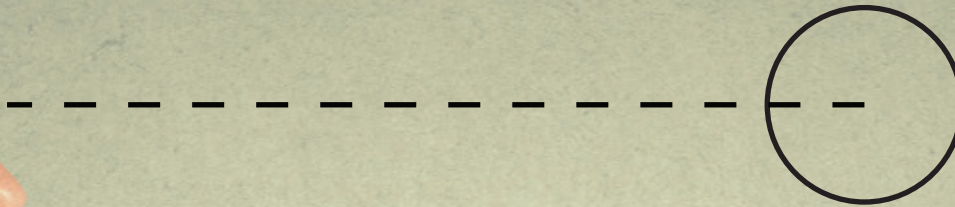


getting **beyond** the BS
How truth-telling transforms leaders and teams.



“**Honesty** can be
uncomfortable”

Andrew  Hughes

Getting Beyond the BS

How truth-telling transforms leaders and teams.

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The BS we tell **ourselves**

Reaching potential: You and your team

There comes a point in every leader's career and every team's development where "doing the do" just doesn't cut it. Doing what you've always done will get you what you've always got. If that's good enough for you, then read no further.

What I'm offering is a way to stop struggling, a way for you to do more by increasing your ability to get things done. It requires a shift in focus away from what you need to be towards who you are-the good and the not so good. This perspective offers you a paradigm-shattering opportunity-it reveals how to get more done by doing less, how to increase your influence and effectiveness by reducing your effort, and how to stop trying to improve and simply improve.

As you'll see, the obstacles on the road to being a more courageous, authentic, influential, and effective leader or team are revealed by the BS you tell yourself and others. Acknowledging, addressing and finally integrating your BS, when done correctly, will fundamentally improve your performance and enrich your relationships, permanently. This translates to greater resilience, collaboration and productivity for your team. For you, it also means better decisions and an upward track on your career path, if that's what you want.

Don't be confused into thinking this quest is necessarily easy-all worthwhile adventures require effort. As is the case for almost all permanent and positive change, what I'm offering here will require you do things that the majority of people never consider, whether through ignorance or fear. But if you are among the bold and courageous, the frustrated and burnt out, or those simply looking for a better way to do just about everything, this paper is for you.

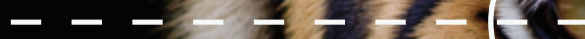
The benefits of this quest are best articulated by those who've committed to acknowledging, addressing and integrating the BS they tell themselves, both as individuals and as a team:

'The Executive Team moved towards a place of truth-telling and awareness of each other's perspectives. Instead of being combative, we became more cohesive and collaborative, a tighter unit than we had ever been.' MG, COO

'This process allowed me to find what I always knew was inside me. Becoming aware of my self-punishing personality traits (including my tendency to be selfrighteous) was an incredible realisation. I can now let the detail go. I've not only improved my management style, but enriched many other relationships that are important to me.' MM, Finance.

