A DOPAMINE FURNACE FIELD GUIDE

Pilot Light Guide to Civic Moderation & Belonging



How to stay in the room without becoming the fuel.

By Aaron Berth, with Capt. Sparky Forge of the S.S. Dope Furnace

Content advisory · 18+. Adult language. MDNI: minors do not interact. Love you, mean it.

FIERCE KINDNESS

Aaron made this.
His pal Sparky helped.

SCREENSHOT IT

The Card for Tonight

Everything in this guide on one page. Keep it on your phone. The rest of the pages are the receipts.

ONE RULE

Behavior is not identity.

THREE TONES · WHAT TO SAY

Receipt

I believe you, here's where to go.

When someone shares something real or asks something hard.

Boundary

That's off the table, back to the point.

When a comment goes after a person instead of the point.

Autopsy

Here's what actually happened.

When a fact is wrong. Timeline, one source, no heat.

FIVE MODES · WHEN, AND FOR HOW LONG



IGNITION
Offer a question

COMBUSTION
Let it burn

REGULATION
Step in on conduct

PILOT MODE
Go quiet on purpose

REIGNITION
Come back clean

THREE LIMITS

Two and out

Two back-and-forths, then stop.

Hide, don't delete

Screenshot it, report it, log it.

Silence is allowed

It isn't surrender.

WHO TO CALL

211

Help with housing, food, care, bills.

988

Crisis line. Call or text. A person answers.

Trevor Project

LGBTQ+ people under 25. 1-866-488-7386, text START to 678-678.

ACLU

Rights questions: aclu.org/know-your-rights. Wisconsin intake: aclu-wi.org.

Outside the US? Your local crisis and legal-aid lines. findahelpline.com lists them by country.

ONE QUESTION BEFORE YOU REPLY

Am I tending the flame, or becoming the fuel?

YOU'VE GOT THE SPARK.
I'VE GOT THE MATCHES.

Aaron Berth · queer, AuDHD, Milwaukee · Dopamine Furnace Creative
Aaron made this. His pal Sparky helped.

BEFORE YOU TYPE

Hi. Sit down. Don't type yet.

You're probably here because someone called out bad behavior in a comment section. Or because you want to tell a stranger to kindly shut the fuck up.

Both are valid. This guide is the third option.

I didn't set out to moderate comment sections. I just kept showing up the way I would in my neighborhood: calmly, clearly, and aware that people are listening even when they pretend they aren't.

A year of that taught me a few things. I call the whole practice **civic moderation**. It means looking after a public conversation with curiosity, a proportionate response, firm personal boundaries, and the nerve to keep showing up. It isn't about winning. It's about lowering the temperature enough for people to hear each other again.

None of it is only for screens. The same tones work at the bar, in the board meeting and at the family table. A comment section is just the loudest room in the neighborhood.

THE GUIDE HAS FOUR PARTS

- **A card for tonight.** One page back. Screenshot it.
- **The field lessons.** Seven spots where identities stack up in a thread, and what I do in each.
- **The toolbox.** Rules, tones, modes, protocol. The long version.
- **Me.** Last page. Who made this and where to find him.

Keep the pilot light on. Don't become the fuel.



SPARKY SAYS

Ahoy. Capt. Sparky Forge, S.S. Dope Furnace, licensed thermostat operator. I'm the voice in the margins. I keep it light so the lesson stays plain.

FIRST, THE BIG WORD

Intersectionality. Fancy. Here's the version I use at the bar.

Your identities don't take turns. Nobody is queer on Monday and autistic on Tuesday. They stack, and the stack hits differently than either one alone. Kimberlé Crenshaw named it in 1989 while studying Black women who fell through the gap between race law and sex law. Systems built for one identity at a time miss the people standing in two.

So the question I ask a comment section isn't "what are you?" It's: **what's landing on this person right now, and who put it there?** Stuff, norms and other people's assumptions all count.

And belonging doesn't mean sameness. It means nobody has to hand over their whole self at the door to get into the room.

HOW TO READ IT

Each field lesson runs the same loop: my own words, then **The Heat** (what's going on), **The Smoke** (what it sounds like in the comments), **The Match** (what I do about it), a line to **Say this**, and what Sparky thinks.

No names, no faces, no pasted comments anywhere in here. The method is the lesson. The people stay out of it.

