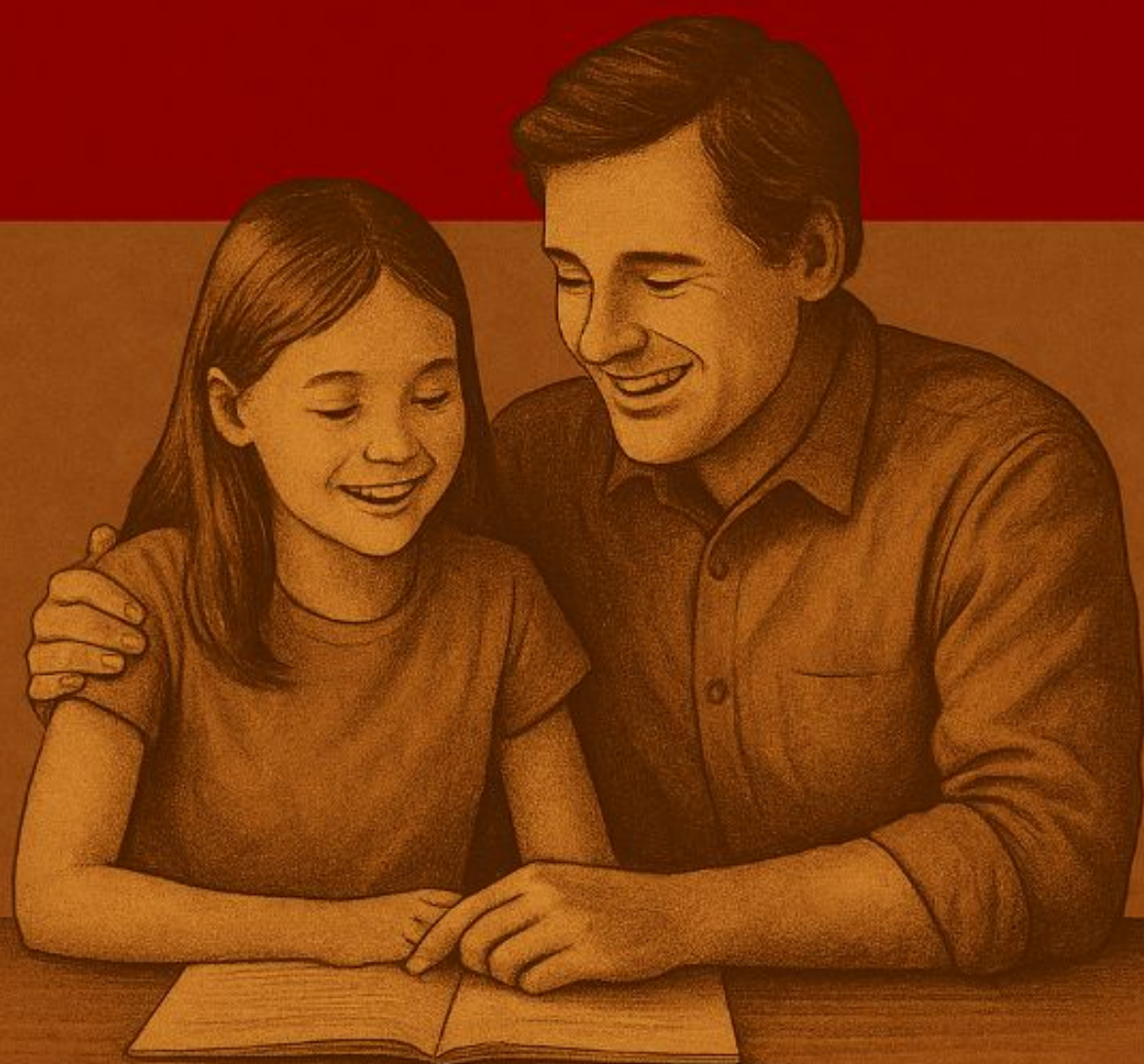


# POST-TEST DE-BRIEF SCRIPT<sup>M</sup>

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A step-by-step conversation guide  
for when results go badly



## WHY THIS SCRIPT MATTERS

### **Problem: Every time a mock / test result goes badly:**

- Your child melts down - crying, shutting down, yelling, or saying they are stupid.
- You feel torn between comforting, correcting, and lecturing.
- The whole house goes tense, and nothing useful is learned from the test.

