

## Exercise 1 – Part 1

Sam shifted slightly in his seat, sighing. Polly popped pink bubbles, bursting between in-breaths.

Pop. Sigh.

Pop. Sigh.

Stewing, Sam suddenly stood, sending the seat skittering.

Polly blinked. Blank baby-blues perceiving precious little beneath her partner's boisterous posturing.

Pop.

“SHHHH!”

Polly puckered, and blew, bubble gum ballooning bigger and bigger.

POP!

Five fingers flew, flaying the air in fiery fury. Sam struggled, no sense strangling her. She'd surly pop from the pressure – pop... POP!

Slow, steady breaths. Breath in, breath out. Block out bubbles bursting, steady, steady.

Pucker, blow, bubble, pop.

Breath in, breath out.

Pucker, blow, bubble, pop.

Steady, steady.

Pucker, blow-

“Stop! Please, stop.”

Polly paused, bubble bopping, poised on puckered lips, eyes prying, preying to procure bottled bits of ponderings, broken brick-a-brack barely perceived behind his outburst.

Finally she said, “Stop?”

“Please.”

Blink. Blink.

“Stop what?”

Sam's fingers found his forehead. Forcing the flying thoughts and fury to slow, to sooth. Steady. Steady.

“Polly. Please stop popping.”

She stared. Surely she misheard.

Popping? But she sits, solid, not scattered. How is she popping?

Pondering, breathing in, she blows a bright pink bubble.

## Exercise 1 – Part 2

His fingers slacken in my hands. A final breath. Gone. I squeeze, holding on just a moment more. Trying to wrap my head around the new reality. His laugh, stilled. Lips will never twist again to a wry smile. The last voice mail the only way I'll hear the warm rich baritone. Yet I keep breathing. I must. In. Out. His pain, gone. I squeeze, carefully remove my fingers, and remember to breathe.