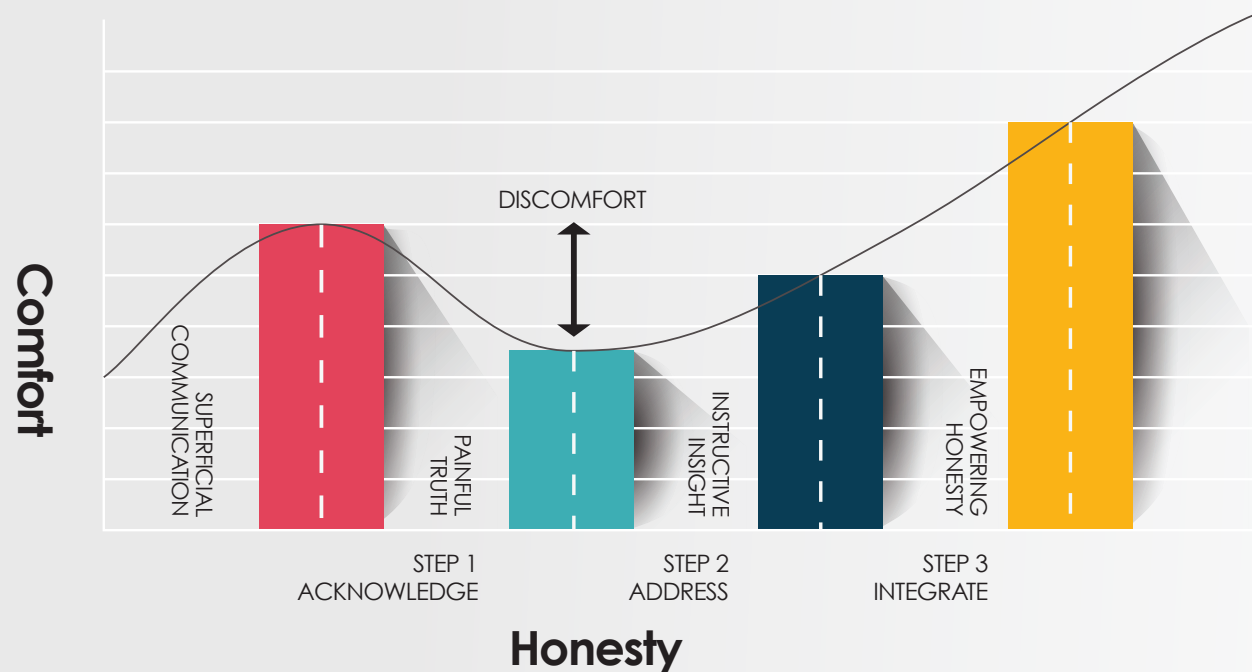
If this interests you, come with me...

Every personality
has its **strengths** and
its blind spots



Problem 1: Honesty is painful while success thrives on it

Honesty can be uncomfortable, which is why it's often unpopular in organisations. Our ingrained focus on personal protection and risk minimisation comes at the cost of being honest with ourselves and others. We have a deep desire to fit in, but truth-telling often brings critical attention. The pain of being honest is a chasm that becomes too hard to cross and so people get caught in superficial communication, striving to remain invulnerable.



It's a problem because self-honesty is fundamental to job success, just as group honesty is central to team success. Without the discomfort that honesty brings, ineffective behaviours worsen, conversations remain guarded, the strength of personalities determines solutions, and internal growth disappears. The result is brittle relationships, diminished trust, lost opportunities, and downward pressure on employee engagement, productivity and profitability.

The first challenge is to be brutally honest with yourself. The second is to be honest with others in ways that they can hear.

Who's at risk?

If you're questioning whether this could apply to you, consider how vulnerable you're willing to be with your peers. How much internal discomfort are you prepared to confront and share with others? How much responsibility do you take for your reaction to others and your effect on them? How often do you share the raw truth with your colleagues about how you feel and what you think? How much freedom do you give others to tell you the absolute truth?

In essence, how real are you at work? Are you the same person at home and work? And if not, why not?

Finding the courage to be uncomfortably honest in the pursuit of an individual or group purpose can be challenging. Honesty can feel dangerous as it creates intra-personal and inter-personal discomfort. The natural habit of your mind is to avoid that discomfort.

The BS we tell ourselves

The avoidance of truth is illustrated in the reasons and excuses you tell yourself when you don't own up to how you're feeling, don't curate your intentions, don't tell it how it is, and don't accept responsibility for your reactions and the effect you have on others.

bullshit / BS: (noun) the reasons and excuses you give yourself and others to avoid discomfort.

We are brilliant at rationalising away the ineffective, inconsiderate and infuriating aspects of our behaviour. But if we're honest, we'll acknowledge that our excuses are usually little more than BS. A story that allows us to stay safely behind a mask perpetuated by our personality construct.

When comfort becomes a trap

When we communicate through the prejudices and nuances of an active personality structure, we only tell the truth when there's no risk. Vast quantities of talent and energy are taken up in navigating what isn't said. Internalised hurts and offences (reasonable or not) shape the next interaction, even if it seems completely unrelated. Conversations become a socially acceptable means of discussing common issues without addressing whatever is causing the discomfort. Teams hit unseen roadblocks or if they are visible, they can't pull their masks down for long enough to address them.