### **Over time this can create:**

- Fear of tests
- Avoidance (rather not try than fail)
- Constant anxiety before and after exams

### **Goal of this script:**

Give you a clear, calm, repeatable conversation you can run after any result so that:

- Emotions are acknowledged, not ignored
- The test becomes information, not a life sentence
- You leave with one or two simple next steps, instead of an argument

You don't need psychological training - just follow the steps.

## THE 3 GOLDEN RULES (FOR PARENTS)

Before we get to the words, remember:

### **Rule 1 - Emotion first, logic later**

When a child is melting down, their emotional brain is driving. Logic (It's only one test) doesn't land yet.

First: calm the nervous system. Then: talk about marks, mistakes, and plans.

### **Rule 2 - Separate self-worth from performance**

Your child's brain often hears: Bad mark = I'm a failure.

We want to teach: Bad mark = something in my process didn't work.

The script keeps pulling attention back to actions, not identity.

### **Rule 3 - Small next steps only**

After a bad result, kids want to:

- Quit
- Make extreme promises (I'll study 5 hours every day!)

Your job is to keep the next step tiny and realistic so they experience success, not another failure.

## OVERVIEW: THE 4-STAGE DEBRIEF

You can think of the conversation in four stages:

### 1. Soothe

Validate feelings, reduce intensity.

### 2. Stabilise

Move from I'm hopeless to It's one data point.

### 3. Search

Gently explore what actually happened.

### 4. Simplify

Agree on 1-2 practical tweaks for next time.

Each stage has word-for-word lines you can borrow.

## STAGE 1: SOOTHE (FIRST 5-10 MINUTES)

Use this as soon as you see the meltdown - in the car, at home, or after they open their email.

### 1. Name and normalise the feeling

*I can see you're really upset about this.*

*It looks like this mark really hurt.*

*Anyone would feel disappointed if they cared as much as you do.*

#### Avoid:

- Calm down.
- It's not a big deal.
- Stop overreacting.

Those phrases tell them their feelings are wrong. Right now, we want them to feel understood.

### 2. Create a safe container

*Right now, we're not here to judge you. We're just going to breathe, talk, and figure out what this test is trying to teach us.*

If they're crying heavily or very shut down:

*Let's take 2-3 minutes just to breathe. We can talk about the details later.*

(Then actually sit quietly with them. No phones, no lecture.)

## STAGE 2: STABILISE

### PULL THEM BACK FROM 'I'M HOPELESS'

Once they're a little calmer (still upset is okay), use these lines.

#### 1. Separate result from identity

*This mark is about what happened on that day in that paper. It's not a verdict on your intelligence.*

*One test measures performance, not potential.*

If they say: I'm dumb / I'm stupid / I'll never get it

You reply:

*I'm not going to argue about how smart you are. I'm only interested in what happened and what we can do next.  
That's where your power is.*

#### 2. Scale the disaster

You're not minimising - just putting it in context.

*On a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 is 'this ruins my whole future' and 0 is 'this doesn't matter at all', where  
do you think this really sits?*

If they say 10:

*Okay, let's test that. Does this one mock result mean you're banned from all future exams forever? (No.) Does  
it mean we can't improve anything before the real test? (No.) So maybe it feels like a 10, but in reality it's  
more like a \_\_\_\_.*

Let them pick a slightly lower number. The goal is to move them from catastrophe to challenge.

## STAGE 3: SEARCH (THE ACTUAL DEBRIEF)

When they're no longer on the edge of meltdown, use a structured set of questions.

**Use this order: Wins -> Causes -> Mistakes -> Fix**

### 1. Start with one small win

*Before we dissect everything, tell me one thing you did better in this test compared to last time.*

If they say nothing:

*Okay, let me share what I noticed: You finished on time / attempted more questions / wrote more than before / didn't freeze as long. It's important we don't erase those things.*

### 2. Ask 'What do you think went wrong?' (child speaks first)

*From your point of view, what do you think went wrong this time?*

Let them answer. Don't jump in.

**Common answers:**

- I panicked.
- I misread the questions.
- I left too many blanks.
- I started revising too late.

Acknowledge: That makes sense. It helps to hear it in your words.

### 3. Use the '4 Buckets' checklist

You can ask:

*Let's sort the problems into 4 buckets:*

- Timing - Did you run out of time?
- Careless mistakes - Did you rush or misread?
- Didn't know the content - Topics you genuinely didn't learn / revise.
- Exam nerves - Panic, blank mind, stress.

Then go through:

*Which of those hurt you most in this test?*

Circle it on a little list. That becomes the main target for next time.

