

The McInnis Method

Constitution

*Eight things this method believes about people.
Everything that happens in therapy begins here.*

You do not have to agree with any of it. But this is going to ask you to say things you have never said out loud, and you should know what I believe about people before you start.



I. **People are not broken. They are organized.**

Whatever you are doing, it hangs together. The thinking, the temper, the argument that keeps ending the same way, the thing you swear you will stop doing and do again on Thursday. None of it is a defect and none of it is random.

So the first question is never what is wrong with you. It is how it all fits together.

II. **Adaptation outlives the situation that required it.**

Protection is intelligence. A boy growing up with a father whose temper is unpredictable learns to read a room before he learns to read a book. It works. It keeps him safe. Forty years later he is still reading rooms in a marriage that is not dangerous.

The adaptation solved a real problem. It does not know the conditions changed. Nothing tells it.

III. **Reality changes people more reliably than explanation.**

You can argue with a story, a diagnosis, an interpretation, or a therapist. You cannot argue with what happens when you finally say what you've been avoiding saying to your wife.

This method does not hand you a better account of your life. It keeps you close enough to your actual life, for long enough, that your life does the work. At some point, therapy has to produce something to do rather than only something to consider.

IV. What you felt is real. What you decided it meant can be checked.

What you felt is not up for debate, and I will not spend your money arguing with it. What you concluded it meant is another matter, and so is what I conclude it meant.

Mine is the interpretation most likely to go unchecked, because nobody in the room has any reason to check it. In this method it gets checked anyway.

If I have you wrong, I would rather find out in week three than in year two.

V. Adaptations organize around assumptions.

Underneath a protective pattern there is a rule you are living by and have never said out loud. You do not defend it, because it has never occurred to you that it could be argued with. One rule usually runs several behaviors at once, which is why the same thing keeps happening in places that look unrelated.

Unsaid, the rule is simply how things are. Said out loud, it becomes one opinion you happen to hold, and an opinion can be tested.

VI. Protection is paid for in capacity, and the capacity survives somewhere.

What you gave up in order to stay protected is not a symptom. It is an ability. To say what you want. To be wanted. To disappoint someone without abandoning what you want.

That ability did not disappear. It went missing in the place where having it became dangerous, and it is still running somewhere else, with someone else, under some other condition. A man who cannot be direct with his wife is perfectly direct with a subcontractor at seven in the morning.

Because the ability is missing everywhere anyone thinks to look, it gets called personality. He is just not an emotional guy. She has always needed to please people. That is the bill for the protection, mistaken for a trait, and it closes the case before anyone opens it.

Finding where the ability survived is most of the work. You are not being taught something new. You are being reintroduced to something you already do.

VII. Behavior trains tomorrow's default.

Understanding opens a door. Repetition builds who you become. Who you are is not buried somewhere waiting to be discovered. It is assembled out of what you conclude from what you keep doing. That is why one new experience outweighs three good insights.

The aim is not that you understand it. The aim is that eventually you no longer have to think about it.

VIII. A pattern loses force when you catch it while it is running.

Not awareness in general. Every therapy claims that one. This is narrower. It is the moment you catch yourself doing it while you are doing it, and the pattern loses a little of its automatic quality because you were watching.

Seeing it afterward tells you what happened. Catching it while it's happening gives you a choice.

THE SPINE

The first three are how protection gets built. The fourth is how it changes.

REALITY → THREAT → PROTECTION → ACTION

REALITY	What is actually happening, and what actually happened. Not your account of it, and not mine either.
THREAT	What you learned to expect and to organize around avoiding. It is not the same thing as real danger, and it is rarely the problem you came in talking about.
PROTECTION	What you built in response. It worked. That's why it stayed, and why it deserves a hearing before a verdict.
ACTION	One real, specific step, taken in your life rather than in this room. You do not wait for the protection to loosen first. Taking the step is how it loosens. Then reality gets a chance to teach you something new.

Challenge without safety strengthens protection.
Safety without challenge creates stagnation.
Growth requires both.

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“He built a cathedral because one room had become too painful to enter.”

Most of what looks like the problem started as a solution. My job is not to demolish the cathedral. It is to help you find your way back into the room and recover what you had to leave there.

Reality creates responsibility. Responsibility creates agency. Agency changes what happens next.

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