It takes uncommon self-awareness to acknowledge this problem exists, and it takes courage to stop the masquerade. The journey starts with unpicking the BS. Leadership and executive teams that don't do so leave massive returns (time and money) on the table and head down the path of burnout and lost opportunity.

Problem 2: Personality is ingrained and inescapable

personality / (noun) Your operating system; the interface through which you make sense of the world and are seen by the people around you.

When someone or something activates you, what do you do? Do you increase your intensity, doubt yourself, go quiet, deflect, blame, or perhaps go on a charm offensive? Whatever your reaction, who do you tell? What do you do about it?

In that moment, you are reacting to an unconscious trigger, and your behaviour will be tainted by it. Your ability to act rationally is diminished. It's unavoidable. What you say and do will be driven by a complex but predictable web of strategies developed to minimise your discomfort — in other words, by your personality construct.

Personality is the enduring constant of all performance paradigms. Everyone has one. Every personality has its strengths and its blind spots. Every personality seeks to experience more of some internal sensations and less of others, always striving to maintain the internal comfort of its owner. It's the lens through which you judge every interaction.

In contrast, honest communication is the secret ingredient of collective high performance. It requires the ability to align what is intended, said, and heard and ensure it all fits with a greater good—a motivation beyond the frailties of personality. That means cutting through the BS, both for the speaker and the listener.

What's really going on?

In short, we're all hiding one way or another, seeking to protect ourselves from a pain that is often hidden. Confronting it may seem insurmountable, but it's really a paper tiger—an incorporeal idea that dissolves under inspection. The irony is that the very thing we try to protect ourselves from is the gateway that will change everything. Getting to the truth of who we are and why we do what we do is the challenge, while the BS we tell ourselves is the gatekeeper.

Different **people**, different **personalities**, different **strategies**



Different people, different personalities, different strategies

Once you look closely, what's beneath the surface becomes obvious.

The **Challenger** is loud and intimidating as they fear harm, so they decide that they need to be strong. They carry a primal urge to act that can feel like a roiling volcano in their gut. Trusting is hard, and vulnerability is to be avoided at all costs.

In contrast, the **Reformer** is a rule keeper, carrying chronic disappointment that people and circumstances constantly fall short of their high standards. Their need to be right and do things right is unshakeable, no matter the frustration or emotional cost. Both personality styles seek to control their environment by embodying what they unknowingly feel they lack – strength for one and perfection for the other. Both can be rigid and judgemental, such that their only truth is 'my truth'.

The **Peacemaker** sits in between these two, focused on maintaining peace, internally and externally. Agreeable and easy going so as to not lose connection with people, they can be overlooked. They listen to others opinions but rarely volunteer their own. Like the Challenger and Reformer they resist what they don't like, but they do it passively.

Other styles are more driven by maintaining an image. The **Helper** has a caring and nurturing personality, needing to be needed and to be of value to others by meeting their needs. It's a strategy that allows them to feel good about themselves and be seen as a good, loveable person. But giving without getting leads to resentment, and interpersonal conflict can feel like kryptonite. Honesty is hard if it might hurt another.

The **Achiever**, in contrast, is driven by the need for success, often at any cost. This person will be whatever they need to succeed. They're goal-oriented and have a taste for the showy trappings of success. Looking bad for any reason is painful, so feelings are packed away where they belong.

The **Individualist** is deeply creative, romantic and often immersed in emotions of the past. They express their creativity uniquely, which provides them with a significance and meaning they feel is missing. Constant comparison and ranking of themselves and their situation to others forces them inward, leaving them feeling different and isolated in social settings. To others they can seem distant and temperamental.

Some personalities are caught in their heads. The **Investigator** plays the role of expert, overly conscious of their (and others') competence. It is their means of finding a place in the world. Knowledge is their currency, determining what they are vigorously interested in and what tunes them out. Not one for small talk, they guard their time, privacy and energy carefully. They enjoy thinking (preferably alone) because they need to understand. Engagement on issues outside of their expertise or involving emotions is challenging for them.

