

Pupils imagine that their bellies are balloons that inflate and deflate as they breathe.

Intention: Pupils become aware of their breath and recognise that focusing on the breath can sometimes change the way we feel.

SEL competency: Self-awareness
Learn how to manage your emotions

Duration: 3–5 minutes

Materials: (Optional) Bring a balloon or show a picture of one to your class.

Key words: bigger, notice, smaller; emotions vocabulary

INSTRUCTIONS

Prepare

1. You may want to pre-teach the key words for this activity.
2. Ask pupils: *How do you feel right now? Excited, bored, tired, worried?* There are no right answers here, so aim to accept pupils' answers in a completely neutral way.

Reflect

3. Now invite pupils to begin the opening routine: *Please sit up, with your back straight. Put your feet flat on the floor.*
4. Show pupils what you want them to do by putting your right hand on your chest and your left hand on your belly.
5. When pupils have their hands in place, ask them where they feel the breath in their body:
Can you feel your right hand moving when you breathe in? Does it move in or out? Up or down? How does your left hand move when you breathe out? In or out? Up or down? Can you feel your hands move up or down when you breathe in?



Valuable resource: scan for an expert video explaining classroom exercises that enhance students' socio-emotional learning and well-being

Remind pupils that they don't need to do any special breathing; they just notice how their chest and belly moves with their natural breath. As pupils breathe in, they may notice the chest rise a little and the belly expands. As they breathe out, the chest deflates and the belly moves back in to the body.

6. Now say: *Close your eyes or look down. Feel the breath moving in your body.*
7. Keep giving the instructions: Now imagine your belly is like a balloon. Breathe in slowly. The balloon gets bigger. Now breathe out slowly. The balloon gets smaller.
8. Continue: Now breathe in and out slowly five times, making your balloon get bigger and smaller.
9. If their eyes are closed, ask pupils to open them: When I count to three, you can open your eyes. One, two, three.

Reflect

10. Invite pupils to reflect on how the breathing practice made them feel: *How do you feel now? Is it different to before? What else do you notice?*
11. Remember there are no right answers! Congratulate pupils for whatever they notice: *Well done for noticing that! Do you think balloon breathing is a good way to feel calmer? Would you like to do it again?*
12. Bring the practice to a close. Remind pupils that they always have their breath to help calm them down.

My breath is always with me, like a good friend.