## STAGE 4: SIMPLIFY (NEXT ACTIONS)

Now you want to zoom in on just one or two changes.

### 1. Ask the 'If you had a time machine' question

*If you could go back 1 week before this test and change just one thing in how you prepared, what would you do differently?*

#### Examples they might say:

- Start practice papers earlier.
- Do more timed sections.
- Sleep earlier the night before.
- Revise Topic X properly instead of cramming.

Then you say:

*Great. That's the one thing we'll focus on for the next mock. Not ten things - just that one change.*

### 2. Turn it into a clear plan

Use this little template:

#### For the next test I will:

- Do: \_\_\_\_\_
- When: \_\_\_\_\_
- How often: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Example:

*For the next mock, I will do one timed reading section every second day at 7 pm for the week before.*

You can write this on a sticky note and put it at their desk.



## FULL WORD-FOR-WORD DEBRIEF SCRIPT

You can literally read this off your phone the first few times.

### Right after result / meltdown

Parent:

*I can see you're really upset about this result. It makes sense - you worked hard and this feels disappointing. Let's just breathe for a minute. We don't have to fix everything right now.*

(Wait. Let them cry / sit silently.)

*Right now I'm not here to judge you. I'm here to understand what happened and help you figure out what this test is trying to teach us.*

### Once they're calmer

*This mark is about what happened in this paper on this day. It is not a verdict on how smart you are. I know it feels huge, but it's one data point.*

*On a scale from 0 to 10, how bad does this feel right now?*

[They answer.]

*Okay. If we zoom out a bit - does this one test stop you from improving before the real exam? [No.] So maybe the feeling is a \_\_\_, but in reality it's closer to a \_\_\_. We can work with that.*

### Moving into analysis

*Before we look at the problems, tell me one thing you did better this time compared to last time.*

[They answer; if they struggle, you supply one.]

*Alright, from your point of view, what do you think went wrong in this test?*

[Listen without interrupting.]

*Thanks for explaining that. Let's sort the issues into four buckets: timing, careless mistakes, not knowing the content, and nerves. Which one do you think hurt you the most this time?*

[They choose.]

## FULL SCRIPT (CONTINUED)

### Converting to a plan

*If you could go back one week before this test and change just one thing about how you prepared, what would you change?*

[They answer.]

*That's a really useful insight. Let's make that our next experiment. For the next mock, your plan is:*

- Do: \_\_\_\_\_
- When: \_\_\_\_\_
- How often: \_\_\_\_\_

*We're not trying to become perfect overnight. We're just trying to be better than last time. If we do that every test, the marks will follow.*

### End with reassurance:

*I care more about how you respond to bad results than about the number itself. Today, you stayed in the conversation and made a plan. That's a win.*

## VARIATIONS FOR DIFFERENT REACTIONS

### 1. If your child shuts down and refuses to talk

Use a softer, longer timeline:

*I can see you really don't want to talk about it right now. That's okay. We don't have to do the full debrief today.*

*But sometime in the next 24 hours, we will sit down for 10 minutes and go through it together. You can choose: tonight after dinner, or tomorrow after school. Which one feels better?*

Give them choice of timing, not whether the debrief happens.

### 2. If your child explodes in anger ('Leave me alone!')

Stay calm and reduce stimulation:

*I can hear you're really angry. I'm going to give you some space for 10-15 minutes. After that, let's talk for 10 minutes about what happened and what you want to do next.*

Walk away. Don't chase them from room to room.

Later, re-open gently:

*I'm ready to listen when you're ready. We only need 10 minutes. You can start by telling me everything that annoyed you about that test.*

Let them vent about the test before shifting to the 4-stage structure.

## PARENT SELF-CHECK

### SO YOU DON'T MELT DOWN TOO

Before you talk, ask yourself:

- Am I trying to protect my child's ego or my own anxiety?
- Can I stay curious for 10 minutes instead of trying to fix everything?
- What's the one message I want them to walk away with?  
e.g. You can learn from this. / You're not alone in it. / We can adjust the plan.

If you're very triggered, you can say:

*I'm also feeling emotional about this result, so I don't want to say something unhelpful. Let's both take a short break and then talk about it properly.*

### The Post-Test De-Brief Script

is not about being perfect. It's about building a new pattern:

**Test -> short emotional repair -> calm analysis -> tiny adjustment -> move on.**

Used consistently, it:

- Reduces fear around mocks
- Teaches your child how to self-debrief
- Turns every bad result into a training session, not a trauma.