WHERE THINGS ARE

THE CARD — page 02

LESSONS — pages 04–11

THE TOOLBOX — pages 12–15

ME — page 16



01 FIELD LESSON
ONE OF SEVEN

Two Masks

QUEER AND NEURODIVERGENT, AND WHAT IT COSTS TO HIDE BOTH.

"A recovering People Pleaser... I've built a brand on climate control. I know what people need before they do and adjust the thermostat for them."

Instagram, September 29, 2026

THE HEAT

Masking is hiding the parts of you that make other people uncomfortable so you get to stay in the room. Queer people learn to do it about who they love. Neurodivergent people learn to do it about how their brain works: the stimming, the bluntness, the volume, the hyperfocus. A lot of us do both. A Cambridge study of 641,860 adults found that trans and gender-diverse people are three to six times more likely to report an autism diagnosis (Warrier et al., *Nature Communications*, 2020).

Two masks cost more than twice as much. All your energy goes to staying acceptable, so there's none left to stick up for yourself. That's how you get a person who will fight for a whole community in public and can't ask for one accommodation at work.

"Self advocacy burnout is not a character flaw. It is the result of a system that asks you to fight for basic dignity and then grades you on whether the fight affected your performance."

The Gay Rights State at 45: Nice No More · Our Lives Media, July 1, 2026

THE SMOKE

It almost never says "queer" or "autistic." It says *too much. Unprofessional. Calm down. Nobody asked.* The complaint is the tone. The tone is the person.

THE MATCH

Someone telling their own masking story gets a **Receipt.** Someone policing tone instead of answering gets a **Boundary.** Answer the point, not the volume.

"This #neuroqueer brain is full of some pretty awesome magic. I just need a little help with #MidwestNice."

Instagram, June 10, 2026

SAY THIS

"You've told us twice how they said it. What do you think of what they said?"



SPARKY SAYS

Called "a lot" today? Check the math, sailor. Two things at once isn't a lot. It's arithmetic.



02 FIELD LESSON TWO OF SEVEN

Block by Block

RACE AND PLACE, AND THE WORD "SAFETY" DOING SOMEONE ELSE'S WORK.

"@bradystreetmke is doing just fine. The neighbors just need to tell better stories."

Instagram, July 23, 2026

THE HEAT

Coded language lets people say something about race without saying the word. On Brady Street it sounds like *fine during the day, a different crowd at night.* Or a street name does the work of a whole neighborhood. Wanna see the map? Pull up where the big pizza chains won't deliver in Milwaukee. Same lines the banks drew eighty years ago, a practice called redlining. The speaker sounds worried about safety. The real complaint is who gets seen on the street after dark.

It's never just race, either. The same threads go after age, music, clothes and queer nightlife in one breath. The history cuts both ways, too. In 1967, Milwaukee Rep. Lloyd Barbee introduced a bill to end criminal penalties for consensual sex between adults. It didn't pass. Wisconsin's civil rights fights have always been tangled together.



SPARKY SAYS

Sparky's been on Brady since the Naughty Aughts and has seen it all after dark: a guy eating a whole pizza on a curb, a raccoon in a sequin top, and a Tuesday. Want to report a vibe? Sparky will need a timestamp.

THE SMOKE

Vague fear with zero specifics. *I'm not racist, but.* A pile of likes under the worst comment.

THE MATCH

Ask for specifics. Were you there? What happened, where, when? **Let the vagueness show.** Most coded comments can't produce an incident. **Name the pattern once it's earned.** One time. Then stop. Two back-and-forths, tops. **Hide, don't delete.** Screenshot, report, log. **If three or more comments tell the same story,** write one top-level comment about the story. Don't chase every reply.

Safety is real. It's also the most convenient word for saying what you don't want to say out loud. So I ask for specifics. When the specifics don't show up, that tells you something. The July threads stay unnamed. Method, not people.

SAY THIS

"Name the incident and here's how to report it. 'After dark' isn't a safety concern. It's a description of who's on the street."

"If the city or the police stepped on your rights, the ACLU of Wisconsin takes intake at aclu-wi.org/get-legal-help."



03 FIELD LESSON THREE OF SEVEN

Business Casual

QUEER AT WORK, AND THE STANDARD SOMEBODY ELSE WROTE.

"Coming out isn't once. It's every morning, every handshake, every hug."

