

# Balloons and Bubbles



## Learning aims

- To learn breathing techniques which support regulation and help 'deactivate' the 'fight, flight, freeze' response.



## What you will need

- Balloons and/or Bubbles

## Instructions

- 1 If your child is able to, invite them to blow up a balloon. If they need help, you could start it for them. Encourage them to use deep, long breaths.
- 2 Invite them to let the balloon go after blowing it up (before tying it) and watch what happens. Have fun with this, blowing up the balloon then letting it go as many times as wanted.
- 3 When they are ready, tie the balloon (or balloons) and suggest some games.
- 4 As an additional or alternative activity, invite your child to blow bubbles. Encourage them to use deep breaths and blow out slowly.

### Balloon Games

#### Rally

Hit the balloon back and forth with a partner.

#### Keep it Up

Keep the balloon in the air by hitting it upwards.

### Bubbles Games

#### Biggest bubble

What technique makes the largest bubble?

#### Bursting bubbles

Burst the bubbles before they hit the ground.

## Therapeutic relevance

When our brain perceives danger, our 'fight, flight, freeze' response is triggered and our body is prepared for action. Amongst the other changes in our body, our breathing becomes rapid and shallow. Research shows that breathing exercises can help deactivate the 'fight, flight, freeze' response. Imitating calm breathing essentially sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax. The brain then sends this message to your body. Stress hormones, increased heart rate, high blood pressure and the other physical changes prompted by the stress response all decrease as you breathe deeply. Expecting children to do breathing exercises when feeling dysregulated is often unrealistic, but they may be able to blow up balloons and blow bubbles. Not only will this help 'deactivate' the 'fight, flight, freeze' response, but it can also be a useful distraction and therefore a helpful regulation tool.

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