The **Enthusiast** is the cheerleader or entertainer in the group. Their need to be happy means they avoid conflict, bad news and being pinned down through deflection, rationalising and overdeveloped optimism. Confronting reality and the pain of the truth is uncomfortable.

The **Loyalist** is the worrier of the group, finding it hard to escape thinking about the dangers and problems that they see everywhere. It's their job to make a dangerous world safe for themselves and, more importantly, for those around them. When others (like the Enthusiast) can't appreciate the dangers ahead, listening becomes hard and trust even harder.

When honesty and personality meet...

Everyone is playing some type of game-it's fundamental to human nature and impossible to avoid without self-awareness. The challenge is to find and articulate your truth. It's the secret ingredient to getting what you secretly yearn for. It's the reason behind your drive and your behaviour, both good and bad. It's how you find the one thing that will change everything, but it's beyond your conscious awareness, and if you don't look, you won't find it.

As Carl Jung famously said, 'Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life, and you will call it fate.'

Teams thrive on honesty

Lack of honesty is why teams struggle, no matter their effort, technical skills or available resources. Without genuine and meaningful awareness of self and others, we are all dancing with shadows, unconsciously filtering what we hear, feel and say through the pains and uncertainties we are hiding. Our conversations are layered with BS to avoid what's uncomfortable.

Until they confront this roadblock, teams can only get so far. Those that move past the BS, evolve together, building something uncommon in business-a collective that tells the truth as a means of honouring themselves and each other. Trust thrives here, and groups become creative powerhouses, owning and solving their collective challenges. Bonds become unbreakable. It's the same dynamic experienced by first responders, forged in the face of intense personal challenges. Here's what happens when honesty and personality meet.

A case study of success: From combative to collaborative

The Village Co is a leading technology start-up based in the Hunter Valley with a big mission, big ideas and even bigger opportunities ahead. It's led by serial entrepreneur Mick Carr and an accomplished and passionate Executive Team. They are supported by committed investors who see value in their ideas, personal drive and unconventional business model. The Village Co has grown from an interesting idea to boasting national partnerships with leading national and international brands, including the NRL, AFL and Universal Studios.

Busyness takes a toll

During 2020, the team recognised that the relentless pace and the strains of bringing new and highly innovative products to market were taking their toll on both the Executive and the wider team. The energy and passion team members brought to the business began to shift to an unhealthy state. Meetings were often lively and combative, but achievable milestones weren't being met despite long hours and lots of individual talent. It felt like a relentless merry-go-round they couldn't get off.

That's when Mick and the team reached out for help to get the Executive Team working more effectively, individually and collectively, and to provide direction and stability to the rest of the business.

Change begins with honesty

At the start of their coaching journey, the Executive Team members acknowledged they weren't working well together and that personality issues presented a major hurdle. Mick realised that his style was creating challenges for all of his Executive Team and that, very often, they weren't honest with each other. Positive changes emerged immediately.

Mick says, 'Right from the start, we became aware of our significant personal blindspots that affected how we showed up as team members. The pace and pressure of the past twelve months brought these to the surface, negatively affecting the businesses performance. Andrew was able to highlight these for us immediately and began working to remove them from the equation.'

Mat Goddard, Chief Operations Officer, explained, 'The Executive Team moved towards a place of truth-telling and awareness of each other's perspectives. Instead of being combative, we became more cohesive and collaborative, a tighter unit than we had ever been.'

Vulnerability delivers rewards

As the team worked through the challenges presented by their individual personality styles, a willingness to be vulnerable with each other emerged. Open and honest communication led to collaborative and solutions-oriented meetings as personalities stopped dominating discussions. The Executive Team started to get traction with key initiatives. Their stability and cohesion flowed through to their respective teams, and the wins began to stack up.