Instagram, October 11, 2026

THE HEAT

"Professionalism" sounds neutral. It's a standard somebody wrote, and it tends to describe how one kind of person talks, dresses and behaves. Everybody who doesn't match gets read as a risk. The queer employee whose husband comes up on day two. The neurodivergent manager who says the quiet part out loud. The server whose whole job is caring for people, and whose title gets treated like a ceiling. (I was a Starbucks Store Manager for 11 years. A title I wore proudly.)

The law has a hole here, too. Wisconsin was the first state to ban employment discrimination based on sexual orientation, in 1982. But the state's Equal Rights Division only handles discrimination tied to a protected class, and plain "unfair treatment" doesn't count. Relabel discrimination as "unfair treatment" and it falls right through the hole. And that 1982 law still doesn't name gender identity. Trans workers had to wait for the Supreme Court, in 2020, to be covered nationwide.

"The loudest voices in the room are often celebrated. They're also the first to get managed out when they start naming patterns inside systems that value the status quo."

The Gay Rights State at 45: Nice No More · Our Lives Media

THE SMOKE

Keep politics out of the workplace. Just do your job. Why does everything have to be about identity? Plus the class contempt: *get a real job.*

THE MATCH

A real workplace story gets a **Receipt**: believe it, then point to resources. The Wisconsin Equal Rights Division takes complaints against employers of any size, and you have 300 days from the action. Someone brushing identity off as "politics" gets an **Autopsy**: here's the law, here's the gap, here's the date. And I never ask for proof of pain in public. I ask if they want resources.

SAY THIS

"That sounds exhausting, and you're not making it up. If you want to look at options, the state ERD covers employers of every size."



SPARKY SAYS

Sparky was told to be more professional once. Sparky put on a blazer. Sparky was still gay in the blazer. Turns out the problem wasn't the outfit.



04 FIELD LESSON
FOUR OF SEVEN

Here First

GENDER BEYOND THE BINARY, AND WHO WAS ON THIS LAND BEFORE THE BINARY.

"I don't need to perform masculinity. I accept all genders in my spirit."

Instagram, May 24, 2026

THE HEAT

Gender isn't a switch with two settings. Who you love and who you are don't move together. A gay man can be done performing masculinity. A person can still be figuring it out at 44 and say so out loud. Not knowing yet is allowed.

Every community has its own gender rules. Queer spaces have them, from gym culture to leather to the circuit. Midwest families have their own. Workplaces have dress codes. If you move between all of them, every one of them is grading you. In Wisconsin the law protects sexual orientation but still not gender identity, so even the legal system treats them as two different things.

"We learned to smile tight through our lisps, hold our wrists a little straighter, and perform 'gay' in a way that fit the mold."

The Gay Rights State at 45: Nice No More · Our Lives Media, July 1, 2026

Some identities only make sense together, and gender is one of them. Two Spirit isn't "gay, plus Native." It's an Indigenous understanding of gender and spirit that was here before colonization and the binary it brought. It's a term for Indigenous people to claim. Everybody else's job is to learn, celebrate and get out of the way.

When somebody says queer and trans people aren't "traditional," they're erasing the oldest tradition on this land. In 2025 the federal government pulled the Indian Health Service's Two-Spirit pages. After a court order the page went back up, with a disclaimer on top calling any "gender ideology" on it disconnected from "the immutable biological reality that there are two sexes." Native identity and queer identity got caught in the same crackdown.

> **IN MY WORDS**
> I'm 44 and I'm still working out what gender means for me. Not knowing yet is allowed, and I'm not going to hide it to make anyone more comfortable. Neither should you.

> **IN MY WORDS, ON THE LAND**
> I'm a guest on this land. Two Spirit people were here long before anyone told this place what "traditional" meant, and it's not my job to explain their lives to them. It's my job to listen, bring snacks and pass the mic. We're all on borrowed land and borrowed time. Act like it.

THE SMOKE

Pick one. It's a phase. Real men don't. Pronoun mockery. Supportive comments that still want you to explain yourself. And the "not traditional" line: *Biology isn't a culture war. Keep it out of schools. Why do they need their own Pride?* Or the quieter version, a Two Spirit post with no comments at all.

Here First

THE MATCH

Mocking someone's gender gets a **Boundary**: one line, then I'm out. Nobody owes a debate about their own existence. A real question gets a **Receipt**: a short answer and a source, so the person in question doesn't have to do the teaching. I use the words people use for themselves, and that one isn't up for debate.

