



Transcript of Accidental Intellectual Episode 13: Producing Imperfect Work

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[Intro Music]

Rachael Lyon 0:06

Hi, and welcome to the Accidental Intellectual, a podcast where we talk to people working in health related fields, and get to know the human behind the expert. Today you're hearing from me, Rachael Lyon, and Lee Propp.

Lee Propp 0:18

In today's episode we sat down with the lovely Dr. Hillary McBride. Let's hear Dr. McBride introduce herself.

Dr. Hillary McBride 0:25

My name is Dr Hillary McBride, and while I practice psychology including all of the things that that encompasses like teaching and research and clinical work like intervention, treatment, diagnosis assessment, all of those pieces... I think about myself, not necessarily first through my professional identity I think about myself first through my personal identity and that often, I think, extends into what I do in my professional work but I, I experience myself as a curious person who loves people, and is really interested in the mystery and vast expanse of being human, and have been for a long time. In particular, the - the uniqueness of our lived experience and the commonalities that stretch across our experiences of being human, and find myself loving the work that I do because of that.

Lee Propp 1:18

It was so lovely to hear about her journey into the field of psychology, and about how her personal and professional identities intersect.

Rachael Lyon 1:27

Without further ado, let's get right into our conversation. We hope you enjoy as much as we did.

[Interlude Music]

Rachael Lyon 1:37

So, Hi, and welcome to the Accidental Intellectual we're so thrilled and honored that you're with us here today.

Dr. Hillary McBride 1:47

Oh my pleasure, thank you for inviting me. What a joy to be with you.

Lee Propp 1:50

All right, so we're going to start - we started a new thing this season where we're going to ask our guests these like rapid fire questions, just kind of fun things get to know you. Alright, mountains or the ocean.

Dr. Hillary McBride 1:59

Ocean.

Rachael Lyon 2:00

Coffee or Tea.

Dr. Hillary McBride 2:01

Tea.

Lee Propp 2:02

Dogs or cats.

Dr. Hillary McBride 2:04

Uh, is neither an option? [laugh]

Lee Propp 2:08

That's an option!

Dr. Hillary McBride 2:09

Cats if I had to, I guess. I don't know.

Rachael Lyon 2:14

Saturday or Sunday?

Dr. Hillary McBride 2:16

Saturday.

Lee Propp 2:17

Paper agenda or an electronic calendar?

Dr. Hillary McBride 2:19

Oh, paper.

Rachael Lyon 2:20

Puzzles or board games?

Dr. Hillary McBride 2:23

Puzzles.

Lee Propp 2:23

What's worse, laundry or dishes?

Dr. Hillary McBride 2:25

How big is the pile? I need more information.

Lee Propp 2:27

Hmm, big. Both are big [laugh]

Dr. Hillary McBride 2:32

Uh, I pick, uh I pick laundry so dishes are worse.

Rachael Lyon 2:37

Cups in the cupboard, do they belong right side up or upside down?

Dr. Hillary McBride 2:41

Um, mugs go right side down, cups go right side up in our house. [laugh]

Lee Propp 2:48

Very organized. Alright last one, do raisins belong in oatmeal cookies?

Dr. Hillary McBride 2:53

Uh, yes but not at the exclusion of other things. Uh, I would have raisins in oatmeal cookies. I would also have chocolate chips in oatmeal cookies or nuts. I'm not saying that the oatmeal with the raisin is superior to other cookies. [laugh]. That's like the true academic answer like I need more information, I'd like to define the terms [laugh]

Rachael Lyon 3:17

[laugh] yeah.

Dr. Hillary McBride 3:18

Some of those questions I was like oh no I know exactly what I prefer, but that one, yeah I have, I have less rigidity around it.

Lee Propp 3:29

Mhm, yeah that's a, a helpful trait in many circumstances.

Rachael Lyon 3:33

We really, I guess to start off want to get a sense of how you got here and if you could tell us a little bit more, sort of about the place in your career that you are right now and the journey and path to get there.

