

Exams and Midterms

A discussion guide for separating performance from self-worth

FOR STUDENTS, ADVISORS, AND COUNSELORS

PURPOSE

This guide helps students untangle their sense of self from their academic results during high-stakes testing periods. The goal is not to lower standards but to build the kind of self-awareness that actually supports sustained performance.

OPENING PROMPT

“When you imagine getting a grade back, what’s the first feeling that comes up?”

KEY THEMES

Pressure and preparation. What drives students to study, and when does that drive tip into paralysis?

Productive stress vs. paralyzing anxiety. Not all stress is harmful. Help students distinguish urgency that motivates from anxiety that shuts them down.

What “good enough” actually means. Invite honest conversation about where expectations come from and whether they belong to the student or to someone else.

CLOSING PROMPT

“What’s one thing you can control right now?”