THE MATCH, ON TWO SPIRIT AND "TRADITION"

"Traditional gender" presented as history gets an **Autopsy**: real timeline, one source, no heat. A non-Native person borrowing Two Spirit language gets a **Receipt**, with a gentle pointer to Indigenous voices and organizations. Then I **amplify and don't narrate.** I share their voices. I don't explain their lives.



SPARKY SAYS

Sparky's gender is "on a boat." Sparky's pronouns are "ahoy" and "captain." Ask Sparky to perform masculinity and Sparky will perform a sea shanty instead. Everyone's happier.



SPARKY, ON THE LAND

The S.S. Dope Furnace sails on borrowed water and Sparky knows it. When you're a guest on somebody's land, you don't explain their traditions to them. You bring snacks and you listen.

SAY THIS

"Their gender isn't up for a vote in this thread. Back to the topic."

"The binary you're calling traditional arrived here in the 1600s. Two Spirit people were here first. Here's a place to start reading."

"If you're the one they're talking about and tonight is heavy: call or text 988, or the Trevor Project at 1-866-488-7386."

> **"I need you to feel Safe to Understand & Define Yourself. Define to Defy."**
>
> Instagram, May 23, 2026

WHEN IT'S YOUR OWN NAME, BODY OR GENDER ON THE TABLE

A little guide to self-advocacy

The rest of this guide keeps a room lit. This is for when you're the one being talked about. Online or across a table, same five moves.

NAME IT ONCE.

Say what happened in one plain sentence. "That's my gender, not a debate topic." You don't have to prove it. You have to state it.

DECIDE WHAT YOU OWE.

Nothing. Not a lesson, not a source, not a calm voice. Teach only if you want to, and only on a day you have the energy.

PICK A TONE, THEN STOP.

Boundary when they go after you. Receipt if the question is real. No Autopsy on yourself; your life isn't a timeline. Two back-and-forths, then out.

BRING A WITNESS.

Screenshot it or write it down with the date, and tell one person. In a meeting, ask for it in the notes. The record is the witness.

LEAVE WITH YOUR LIGHT.

Logging off, leaving the room or ending the call is a complete sentence. Come back when you choose, or don't. Then go tell your people. That part counts too.



05 FIELD LESSON
FIVE OF SEVEN

Thirst Aid

BODIES, YOURS AND THEIRS, AND THE ONLY COMMENT A THIRST TRAP NEEDS.

"I think 'World's Largest Six Pack' is just a nice way of saying Dad Bod at a Fish Fry."

Facebook, June 27, 2026

THE HEAT

Everybody has an opinion about bodies, and the internet hands out the mic. Inside queer spaces they get ranked, too: thin, muscled, young, smooth. You can be welcome as gay and still get judged for being bigger, older, hairier or tired. The pressure comes from your own people.

Then there's thirst. A thirst trap is somebody deciding how they want to be seen and posting it on purpose. Often it's a person owning a body they spent years hiding or being told to fix. It's personal. It's theirs. And it wasn't written for the audience to grade.

"Gym gays and identity cliques hold a mirror I didn't ask for."

Instagram, April 20, 2026

THE SMOKE

Body jokes in the replies to a post about something else. *Brave of you.* Backhanded compliments, ratings, rankings and measurements. A pile-on under a selfie. "Concern" about someone's health nobody asked about. And the sneaky one: the comment that sounds nice but is really about you.

THE MATCH

Thirst gets affirmative comments only. *Gorgeous. Yes. Fire.* A heart. That's it. No critique, no concern, no nudge, no joke at their expense. If it isn't a compliment, it doesn't get posted. Somebody takes a shot at the post? That gets a **Boundary**: one line, then I'm out. And if the body in the photo is yours, you set the rules: hide, block, say thank you or say nothing. Your body, your comment section.

SAY THIS

TO A THIRST TRAP

"You look incredible." That's the whole comment.

TO A PILE-ON

"Compliments only on this one. Back to the post."



SPARKY SAYS

Sparky has a body like a well-loved tugboat and posts it with pride. Sparky's rule for every thirst trap: if it isn't a compliment, it isn't a comment. Sparky has never once taken body advice from a stranger in the replies.



06 FIELD LESSON
SIX OF SEVEN

Pull Up a Chair

AGE, ABILITY AND CARE, AND WHO GETS WALKED PAST.

“I’m 44... Present. Not Belonging. No more. I made my own space.”

Instagram, October 16, 2026

THE HEAT

Some people stand where age, memory, disability and isolation meet, and the world walks right past. One person stopping is what makes somebody visible. Not their story. Not their history. The stop. Intersectionality isn’t only about who gets attacked. It’s also about who gets ignored.