Dr. Hillary McBride 3:36

Sure. And please feel free to jump in with any specifics or clarifying questions as needed. I come from a family of therapists, I mean there's an obvious joke there I'm sure about how I was brought up in the family business, I mean we had conversations growing up constantly about dream analysis, and interpersonal patterns and processes and boundaries and things that I feel in retrospect, were so we're so rich, to have as part of the fabric of my family growing up. And yet, it was never really my intention to become a psychologist, to become a scholar in this way, in fact I remember really early experiences, I remember growing up seeing my dad's dissertation on his - on the library wall in one of our offices at home and he, I remember asking him about it and saying, I will never write a dissertation look at oh my gosh, look at how much paper and how many words like this is not - that's not okay that sounds horrible. And so of course it wasn't really my intention to pursue the career that I have, but I imagine we can't separate ourselves out from as well I mean, I shouldn't say imagine it's clear and obvious from our theoretical knowledge in the field that we can't separate ourselves out from the context that we grew up in and so my, my attunement to dynamics and my care for people as infused in my family of origin, found its way through and me and I originally went to university studying performance violin, so I'm a violinist and thought that would be my career trajectory. And so have spent most of my life studying violin, extremely rigorously and woven into my story, it's feels important to know it was also like a high degree of acuity of mental illness that showed up in a number of ways in an eating disorder primarily

being one of them and the ensuing treatment that's required from such a complex diagnosis and medical presentation. And there was a point in university where I, I felt like violin playing was somehow intertwined with the way that the eating disorder, and the pathology that's underlying it manifested in my life. And so it felt really important for me to take a break from playing violin, and my dad who happened to be a faculty in the department of midwifery, was he faculty? He definitely did instruction, and was connected to the Department of Midwifery here at UBC and Vancouver - had always spoken so openly about the politics of women's bodies and the, the importance of women's agencies and determining reproductive rights and things like that and so when, when I was looking for what do I do? I need to repair some of the things that are inside, and I don't feel like I can keep playing violin and be a healthy person it's somehow the perfectionism and the rigor and the rigidity is too intertwined. I don't know where it really came from, but it was like this seed emerged that had been planted a long time ago in the soil. And I, I decided I really wanted to be around birthing women, and I really wanted to be around the experiences of women trusting their bodies and understanding. The body is more than an object that we want to disappear, but the body is an entry intrinsically valuable. So I went and lived in the Philippines for a little while at a birth house, and spent quite a bit of time learning about midwifery and being a doula and learning what it meant to accompany people through this wave of intensity that might at times seem insurmountable but brings about transformation and hopefully life. There was something about that process, the metaphor of it, the being, in the, in it with people that did something to me woke something up in me and healed a part of me and so I came back from Asia, really wanting to be a midwife and thought well while I'm waiting to get into the delivery school I'll study psychology, it just feels like something I'm kind of interested in and then it was like then it was like, ohhh, ohh. I see what's happening. Then I kind of put it together that I wasn't interested in, I wasn't really interested in the medical aspects of birth I wasn't really interested in the routine, and a very necessary and appropriate care that comes along with being a medical provider, I was interested in the psychospiritual journey that a person takes when they are confronted with something that feels insurmountable, and is pathologized and medicalized and yet is actually good and okay and when accompanied well with someone who is attuned and skillful is transformative. And that really started to shape my metaphor for understanding the journey of psychotherapy for understanding the process of lifespan development, these crises are markers throughout our development that feel insurmountable but when accompanied well in skillfully produce more of the self, the, the create the emergence of life, so to speak and the natural processes of life. So, that I mean there's so many things I could talk about there in terms of births and perinatal mental health and how that's impacted me now, because that is one area of clinical and research specialty for myself but I think for the most part really what that experience showed me was that I, I want to be with people who are in experiences and skillfully support them to trust themselves, and through the context of our relationship, empower them to access what life looks like and feels like inside of them. And, yeah, and so went back to grad school, and kind of did the whole thing did I master's and then did my doctorate and now I teach and research and write, and sit at this, what feels like for me intersection between the silo of the academic community and the public world and the discourse that we have as a society and culture around mental health and what it means to be human, and often try to translate between these two communities, although I do that with varying degrees of success, depending on the day of the week but I really love, I love the experience of being human. And I don't think that needs to exclude the experiences that are painful and hard to understand, including things like mental health issues, or this, or the suffering of being alive in the world that we are. And for me it feels like this part of the way that we transform democracy. The way that we transform culture and create communities that that healthy people can flourish and grow in is we tend to wounds, we tend to our wounds we tend to our cultural wounds, we learn new ways of being together, and in doing so we heal ourselves we heal each other, and life can emerge through that, through that intensity. So that's a that's a summary but I'm happy to share more about research expertise I didn't really talk much about like publication or research

methodology I don't know how much you want to get into the - the actual academic side of things but that's more of like the narrative of - of my life.

