

DO

THINGS

THE EMOTIONAL
REALITY OF
EVERYDAY AMERICA

BBDO



In Atlanta we
Do Big Things
by bringing
uncommon insight
into what drives
everyday people in
real America.

For the past year, the strategy team at BBDO Atlanta has been listening to **how everyday America feels right now**

We listened to the listeners: 160 AI-moderated interviews with real people who live inside everyday America – bartenders, nail technicians, teachers, etc.

We tracked the shifts: Ongoing quantitative pulse checks across mood, beliefs, and behavior, across urban, suburban, rural locations and generations. Total sample size = 2,500



The truth we kept hearing

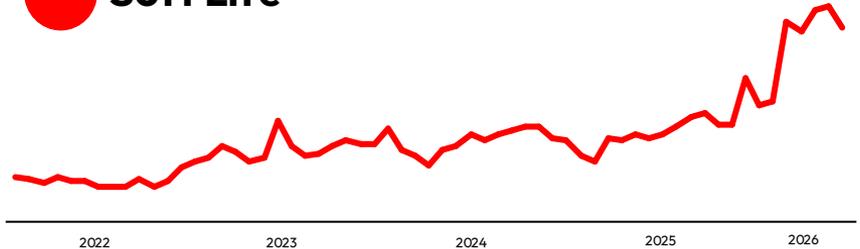
HUSTLE CULTURE IS OVER.
AMERICA IS EXHAUSTED.

You can see it everywhere in culture

- Soft life
- Cozy imagination
- Delulu
- Bedrotting
- Lying Flat

 **Soft Life**

Up 30%



What's driving this..

What felt aspirational just a few years ago, now feels out of reach

Medium

Delulu as Power: Escapism, Identity, and Gen Z's Fantasy Obsession

WARC

We're all lying flat now

Health & well-being / Millennial lifestyles & attitudes / Strategy

Two thirds of people now prioritise living for today, some even 'lying flat' – it's not out of sheer laziness, however: more and more people struggle to imagine, and therefore work toward, a better tomorrow.

Forbes

INNOVATION > SCIENCE

Why The 'Soft Life' Trend Is Crushing Hustle Culture

WONDERMIND

Bed Rotting Is TikTok's New Obsession. Here's How to Make the Most of This Mental Health Day