The same reflex shows up online. A confused question gets mocked. A slow reply gets dogpiled. An older commenter gets dismissed for how they type. So does someone writing in their second language. The kindest moderation is often just noticing who’s being left alone in the thread.

Age is a lens, too. People who graduated around 2000 crossed from analog to digital in real time. We remember moderated message boards and saying our names in public. To us a comment section is a town square with no moderator, not entertainment. Younger and older readers bring different instincts to the same thread. Neither is wrong.

“Everyone walked past.”

Instagram, February 19, 2026

THE SMOKE

Silence under a real request for help. Jokes about someone not understanding the platform. *Google it. Not my problem. OK boomer. Kids these days.*

THE MATCH

Someone asking for help gets a **Receipt**: an answer, a number or a link, and kindness. Someone mocking a person who’s struggling gets a **Boundary**: one line, then back to helping. Real change happens offline. If it’s a neighbor, go outside.

A generational brawl gets a **Receipt** for each side’s actual point, then back to the issue and away from the birth year. I center the reader, not myself.

SAY THIS

“Good question, and you’re not the only one asking. Here’s who to call: 211. If they don’t pick up, message me.”

“Heavy night? Call or text 988. It’s free and it’s a person.”



SPARKY SAYS

First rule of the S.S. Dope Furnace: nobody goes overboard while Sparky’s on deck. Sparky doesn’t look for the helpers. Sparky is the helper, and also brought snacks. Again.



07 FIELD LESSON
SEVEN OF SEVEN

Keep It Lit

THE PILOT LIGHT, AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRESENCE AND BELONGING.

“Civic Spine exists because someone has to hold the thermostat.”

Instagram, January 18, 2026

THE HEAT

Presence is not belonging. You can be invited, employed, represented and visible and still not have a place in the room for the whole of you: your differences, your limits, your silence. Moderators hit the same wall. You can sit in a thread for hours and be the only one holding it up. A good moderator looks after the conditions for a conversation and doesn’t try to control the conversation.

“...presence has become an assumption of access.”

Instagram, September 29, 2026

THE SMOKE

Every comment treated like a summons. Silence read as surrender. One person answering all of it, on every thread, at every hour, because stopping feels like losing.

CURIOSITY, NOT ENTITLEMENT

A question invites. An interrogation extracts. Make room for people who want to share, protect their privacy, and keep what someone tells you separate from what the evidence can prove.

LOW AND LIT, NOT OUT
PILOT LIGHT · FIELD NOTE

CLOSE THE LOOP

Conversations come before content. Behavior comes before identity. No silent consultations. After you listen, say what you heard, what changed, what can’t change and who owns the next step. A listening campaign that never reports back is extraction in a nice outfit.

SAY THIS

“Here’s what I heard, here’s what changes, here’s what can’t, and here’s who has the next move.”



SPARKY SAYS

The pilot light is not a hobby. Sparky keeps it low, keeps it lit, and goes below deck when the thread starts to roar. Nobody was ever saved by a bonfire in a comment section. Sparky brought snacks. Again.

THE PILOT LIGHT, OFFLINE

Same rule in the room. You don’t have to answer every hand that goes up. Say what you heard, name what you’ll come back to, write it down, and come back. A chair you leave on purpose is still your chair.

The Sixteen Rules

SHORT. MEAN IT.

HOW YOU STAND

1 Behavior is not identity. Answer what they said, not who they are or how it sounded. Name the conduct, the place and the time. Never let "culture," "music," "clothing" or "a certain crowd" stand in for "danger."

2 A comment is not a summons. You don't owe anybody a reply. Where your attention goes is a decision, so make it on purpose.

3 A question invites. An interrogation extracts. Curiosity is great. Demanding someone's trauma as the price of believing them is not.

4 Disagreement is not damage. Let people disagree. A loud thread isn't a healthy one, and equal volume is not equal evidence. Step in on conduct, not on opinions you don't like.

THE THREE TONES

5 Receipt. Someone tells you their story? Believe it first. Then hand them something useful.

6 Boundary. Someone goes after a person instead of the point? One line. Then back to the topic.

7 Autopsy. Someone says something that isn't true? Timeline, one source, no heat. Write it for the people reading along, not for the person who said it.