Lee Propp 11:33

Yeah, that was a really wonderful. It's, it's interesting to me how, like when we asked you to introduce yourself and now sort of telling the story of your life, there has been so much of a personal that has really been brought through and I think that's, I mean, perhaps indicative of the work that you do and are involved in, but to me speaks into a huge self understanding, like, it's always interesting to me when you ask people, you know, tell me, tell me who you are, what do you do. Yeah, and I'd say 80% of the time is very much focused on professional success and all the accolades that they've achieved, but I think it's, which is not unimportant, but it always strikes me as interesting and really lovely when someone gives me a really rich story and I wonder, was that always the way you would have introduced yourself?

Dr. Hillary McBride 12:28

Mhmm I think at different seasons of my life to lead with accomplishments, felt like a way to garner social power. So if I appeared young or was in a context with other people who have more social power to, to begin with a list of my credentials and trainings or grants or whatever would be, would be a way to say no I belong here too. I, when I think about the like the political side of academia and the way the process of interpersonal relationships and self navigation in the academic sphere, I think about how we are groomed to dehumanize ourselves and how that in influences and impacts the way we treat students, the way we treat our patients, the way that we do research, the way the politics of the particular research methodology that we choose and it feels very hard for me to be congruent. In my clinical and academic work, where I'm asking people to be fully human and trying to create structures in which that is supported, if I am either dehumanizing myself or disembodied or creating a power hierarchy where now I position you as having to define yourself by your achievements and accomplishments and your CV, and it doesn't really invite us into dialogue, or community or kinship. It invites us into one upsmanship or self validation or kind of this perpetuation of - I mean, I'm sure you've heard it all said like the publish or perish mentality like you're only as good as your last achievement and I just don't think we build healthy societies or healthy relationships if that's the framework that we set upon. So for me the sense of wanting to be congruent. In, in being a person. It feels important that the process of my professional work aligns with the things that I'm saying in my professional work which is that, you know, equality and mutuality and connection and coming alongside and narrative, matter of their healing.

Lee Propp 14:49

Yeah, I think a lot of that really sort of speaks to me and the understanding that I'm shaping up of what, like what is psychotherapy, I think it's, it's less than a year's time where I'm gonna have to write essays for to apply for an internship and - and I, I struggle with the really beautiful explanation you've given and also the, the teaching of, I mean there has to be a professional boundary, but I wonder how, how you see those worlds and how you, how you navigate them.

Dr. Hillary McBride 15:18

Well, I think, so I am thinking about the kind of theoretical influence and my clinical work that tells me that offers me a map, about like how do people grow and change and heal and one of the paradigms that I love returning to is that for growth to happen in a therapeutic context, the therapist has to be brave, and, and has to be just a little bit braver than the patient or the client, so that the client or patient can feel a sense of I can be brave here too. And yet, we are skillful in the way that we are brave, with people in the room, we take a risk to be more immediate, instead of staying in what would be comfortable. We self disclose about what's happening. Wow, when you said that I felt so sad that that had happened to you like growing up. I'm so sorry. How is it to know that I'm sad, how is it to feel my sadness or if you can stay

with that for a moment. And the bravery, doesn't take away from that professional boundary in fact it is. I think it is part of how we be even better, professionally, but the discernment, I hear you're asking about and for me like a template that a couple of colleagues and I often refer to is the idea of sharing, sharing scars that wounds or sharing something that is useful or relevant to, to the mission of the work and trusting that I have places and people that can hold things that are unfinished so that they're not being, they're not being distributed into the hands that are not necessarily safe to hold to the stuff that's going on for me, so I often ask the question like does it feel raw or if I shared this would it be because I want to be heard, or because it's useful for this context or how much, how much do I share in such a way that you know me and then I'm reducing a hierarchy that's exclusionary, but not so much that I'm asking you to do something for me transactionally in this moment. And I think what that means is we have to be astute and discerning, what's the relationship, what's the context, and it is much easier to have some sort of prescribed metric of what we share and what we don't share, and it was much harder and requires much more self and relational attunement to ask in every situation, what would I like to share here and how will that impact those people and what do I need and, and is this the place to get that need met or not. So perhaps the answer to your question, that was long winded and perhaps verbose but in summary, saying, I think we self attune and we attune to the context, and this is how we are helping people and when we do that, we can figure out. I mean I have learned to trust myself. So I have learned that I know in my kind of like decision making self capacity, that if I am attuning, and I'm sensing and I'm thinking about myself, and my needs across time, that, that I'll make a good choice, and then I'll be able to handle the impact of whatever happens.

