What to say before an exam — the sentence card

Say less, listen more, and talk about the next step, not the mark.

When	Instead of	Say
The night before	“Do another hour.”	“You've done enough for tonight. Time to sleep.”
The night before	“Don't worry, it's easy.”	“It's normal to feel nervous. What worries you most?”
The night before	“Your cousin got full marks.”	“You know this unit better than you did a week ago.”
When they're upset	A stream of advice	“Do you want my help, or do you just need to vent?”
The morning	“Everything depends on this exam.”	“Whatever the result, we'll work out what to do next.”
The morning	“Focus, and don't make mistakes.”	“Start with the question you know, then go back to the harder ones.”
After the exam	“How many did you get wrong?”	“What went well today?”
Results day	“You've let me down.”	“Thanks for showing me. What do you make of it?”
Results day	“Why not a higher mark?”	“It's not the end of the world. Let's pick one step for the next exam.”

When to ask for help: if anxiety or low mood is severe, persists and interferes with everyday life (NHS). Start with the school counsellor or your family doctor.

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