which company and products deserve your money.

● PARTICIPATION ●

We learn and grow through active participation. It is through doing, not watching, that we can truly grasp concepts and experience change.

Our society has grown into a large number of watchers.

We are encouraged to enjoy the exploits of the few, by observing them on TV, or through social media. We have become a relatively sedentary people and we can tell from conversations how many people are experiencing their own adventures, and how many are living vicariously through the lives of celebrities and fictitious characters.

Commodification in the form of advertising is based on having more and more eyeballs on particular products. TV shows, movies, sports events, and social media platforms are designed to attract as many eyes for as long as possible so as to get more exposure for the advertisers that often pay large amounts of money for those eyeballs.

There's nothing wrong with advertising nor with enjoying the exploits of others. What I'm aiming the spotlight on is how much are you participating in your own life versus being an observer.

For the longest time I did not own a television. And I didn't miss it. There was far too much to do that I did not have time to watch television. I still don't own a television but I do have a Netflix account now. And I know how easy it is to get sucked into the excitement of all those series so much so that there came a time when I would turn down invites, and was more excited to smoke a spliff and binge on a series than spend time with friends, creating my own adventures. For that reason I occasionally deactivate my account and find other ways to keep occupied.

It is so easy to get lost in all the content that is out there. From the number of books that come out to all the YouTube channels to the posts we see on Instagram and Facebook. We lose ourselves in the lives of others. And, again, there isn't anything inherently wrong with consuming all the content that excites you.

By all means, read all the books! In fact, read more books than Facebook posts. Watch the YouTube series. Gain insight. Learn. Be entertained, for the gods' sake!

And then write your own book. Make your own videos. Teach. Entertain.

Participate in adventures in whatever way grabs you. If a food traveller excites and inspires you, perhaps find ways to collaborate with them. Or do your own food-related travels.

The world needs more participants, people who step up and shine their light. Out in the Playa, virtually everyone is a participant, contributing to the overall event, whether it's as simple as dressing up, or as intense as being part of the DPW, working weeks and months before and after the event.

And here, I want to distinguish between participation in which we uplift and contribute to better, and participation that is detrimental.

Disrespecting somebody on a Facebook comment thread is a form of participation, but is it really doing anyone any good?

Participating in a war is, once again, participation. But when we're fighting our fellow humans over an ideology or for assets, are we really contributing to a better world?

Once again, it is helpful to remember that we are members of the same global family, and participation should in some way contribute to the family experience, in the same way that our participation at AfrikaBurn contributed to the overall burner experience.

We aren't all as readily invited to play and work in the default world so we need brainstorm ways in which we can meaningfully participate, whether in your workplace, in your neighbourhood, community, continent, or planet.

The more we shine our light by doing more instead of complaining or commenting on the doings of others, the more we become an inspiration to our peers. Encourage participation, encourage contribution, encourage the people in your environment to do and be more, and complain less.

And let's step it up a notch with civic responsibility.

● CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY ●

People who were at AfrikaBurn back in 2014 will remember that the theme of the year, being The Trickster, had invoked the energy of Loki, with his mischievous ways, causing frivolous disruption to the experience of the majority of the Burners.

For various reasons, this was also a very turmoilic Burn for me, too, both personally, and in witnessing and holding space for my friends going through their respective hurts and issues. I left the desert, on a long and hard ride back to Johannesburg, feeling like I will never return.

But two things happened that saw me there the following year.

During my time on the Playa, I had wandered quite accidentally into a camp of international Rangers. One of those rangers, Phoenix, bumped into me later and we engaged in a long chat while walking the Binnekring. In the course of this conversation, Phoenix told me that I would make a good Ranger.

Then, later, a story was told to me about a group of experienced Burners, some of them friends of mine, somehow involved with the organisation of the event, who were sitting around and chatting when a participant approached and gave a recommendation of what would make AfrikaBurn better. The response was, "That sounds like a great idea! Go ahead and do it!"