Rachael Lyon 18:40

Yeah I think that's a really good point about being able to trust yourself and making that judgment. I guess I'm curious about, maybe some of your more public facing work, we would love to I guess there's two pieces to my question. One is sort of the Other People's Problems Podcast, I'm so curious how that came to be. I would love to hear the story about that and then also I guess in the in the context of boundaries how you balance, sort of this public facing piece of your work with, with boundaries and also keeping some things to yourself.

Dr. Hillary McBride 19:22

Yeah, well maybe I'll, I'll answer that question first because it feels topical based on what I was just saying, again, the question is like who, who is hearing this, what's the context, what am I trying to do, is it useful. Would I share this with a client if they knew it. You know would I share this in my office with someone. Does they create an opportunity to be human, does it model humanity. I'm just asking myself questions a lot of the time and again to come back to what I said I, I trust myself, and I also trust people in my life to give me feedback about how things land. If it's too much, and so I probably more than anybody else erring on the side of holding - withholding information to be respectful of myself, primarily, and try - not expecting that when I share things that I'm doing that to get something from other people but more to say like, let's be in a dialogue about being human together but I understand that it's a restricted view of a person that social media, that public facing work is public facing work, and it's public relations, and that is not the same as intimacy in relationship or therapeutic relationship or a marriage or friendship. And I don't treat it as such, and perhaps that makes it easier just to feel like, Oh, these are things that I, I'm okay to share with people for this particular reason, but I'm not expecting relationship or self worth to come out of this context at all so I feel like I hold it extraordinarily loosely and as much as I really love engaging with an online community because I think it allows, it allows us to reach each other more now than ever because of the pandemic. It's not actually something that - as much as I'm saying I think about the questions, what will I share, what will I not share, I don't really think about social media very often, it's not a big part of my life I'm not on it constantly, or scrolling or like taking things in, so it really doesn't feel like the primary way that I interact with people at all or the way

that I understand myself and I think the ability to be like ‘oh that's kind of over there,’ and I can engage with it when I want to and like I can think through these things and, and make good judgments. It just doesn't feel like it consumes a lot of time or space for me, but I also understand having grown up with family members who are therapists who also did public work, and sat at different intersections and I've had boundaries modeled well and perhaps have had boundaries in certain ways, I don't know maybe exaggerated is not the right word, but I think about growing up in my home and the climate of privacy, and just confidentiality and privacy and what you share what you don't share was constantly talked about. In fact, if I would have a conversation, perhaps if one of my parents was there, you know, I'm wondering about this about my sibling. It's a well why don't you go talk to them about that because I don't want to give you information about them like that's triangulating, like that was like, wow. Oh, like how I relate to people, maybe like was overly thought out at times, but I just I want to present this idea of being thoughtful and discerning and boundary but also like holding it really loosely and not caring so much and not expecting that to be a big part of my self worth or value or take up a lot of time in my life and somehow it is so, yeah. So that's, that's that kind of question is that okay if I jump over to the other one.

Rachael Lyon 22:55

Of course of course, yeah.

Dr. Hillary McBride 22:58

So, Other People's Problems came out of an idea from the producer of the podcast, and her name is Jody Martinson, and she has, has an incredible history of doing meaningful work. So as a producer for CBC she has done a number of projects that communicate in ways that are so obvious that she can handle sensitive content and is interested in challenging some of our assumptions I think as journalists do well, and she has an experience of realizing well therapy is not at all like what we see on TV, like what? Like this is, there's something - some mismatch here between what's actually going on in therapy, and the portrayal of mental health services in the media, and we need to bridge that gap. So, she started reaching out to a number of people, and somehow came across my work and my name. I think through a referral from somebody else who was interested in the project at that time. And this was probably in 20, would it be 2016? So many, many years ago and there was years of conversations that happened with numerous people before I even got involved, and so a lot of people ask about like was it like – did someone hear like how, How Should We Begin I can't remember what Esther Perel's podcast is called.

Rachael Lyon 24:13

Where should we begin.

