

Breathing Parachute

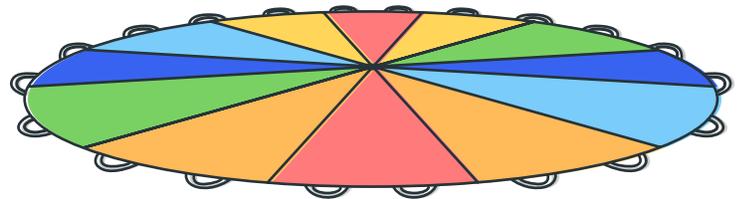
In this activity, students will learn the importance of avoiding smoking and tobacco products.

MATERIALS:

1. Signal (e.g., whistle)
2. Large parachute
3. Whiteboard, chalkboard, or chart paper with appropriate writing implement (optional)

SETUP:

Gather students in a large, safe play space, such as a gymnasium, playground, or grassy field.

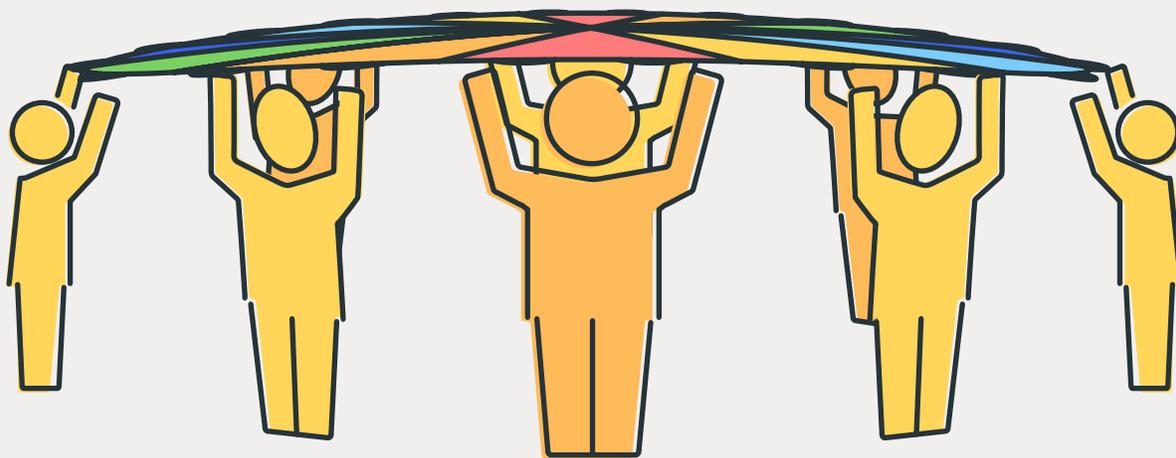


PLAY:

1. Brainstorm with students some of the benefits of healthy hearts and lungs. (For example, blood and oxygen can flow the way they should in our bodies, we can play the active games we love more easily and for a longer time and we can breathe more deeply.)
2. Brainstorm a list of the bad consequences of smoking cigarettes and using other tobacco products, like cigarillos, e-cigarettes and smokeless tobacco. (For example, tobacco use can make it more difficult to exercise and play actively; blood and oxygen have more trouble flowing the way they should in our bodies; high blood pressure and blood clots are more likely; it takes away some good cholesterol; it increases the chance of heart attack or stroke; it makes your clothes, body, car and home smell bad; you can lose some of your sense of smell and taste; it stains teeth and fingernails.) State, "Not using tobacco helps your heart and lungs work better together with each other and with your body."
3. Explain that today students will learn a game that helps demonstrate the importance of avoiding smoking and tobacco products. Before they play this parachute game, first they must learn and agree to some important safety rules:
 - Always listen carefully for instructions before acting.
 - Start and stop upon the signal.
 - Keep your body and voice under control at all times.
4. To make sure everyone stays safe, explain that anyone who ignores the rules will have to sit out one round. Then he or she will get a new chance to show that he or she can stay safe.
5. Direct students to each find a place at the edge of the parachute. State, "We will work together to roll the edges of the parachute until the edges are about one inch thick. This will create a comfortable way to hold the parachute." When this step is accomplished, say, "Hook your fingers into this roll and place your thumbs under the roll. This is safer than using the handles." (Never allow students to use the handles.)

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6. Direct students to gently lift the parachute above their heads and lower it gently to waist level. Explain that lifting and lowering the parachute represents the lungs breathing in and out. Check for safe behavior and redirect as needed. Have students continue gently lifting and lowering the parachute. After several repetitions, call out a color, directing students holding that color to walk carefully under the parachute to another spot along the edge. Repeat several times, alternating colors so that all students may demonstrate safety and understanding.



7. Continue, calling out two colors at a time, and rotate through all colors. Caution students still holding the parachute to grip more tightly.
8. Signal to stop the action. Discuss how it is easier to raise and lower the parachute when everyone is holding on than when some are not. Explain that avoiding smoking and tobacco products is like the parachute moving up and down freely, with everyone's help; it helps the body parts work together to make the body the most healthy it can be. In contrast, fewer people holding on to the parachute represents how people can become less healthy the more they use tobacco products.
9. Resume parachute play, increasing speed and changing movements (for example, skipping or hopping) as students demonstrate safety. To increase physical activity, direct students to travel outside the parachute's perimeter one full lap back to their starting spots. Repeat the activity for several rounds. Remind students throughout that all hands holding is easier, just like lungs are healthier and function optimally when a person doesn't smoke.
10. Conclude the activity by having everyone (including you) sit inside the inflated parachute holding down the edge by sitting on it. (This helps create an intimate moment of togetherness, focus and communication.) Ask students to share what they've learned about healthy lungs and smoking.

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FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS:

1. Increase the speed and difficulty of the movements more gradually.
2. Have students sit with their legs under the parachute. Direct them to do sit-ups while holding the parachute. Everyone must work together to perform the sit-ups in unison so that the pressure on the parachute is even.

FOR OLDER STUDENTS:

1. As students demonstrate safety, encourage them to create new ways of moving.
2. Add soft objects, such as yarn balls, to the top of the parachute. Challenge students to safely volley the balls, while keeping them on the parachute.
3. Everyone must work together to coordinate their movements.

