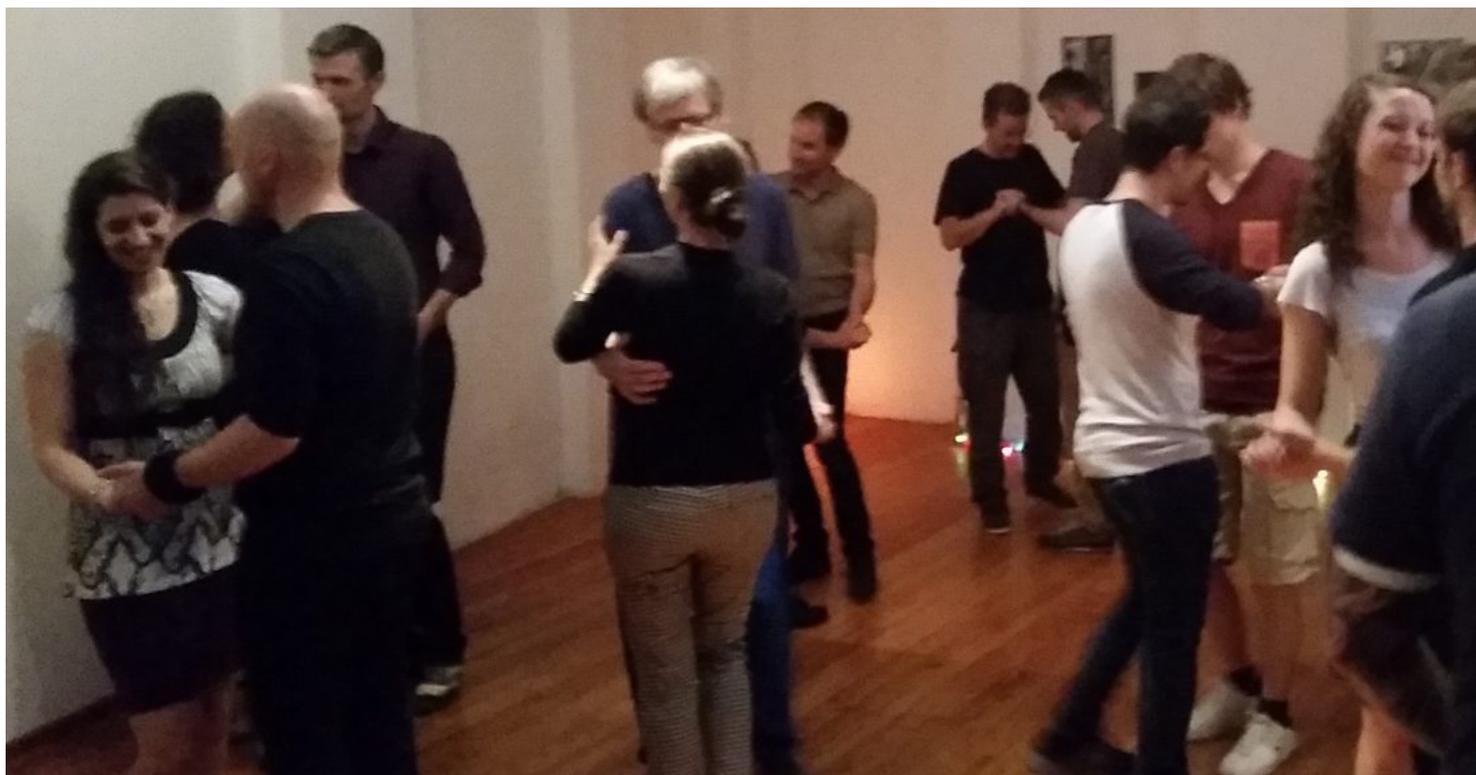


CODE OF CONDUCT QUESTIONNAIRE



Post Views 685

I am enthusiastic about dance scenes creating their own codes of conduct, tailored to their dance style and community. This article will take you through some questions that can help you write your own! Then next month we'll look at ways of integrating it into your scene.

What is a code of conduct?

A code of conduct is basically just a message from the organizers or leaders of a dance community to the people who are coming to take part in the scene. It describes the expectations and norms of your dance community.

Codes of conduct can take many forms. Some people create scene “philosophies” or “value statements,” that focus on big ideas and values, while others have “policies” that might include much more specific details and procedures.

Why bother?