Dr. Hillary McBride 24:16

Yeah where should we begin. And so we had been in production for about 18 months before we even heard about that podcast and I think there's something so cool in the synergy of the collective unconscious when, like, okay, something needs to happen and it just kind of emerges from creative minds. So yeah, there were many iterations of what the podcast was going to look like and lots of ethical conversations and reviews and lots of, lots of concern for client welfare, understandably, and what we found time and time again with the project is that people who didn't want to do it said no. People who wanted to say yes, said yes and then were able to change their mind and felt really empowered in their ability throughout the course of the project to be like, no, that doesn't feel good anymore. And the therapeutic conversations that come from that in terms of people being able to set boundaries and feel respected, and how healing that can be. But then, most obviously is for people who have said yes, the impact on their life and being able to share just therapy with other people because they're not coming in, doctoring what they say they're not coming in, hoping to, you know, with some other agenda of being

heard, they're just coming to therapy, and somehow by coming to therapy, they can help other people. That for people feels like this thing incredibly empowering offering to our, to our society. So, there is something that has happened and being able to say, I can just do my work but somehow I also know it's helping other people in a really obvious way, that feels good for me. And then, we don't really have practices of doing this often, in, in psychotherapy for people who are out in the community but listening to recordings of your own therapy is profound. In terms of the ability to get insight about yourself, to give yourself feedback, to self reflect on perhaps your social skills, or mannerisms, or like, oh, no wonder people react to me that way, that's how I talk about this? All the way to progress and assessing, assessing how far a person, how far you have come, or being compassionate towards yourself, when you hear something outside of yourself. So there is this really interesting secondary gain that comes from the project outside of maybe like the activism pieces where people are reporting that listening to the audio is stirring things for them, even before it gets released. And then on top of that there's all the feedback from people saying things online, of course they don't know who the clients actually are and have no way of contacting them but as you know, clients, I'm sure, have heard their friends say things or hear it on the radio or hear people talk about the podcast, and they're like wow, I feel so seen and supported and I had no idea that my work, just being me and healing could impact so many people, there's, yeah, there's all sorts of far reaching implications, and maybe like implications internally inter-psychically from doing a project like this, but I'm happy to talk more about it or my experience of it but that's how it came to be and some of the things that have come from it.

Lee Propp 27:35

Yeah, I think you, you did such a wonderful job of highlighting all of the really positive things that I think, more or less, maybe elicit in my mind that like all of the great things that could come from showcasing therapy and in this kind of way, and I'm glad you noted the listening to yourself do therapy because I think anyone who's had any sort of health care provider training has the experience of supervision, and sitting there watching the recording with you or you know the two way mirror or, you know on the ceiling we have rooms, um, and it's like, I mean I think when I first started to have to do that I would want to like crawl under the table and hide like listening to your own voice, and then having someone else watch it with you is, can be horrifying I think maybe doing this podcast, maybe it's helped because I have to hear the sound of my own voice all the time. I wonder, um, sort of, what how that experience of like sort of seeing, having tons of other people, alongside you, hearing it. Not seeing it but hearing you be a therapist. How is that experience gone through the years.

Dr. Hillary McBride 28:46

Oh my gosh. Well, I can tell you that my critic, my inner critic around my clinical work as its presented on the podcast, really loves to come out, because, as is the case whenever you do a session you hear things after your like why did I say that or what? Why did I go there? And then there's this other piece about having the podcast condense, you take 50 to 55 minutes, and you bring it into 20 minutes of audio I'm like, oh no, there was so much more in that session. No, I did, I didn't say that right away, like if we're not editing in and adding in audio or like changing things around but we're condensing things. And so there was a part of you have at times been like no I want, I want people to know like I also said this or I also said that, and I think the big lesson for me and it circles back to what we've been talking about already today is, if I don't let imperfect clinical work be seen then I am not inviting people to do imperfect work, but the narrative of perfectionism is self perpetuating and creates a, an idealism about the person of the therapist that is unattainable and unachievable. And I have certainly found incredible compassion for myself and seeing my therapeutic heroes do clinical work and have them talk about their mistakes and be like oh that's where I went wrong, right. The problem with that podcast is that it's not a teaching podcast so I'm not getting to say here's why I made that choice and here's the thing I would do differently and, you know, here's what I know about this client that you don't know about this client and

here's what was happening like in the room at that moment. So you're not getting all of my process notes but I think it's important that we produce imperfect work, because I think it creates a community, particularly for therapists who often have the extra baggage of like, and because I have all these tools I should feel better about myself, or because I have all these tools I should be able to do it perfectly, I should be a perfectly mentally well human all the time. I just want, again I want the story of being human and the story for the person of the therapist to be wider than the one that we give ourselves and are given, and I think that means that my role as a, quote here like 'leader' in this way, is that I get to model, just like, here's a piece of my work. What do you make of it? And trust that I'm valuable, and I'm good enough, and I'm okay, even if it's imperfect, even if people critique, even if people idolize it. It's actually disconnected from my worth and value as a person, and for my overall work as a therapist. So that that stuff definitely comes up for me, but what a wonderful exercise to practice wedding a project into the world and just letting it go and trusting that you'll be okay.