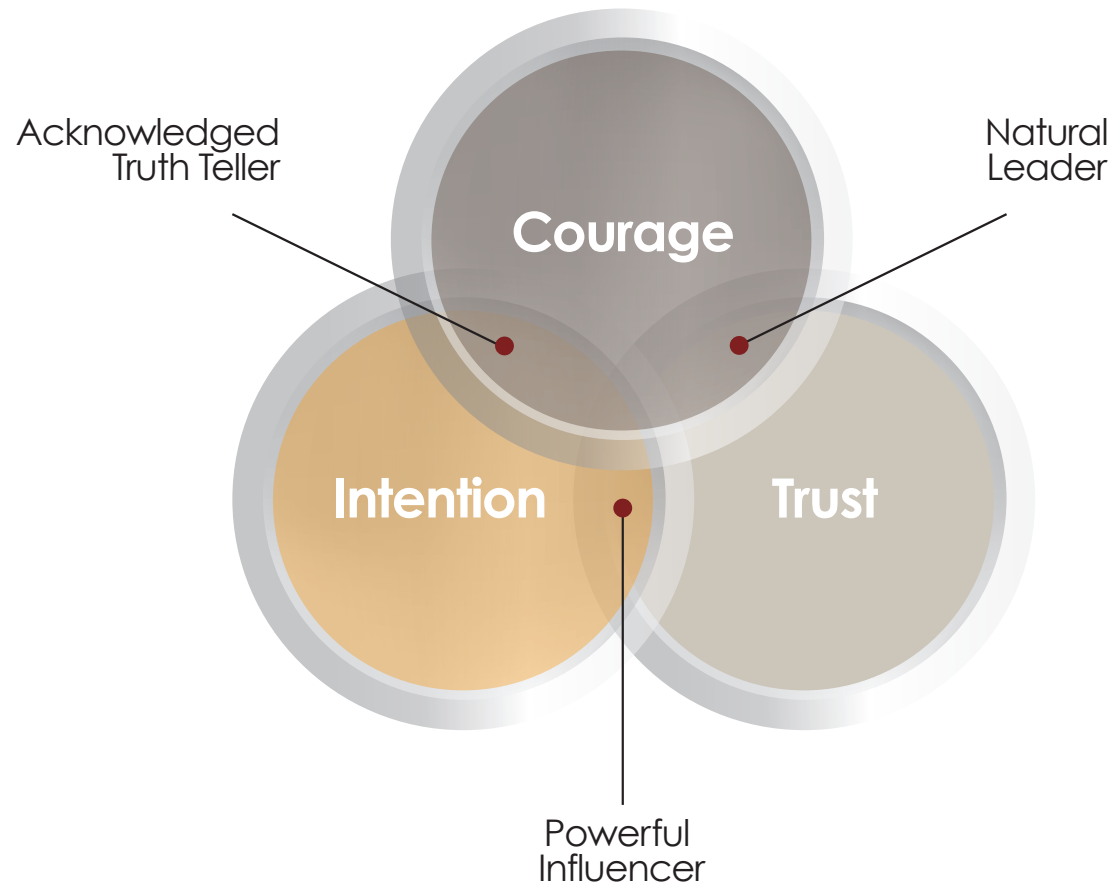
'The business is now in as good a shape as we have ever been', Mick says. 'We are primed for our next stage of growth, and we've built a foundation with our Executive Team that will withstand the business challenges and pressure we are sure to continue to face.'



Moving **Beyond** the **BS**

The solution: Moving beyond the BS

There are three critical ingredients for every leader and team to master to dissolve their BS, move them from destroying to embedding value, and transform their business. While these ingredients are obvious, they work powerfully together, as illustrated in the model below.



When teams find their courage, curate their intention, and build trust, you get people who instil confidence throughout the business, empower others through clear direction, and establish an unstoppable momentum, no matter what lies ahead. BS disappears. Team members become powerful and inclusive leaders in their own right. With this comes collaboration, innovation, and possibilities previously unimagined. **Sound interesting? Here's how it's done.**

Finding courage

When it comes to leadership, courage isn't about being loud, forceful or abrasive—often, that's just part of the BS. It's about putting the spotlight on the elephant in the room, even if that elephant happens to be you. In the end, it's the ultimate service you can provide for your team.