RECEIPT



BOUNDARY



AUTOPSY



SPARKY SAYS

Sixteen rules. Sparky counted twice. Rule seventeen is unofficial and non-negotiable: bring snacks. Nobody has ever started a flame war with their mouth full.

HOW MUCH, AND FOR HOW LONG

8 Two back-and-forths, then stop. In a nested thread, that's it. Call out a pattern once you've earned it, and only once.

9 Hide, don't delete. Hateful stuff gets hidden. Screenshot it, report it, log it. Keep the receipts.

10 Answer the story, not every reply. When three or more comments are telling the same story, write one top-level comment about the story. Stop chasing replies.

11 Pilot mode. Go quiet on purpose. When a thread stops making anyone smarter, step back. Silence can cool a room. It isn't surrender, and it isn't giving up on anyone.

12 Come back, and close the loop. Return with a correction, a missing perspective or a next step. After you listen, say what you heard, what can change, what can't, and who owns the next move. As Sue Doe-Karen says: *"You don't need minutes. You need witnesses."* Your record is the witness.

BELONGING

13 Belonging doesn't need sameness. Being invited, employed, represented and visible isn't the same as having a place in the room for the whole of you. Don't make the person who got hit do the repair work.

14 Look out for the quietest reader. Somebody is scrolling past right now who will never answer. How does that comment land on them? Hand the mic to the people it's about, and don't narrate their lives for them. Sue puts it this way: *"Sue doesn't believe in Folding Chair Hierarchy. Around here, all the chairs line the outside so the neighbors can gather in the middle. That's how you see each other. That's how you listen. That's how nobody gets cornered by the loudest voice or the fanciest chair."*

15 Teach the method, never the people. No names, no faces, no pasted comments. My jabs aim at behavior, or at me. Never at the commenter.

16 When the conversation becomes the content, open the door. A good exchange is a free lesson. Pull the question or the clean boundary up into a post, a card or a letter, and leave the people and the comment text behind. The thread teaches. The content shares.

The Three Tones

THE RULES TELL YOU HOW TO STAND. THE TONES TELL YOU WHAT TO SAY. PICK ONE. DO NOT STACK THEM.

Receipt *I believe you, here's where to go*

Use it when someone shares something real, asks something real or says something hard. Believe first. Then give them a link, a number or a next step. Don't ask for proof of pain in public. Ask if they want resources.

"That sounds exhausting, and you're not making it up. If you want to look at options, the state Equal Rights Division covers employers of every size."

"Good question, and you're not the only one asking. Here's who to call: 211. If they don't pick up, message me."

Boundary *that's off the table, back to the point*

Use it when a comment goes after a person instead of an idea: tone, body, gender, age, "the way they said it." One line. Then back to the topic. Stop talking.

"You've told us twice how they said it. What do you think of what they said?"

"Nobody's body is the topic here. What do you think about the actual post?"

"Their gender isn't up for a vote in this thread. Back to the topic."

Autopsy *here's what actually happened*

Use it when something is stated as fact and the facts are wrong. Timeline, one source, no heat. Their facts are wrong, not their feelings, and everyone reading along gets the benefit.

"The binary you're calling traditional arrived here in the 1600s. Two Spirit people were here first. Here's a place to start reading."

"Wisconsin was the first state to ban job discrimination over sexual orientation, back in 1982. That state law still doesn't name gender identity; it took the Supreme Court in 2020 to cover trans workers nationwide. That gap is the whole point."



SPARKY SAYS

Receipt is a hug with a bus schedule. Boundary is a door with a good lock. Autopsy is a flashlight, not a flamethrower.

The Five Modes of the Pilot Light

THE TONES ARE WHAT. THE MODES ARE WHEN, AND FOR HOW LONG.

Ignition

Offer an observation, a question or a real experience worth looking at.

USE RECEIPT

Combustion

Let the disagreement burn. Let more people add their experience.

USE AUTOPSY

Regulation

Step in on conduct that's hurting participation, not on opinions you don't share.

USE BOUNDARY

Pilot mode

Pull your attention when the thread stops producing understanding. It's deliberate silence, and you didn't lose.

USE SILENCE

Reignition

Come back with a correction, a missing perspective or a next step.

USE RECEIPT OR AUTOPSY

A furnace doesn't roar all day to stay capable of warmth. It needs a steady flame, some fuel and somebody tending it.