Rachael Lyon 31:41

Did you ever have a moment when you were first approached about the podcast where you, maybe doubted or didn't think you were going to agree to do it, or did, did you receive the proposal and you're like yes I am 100% in.

Dr. Hillary McBride 31:53

Hm, perhaps it's neither of those, I think. I think my, my decision making around that was probably more like I need lots more information, but I probably wouldn't have asked for more information if I wasn't interested or I didn't think that there was something that was compelling. But we, in Canada, our CPA Code of Ethics has four principles and principle number four, is often neglected, and seldom instructed well, and that is our responsibility to society that we have a role in the field and the profession of psychology and psychotherapy to, to participate in shaping discourse and mental health, and communities, and society. And for me, I constantly am looking for ways that my, my practice and my profession and my training, allow me to speak into this principle for the responsibility to society and help me live that responsibility out well. And so there, I think the hook for me when I heard about the project from Jody was of course this is important. How do we do it well, what's the plan, how are we going to take care of clients, and protect the right to self determination, and honor their ethics and boundaries but yes I want to know more.

Rachael Lyon 33:14

Yeah.

Lee Propp 33:15

Yeah, I think, listening to you talk about approaching that project it, it reminds me of something I've been trying to remind myself lately and it's something you noted already is just following curiosity, I think we lose that. We lose that as we as we grow older and we introduce ourselves with our professional accolades and we do all the things that we should be doing, and I wonder if, if you had anything to share with I guess us but also the listeners who aren't mainly trainees and early career professionals in the healthcare space of how you reconnect to that curiosity, when you feel like a hamster in the wheel.

Dr. Hillary McBride 33:57

Yeah, for me spirituality feels like a big, a big answer to that question, and perhaps I'll redefine that like I have a religious and faith community that I participate in but it feels like, sometimes religion and faith communities are kind of the answers and I think of spirituality as the questions. And for me, spirituality has - is the drive within us, similar to similar to sexuality, similar to development, similar to any of these, these parts that feel wired in that allow us to expand and unfold and be bigger than whatever feels like

it's right in front of us or just me, or just - just this. And so spirituality for me feels like, if I was to think about a posture, it's like academia asks me to have my head down in a book, and spirituality like tilts my chin up and says like look at the big sky. Look at the trees, look at your connection to the land, look at everyone who's come before you and who will come after you. And so for me the spiritual practice of being in wonder actually feels like a discipline in a way, so to wondering about things turning my attention, or my orientation in relationships towards wonder feels like a, like a goal and an important thing that I think about and do often. Mindfulness really helps with that. Awe really helps with that. I'm really taken by the work of Martin Buber, so the Jewish existential philosopher and his position around really seeing other people. Really seeing. I'm sure you've heard of I and Thou and his, his work around that but he has a very, I think a quote that's deeply imprinted on me that says 'all actual life is encounter.' So when I am encountering another person, I am wanting to see, see them and know them and explore and trust that I will never get to the bottom or to the fullness of who the person is, but I also want to do that with nature, and I want to do that with systems, and I want to do that with art, and music and I think my husband's an artist, so that helps too because he's extraordinarily existentially minded and we discuss death on the daily and what it means to be alive and so there are all of these kind of like, like open opening things that are like, Oh yeah remember that and don't get so focused on, on what you're doing - the task that you're doing. So yeah I think spiritualities and the discipline of asking questions, feels important to me but I put perhaps to make that more tangible and concretize it, I'm, I'm aware of a, I always forget how to pronounce his name correctly so so I'm so sorry that I'm doing this I need to make sure that I get it right, Thich Nhat Hanh, and the Buddhist teacher. His work has impacted me deeply and he has an exercise where he's asking you to see the world in a grain of rice, and I think about some of his teachings and what that does for us to see connected like, to train our brain to see connections between things. And so, I have a friend of mine, who, who has hacked this particular exercise and will like when he's feeling low or disconnected, he'll look at something and consider the history of it. So like, let's just say I've got about a plant on my desk and I did not buy the plant and I did not plant the plant, so perhaps a hack here would be like, Okay, where did this plant come from, where did the soil come from, well it came from this person, what is that person's story, where did their family come from, where did their family come from, what are they doing right now, and seeing the world as ever unfolding connections between all things, and how you can take a simple object and do that, but I like to think about people that way too or nature or I think that original exercise has a piece of paper and says can you see the cloud in this paper. Okay, well, the paper is made from wood, and the wood came from a tree and the tree was nourished by the rain and the rain came from the cloud, so can you see the cloud in the paper? And these are little exercises that we do to stimulate interconnectedness and wonder, and I think enough discipline and practices like that allows us to trust that everything we see has a history, everything we see is bigger and - and woven into everything else.

