



The Car Ride Home

Help your athlete feel supported, heard, and ready to learn from the experience.

BEFORE YOU SPEAK

- ☐ Take one slow breath and check your own emotions.
- ☐ Let your athlete decide whether to talk now or later.
- ☐ Remember: connection comes before correction.

A SIMPLE THREE STEP CONVERSATION

1 Connect	2 Listen	3 Encourage
"I loved watching you compete."	"Do you want to talk about it, or would you rather have some quiet?"	"I'm proud of how you kept going."
Keep your tone warm and calm.	Listen without interrupting, fixing, or debating.	End with support—not a performance review.

SAY THIS INSTEAD

Avoid	Try
"Why did you do that?"	"What did you notice out there?"
"You should have..."	"What did you learn that can help next time?"
"Did you win?"	"What are you proud of today?"
Comparing them to others	"Where did you see progress in yourself?"

LET YOUR ATHLETE LEAD

☐ My athlete wants to talk now.

☐ My athlete needs quiet first.

☐ My athlete wants encouragement, not advice.

MY COMMITMENT

One phrase I will use after the next competition:

Before Competition The Parent's Role

Create calm, confidence, and consistency without adding pressure.

WHAT YOUR ATHLETE NEEDS MOST

☐ A calm presence	☐ Trust in their preparation
☐ Clear logistics	☐ Permission to enjoy competing
☐ Space to use their own routine	

SUPPORT WITHOUT PRESSURE

Helpful	Pressure increasing
"Trust your training."	"You have to win today."
"What do you need from me?"	Repeating instructions or last-minute coaching
"Compete with courage and have fun."	Discussing rankings, scholarships, money, or expectations
Calm body language	Showing visible frustration, worry, or urgency

OUR PRE COMPETITION PLAN

My athlete wants me to help with:
My athlete wants space for:
One cue or phrase they want to hear:
If nerves show up, I will help by:

PARENT RESET

☐ Breathe slowly.	☐ Keep instructions brief.	☐ Avoid outcome talk.
☐ Trust the coach and athlete.	☐ Model steady confidence.	

MY COMMITMENT

The energy I want to bring before competition is:
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After a Tough Performance

Respond to mistakes, losses, and disappointment in a way that builds resilience.

USE THE FOUR STEP RESET

Step	What to do	Helpful language
1 Regulate	Stay calm. Allow time for emotions to settle.	"Take your time. I'm here."
2 Validate	Acknowledge the disappointment without minimizing it.	"That was really hard, and it makes sense you're upset."
3 Reflect	Ask permission before discussing the performance.	"Would you like me to listen or help you think it through?"
4 Refocus	Identify one lesson and one next action.	"What can you carry into your next practice?"

WHAT DOES MY ATHLETE NEED RIGHT NOW

☐ Quiet and space	☐ Comfort and connection	☐ Help naming emotions
☐ A chance to talk	☐ Food, hydration, or rest	☐ Problem-solving later

KEEP THE SETBACK IN PERSPECTIVE

What is my athlete feeling? _____
What did they do well despite the result? _____
What is within their control now? _____
One useful lesson—not a full critique: _____

WATCH FOR THESE TRAPS

☐ Rushing to fix it	☐ Blaming officials, coaches, or teammates
☐ Giving a long technical review	☐ Comparing with another athlete
☐ Making the result about time or money invested	

MY COMMITMENT

Next time my athlete struggles, I will first:
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Questions That Build Confidence

Use questions that help athletes notice preparation, progress, courage, and control.

REPLACE RESULT QUESTIONS WITH GROWTH QUESTIONS

Instead of asking	Ask
"Did you win?"	"What are you most proud of?"
"Why did you do that?"	"What did you notice in that moment?"
"Were you the best?"	"Where did you see improvement?"
"Why were you nervous?"	"What helped you compete even with nerves?"
"What went wrong?"	"What worked, and what is one thing you want to adjust?"

CHOOSE ONE OR TWO NOT ALL OF THEM

☐ What part of your preparation helped most?	☐ When did you feel focused?
☐ How did you respond after a mistake?	☐ What did you do that took courage?
☐ What was within your control today?	☐ What did you learn about yourself?
☐ What do you want to repeat next time?	☐ Do you want me to listen, encourage, or help?

PRACTICE LISTENING

A question my athlete responds well to:

A question that tends to feel like pressure:

What I heard without correcting or fixing:

MY COMMITMENT

At the next competition, the one question I will ask is:

Praise That Builds Growth

Praise the behaviors athletes can repeat—not only the outcome they cannot fully control.

USE SPECIFIC EVIDENCE

Notice	Say
Preparation	"I noticed how consistently you prepared this week."
Effort	"You kept working even when it got uncomfortable."
Courage	"You chose to compete even though you felt nervous."
Response	"You reset quickly after that mistake."
Improvement	"Your starts looked more controlled today."
Leadership	"You encouraged your teammate after a hard moment."

MAKE PRAISE BELIEVABLE

☐ Be specific about what you observed.	☐ Focus on choices and behaviors.
☐ Connect praise to preparation or values.	☐ Keep it honest—avoid exaggerated claims.
☐ Praise progress without pretending mistakes did not happen.	

TURN GENERAL PRAISE INTO GROWTH PRAISE

Instead of "Good job," I can say:
Instead of "You're a natural," I can say:
A behavior I want to notice more often:
A value my athlete showed today:

MY PRAISE FORMULA

I noticed + The specific behavior + Why it mattered

MY COMMITMENT

One specific statement I will give my athlete this week: