

# Managing Stress Healthfully: Stress Ball

## Parent Activity

### Overview

Parents will make a stress ball that they can use during times of stress and to share with their child to help with strengthening their hand muscles and developing fine motor skills. Stress management promotes a healthier lifestyle.

### Head Start Parent and Family Engagement (PFE) Outcomes:

- #1 Family Well-being
- #2 Positive Parent-Child Relationships
- #4 Families as Learners
- #6 Family Connections to Peers and Community

### Extensions/ Adaptations:

Have parents make 2 stress balls - one for the adults to use as a tool to manage their stress, and one for their child to use to develop their fine motor skills.

### Supplies

- 3 balloons per participant (same size and shape; do not use water balloons)
- Empty, dry 16.9 oz water bottle - 1 per participant (made of thin plastic so it is easily crushed)
- Flour - 3/4 cup per participant
- Wet paper towels
- Pencil (or chopstick) - 1 per every 2 participants
- Funnel - 1 per every 2 participants
- Newspaper (optional)

### Before You Begin

Place newspapers on the table before beginning to make clean up quick and easy.

**ALLERGY NOTE:** If a parent or child has a latex allergy, use latex free balloons. If a parent or child has an allergy to flour, rice or sand can be used to fill the balloon instead.

# Steps

**Pre-Activity Discussion:** Stress is the feeling we get when we feel pressure, strain, or are overwhelmed. Stress is a normal part of life. You can experience stress from your environment, body, and thoughts. Even positive life changes such as a promotion or the birth of a child causes stress.

## Activity Instructions

Having an extra pair of hands can be helpful, so encourage parents to work with a partner to create their stress balls.

Read the following to the parents:

1. Insert the funnel into the bottle and put 3/4 cup flour into bottle. If needed, use a pencil to press the flour down the funnel into the bottle.
2. Tip the bottle over holding the balloon around the bottle top and slowly squeeze the bottle to get the flour from the bottle into the balloon. Fill the balloon with about 2-3 inches of flour.
3. Pinch the balloon to prevent air from escaping while removing balloon from bottle.
4. Tie the balloon closed, and cut off the dangling end of the balloon tie. Caution: don't cut too close to the knot because it could come undone. Using a damp paper towel, wipe off any flour on the outside of the balloon.
5. Blow up the second balloon and let out the air to stretch the second balloon. Next, cut off the neck of the balloon.
6. Starting with the tied end of the first balloon, pull the second balloon over the first so that the first balloon is inside of the second.
7. Repeat steps 7 and 8 above with the third balloon to make the stress ball even more sturdy.

## Post-Activity Discussion:

Parents can use these to keep their hands busy if they are dealing with a tobacco craving or as a way to manage their stress. Suggest that parents share their stress ball with their child. It can strengthen their hand and finger muscles, which will help develop their fine motor skills. Because the stress ball is small and portable, they can be used by parents or children while in the car, while waiting for an appointment, or waiting to be served at a restaurant.