Well it doesn't actually take all that much effort to write a code of conduct, plus it offers some clear benefits. So really, why not?

Here are some of the many reasons to encourage your scene to create one. Codes of conduct:

- formalize what your scene stands for, which can help provide continuity in scenes that might see a lot of turnover.
- improve member retention, as a community coalesces around shared values.
- make clear for newcomers what the basic do's and don't's of the scene are. That can remove a lot of stress from beginners that are just trying to fit into the new culture. It also helps avoid undesirable situations by deterring unwanted behaviors. Max Pogonowski in Sydney points out, "People who might have done something might think again because they just maybe think about it from someone else's perspective."
- can limit the liability of the organizers when problems do occur. It can also provide guidelines for resolving issues.
- can also signal to newcomers that your scene might be a place they want to stay. After all, one particular individual might be responsible for a bad interaction, but a value statement could show that your scene doesn't condone such behavior.
- might even serve to attract dancers to your scene. Some people, for example transgender folks or survivors of sexual assault, might not even risk attending once, unless they see some evidence in advance that your scene will be a safe, welcoming place.

As Miguel Zaragoza, organizer of San Francisco's Hot Bachata Nights(<https://www.hotbachatanights.com/>), says "You have to be sure that you're catering to people's safety - they have to know they are safe to have success at your event"

What kinds of scenes should have a code of conduct?

Codes of conduct are for everybody. Every dance scene has norms and values, and communicating them explicitly makes life easier for everybody. It's tough to be the person guessing at unspoken rules!

I get excited about attending an event that expresses values in line with my own. I wrote this article while attending Vienna Sugar

Blues(<http://www.viennasugarblues.com/code-of-conduct/>). Their code of conduct includes such gems as “We invite you to clearly express which role you want to dance when you ask someone for a dance” and “It is okay to say no to a dance when asked. Please be respectful and accept a ‘No’ when asking for a dance and equally be kind when you decline a dance.”



I also seek out inclusive scenes which include a statement like Embodied

Dance's(<http://www.embodieddance.com/code-of-conduct.html>). “This environment is for everyone regardless of race, age, level of dance, sexual orientation, gender/gender identity, disability, physical appearance, religion, or anything else.”

That said, having a code of conduct can also help if you are part of a very traditional dance community. If your scene has strict gender roles, specific rules about who can invite others to dance, a dress code, or even ties to particular religious beliefs, you can let people know that from the outset. That way you'll save people with dramatically different outlooks and identities (and yourselves) from some uncomfortable situations.

Isn't writing a code of conduct a lot of work?

No! In fact, you don't even have to write anything. Capital Blues(<http://capitalblues.org/safe-space-policy/>). created their policy under a Creative Commons Zero(<https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/>) license, which means you can just copy, paste, and change the name of the group. Done! Many other groups (like Mobtown Ballroom(<https://mobtownballroom.com/code/>)) give permission for you to adapt theirs as long as you give credit, which is basically how I've created every code of conduct I've ever written. That's why I'll be giving you plenty of links to check out.

How can my community write one?

If you're the main organizer of a scene, you could consider sitting down and writing one by yourself. However, I recommend inviting a group of key people from your scene to help. Go through the questions below and decide together which points you feel are important to communicate.



- What kind of document are we trying to create?

Do you want to communicate a general philosophy or include specific policies? Are you describing normal etiquette or also hoping to create a safer space? Are you focusing on your values or trying to limit liability?

You might write “we” statements describing community norms and expectations like Mile High Blues(<https://milehighblues.com/code-of-conduct/>). You could instead write “I” statements that you are asking members of the scene to agree to, like the Fusion Exchange(<http://www.fusionexchange.org/the-fusion-exchange/policies/code-of-conduct-overview/>). Some scenes use “you” statements, addressing dancers directly like Dance Jam Productions(<http://www.dancejamproductions.com/codeofconduct.pdf>). Studios often use third person passive to lay out rules, like Salsabor(<https://www.salsabor.com.au/terms-conditions/>). You could also choose a question-and-answer format like Blues Dance New York(<http://bluesdancenewyork.com/what-is-blues/dance-etiquette/>).

- How much detail do we want to include?