Medium

Why Cozy Living is the Internet's New Aesthetic Obsession

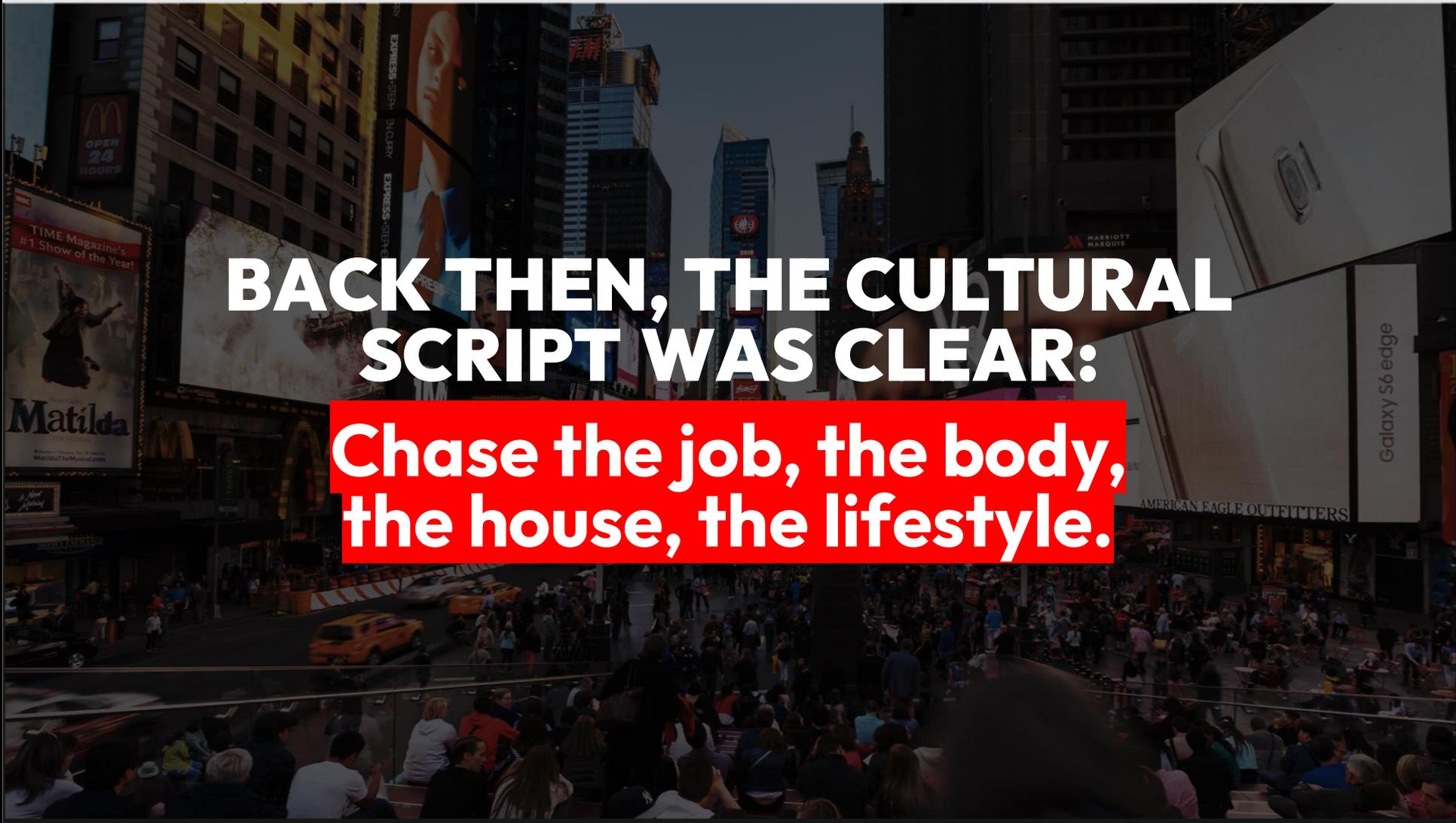
FASTCOMPANY

08-27-2025 | TECH

Bed rotting has gone mainstream

According to a recent Morning Consult report, young people are spending time in bed scrolling social media or streaming shows, engaging in more 'energetic' or 'social' activities.

**HOW AMERICA
GOT HERE**

A wide-angle, high-angle shot of a bustling city street at night, likely Times Square in New York City. The scene is filled with tall buildings, numerous billboards, and a dense crowd of people. In the foreground, a large group of people is seated on a ledge, looking towards the street. The street is filled with yellow taxis and other vehicles. The sky is dark, and the city lights create a vibrant, energetic atmosphere. The text is overlaid on the center of the image.

**BACK THEN, THE CULTURAL
SCRIPT WAS CLEAR:**

**Chase the job, the body,
the house, the lifestyle.**

The pressure gap

For years, people were told to push harder, be happier, manifest more. But the reality on the ground tells a different story.

“I don’t need to hear ‘grind harder.’
I’m already maxed out.”

Urban respondent

LEADERSHIP > FORBESWOMEN

2025: Exhaustion Caught Up With Us. 2026: Rest Is The Reset We Need.

The emotional reality now

Life now feels louder, more expensive and less stable for **everyday Americans**

61%

of Americans say they feel tired “quite often” or “all the time”

Stress & Tiredness

are the top reported emotional states across all demos

48%

of Americans say they are more pessimistic about the future compared to last year

A close-up photograph of two hands, one darker-skinned and one lighter-skinned, gently holding a glowing sunset over a cityscape. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden light that fills the sky and reflects off the buildings below. The hands are positioned as if cradling the scene, symbolizing care and support during a transition.

Today, the story is shifting

**A CULTURAL RESET
IS UNDERWAY.**

People no longer want
another pep talk.
They want to be seen.
And for brands, that
means showing up
differently.

Only
10%

of ads are empathetic and creative. This is a consistent challenge across B2C and B2B advertising.

**“I don’t need another brand
telling me to do more. I’m
barely keeping up as it is.”**

Urban respondent

3 in 4

don’t feel consistently understood by brands



At the heart of it: A shift from aspiration to **Inspiration.**

For a maxed-out America, the idea of better has shifted. Bigger no longer inspires us because aspiration feels out of reach, while **inspiration feels real.**



Aspiration (Pressure)

- Take charge with no real tools
- Always be productive
- Just be happy
- Don't show weakness

VS



Inspiration (Permission)

- Take back small wins
- Be real about struggles
- It's ok to take a break
- Rest and recover

Inspiration today means comfort, control, and enough energy to keep going.

Over the past six months, these needs have felt most important:

47%

say comfort
(feeling safe, relaxed)

39%

say enjoyment
(escaping, embracing joy)

32%

say energy
(feeling mentally and
physically refreshed)

You can see this shift in small, everyday ways

1.

**Choosing
real over
polish**

2.

**Using
humor for
respite**

3.

