

THE 5-BEAM

RECONSTRUCTION INSPECTION

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LIFE SWINGS.
YOU SURVIVED.
NOW REBUILD.

That does not mean the structure is ready for renovation.

After loss, recovery, divorce, illness, burnout, betrayal, career disruption, public failure - or simply the collapse of the life you thought you would have - there is enormous pressure to answer big questions.

What do I do now?	**Who am I supposed to become?**	**How do I start over?**

But those may be renovation questions asked during an emergency. Before you reinvent your life, inspect it.

This reflection tool helps identify what is stable, what is carrying too much weight, what you may be avoiding, what systems are no longer working, where support is missing, and which part of your life deserves attention first.

This is not a clinical or mental-health assessment. It is a practical self-reflection tool for deciding where reconstruction may need to begin.

BETH McDONOUGH | Author + Keynote Speaker | Architect of the "After."

HOW TO TAKE THE INSPECTION

Score your **actual life during the last 30 days** - not the person you used to be, the person you intend to become, or the answer you think you should give.

Inspect what is actually standing.

1	**NOT TRUE**	Absent, unstable or creating significant problems.
2	**RARELY TRUE**	I can sometimes access this, but not reliably.
3	**PARTLY TRUE**	Some structure exists, but it is inconsistent or under strain.
4	**MOSTLY TRUE**	Generally reliable, with areas to reinforce.
5	**CONSISTENTLY TRUE**	Functioning well enough to carry weight.

THE FIVE LOAD-BEARING BEAMS

S	**STABILIZE**	Stop the structure from moving.
T	**TRUTH**	Inspect what is actually there.
I	**INSTALL NEW SYSTEMS**	Replace willpower with infrastructure.
L	**LOAD-BEARING SUPPORTS**	Distribute the weight.
L	**LANDSCAPE A LIFE**	Build somewhere worth living.

Rule: Do not chase the total score. Your lowest beam is usually the most useful place to inspect first.

S BEAM 1 | STABILIZE

Before you build anything new, stop the structure from moving.

Stabilization is sleep. Food. Money. Safety. Appointments. Boundaries. The conversation you keep postponing. The bill you are afraid to open. The behavior that keeps creating another emergency.

1. My basic needs - sleep, food, housing, physical safety and essential responsibilities - are stable enough that I am not constantly operating in emergency mode.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I can identify the two or three problems that actually require attention now, rather than treating everything as equally urgent.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I know what I need to stop, pause or contain because it continues to create instability.	1	2	3	4	5
4. When I become overwhelmed, I have at least one reliable way to regulate myself before making important decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am dealing with practical realities - money, health, paperwork, appointments, deadlines - instead of allowing avoidance to create the next crisis.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My current schedule contains enough margin for recovery, thought and basic maintenance.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I can distinguish between something that is uncomfortable and something that is genuinely unsafe or urgent.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I am not making major life decisions primarily to escape how I feel today.	1	2	3	4	5

STABILIZE SCORE ____ / 40

THE PROBING QUESTION

What keeps becoming an emergency in my life - and what would change if I stopped calling it 'just how things are'?

T BEAM 2 | TRUTH

You cannot repair what you refuse to inspect.

Truth is not punishment. It is accurate information. Reconstruction becomes impossible when we are designing around a life, relationship, identity, career or expectation that no longer exists.

1. I can describe what happened to me without either minimizing it or allowing it to define my entire identity.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I can name what is no longer working even when admitting it is painful, embarrassing or inconvenient.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I know the difference between what I actually want and what I believe other people expect from me.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I can identify at least one pattern in which my own choices contribute to an outcome I keep saying I do not want.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am willing to revise the story I tell about myself when the evidence no longer supports it.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I can separate facts from shame, fear, prediction and assumptions about what other people think of me.	1	2	3	4	5
7. There is at least one person with whom I can tell the unedited truth.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I am no longer waiting for another person to apologize, change, understand or return before I allow my own life to move forward.	1	2	3	4	5

TRUTH SCORE ____ / 40

THE PROBING QUESTION

What do I already know is true that I keep negotiating with?

BEAM 3 | INSTALL NEW SYSTEMS

Willpower is not infrastructure.

If the same system keeps producing the same outcome, demanding more discipline from yourself may not solve it. Reconstruction asks a different question: what needs to be redesigned?

