

# Ten Truths

**What I've learned from a decade coaching agency directors, creatives, strategists and insight professionals who are smart, stressed and stuck in their own heads**

**By Andrew Sewell**

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# Intro

# INTRO: WHY I WROTE THIS

You're a smart, creative, emotionally intelligent person working in an industry that runs on speed, uncertainty, pressure, and performance.

And if you're like most of the people in agencies I coach, you're probably doing a great job on the outside... and wondering why it doesn't feel great on the inside.

This guide is a decade's worth of pattern-spotting, boiled down into 10 simple truths.

You don't need another "10 tips for better time management" post – or someone telling you to drink more water.

Change doesn't come from trying harder. It comes from noticing the unhelpful loops you're stuck in, and gently stepping out of them.

Treat this like a mirror, not a manual. Take what strikes a chord, and leave the rest. And if some of it lands a bit too close to home – that doesn't mean you're eternally screwed.

It might just mean you're ready for something different.

# TRUTH #1

## OVERTHINKING IS INFINITE THINKING – A LOOP WITH NO FINISH LINE

Everyone I work with has a busy mind. Lots of them lie awake at 3am ruminating on things they did earlier in the day or worrying about things that haven't happened yet.

A massive shift comes when you see that overthinking is infinite thinking – it's your brain spinning out, caught in an endless loop. Your brain thinks it's protecting you. But really, it's just stressing you out.

The key is to change your relationship with your thoughts. I can show you how.

### **Top tip:**

Notice when you're next caught in a loop of infinite thinking and bring yourself back to the present moment – sanity. Make a decision *before* you have mythical perfect knowledge. Imperfect action beats analysis paralysis all day.

### **Ask yourself:**

What am I trying to solve that might not even be a real problem yet?

## TRUTH #2

# YOU CAN'T THINK YOUR WAY OUT OF A THINKING PROBLEM – YOU HAVE TO FEEL YOUR WAY THROUGH IT

This is a big one. For people like us – who live predominantly in our heads – it feels like the best way to solve any problem is by firing up the old logic and intellect. Your brain says – don't worry, I've got this. Just let me figure it out.

This is obviously great for some things. But for others – like relationship issues, figuring out what you really want to do with your life, and growing beyond habitual patterns like perfectionism and people pleasing – it doesn't really work.

Here, you have to feel your way through things. Using your intuition, gut instinct and felt-sense in the present moment. Think of emotion as *e-motion* (energy for change). Once you connect with what you're actually feeling, real movement is possible.

### **Top tip:**

Next time you're looping on a problem, pause and ask your body – not your brain – what it knows. Slow down and get still. Let the feeling speak before the thinking takes over.

### **Ask yourself:**

What am I feeling right now that I've been trying to think my way around?

## **TRUTH #3**

**BURNOUT DOESN'T JUST COME FROM WORKING TOO HARD. IT COMES FROM WORKING AGAINST YOURSELF FOR TOO LONG.**

Burnout doesn't just come from working long hours – it comes from ignoring what really matters to you, day after day, just to keep up or keep others happy. That kind of pressure wears you down from the inside out.

I have first-hand experience of this one. It took me a long time to see it.

### **Top tip:**

Start small. Notice the moments where you override your own needs or values to stay agreeable or appear 'on top of things'. These small moments, over time, can lead to burnout. Awareness is the first step back to health.

### **Ask yourself:**

Where in my work have I been going along with things that don't feel right, just to keep the peace or meet expectations?

## **TRUTH #4**

### **YOUR BIGGEST STRENGTHS – BEING THOROUGH, CARING DEEPLY, AND PUSHING FOR HIGH STANDARDS – CAN ALSO BE YOUR BIGGEST ENERGY DRAINS**

You're one of the high performers. You're responsible, a problem solver, emotionally intelligent, and you get things done. What's not to like? Back in the day, I loved having people like you in my team.

But here's the thing: in your desire to prove yourself or make an impact, you can over-use those strengths. And that's when the exhaustion creeps in. You start to feel like you're just going through the motions. Knowing when to step back is just as important as knowing how to push forward.

#### **Top tip:**

Notice when your 'always on' mode is costing you more than it's giving you. Rest doesn't make you less committed – it makes your strengths more sustainable.

#### **Ask yourself:**

Which of my strengths are wearing me out – and how can I use them in a way that protects my energy, not drains it?

## TRUTH #5

# IT'S DARK BECAUSE YOU'RE TRYING TOO HARD

In today's busy agency world, it's easy to get swept up in the relentlessness of it all. Before you know it, you're operating at 'ramming speed' every day, just trying to stay on top of things.

When you take everything so seriously, the pressure builds – and it starts to weigh you down. Yes, life and work have real challenges. But sometimes the smartest move is to ease up, have a laugh, and stop trying to control every outcome.

### **Top tip:**

Look for small chances to reset the tone – watch a show that makes you giggle, take a walk, listen to a song that makes you smile. Pressure shrinks perspective. Lightness brings it back.

### **Ask yourself:**

Where am I holding things too tightly – and what would happen if I loosened my grip, just a little?



## TRUTH #6

# THE QUALITY OF YOUR PRESENCE IS EVERYTHING

This might be the most powerful ‘truth’ I’m sharing here. On the surface, it’s about knowing that showing up isn’t enough – you’ve got to be really there. When your attention is all in, you make sharper decisions, connect more deeply, and get better results.

At a deeper level, it’s a reminder that you’re a human *being*, not just a human *doing*. Your presence – that steady part of you beneath the mental noise – is the source of your clarity and creativity. You tap into it in those moments when you’re fully absorbed: swimming, riding your bike, laughing, dancing, taking a quiet walk, gazing at the sea.