Three ways of being are the wellspring of courage:

1. **Find your voice:** Know what you stand for, acknowledge the value you bring, then learn to speak with freedom.
2. **Be honest:** Own your behaviours and their impact and accept that you can and should change. Once you've done that, help others do the same.
3. **Do what's uncomfortable:** Own up to what you avoid and be present with your discomfort. Courage is about running towards the cannons, not away from them. Persist when it gets hard.

Setting (the right) intention

Courage is important, but too much can make the speaker a tyrant, and too little turns them into a doormat. Courage needs to be balanced with intention. Just as organisations find direction from a guiding purpose, an individual's intention sets their path. When intention is dominated by personal aspiration or the need for self-protection, protecting your own patch becomes all-important – and that's fertile ground for the growth of BS. In contrast, when courage is balanced by good intention, you can deliver brutal honesty so that it is heard and dissolves BS.

Leadership requires an intention bigger than the self in 3 critical ways:

1. **Be in Service (to others):** Work in others' best interests, understanding you'll have to balance competing priorities. Don't be a pushover or a bulldozer, but speak the unspeakable so it serves those around you. Always keep your BS out of the way.
2. **Commit to vulnerability:** People turn up the same way you do, and armour attracts those ready for battle. Let people in. The irony is that vulnerability is strength.
3. **Practice compassion:** What's easy for you may feel impossible to others, so take time to understand them and make allowances where they're warranted. Be compassionate with yourself – getting better means you have to start somewhere.

Combining courage with good intention will help you safely navigate the apparent dangers of being honest. While this will allow your message to be heard, trust is the currency that convinces others to listen.

Build trust

There's no escaping it – in every organisation, the leadership group sets the trust benchmark. And it's what you do that matters most, not what you say. If you want to seek out and replace BS with honesty, you better make sure that people trust you at your word.

Many little things establish trust, but they're all covered by the big three:

- 1. Be authentic:** Create transparency and be who you appear to be. Show the real you to people around you, and be the same person no matter where you are.
- 2. Be reliable:** Do what you say you'll do. Follow through on commitments. Get results, be accountable and model what you ask of others.
- 3. Care:** Allow yourself to become emotionally invested in the welfare and success of those around you. Seek the best for them and act on it – even if that means holding a mirror up to their behaviours or helping them on their way.

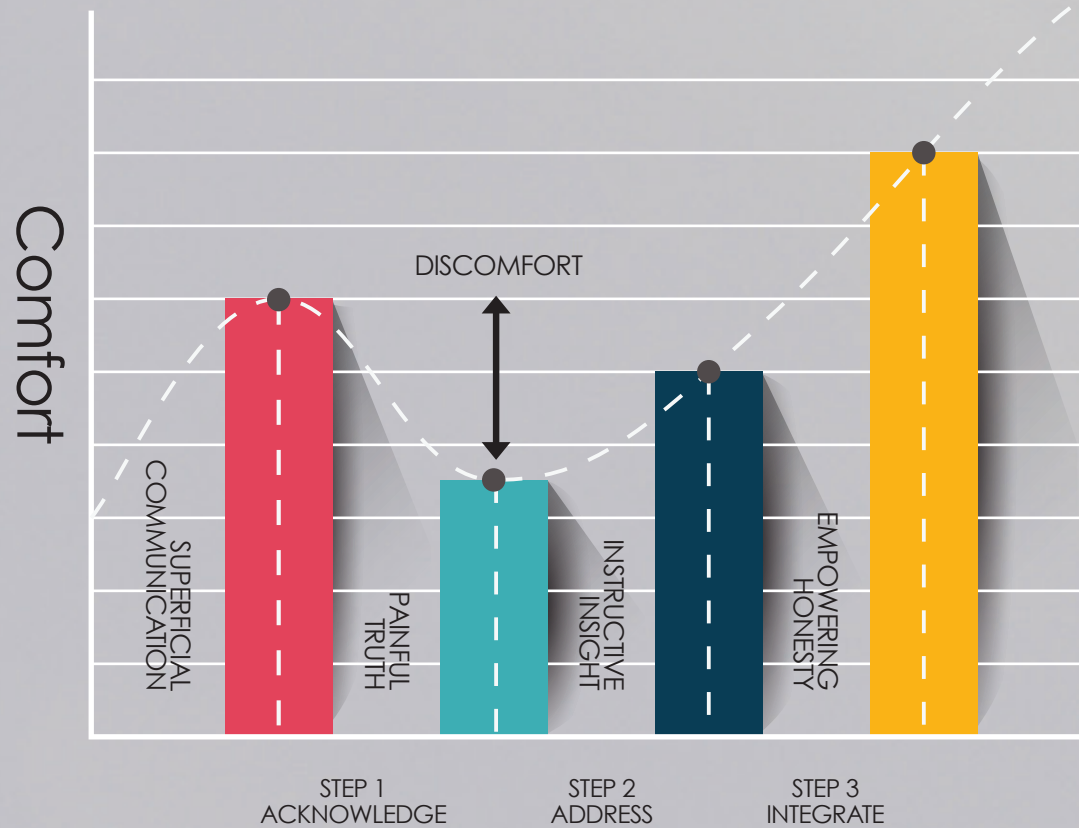
The Process: Building power and influence without BS