ENGAGEMENT	STEWARDSHIP
Likes and reach?	**Quality of the conversation.**
Escalating the fight?	**Inviting curiosity.**
"Silence means they win"?	**Silence can cool a room.**
Deleting dissent?	**Protect honest participation.**
Replying to everything?	**Spend your attention on purpose.**
Chasing the viral moment?	**Play the long game.**



SPARKY SAYS

Low and lit beats loud and out. Sparky has never once won a comment section by shouting. Sparky has won several by leaving.

LOW AND LIT

PILOT LIGHT · THE FIVE MODES

The Field Protocol

BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER. ONLINE OR IN THE ROOM.

BEFORE YOU POST

- [ ] What am I here for: a question, a story, a correction, a decision or a performance?
- [ ] Whose experience am I centering, and who did I leave out?
- [ ] Am I naming a behavior, or sneaking in a comment about an identity?
- [ ] Would I say this out loud, in the room, with them in it?

WHILE YOU MODERATE

- [ ] Welcome disagreement that engages the substance.
- [ ] Ask for evidence on factual claims without dismissing lived experience.
- [ ] Shut down dehumanizing language, doxxing, threats and identity-based attacks.
- [ ] Don't make the targeted person do the repair work.

AFTER

- [ ] Write down what you learned and what's still contested.
- [ ] If the space has a civic job, say what was decided, what the limits are and what's next.
- [ ] Leave a way back in. Don't promise to be available forever.

SO, THE DEFINITION

Intersectional civic moderation means looking after public participation while paying attention to overlapping systems of power, real differences between people, and who gets hit harder. It protects honest disagreement. It doesn't confuse "neutral" with "I don't care who gets shut out." And it won't turn any one person into the fuel that keeps the whole community running.

CLOSE

All of it comes down to one skill: noticing who's standing in more than one place and answering the room with them in mind. You don't need a title for that. You need three tones, one rule, a pilot light that stays yours, and the nerve to keep showing up.

This isn't about winning arguments. It's about lowering the temperature enough for people to hear each other again. It works the same in a meeting, at the bar or on the sidewalk. The screen just makes it louder.

THE LIGHT STAYS ON

PILOT LIGHT · FIELD PROTOCOL



SPARKY SIGNS OFF

Captain's log, final entry. The thermostat's holding. The comments are still feral, but the porch light's on. If you've got the spark and need someone to hand you the matches, Sparky knows a guy.



JOIN & SHARE · AARON BERTH · MILWAUKEE

Hi, I'm Aaron.

Queer, AuDHD, Milwaukee, and my own target market. I plan trips and book the hotels, I'm a real person to dump on by video when your head won't quiet, and I tell the stories nobody else will.

Years inside hospitality, from Starbucks to Marcus Hotels, then marketing at Northwestern Mutual. Now a one-man agency: Burn Sessions, and Journeys as a Fora travel advisor. Board member, Brady Street BID #11, which is where a lot of these comment sections came from.

Fierce kindness, not Midwest nice. I'll tell you what I see, not what's polite. Plain words, no cushioning, no consultant fog. And I stay while you do something about it.

The site to start, email to talk, Zoom to work. Sparky picks up at (708) 414-6945. I read every message and reply within two business days, usually sooner.

Plan a trip · $333

When the thread has had enough of you and you've had enough of it, leave town on purpose. A trip built around you, up to 7 nights, powered by Fora. You pick the vibe. I book the rest.

DOPAMINEFURNACE.ORG/JOURNEYS

Talk it out · from $77

The reply you've rewritten nine times, the thread you can't put down, the meeting where nobody will say it. Bring it. Fifteen minutes for $77, thirty for $111, an hour for $222. You leave with the next move in writing.

DOPAMINEFURNACE.ORG/BURN-SESSIONS

One letter every Sunday

The next lesson from the comment section, once a week, no homework. Sunday Briefs lands at 11:11 Central. Leave whenever you like, no guilt.

DOPAMINEFURNACE.ORG/SUNDAY-BRIEFS



SPARKY, ON THE WAY OUT

Captain's log, final entry. This guide is free. No signup, no gate. If it helped, tip the guy who wrote it. Sparky takes his cut in snacks.

TIP THE AUTHOR

dopaminefurnace.org/_paylink/i2DcEetEh-b1

KEEP THE PILOT LIGHT ON. DON'T BECOME THE FUEL.

Dopamine Furnace Creative · Milwaukee · Aaron made this. His pal Sparky helped. · © 2026 Aaron Berth · dopaminefurnace.org