In the Burn world, if you don't like something, it is expected that you make a plan, take responsibility and initiative, and create the change you want to see.

I returned the following year, purposefully taking up more volunteer duties and ranger shifts, with the intention of restoring balance to an event I had come to love, instead of bemoaning that it was no longer what it used to be.

It turned out that I was not the only Burner with this intention. And, to this day, 2015, themed The Gift, was the best Burn experience I (and many others) have ever experienced.

This wasn't simply because the organisers made changes or took initiatives. It was because the majority of the community did. It was because we who are Burners take responsibility for the world we are in and the experience we want.

In the world outside Tankwa, responsibility is not as readily taken. Most people complain about the state of things, and the way things should and could be, but very few make any effort to change it.

In reality, it is your civic duty as a member of the human species to effect the world we live in for the better of all.

You can do this by paying attention to what you are complaining about. What

troubles you? What about your suburb, or community, or town, or the complex you in live with or the company you work for bothers you enough to want things different?

Then, take ownership. Create a community task force or a team, rally friends, take some action to make the change you want to experience. In the default world, where it is far more authoritarian, there may be more hurdles and bureaucracy to overcome, true, but this simply means that you need to be more creative in your plans for change.

The world changes when we change it. Very few politicians have any incentive to change things, especially if that change could put them out of power or otherwise disrupt the status quo. Most corporations are the same. Complaining often doesn't get us anywhere. We must take responsibility for what we want.

This principle reminds us that we are part of the same civilisation, and, as we radically include everyone else, we are part of the same family. What we do for ourselves, we do for others. And as you take more responsibility, putting your skills into the betterment of your world, you inspire others to do the same.

These don't need to be massive improvements. Start where you can, in your own household before taking on the neighbourhood.

And taking responsibility implies being responsible, too.

AfrikaBurn exists because of dedicated management, organisation, planning and teamwork. People don't simply show up a few weeks before the gates open. It's a year round process. As you take on more responsibility for your world, do it as a team, too. Talk and plan first, use skills that exist, upskill where need be. Instead of dressing up in a scuba outfit and fighting crime as a solo vigilante, create a neighbourhood watch, organise self-defence and awareness classes for the watch, get the security companies and the local police involved in your initiative.

We are a part of a whole, and there are other parts that can support what we need. The first step is a mindset shift that we can't change things. We can. The challenge is only to figure out how.

● ~~LEAVE NO TRACE~~ ●

In terms of the Burning Man principles, Leave No Trace refers specifically to the environment, and the commitment to remove all visible traces of the event once it is done.

It does extend to say “We clean up after ourselves and endeavour, whenever possible, to leave such places in a better state than when we found them.”

That sentiment is much more in line with how I see this particular principle and would prefer it be re-titled.

● LEAVE IT BETTER ●

The reason I don't like the wording of “Leave No Trace” is because, even as an ideal, I find this to be a completely impossible and not particularly practical aim. The event of AfrikaBurn does leave a trace. It leaves many traces.

From the steps of the thousands of people on the sand, the smoke particles pumped into the atmosphere, the sounds reaching across the desert permeating the ears of every living creature there, including the creatures who remain there after we leave.

More importantly, the experience affects us all, and the reason you're reading this is because it has left an impression, a trace in your mind, and in your heart.

We all do that. When we are shining our light, being the amazing expressive, loving, caring people that we are, we leave a trace wherever we go. And that's exactly what we want to do.

So, this is also an easy principle to adopt. Look around your immediate environment and determine what you can do to leave it better.

It could be as simple as smiling at every person you pass in your workplace. It could be a bit more radical as picking up trash around your neighbourhood. Or you could create a company that performs legal dumpster dives in order to provide the underprivileged with a soup kitchen.

There are innumerable ways in which you can leave a better trace on your world. And like so many of the principles your actions serve as inspiration for the people who are willing to be inspired.