Calling out your BS will allow you to discover the best in yourself and those around you. Communication will move from superficial to empowering. As you integrate and respond to the absolute truth of your strengths, challenges and way of operating, you'll get more done by doing less. Paradoxically, your fight to control and change your reality will diminish while your influence and power to do so will expand, perhaps exponentially. As you become a leader who knows them self and challenges others to do the same, you'll attract talent because talented people like environments that are challenging and help them grow.

When you cultivate direct honesty for the long term, you stand out, build trust, become a creative powerhouse and ultimately set the foundation for a high-performing and profitable organisation.

There are 3 steps to breaking the bonds of the BS.

There are **3 steps** to breaking the bonds of the BS.



Honesty

Step 1 – Acknowledge how you do life

The starting point is to examine and acknowledge your personality. Until you discover what drives you, what you are blind to and what you are trying to avoid, you'll continue to sabotage yourself. Honesty starts at home. Your introspection will reveal that no one is trying to you in a box. You're already in one of your own making.

You'll quickly discover:

- what triggers you and why
- what are your coping strategies
- how your protective strategies are working against you
- why and how you go off the rails
- the tell-tale signs that you've ceased to operate rationally or in your best interests.

Step 2 – Accept your strengths and challenges

Owning who you are can be confronting. That's why accepting and addressing your strengths and challenges is your next step. It's **through understanding and accepting** your personality (the good and challenging bits), you'll find your way out of its limiting and selfdefeating aspects. With courage you'll **address** what doesn't work. Your insights will leads you to the easiest paths to the best solutions.

Step 3 – Integrate and evolve

The final step is to continue to be honest with yourself and others, integrating what you learn about yourself. **With introspection**, you'll be more honest about your motivations and shortcomings. **With understanding**, you'll set better intentions, be kinder to yourself and easier to work with. **With practice**, you'll develop new habits. **With time**, you'll gently walk into a new way of being you that provides you with more space and freedom.

Soon you'll find that results take less effort, and you'll be inspired to take on challenges that are more significant and more rewarding.

As experience is the greatest teacher, your newfound ability to observe your reactions will flow to those around you. You'll begin to notice, with compassion, that others are playing a similar game. Having been through the growing pains that self-awareness brings, you'll be able to hold the space for your team to embrace honesty. Knowing that each must find our own answers, you'll help others by shining a light on what they don't see and allowing them to find their solutions.

One thing that can change everything...

This shift in 'being' has a profound effect on the individual, the team and the business. But it doesn't stop there. Once a person puts an end to their BS, personal relationships change for the better, and they begin to develop a deep benevolence towards life. So, while being able to see and cut through the BS is great for business, it's ultimately a skill that transforms individuals, families and communities forever.

No one can be forced to free themselves from limiting BS. Ultimately it's a choice to go on a journey of self-mastery. If you do, you'll discover vast internal resources beyond a door guarded by the strategies of your personality. The good news is that once you open that door, it never closes.

