

IBS Mood Symptom Loop Conversation Guide

Use this one-page guide to prepare a clinician or therapist conversation when IBS symptoms, anxiety, low mood, pain sensitivity, and urgency seem to be reinforcing each other.

This is not a diagnosis tool. It is a way to make the appointment more specific.

Main Pattern

Check the symptoms that are most active right now:

- Abdominal pain or cramping
- Urgency or fear of being far from a bathroom
- Diarrhea, constipation, or alternating stool pattern
- Bloating, fullness, or nausea
- Anxiety, panic, or strong anticipation before meals or leaving home
- Low mood, loss of interest, or reduced energy for self-care
- Sleep disruption or stress-sensitive flares

What You Have Already Tried

Strategy	Tried?	Helped?	Notes
Low-FODMAP or food-trigger trial			
Caffeine, alcohol, fat, or sugar alcohol audit			
Regular meals, hydration, movement, or sleep changes			
IBS medicine, rescue support, or supplement			
CBT, gut-directed hypnotherapy, relaxation, or therapy			
Medical follow-up for changing or severe symptoms			

Questions to Ask

- Does my pattern still fit IBS, or should anything be rechecked medically?
- Is the main target food triggers, bowel speed, pain sensitivity, anxiety, low mood, sleep, or a mixed loop?
- Would CBT, gut-directed hypnotherapy, relaxation training, medication review, or another therapy route fit my case?
- If an antidepressant is discussed, is the goal mood treatment, IBS pain modulation, or both?
- What symptoms should make me seek urgent medical care or immediate mental health support?

Bring This Context

- Current medications and supplements
- Any history of severe constipation, bowel obstruction, inflammatory bowel disease, eating disorder, panic attacks, depression, or self-harm thoughts
- Any red-flag symptoms such as bleeding, fever, unexplained weight loss, persistent vomiting, severe new pain, or rapidly changing bowel habits
- Your local crisis or urgent support plan if distress becomes immediate