1. My important habits are supported by routines, reminders, environments or accountability - not motivation alone.	1	2	3	4	5
2. When an old pattern fails me, I examine the system around it instead of immediately concluding that I am the failure.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My environment makes the behaviors I want easier and the behaviors I am trying to leave behind harder.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I have boundaries that protect my time, health, recovery, attention or energy.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I know which recurring situation most reliably pulls me back toward an old pattern.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I have a plan for predictable difficult moments rather than treating each one as a surprise.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am willing to make my life temporarily smaller, simpler or less impressive while I build systems that can actually hold it.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The systems running my current life were designed for who I am becoming - not simply inherited from who I used to be.	1	2	3	4	5

INSTALL NEW SYSTEMS SCORE ____ / 40

THE PROBING QUESTION

Where am I repeatedly asking willpower to do a job that should belong to a system?

L BEAM 4 | LOAD-BEARING SUPPORTS

Nothing strong is supported by one beam.

Sometimes what looks like independence is structural overload. One relationship, one role, one coping mechanism or one person was never meant to hold up your entire life.

1. I have more than one source of meaningful support.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I can ask for specific help before a situation becomes a crisis.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The people closest to me generally reinforce the life I am trying to build rather than repeatedly destabilize it.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My entire identity is not dependent on one role, relationship, title or achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I know which problems require friendship, which require professional expertise and which are mine to solve.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I allow other people to see me before I have everything cleaned up and figured out.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My support system includes people or communities who can tolerate the truth without rescuing, shaming or controlling me.	1	2	3	4	5
8. If one major support disappeared tomorrow, my entire structure would not collapse with it.	1	2	3	4	5

LOAD-BEARING SUPPORTS SCORE ____ / 40

THE PROBING QUESTION

What - or who - am I asking to carry more weight than it was ever designed to hold?

L BEAM 5 | LANDSCAPE A LIFE

Eventually, survival has to become somewhere you actually want to live.

Landscaping comes after stabilization and structure. This beam asks whether you are merely escaping the old life - or deliberately creating the next one.

1. I can imagine a future that is more than simply 'not feeling this way anymore.'	1	2	3	4	5
2. My calendar contains something that gives me meaning, curiosity, connection, pleasure or genuine anticipation.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I know what matters to me now, even if those values differ from the person I used to be.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am making at least some decisions based on what I want to build rather than only what I want to escape.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am willing to build a life that looks different from the one I once believed would prove I was successful.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I have relationships, places, rituals or activities that make my life feel inhabited rather than merely managed.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am becoming curious about who I might be next rather than devoting all my energy to restoring who I was before impact.	1	2	3	4	5
8. If nobody were watching, I would still want important parts of the life I am building.	1	2	3	4	5

LANDSCAPE A LIFE SCORE ____ / 40

THE PROBING QUESTION

Am I rebuilding a life I actually want - or reconstructing something primarily so other people can see that I recovered?

YOUR STRUCTURAL REPORT

Transfer each beam score. The total is useful context. Your **lowest beam** is usually the most actionable finding.

S	**STABILIZE**	**____ / 40**
T	**TRUTH**	**____ / 40**
I	**INSTALL NEW SYSTEMS**	**____ / 40**
L	**LOAD-BEARING SUPPORTS**	**____ / 40**
L	**LANDSCAPE A LIFE**	**____ / 40**

TOTAL: _____ / 200

DO NOT CHASE THE TOTAL SCORE.

A 160 does not make you 'better' at rebuilding than someone with a 90. This is an inspection, not a grade. You are looking for structural information.

33-40	**STRUCTURALLY SOUND**	Carrying weight reliably. Maintain it and ask what it can support next.
25-32	**STABLE - NEEDS REINFORCEMENT**	Real structure exists. Reinforce the lowest-scoring point.
17-24	**UNDER STRAIN**	Do not add major load yet. Repair one weak point first.
8-16	**STABILIZE FIRST**	Reduce unnecessary load. Choose one immediate action and bring in appropriate support.

CIRCLE YOUR LOWEST BEAM.

That is not your identity. It is simply the first place to inspect.

YOUR FIRST RECONSTRUCTION PLAN

Do not repair all five beams this week. Buildings are reconstructed in sequence. Lives can be, too.

FIND THE STRAIN. REDUCE THE LOAD. REINFORCE ONE POINT.

1. WHAT IS THE SINGLE WEAKEST POINT INSIDE MY LOWEST BEAM?

2. WHAT IS ONE ACTION I CAN TAKE IN THE NEXT 24-72 HOURS?

3. WHO OR WHAT COULD HELP ME DO IT?

4. WHAT WILL I STOP DOING WHILE I REINFORCE THIS?

5. WHAT AM I TRYING TO BUILD THAT MY CURRENT STRUCTURE CANNOT YET SUPPORT?

YOU DO NOT BEGIN WITH A NEW LIFE.
YOU BEGIN WITH A SAFE PLACE TO STAND.

Beth McDonough | Author + Keynote Speaker | STILL STANDING™ | Reconstruction | Architect of the “After.”