

THE TONE
YOU USE
WITH
YOURSELF





A QUIET EXERCISE THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

There is a voice you live with every day. It speaks more often than anyone else in your life.

You may not notice its words clearly. But your nervous system notices its tone. Long before the mind evaluates whether a thought is logical or fair, the body has already responded. The tone beneath your inner dialogue, rushed, sharp, pressured, disappointed, quietly signals to the nervous system whether it is safe or under threat.

The body believes tone. Your body does not analyse language. It responds to felt safety.

Research in affective neuroscience shows that the nervous system responds to emotional cues before it responds to meaning. This is why two identical sentences can feel completely different depending on how they are delivered.



The body does not respond to logic first. It responds to safety.

When your inner tone carries urgency, disappointment, pressure, or criticism, the nervous system interprets that emotional quality as a subtle threat. Not a dramatic one. Not danger in the obvious sense. But enough to activate readiness.

The jaw tightens slightly. The breath shortens. The shoulders lift without you noticing. The heart beats a little faster.

If this tone repeats throughout the day:

- *“I should be further by now.”*
- *“Why can’t I handle this better?”*
- *“I need to get it together.”*

The body never fully stands down.

Over time, this creates a quiet but constant internal bracing.

You may not call it stress. You may simply call it being responsible, motivated, or self-aware. But the nervous system does not distinguish between external pressure and internal pressure. It responds to both.

When your inner voice is sharp, the body prepares for correction. When it is impatient, the body prepares to perform. When it is disappointed, the body prepares to defend.

Living inside this tone can feel like:

- *Persistent tiredness without a clear cause*
- *Difficulty fully relaxing*
- *Irritability that surprises you*
- *Emotional reactions that feel larger than the situation*

Not because something is wrong with you. But because your system has been working hard to manage a constant signal of “not enough.”

Softening your inner tone does not mean lowering standards. It means removing unnecessary threat.

When threat reduces — even slightly — the body begins to recover. That is why this practice matters.



THE PRACTICE BEGINS

EXERCISE 1

Catch The Tone (1 Minute)

This exercise helps you notice the emotional tone behind your thoughts, without trying to change anything yet. There is nothing to fix here. Just a quiet moment to hear how you speak to yourself when you're not paying attention.

When to do this:

Any moment you feel tense, discouraged, rushed, or self-critical.

What to do:

- Pause for a moment.
- Notice the sentence running in your mind.
- Don't analyse it. Just listen.

Now ask:

- Is this tone sharp or gentle?
- Fast or patient?
- Demanding or supportive?

Place one hand on your chest or belly as you notice. Let your body register that you are paying attention.



EXERCISE 2

Name the Impact (30 seconds)

Every tone has an effect. This moment helps you name what your nervous system is responding to. You're not judging the voice, only noticing its impact. Still holding the sentence in mind, check your body.

When to do this:

Do this the moment you notice a shift inside you during or after someone speaks – when something feels “off,” heavy, sharp, or unsettling.

What to do:

Pause. Hold the tone in mind. Scan your body. Notice where it lands. Name it silently. No fixing. Just observing.

Ask:

- Does my jaw tighten?
- Is my breath shallow?
- Do my shoulders lift?
- Does my chest feel heavy?

You are not trying to relax anything yet.
You are simply observing how tone lands in the body.



EXERCISE 3

The Love Test (1 minute)

This is a moment to check kindness, not correctness. Ask whether the way you're speaking would feel safe if it were spoken to someone you love. The nervous system responds to tone before meaning. This test helps you feel whether your words are offering safety or pressure.

When to do this:

Do this when you notice your inner voice becoming sharp, pressured, or demanding – especially after a mistake, delay, or moment of overwhelm.

What to do:

Repeat the sentence silently.
Imagine saying it to someone you love, someone tired, someone already doing their best.

Ask yourself:

- *Would I use this tone with them?*

If the answer is “no,” notice whether there is grief in that realisation. Often there is.

You may feel sadness, tenderness, or a quiet ache. This is not weakness. It's the moment you realise how much care you actually need – and deserve.



EXERCISE 4

Rewrite the Tone (2 minutes)

This is where change begins, without force. You keep the same words and simply soften how they are spoken. You are not here to argue with your thoughts. You are here to change how your body receives them.

When to do this:

Do this after you've noticed tension in your body or realised your inner tone feels harsh or pressuring.

What to do:

Repeat the same sentence, but soften how you say it — 20% slower, with less urgency, as if speaking to someone you care about. Let your exhale lengthen and allow your shoulders to drop as you speak.

Example 1 – Self-pressure:

Original tone:

“I should be doing better.”

Shifted tone:

“I should be doing better.”

(slower, steadier, without threat)



Example 2 – Emotional Overwhelm

Original tone:

“I can’t handle this.”

Shifted tone:

“I can’t handle this.”
(spoken as information, not failure)

Often the body relaxes enough to stay present.



Example 3 – Relationships

Original tone:

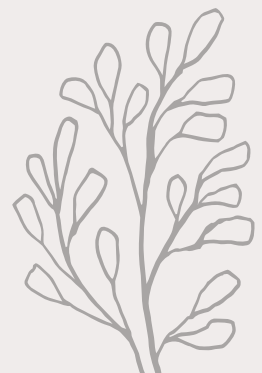
“They never listen to me.”

Shifted tone:

“They never listen to me.”
(with sadness instead of blame)

This is not positive thinking. You are not pretending the sentence is pleasant. You are simply removing threat from it.

You may feel subtle shifts rather than dramatic change. That’s enough. Safety often enters quietly – through a slower breath, a softer chest, a body that no longer needs to brace.



EXERCISE 5

Let the Body Respond (1 minute)

You don't need to do anything now. Your body already knows how to respond when pressure eases. When safety increases, the body adjusts on its own. This minute is about noticing, not managing.

When to do this:

Do this after you've softened your tone – especially in moments when you feel behind, disappointed in yourself, tense with someone, or emotionally overwhelmed.

What to do:

Pause for one minute and let your body respond. Do nothing. Simply notice whether your breath, posture, or sense of urgency shifts. Trust whatever happens – even if nothing seems to change.

Later, if you'd like, reflect on one gentle question about your inner tone. One sentence. One shift. One noticing is enough.





HOW TO USE THIS IN DAILY LIFE

- Use it in the moment, not later

- Use it when you feel:

Behind / Disappointed in yourself / Tense with a partner /
Emotionally overwhelmed

- One sentence is enough

- One tone shift is enough

This is not about being kind all the time. It's
about being less cruel when things already hurt.



A GROUNDING CLOSE

You may wish to journal:

- What tone do I most often use with myself?
- When did I learn this tone?
- Who did it originally belong to?
- What would a steady, safe tone feel like in my body?
- What changes when I speak 20% slower?

You don't need better thoughts.
You need a safer inner voice.

Each time you soften the tone,
your nervous system learns:
I am not under attack.

If you feel called to explore this work in a deeper, held environment, we'd love to support you.

Enquire about the Self-Healing Retreat:
reservations@sandaretreats.com

Sometimes healing doesn't begin with change. It begins with learning how to speak to yourself in a way your body can finally rest inside.



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