

Calm Your Inner Critic: 5 Simple Somatic Practices to Soothe Your Internal Critic

Simple body-based tools to calm your mind and nurture inner strength

Heidi Elias, LCSW, SEP

Creating Space for This Work

The voice of your inner critic can feel relentless. It tells you that you are not good enough, that you should be doing more, or that you do not deserve good things.

This voice is not proof that something is wrong with you. It is often a survival response — an old strategy your nervous system developed to try to keep you safe. While it may have helped you once, today it may leave you stuck in self-doubt and stress.

The good news is that you can shift this pattern. The practices in this guide are **simple, body-based tools drawn from somatic therapy**. They are not about forcing positive thinking. Instead, they gently help your body and mind work together so that self-compassion and resilience become more natural.

You do not need to master them all at once. Start with one, notice what changes, and return to it whenever you need support.

Practice 1: Ground Through the Senses

How This Supports You:

Your inner critic lives in your head. Returning to the body quiets mental noise.

Try This:

Pause and name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, 1 you taste.

Tip:

Notice how your breath or shoulders shift as you settle.

Practice 2: Place a Hand of Kindness

How This Supports You:

Physical touch releases oxytocin, calming the stress response.

Try This:

Place a hand over your heart, cheek, or belly. Breathe slowly. Say quietly, “*I am here with you.*”

Tip:

Imagine offering this same kindness to a child or friend, then direct it inward.

Practice 3: The Exhale Reset

How This Supports You:

A long exhale signals safety to your nervous system.

Try This:

Inhale gently through your nose. Exhale slowly through pursed lips, longer than the inhale. Repeat 3–5 times.

Tip:

Try silently saying, *“Letting go”* with each exhale.

Practice 4: Name What is Right

How This Supports You:

Trauma and self-criticism prime the brain to scan for danger. Redirecting attention builds balance.

Try This:

Look around and name one thing that feels neutral or pleasant (a color, a sound, a comfortable sensation, a soothing object). Repeat.

Tip:

Small positive acts count. A soft pillow, a ray of light, or the taste of tea are all enough.

Practice 5: Anchor a Supportive Phrase

How This Supports You:

Words can interrupt harsh inner commentary when paired with body awareness.

Try This:

Pick a phrase that feels true, such as: *“I am doing my best,” “I am on my own side,”* or *“I am learning.”*

Tip:

Say the phrase while placing your hand on your heart or taking a grounding breath.

Your Path Forward

The practices you have explored here are just a **small sample of the somatic tools** I offer to help quiet the inner critic. Practicing these exercises regularly can bring noticeable relief, but working consistently with a structured, personalized approach provides a **more comprehensive way to soften self-criticism, release stuck patterns, and strengthen resilience.**

I encourage you to **explore my website** to learn more about how I work, the principles behind Somatic Experiencing, and the ways these practices are integrated into therapy. Be sure to pay

special attention to the various case studies in the **Resources** section — they provide real examples of how clients have applied these tools for lasting change.

If you feel ready to take the next step, I invite you to **schedule a time for a quick phone call**. If I believe that I can be of assistance to you, I will then invite you to a **free 20-minute Zoom call**.

Together, we will create a plan to help you move from being driven by your inner critic to living with steadiness, confidence, and self-compassion.

You are not broken. You are simply learning a new way forward rooted in resilience and freedom.