**Finding
moments
to slow
down**

4.

**Getting
closer to
community**

5.

**Holding
onto small
rituals**

1.

CHOOSING REAL OVER POLISH

People want space for honesty, emotion and real connection.

“Everyone is going through something, but nobody talks about it. I wish more people were open, it would help us all feel less alone.”

Urban respondent

“Focusing more on the positives and less on the negatives is a mindset people I know try and take.”

Suburban respondent

“We have each other, but sometimes it feels like no one really talks about what’s really going on.”

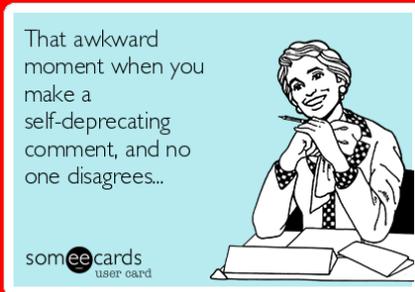
Rural respondent

2. USING HUMOR FOR RESPITE

Urban humor is quick, and hyper-online.



Suburban humor is self-deprecating, whispered over wine.



Rural humor is tough-love irony.



3.

FINDING MOMENTS TO SLOW DOWN

In cities, it's group chats, memes, and therapy apps.

"People use memes and short posts in group chats as a way of laughing things off and coping without going too deep."

Urban respondent

In suburbs, it's family routines and nesting.

"Neighbors say they're coping by 'keeping the house nice and focusing inward' gardening, projects, and home routines give them control."

Suburban respondent

In rural communities, its pets, land, and faith.

"During tough times, people asked for prayers and leaned on the Bible and God, focusing on faith and community support."

Rural respondent

4. GETTING CLOSER TO COMMUNITY

URBAN

People are craving closeness, spiking around cultural moments

Personal relationships are the **#1** driver of urban emotional life. Urbanites mix chosen and biological family.

47% said community mattered “very/extremely” at its peak.

Urban audiences are more likely to say they actively participate **26%** but engagement rises around cultural or social triggers (events, crises, celebrations) that spark a craving for community.

Source: BBDO Everyday America Pulse

SUBURBAN

People are into quiet belonging.

Community importance is flat at **~31%** across waves

Community is less about passion points and more about background stability. It’s “nice to have,” not something they rally around.

Family support is strongest here (both financial and emotional). They’re less likely to “build their own crew” and lean more on family tradition.

Source: BBDO Everyday America Pulse

RURAL

Community ties are personal and local.

4 in 10 consistently say community is rooted in knowing your neighbors

Active participation dropped to **9%**, while disconnection rose to **17%**

They start lowest on family closeness, and tangible support is declining (family help dropped from **63% → 60%**). They are big on creating small, trusted circles.

Source: BBDO Everyday America Pulse

5.

HOLDING ON TO SMALL RITUALS

When the big picture feels overwhelming, people zoom in and small rituals make them feel in control

URBAN

“Buying a coffee or little treat is how I get through the day. It’s small but it helps.”

Urban respondent

SUBURBAN

“My friend tries to find moments of joy in their life everyday such as their flower garden, a good book or a funny video.”

Suburban respondent

RURAL

“The people I know turn to family and friends to vent.”

Rural respondent

A family of five is sitting on a dark brown leather sofa in a living room. From left to right: a boy with glasses is laughing, a girl is looking towards the center, a woman is smiling broadly, a boy is looking towards the woman, and another boy is smiling. They are all barefoot. The room has a patterned rug, a coffee table, and a white door in the background.

These five everyday ways led us
to **five strategic reframes** for
brands to consider today

5

STRATEGIC REFRAMES

01

From Perfect to Honest

02

Creating Space with Humor

03

Owning the Everyday

04

Showing Up and Belonging

05

Celebrating Small Rituals

01

FROM:

**HOW DO WE MAKE IT
LOOK PERFECT?**

TO:

**HOW DO WE MAKE IT
FEEL HONEST?**

01

HOW DO WE MAKE IT FEEL HONEST? TURNING THE REFRAME INTO ACTION

HoneyBaked Ham – [Watch The Work](#)



Honey Baked Ham skipped the perfect holiday fantasy and showed the moments in between, making the brand feel more honest and human.

Baseball For All – [Watch The Work](#)



Baseball For All focused on the real stories of women who carved out a place in baseball without a clear path, honoring the legacy they're building for the girls coming next.