At a minimum, your code of conduct should convey your scene’s core expectations. Maybe you want to have some main ideas in bold and then details fleshed out, to facilitate easy reading. It can be nice to have specifics written out for socially anxious beginners, or if you’re ever in a situation where you need to confront someone for their inappropriate behavior. On the other hand, a briefer document can be easier both to create and to read. For the Love of Bachata has made a great short policy(<http://fortheloveofbachata.com/code-of-conduct/>); Fredericton Swing’s document is impressively comprehensive(<http://frederictonswing.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Code-of-Conduct-Safer-Spaces-Policy-and-Guide-to-Being-a-Respectful-Dancer.pdf>).

- What are the norms for hygiene in our scene?

Of course nearly every social dance scene agrees that showers and clean clothes are desirable, but many other ideas vary. Should people use deodorant? Should long hair be tied back? Should dancers avoid wearing fragrances?



- Do we have a dress code?

More formal dance scenes have specific expectations about clothing. Many dance studios require certain kinds of shoes or forbid others. For most dance styles, there are at least some types of clothes or jewelry that should be avoided for safety reasons.

- How do we handle invitations to dance?

Should there be a verbal invitation? Is an outstretched hand normal? Do we need to wait for prolonged eye contact? Are there gender norms that should be respected? Is it all right to say "no,"(<http://socialdancecommunity.com/what-it-means-when-they-say-no/>), and if so, how should it be done?

- What is never allowed in our dance?

Is it okay to talk while we dance? What holds are inappropriate? What moves are unsafe? What kinds of language or touching are impermissible?

- What should we ask permission about before doing?

Plus, how do we



check(<http://socialdancecommunity.com/are-you-sure-youve-never-made-your-dance-partner-uncomfortable/>), for our partner's consent? Many scenes now encourage people to ask (verbally or nonverbally)(<http://socialdancecommunity.com/teach-consent-2/>), before doing dips, dancing in close embrace, or trying a trick that puts one's partner off balance. Some venues don't allow aerial steps except when cleared in advance for performances. Consider the particularities of your dance style and location.

- What responsibilities do we have toward the venue?

Are there rules for the space that need to be respected? Should your dancers help with cleaning duties? Where is smoking permitted? What concerns might there be from the neighbors?

- What is our policy regarding photography and/or social media?

Will you be taking photos to use in promotional materials? Are dancers allowed to post photos or videos they take in class or at parties? I offer more questions to consider and possible policies [here](http://socialdancecommunity.com/photography-at-dance-events/)(<http://socialdancecommunity.com/photography-at-dance-events/>).

– How can dancers bring feedback or problems to us?

Having a code of conduct doesn't help much if there is no connection to what happens on the dance floor. Many scenes designate certain individuals to whom people can bring comments or complaints. Others also have boxes where dancers can drop in suggestions or concerns anonymously.

In short, people need to feel heard if they are going to keep coming back. Next month I will go into detail about choosing and training people to respond, as well as establishing procedures for addressing people engaging in unacceptable behavior.

What else?

Sometimes people are [reluctant](http://socialdancecommunity.com/why-are-we-uncomfortable-with-safety/)(<http://socialdancecommunity.com/why-are-we-uncomfortable-with-safety/>) to create a code of conduct because it would be tantamount to a public admission that there are issues that have to be addressed in the scene. Yet creating a code of conduct can be an energizing and affirming activity as you reflect together on your scene's values and the kind of community you want to create. Sharing it with your dancers should also be positive, focusing on what it means to your community rather than framing it as killjoy directives (again, more on this next month).



Furthermore, inviting people to give feedback or express concerns safely will give you a much better chance of improving your member retention and dealing with issues while they are still minor. That's nothing to be ashamed of! "Our dance scenes reflect the struggles of the society we live in, and unfortunately, we still have work to do around issues of consent, sexual assault and safe spaces," as Lior Vered of Triangle Zouk put it.

Just in case you want a little more help during the writing process, check out [Safer Dance](http://www.spontanement.org/saferdance/)(<http://www.spontanement.org/saferdance/>)'s "[How to Write a Code of Conduct](http://www.spontanement.org/saferdance/code-of-conducts/)(<http://www.spontanement.org/saferdance/code-of-conducts/>)" and [these resources](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/0B_xFy7kzDLqMakNZQ241b1FTZmM)(https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/0B_xFy7kzDLqMakNZQ241b1FTZmM) from [Safety Dance](https://www.facebook.com/groups/safety.dance/)(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/safety.dance/>).

If you do create your own code of conduct after reading this, I'd love to hear about it!

Thanks to my first readers, Jeemin Kim and David Hendershot.