What you'll get from a good coach

Like all endeavours that lead you to discover fundamental truths about yourself and life, this journey is both challenging and richly rewarding. A good coach will hold up the mirror of reality so you can see who you are and what you're creating. You should expect their absolute honesty, delivered directly but without judgement. They'll call you on your BS.

Experience is the best foundation, and a coach who has done the work will empathise with your challenges. They'll also know that until you experience the impact of your unconscious content in real-time, you'll find it hard to fully understand the reasons for your behaviour. So you'll be given tasks that will hone your awareness, taking you from the content of your problems into the context. From there, you'll observe the subtext of what's going on, and more choices will become available to you.

As you make progress, your coach will challenge you further, helping you uncover and release the unconscious content that triggers you and limits your resourcefulness. As you begin to rise above the frustrations and problems of the past, they'll help you lift your team to fill the void your growth has created. In essence, think of a coach as a tour guide on the bus trip that is your life. You're the driver, and you're used to taking the same route and driving the same way, day after day. A coach will ask you to stop and notice your surroundings, head down uncharted side streets, regularly change your cadence and even try a few hill-starts. All so you might see things differently, experience alternatives, build your resourcefulness and expand your potential.

Above all, a good coach will dare you to own your essential nature and step into the transformative leader you can be. It all starts with honesty. It ends the same way.

Are you ready to change?

Despite massive potential returns, relatively little time is spent understanding and addressing what's going beneath the surface. In the absence of that awareness and the commitment to shining a light on intra- and inter-personal challenges, BS will always sabotage performance and opportunity.

So the question remains-when will you decide to be honest about what you're covering up? When will you choose to examine what you've been avoiding? When will you see the negative impact you have on others by being unable to manage your own internal game?

It's easier than you might think and until you do, change will be incremental, results will require exponentially more effort, and the depth of your resourcefulness (and those around you) will remain hidden. ever.

Start accessing your hidden potential, now

Here's what to do to take the next step:

Free Personality Style assessment

- Get your free Enneagram Profile – andrewhughes.com/enneagram
- Book a free 30 minute debrief with me and make some discoveries – (link to Calendly on website)

Executive Coaching Program

- Call me to discuss how you could benefit from a 6 month coaching program
- Book a free 30 minute coaching conversation to help you crack your latest leadership challenge

Executive Team Development Program

- Call me to discuss how your team could benefit from a 3-6 month Executive Development program.

To find out more about Executing Coaching or Executive Team Development programs (delivered in person and virtually)

call Andrew on 0407 412 119, email him at andrew@andrewhughes.com or visit his website <https://andrewhughes.com>.

You're welcome...

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About the Author



Andrew Hughes is a leadership and personality expert, adept at truth-telling and disrupting patterns that aren't helping. He partners with leaders who, while having fun, are committed to getting real and happy to confront the BS that lies in the way of their potential. Andrew has been coaching and training executives successfully for over 10 years, from exciting start-ups to national behemoths. He's a former chief client partner of a national law firm and a former Big Four accountant, the founder of a successful consultancy firm and chairperson of a rapidly expanding social enterprise. Andrew combines his professional background with his expertise in people and personality to bring a dynamic and insightful approach to accelerate the development of executives and leadership teams toward their potential.

Andrew started this journey to get the most out of life, so he makes a point of spending plenty of time relaxing with his family, tending his bees, and wholeheartedly enjoying a rural lifestyle.

A stylized, handwritten signature of the name 'Andrew' in black ink.

Testimonial

'I have had the pleasure of engaging Andrew to provide leadership, coaching and team development support for executives and teams in several organisations over the past 8 years. Andrew is passionate, innovative, evidence-based and an absolute leader in his field. Andrew was 'disrupting' well before the word became popular and he is an exceptional public speaker. Andrew has also supported me on my leadership journey and helped me develop to the leader I am today.' – MH, HR Senior Exec, Private and Public Sector.



Own who you are



Andrew Hughes

To speak with Andrew, email: andrew@andrewhughes.com
For further information about his programs, visit: andrewhughes.com