02

FROM:

**HOW DO WE MAKE PEOPLE
LAUGH?**

TO:

**HOW DO WE USE HUMOR
TO HELP PEOPLE BREATHE?**

02

HOW DO WE USE HUMOR TO HELP PEOPLE BREATHE? TURNING THE REFRAME INTO ACTION

Voya Financial - [Watch The Work](#)



Voya Financial brings a relatable moment of levity to a stressful topic most people would prefer to avoid.

03

FROM:

**WHAT BIG MOMENT CAN
WE OWN?**

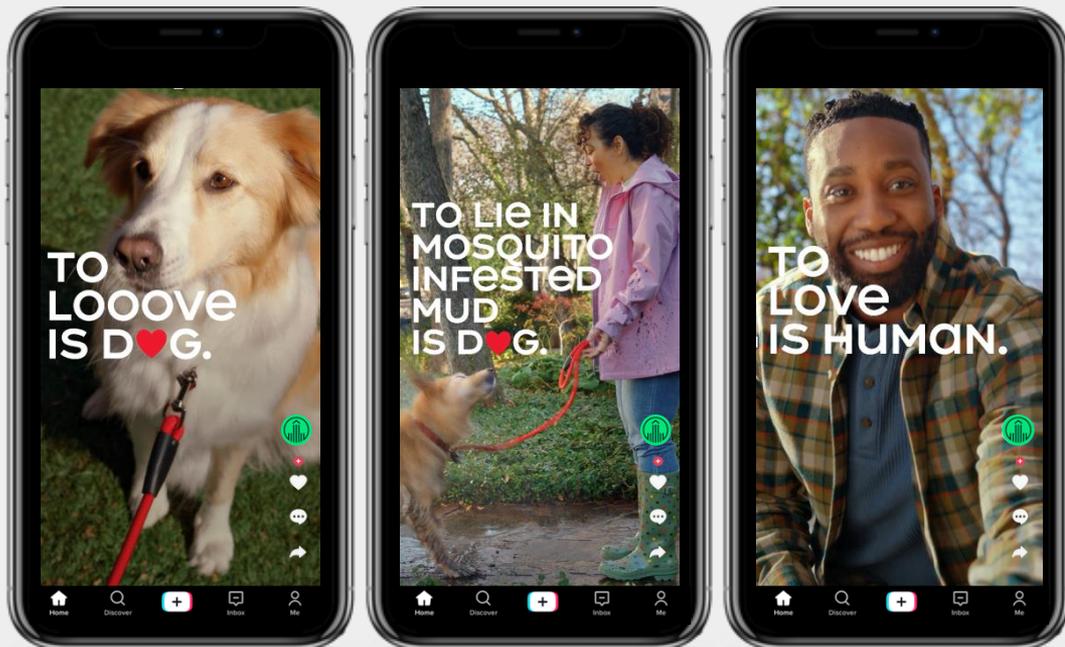
TO:

**HOW DO WE OWN THE
EVERYDAY IN BIG WAYS?**

03

HOW DO WE OWN THE EVERYDAY IN BIG WAYS? TURNING THE REFRAME INTO ACTION

Boehringer Ingelheim



Dogs are known for showing everyone, but especially their owners, unconditional love.

Boehringer Ingelheim used that truth to remind pet owners that the best way to show their dogs daily, unconditional love is by protecting those hearts that love them so much from disease.

04

FROM:

**HOW DO WE REACH
MORE PEOPLE?**

TO:

**HOW DO WE SHOW UP WHERE
BELONGING ALREADY LIVES?**

04

HOW DO WE SHOW UP WHERE BELONGING ALREADY LIVES? TURNING THE REFRAME INTO ACTION

Bayer Crop Science – [Watch The Work](#)



Farmers already share knowledge in tight, trusted spaces. So, Bayer went there. Instead of pulling people to the brand, the brand showed up in the places farmers already rely on.

Sanderson Farms – [Watch The Work](#)



Drawing on its deep Southern roots, Sanderson Farms became an official SEC sponsor and created work that shows a genuine knowledge and love for the traditions that make SEC culture iconic.

05

FROM:

**WHAT CULTURAL MOMENT
SHOULD WE RIDE?**

TO:

**WHAT SMALL RITUAL CAN
WE CELEBRATE?**

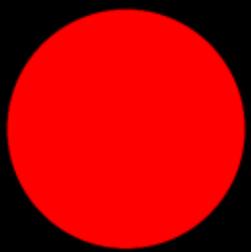
05

WHAT SMALL RITUAL CAN WE CELEBRATE? TURNING THE REFRAME INTO ACTION

The Home Depot - [Watch The Work](#)



The Home Depot reframed holiday magic from something you wait for to something you help create, celebrating the small but meaningful ritual of choosing the tree and the people who make that moment possible.



BBDO
THANK
YOU