The trick is to realise it’s not reserved for special moments. It’s available in any moment – if you choose to come back to it.

### **Top tip:**

When you catch yourself zoning out, pause and take a breath. Notice what you can see and hear in the present moment. The only moment that ever really exists. That’s all it takes to reset your presence.

### **Ask yourself:**

Am I really here – or just going through the motions?

# TRUTH #7

## THE PEOPLE WHO CAN HANDLE UNCERTAINTY BEST WILL WIN

Your brain is wired to crave control and certainty. It's what helped our ancestors survive. But life? Life isn't certain – and never has been. That truth can either keep you stuck in your (uncomfortable) comfort zone, or it can push you to back yourself and take a risk.

Not knowing is uncomfortable – but it's also where all the good stuff lives. Creativity, innovation, and growth don't come from having all the answers. They come from staying open long enough to find better ones.

### **Top tip:**

When you feel yourself rushing to find a quick answer or fix, pause. Ask a better question instead. Sit in the unknown – that's where the breakthroughs begin.

### **Ask yourself:**

Where am I choosing control over curiosity – and what might open up if I didn't?

## TRUTH #8

# WHEN YOU STOP TRYING TO PROVE YOUR WORTH, THE REAL MAGIC HAPPENS

Many of the agency leaders, creatives, strategists and insight directors I coach are unknowingly driven by an old story: “I need to earn my place.”

It shows up as overthinking, overworking, overachieving. It’s what drives imposter syndrome.

But here’s the truth: this pattern isn’t who you are – it’s a protective script. Something you picked up early on, not a truth you have to live by.

You were never broken. You don’t have to work yourself into the ground to prove your worth. That belief was learned – and it can be unlearned.

### **Top tip:**

Real change begins when you stop performing and start trusting who you already are.

### **Ask yourself:**

Where in my work am I still trying to prove something I’ve already earned?

## TRUTH #9

# THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GEN X, GEN Y AND GEN Z AREN'T JUST SMALL ANNOYANCES – THEY'RE A LEADERSHIP MINEFIELD

I was raised on 'figure it out yourself' and 'put your head down and work'.

Younger teams? They expect transparency, flexibility, and purpose – and they're not afraid to call it out when things feel off.

If you're still leading like *Pulp's* 'Common People' is riding high in the charts, you'll lose them fast.

The real challenge isn't just adjusting – it's bridging the generational gaps without losing your own sense of who you are.

### **Top tip:**

It's simple but often overlooked: don't just talk – listen. Find out what matters to your team, then lead in a way that respects all generations, without watering yourself down.

### **Ask yourself:**

Am I actually adapting – or just waiting for them to “grow up” and come around to my way?

# TRUTH #10

## DON'T BE AN ISLAND

I've saved the most important until last.

It's so easy to bottle it all up these days. It so easy to look like you're connected – to your colleagues, your loved ones, your online community – but really feel a deep sense of isolation.

As a leader, the higher up you go, the lonelier it can get. Leaders often carry the pressure silently, believing they have to have the answers, hold it all together, and stay composed.

But isolation isn't strength – it's self-protection. And it doesn't work.

Always remember, connection is the real power move. You don't have to do it all alone.

### **Top tip:**

Make space for real conversations with your peers – outside of the office, if that's where you feel like you can speak openly.

### **Ask yourself:**

Where are you pretending you're fine when you actually need support?

**My story**

# MY STORY

**Hello, I'm Andrew,  
and I'm an overthinker.  
Well, a recovering one.**



Ten years ago, I was an advertising creative at Havas People. On the surface, everything was rosy. I led big pitches, won a ton of industry awards, and managed a brilliant team.

But underneath, I was struggling. I was stressed *and* bored. My brain never switched off. Eventually, I was running on fumes. I knew something had to change.

Fast forward a few years: I reinvented my career. I'm now a coach, speaker, and author of *The Overthinker's Guide to Life*. I created Overthinkers Anonymous and work with agency directors and teams navigating pressure, change, and big decisions.

I've coached agency owners, MDs, strategists, CDs, insight directors, senior creatives, rising leaders, and freelancers. Many came to me feeling overwhelmed, stuck, or stretched too thin.

I love working with people like you because I know what it's like to be high functioning on the outside and struggling on the inside. I remember lying awake at 3am with a head full of ideas, pressure, doubt, and deadlines. The question – *can I really do this for another 10 years?* That's why I do this work now.

**What  
next?**



# WHAT NEXT?

If you're nodding in recognition, you're not alone – and you don't have to figure it all out by yourself, either.

To mark ten years since I left agency life, I've created a new **4-week reset** offer. It's a focused, practical way to step back, get clear, and reset your direction – without needing to blow up your life.

I also offer **longer-term 1:1 coaching programmes**, run **team sessions**, and speak on topics like Overthinkers Anonymous, overthinking as misused creative energy, and identity and career reinvention in the age of AI.

"Having Andrew there to coach me through quite a transitional stage in my professional life has been a brilliant experience."

– Lucy Sanderson, Creative Copywriter

If you're curious, let's talk. No pressure, no pitch – just a conversation to see what might help.

## **Book a free 45-min call**

"I always left our conversations feeling lighter, clearer, and more energised."

– Paul Thompson, MD, Media Performance

"I can't recommend Andrew highly enough: a brilliant, insightful and empathetic coach and trainer."

– Sally Forsyth Spark, MD at Point 6 Design

# Thanks for reading

**Ready for a reset?**

**Email me at [andrew@andrewsewell.com](mailto:andrew@andrewsewell.com)**

**Or use this link to [book a free 45-min call](#)**