



REFLECTION SHEET

The Voice in the Empty Room

A companion for hearing how you speak to yourself — and who else is hearing it.

Whatever you say to yourself when you fail is the voice you will use on another person when you are tired, behind schedule, and out of patience. It is the most rehearsed speech you own. These questions are for listening to it on purpose, probably for the first time.

A Practice to Begin

The next time you make a small mistake — not a large one, a small one — stop and write down the exact words you say to yourself about it. Not the gist. The words. Then read them back as though someone else had said them to you out loud. Notice whether you would let anyone speak to a colleague that way in your presence.

Reflection Questions

1. What is my first sentence to myself when something goes wrong — the one that arrives before I have any information?
2. Where did I learn that sentence, and how old was I?
3. Who have I used it on? Think of a specific person and a specific day.
4. What do I refuse myself — rest, error, not knowing, asking for help, being afraid out loud?
5. And who near me is not permitted that same thing, because I have never permitted it to myself?
6. Have I been mistaking contempt for rigor? What would change if I held the same standard without it?
7. If my Enneagram type has a favorite accusation, what is the wording of mine?
8. What would be the accurate thing to say to myself — not the gentle thing, the true thing?

An Invitation for the Week

For one week, when the voice starts, do not argue with it and do not replace it with something nicer. Just ask one question: is this accurate, or is this rehearsed? Most of the time it will be rehearsed, and naming it as rehearsal takes more of its power than any amount of positive self-talk. Accuracy is the practice. Kindness tends to follow it.

"Under pressure, people do not reach for their values. They reach for what is rehearsed." — The Voice You'll Use on Everyone Else

