

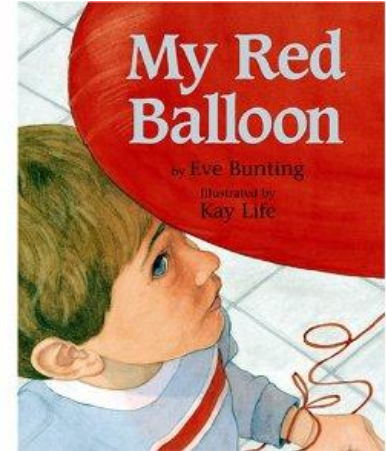
# MY RED BALLOON - LESSON PLAN

Operation Military Kids 2012



## Background

This book is about a little boy whose dad is finally coming home after being away at sea for months. In order for his dad to find him in a crowd of anxious military families, the little boy carries a red balloon with him. Sadly, through all the little boy's anxiety and questions, he loses his grip on the balloon, and it floats away. The little boy is overcome with fear that his dad will not be able to find or recognize him. As the Navy men begin to connect with their families, the little boy's dad spots him almost immediately and rushes to give him a big hug.



### Life Skills:

- Coping with Stress and Worry
- Creativity
- Expressing Feelings

### Grade Levels:

- K – 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade

### Supplies Needed:

- 3 Balloons per ball
- Flour
- Scissors
- A Spoon
- A Funnel
- A Stick/Pencil

### Do Ahead:

- Read the book ahead of time to become familiar with the story

## What to do

### Activity 1: Read *My Red Balloon* by Eve Bunting and Discuss

Make sure you read it out loud. Have your youth follow along and look at the illustrations as you go. This way, they'll gain a visual understanding of what is being read.

After reading the book, ask your youth to tell you how they felt when the red balloon floated away. Allow them time to share their thoughts and ask questions about the book.

### Activity 2: Create a Balloon Stress Ball

When a loved one leaves home, whether it is for deployment, a trip or a job, missing them comes naturally. When we miss someone, it helps to prepare for their homecoming. Having a stress ball is not only a great toy to stay occupied with while waiting for a loved one to return home, but it is great for squeezing when fear and nerves start to peak.

First, stretch the balloons out a few times so the rubber will soften. Then, carefully help your youth apply the funnel into a balloon and fill it with flour using the spoon and the stick. Be cautious not to puncture the balloon. Fill the balloon until it is the size of a lemon. Once the balloon is full, help your youth tie it in a knot, and cut the remaining rubber off above the knot.

To avoid a breakage, take another balloon and cut off its neck. From there, fit that balloon around the flour-filled one. Repeat this step again with the third balloon.

Allow your youth to play around with colors. Now your youth can have fun with their new stress ball. Remember, they make great gifts!

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## Talk it Over

At any time after reading the story or completing the activities, time should be set aside to talk with your youth about deployment and the homecoming of their loved one who is away. Here are some suggested questions you may want to cover:

- What makes it difficult to have somebody you love so far away?
- What can you do to welcome them home?
- Do you know why your loved one was deployed?
- When will be a good time to use your stress ball?
- What do you want to do with your loved one when they come home?

These are just suggestions, but it is important to discuss how your youth feels about deployment. They need to know that it is okay to miss someone, it's okay to be stressed out and there are ways to manage it.

This lesson plan is meant to ease the pain one goes through when missing somebody who has been deployed. It is our hope that it will help your youth to positively deal with deployment, and for families to grow closer together.