Lee Propp 38:37

Yeah, that was so beautiful and I think I hear so much, I mean, I and Raechel as well is, we're training in child and adolescent psychology. So, I mean, it sounds so much to me like the questions that children ask.

Dr. Hillary McBride 38:53

Exactly.

Lee Propp 38:56

And we forget, we forget how to ask them.

Dr. Hillary McBride 39:58

It's so sad.

Lee Propp 38:59

Yeah, and I think what I'm hearing from you is, is we need to reconnect with that parts of ourselves, which is difficult in the grind of everyday life, but perhaps tremendously important.

Dr. Hillary McBride 39:17

Mhm, maybe even life sustaining.

Lee Propp 39:21

Yeah, yeah, you definitely could argue that. So, I am being cognizant of time so as we close, we, we generally ask our, our guests if there's anything that they can leave us with, and I, I invite you to, to give us whatever you'd like - any as you were saying earlier, imperfect offering to, to all those listening and to us.

Rachael Lyon 39:54

It can be something about failure, or lessons from failure, or it can be something that you think has been a good learning experience for you.

Dr. Hillary McBride 40:02

Hmm, I'm, I'm in a supervision group, where even though I'm not doing any academic training anymore, I'm, I'm still engaging in ongoing clinical training to keep working on my skills. And we tape ourselves, and then we share the tape, with our supervision group. And of course with client consent, these things are implied but they're we're saying too, and it is uncomfortable and so valuable, and the expectation that we should stop taping ourselves, stop taping our clinical work when you're not trying to do it for a supervisor, something I just want to free us of as clinicians, like the ability to self supervise and know that we can reflect on our work and keep growing. Feels like the only way to be faithful to the developmental process of the person of the therapist, which is to know that we - it will be years and years and years, and maybe never before we go, oh I've arrived. Oh, I know, I know perfectly how to do all of this flawlessly. So, I want to encourage people to keep taping and taping, specifically, but also to create experiences clinically where you have something similar, akin to like the rich learning that comes from taping so, find your - find a way to be stretched and keep, keep learning, keep asking for input and feedback around things. And then doing my own therapeutic work, I mean that I was in therapy for a very long time before I ever became a therapist or to training, and that, it's so fascinating to me when clients come in and will say, oh you, you've gone there. And people will say, you know I can sit across from therapists after therapist after therapist and I know who is afraid of or is not afraid of going into the places that are the most painful because people settle - the clients, particularly those who have trauma history are so micro attuned to what the therapist is doing that if we, if we have any sense of discomfort around going places. It will be revealed in the in the sessions and people will sense that, so do your work, right, go to therapy. I always say to patients whenever I see them it's often the very first thing that I say I'm a therapist because therapy has worked, and still works for me. And I'm not going to sell you a medicine that I won't take, I'm not going to tell you to do something I won't do. And that feels part of like the, the congruence for me of how I want to show up in that room. So take your work, go to therapy.

Lee Propp 42:57

Hm, I like that it's just all really, to just lean into discomfort, a little bit.

Dr. Hillary McBride 43:00

Oh my gosh. Yeah, and when we marry that with wonder of like, what will I find, oh my goodness I can be safe with myself and I will be supported and I will be still be lovable whatever I find and however I am in that experience of discomfort. It is so less scary to do that.

Lee Propp 43:25

Absolutely. This has been so wonderful, it's been so wonderful to hear you talk I was listening to some of the episodes before in this and was reflecting on how lovely your therapist voice is.

Rachael Lyon 43:43

And just your voice.

