

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WEEK 2 ACTIVITIES

Today you will learn about the guidelines of **mind-body medicine** and the technique of **soft belly breathing**. The soft belly breathing is something that you will be using throughout this journey and you will find it is a component of many of the activities you will do in the future. Below are the instructions for this week's activity:



Soft belly breathing instructions:

- a. One person will have to read out the script, while the other person (or persons) listen to the words being spoken and follow the instructions
- b. The key to this technique is learning how to breathe in through your nose, and out through your mouth while keeping your belly relaxed
- c. **Practice this breathing daily.** You may find it calms you down before bed
- d. **Reflect in your journal: how did soft belly breathing feel today?**

****If you struggle with soft belly breathing, try laying on the floor and placing a book or stuffed animal on your belly. Notice the natural rise and fall of the object as you **breathe in and out******

General instructions for mind-body medicine activities:

1. If you have not already, **please read the introduction to mind-body medicine** so that you have a general idea of what mind-body medicine is and why it is an important part of overall health
2. The nice thing about mind-body medicine is that it can be equally helpful for an **individual as well as a group**. You may practice these activities alone or with your family, depending on how comfortable you feel
3. If you do these activities as a family, the following tips can be helpful so that you can **create a safe space for healing and growth**:
 - a. Consider using a talking object to remind everyone of mutual respect
 - b. When someone shares about their experience, everyone else listens without judging, correcting or giving advice
 - c. If someone doesn't want to share, they should never be forced to speak

MIND-BODY SKILLS GROUP



The Center for

Mind-Body
Medicine

“Soft Belly”

Close your eyes... and allow your attention to settle inward, and downward into the body. Become aware of your breathing. Gradually allow your breathing to shift – softer, slower, and deeper if that is comfortable for you.

...Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth. Sense the air moving downwards keeping the chest and neck relaxed. Notice how the belly expands with the in breath, and relaxes with the out breath. This deepens the breath, the exchange of oxygen, and relaxing nerves, muscles, and the ‘busy mind’. With each breath, silently say to yourself “soft” as you breathe in and “belly” as you breathe out.

Continue this approach for several minutes. Each day you can add another minute or two to it until you are practicing for 10 minutes or longer. If thoughts come, let them come, and watch them go, each time gently returning back to soft belly breathing.

Do this anytime you are feeling fast, tense, or stressed; or at bedtime if you are having trouble sleeping. Soon, you’ll find that in times of stress you can take a few deep breaths and say, “Soft...belly,” and relaxation will come quickly.

“Soft belly” is just one of many forms of relaxation.

Regular relaxation/regulation response training has impressive results for people with many health challenges; decreased levels of perceived stress and increased immune functioning; decreased pain; faster recovery from procedures; fewer side effects from chemotherapy, and less anticipatory nausea and vomiting before chemotherapy; decreased anxiety, improved mood, and less suppression of emotions. Relaxation, regulation, and meditation training also helps us to gain perspective on every aspect of life, and to feel less overwhelmed by it. If you can cultivate “comfort with discomfort” during difficult times, we regain a sense of agency over the challenging and unpleasant experiences and conditions that we encounter.

Meditation and relaxation are built into the base of all of the other mind-body therapies, and the soil that nourishes their use and effectiveness.