

# Positive Nutrition: Mind Body Spirit

## A mind body spirit approach to a flourishing life

Soft Belly Breathing—*James Gordon, Center for Mind Body Medicine*

Soft Belly Breathing—Soft Belly Breathing is a technique developed by James Gordon at the Center for Mind Body Medicine and is an excellent way to calm the nervous system and body. When you expand your diaphragm, your vagus nerve engages the parasympathetic (rest/digest) nervous system allowing your body to relax. This breathing technique includes a conscious inhale extending the belly in a natural way as babies do when they breathe, followed by a slow, easy contraction.

- \*Find a comfortable chair or stand softly.
- \*Place your hand on your belly, close your eyes and take a deep breath in, dropping your shoulders.
- \*Take a couple of deep, slow breaths as you adjust.
- \*On the slow inhale, say to yourself, “soft” allowing your belly to expand fully and when you exhale say “belly” allowing your belly to contract fully.
- \*Feel the rhythmic flow of the breath as your diaphragm expands.

You can say “soft” on the inhale and “belly” on the exhale as a focus. You need not force anything, but just “be” as you experiment with this exercise. If thoughts come, let them come and then drift away like clouds in the sky. It is normal and natural.

Start out with 3-5 minutes and then increase to 20 minutes at your own pace.

\*This breathing technique is simple and yet it may take some practice for some people. We tend to holding our breath during the day and when we are stressed creating a rigid body. We may need to bring our awareness to any tension in the neck, back or belly before we feel safe enough to allow our natural breathing rhythm to engage. Be patient and kind with yourself as you practice this technique. It will become easier and more natural.