Lee Propp 43:44

And all of the wonderful things concepts that come out, obviously, but it has been so wonderful to spend this hour with you, so thank you.

Dr. Hillary McBride 43:51

My pleasure. Good luck with your training and thank you for doing this project.

[Interlude Music]

Rachael Lyon 44:03

Well that was an amazing interview with Hillary, she was so generous with their time. We're so grateful that to speak with her.

Lee Propp 44:09

Yeah, it was a very jam packed therapy hour interview. Yeah, but it was a lovely time.

Rachael Lyon 44:22

Yeah I was to Lee about how I actually came to know of Hillary and her work and it was accidental, as the theme of this podcast goes, I was walking home along Bloor a couple years ago and there was a sandwich board outside the theatre on Bloor and it said, Other People's Problems, conversation with Hillary McBride. And, I had never heard of the podcast and I said wow that sounds really interesting and I ended up googling it when I got home and, this is several years ago now but since then I've been such a fan of the podcast and - and Hillary and her work so it was so exciting to hear, sort of the story behind how the podcast came to be and, and her, her work on the podcast and what that's been like for her.

Lee Propp 45:13

Mhm, yeah, absolutely. I think I'm always struck, listening to those episodes of that podcast of how, how real it sounds and it is - it's because it's real therapy in context and in making sure it's all safe and going well but I think it's. Everything about it is it feels like you're in the room there. With, with her and the clients.

Rachael Lyon 45:39

Yeah, I love what she talked about, about the importance of letting imperfect therapy be seen, and how she just embraced that because I can feel as a trainee and I'm sure even later in my career that would be an uncomfortable experience to, to have work that maybe isn't my best work or something that I think is, is perfect, which is not the reality of any of the work that I do, having perfect work is just not, not possible all the time and how she sort of flagged it as a responsibility to society. I thought that was such a great attitude and an important message behind. The purpose of the podcast and the impact that it has.

Lee Propp 46:31

Oh absolutely, she's she's making, you know, the mystery of psychotherapy so much more accessible to the public in general and that's, yeah I mean it's in our ethical code of conduct as professionals and I think it is quite an embodiment of that of that message, which is really lovely. I think also in reflecting on that conversation, some of the take home messages that we got and some of the themes that came up in the interview about, reconnecting with society, I think, especially at the graduate level, but you know as you're progressing your career there are times, many more times that you'd probably like where you feel kind of just like a hamster in the wheel just churning at work and it never stops and there's the destination is always moving and I think the, the idea to reconnect with that curiosity of why you really started what, what makes you curious what, you know, sets off the alarm bells and gets you all excited and then reconnecting with that is hard but a, a worthwhile a worthwhile goal, to sort of keep reminding yourself of.

Rachael Lyon 47:42

Absolutely, especially with sort of the climate of academia, where she's right there is sort of this pressure to to publish and keep producing work and success is measured, often times, by how much work you produce, and the awards you've gotten all of these sort of very superficial markers of success but being curious, is a great way to feel less like it's this never ending cycle, where you can never achieve or you never achieve enough and the fact that she introduced herself by saying that she doesn't define herself by her word I think is just so refreshing.

Lee Propp 48:29

Yeah, I think it's an important message that I remind myself all the time when people say you know who are you and often the first thing that comes to mind is, you know, I'm a graduate student, but I, that's not who I am, that's what I do and it's what takes up most of my days and some of my evenings and weekends, but it is by no means is who I am and I think I, you know, that conversation that we had with with Dr. McBride, as well as, you know, a number of other ones that we've had on the show and that I've had with many friends recently is just being conscious of how much it seeps into your life and how much you let it define you because then when it, when it's gone, you still want to have a full and rich sense of self left, which is what I took out of it so I, I will absolutely carry many of the ideas and conversations that we had with her, as I, you know, try and finish this degree. I hope resonates with many of you as well.

[Outro Theme Music]

Lee Propp 50:07

You've been listening to the Accidental Intellectual. Our podcast is produced by Holly Boyne, Manon Feasson, Lauren Goldberg, Bronwyn Lamond, Rachael Lyon, Harrison McNaughton, Stephanie Morris, Lee Propp, and Ariana Simone. Our theme music is by Alexandra Willett and our branding by Maxwell McNaughton. You can check us out on Twitter [@accidental_pod](#) and on Instagram [@accidentalintellectual](#). Our website is www.accidentalintellectual.com. We'll be back next time with more stories from the humans behind the experts.

[Interlude Music]