● THIS IS YOUR LIFE ●

The principles described by Burning Man and Afrikaburn are designed to create a richer, fuller, more inclusive, communal experience. They are the foundation for a life lived away from the influence of our default world, where we bond as a family, working together, playing together, expressing freely and improving our overall existence.

But nobody can tell you how to live your life.

I've taken the principles and elaborated on them in a way that makes sense and that make a difference to me. My life experiences and the way I see the world are not the same as you. And the whole attitude that comes with being a Burner is to step out of the crowd and be your own leader instead of one of the sheep.

So, with that in mind, go forth and apply the principles in a way that makes the most sense to you. I've offered up examples that I hope will inspire. And if you have other examples that may inspire others, feel free to share with the Burner community.

Before I end this work, I want to touch on one more thing that makes a big difference between the world of AfrikaBurn and the common world.

I am a very spiritually oriented and holistic person. I speak a lot about energy and how the intention of your doing affects the actual doing.

You can use the muscles in your lower face to part your lips and stretch them out, revealing your teeth, held in place, one row over the other, by your jaw tendons. And, without the underlying energy of joy, this act of smiling can be more scary than inviting.

You can follow the guidelines and perform the actions, and get different results from somebody else, because the energy behind those actions will always be different.

I mentioned earlier this saying that the "playa will provide" being akin to the spiritual notion that "God or The Universe or Spirit will provide". The coming together of so many like-minded people in a space designed with the desire to better our world and our connections create a bubble of spiritual power that does indeed provide us with what we need and what we bring.

If you have been to a few AfrikaBurns, you may have noticed that if you were lonely before you got there, that loneliness was shoved in your face when you were there. If you were sad before, sadness may have been your theme there. If you were happy before, happy was your overall experience there. Almost in the same vein as if you went on a Buddhist retreat, AfrikaBurn can be a very

spiritual and awakening experience.

The energy that we have available to us and the way we expend it out in the desert is very different to when we are entrenched in our regular lives. We've seen how different people act and treat each other just within the boundaries of Tankwa Town versus on the road. It's like the environment makes you high and returning to the world just outside it starts bringing you down again.

Our aim is to hold onto this heightened state as best we can. I've spoken about the distractions, and the increased number of activities and responsibilities vying for our attention. We also have to deal with people who are operating from different mindsets and different levels of consciousness. Applying the principles in the default world takes a lot more effort and energy than in the Burn world because of these factors.

But here's the thing. When you make a conscientious effort, and you put your heart into bringing more of Burn space into default world, something interesting happens. The Playa provides. The world becomes more like your Playa.

We don't complain on the Playa. We attend to the situation and make it better for everyone.

Your planet is your Playa. Your life is your responsibility, and if there's anything about it that you're not happy with, it's up to you to address that in whatever way you can. It is your duty.

I really haven't got my life together. I'm like everyone else, doing the best that I can with what I have. I've been applying this way of life a lot longer than many, perhaps. My life out in the default world may not be like it is on the Playa. But it does have its moments.

I am typing this while sitting next to a pool, with no pants on, on a Tuesday afternoon. I get to express more. I get to play more. I have a large community to rely on when in need. The people I engage with on a fairly regular basis are more conscious and are of the Burner mindset, even the ones who've never been to any Burn.

I can't tell you that your life out in the default world will be any better because you have applied the Principles more purposefully. But I hope that it will be.

Being Dusty
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About The Author

I have been writing since I was able to hold a pencil. My dream job as a very young child was to be an author. I began my first novel around the age of 7 or so. It was never completed. I still have the original pages, in fact.

My life has taken many wonderful twists and turn through many different careers, and through it all, my skills and imaginative nature as a writer has remained a constant. The ability to wield words in a way that greatly expresses my inner world is a tremendous blessing, and has kept me sane through harsh times.

I still haven't published any novels.

Don't follow me.

I ask only that you walk by my side every so often.

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