

# A Deeper Dive into IBS Relief



## IBS Relief Now!

**Session Eight:** IBS is a “syndrome.” It needs to be approached from multiple perspectives because there is no single path that causes IBS. There is also no single solution path to manage it. Here are six core dimensions of a holistic personal IBS care plan so *you* find *your* path.

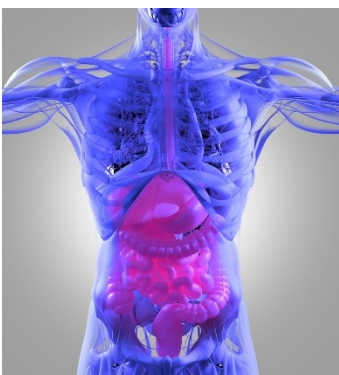
### Session Eight: Assembling our Personalized Plan of Action

#### Putting it all Together

Each of the program’s sessions we have covered to date have highlighted specific factors that are involved in generating, maintaining, and even worsening IBS. IBS is a “syndrome.” There is no single cause. There are no magic bullets. Medications work for a minority of IBS sufferers, and even then, they work less than half of the time. This glaring statistic stands as stark testimony to the fact that as a syndrome, it is vitally important to look at multiple factors that can make one individual sick, which can be entirely different for the next IBS sufferer.

The same is true, of course, for the unique combination of factors that effectively settles and stabilizes IBS for each person experiencing this mystifying condition. Thankfully, there are several nearly universally helpful factors that need to be included within the overall elements of any individual’s IBS self-management plan.

#### Two IBS Self Care Fundamentals



Regardless of the specific form of IBS that afflicts you, there are two fundamental factors that need to be addressed. They work in opposite directions. You can think of one as a “bottom-up” approach. It involves

paying attention to what you eat and to your eating behavior – when, how often, how quickly you eat, and even to the setting in which you eat. This factor most directly impacts your microbiome. Attending to this element will gradually change the composition of the bacteria that live in your digestive tract, thereby reducing inflammatory processes, correcting energy-depletion issues, and generally creating an internal digestive environment that is more at peace with itself and with you.

The second factor can be viewed as a “top-down” approach. This factor recognizes that your body is constantly “listening in” on the state of your mind. Cell biologist, Bruce Lipton, has written extensively on just how powerful an effect our mental messaging center has on the health and functioning of our individual cells! The point is that the more your mind is filled with worries, fears, regrets, anger, bitterness, sadness, despair, doubt, or a host of other negative mental-emotional states, the more likely those states are to be translated from



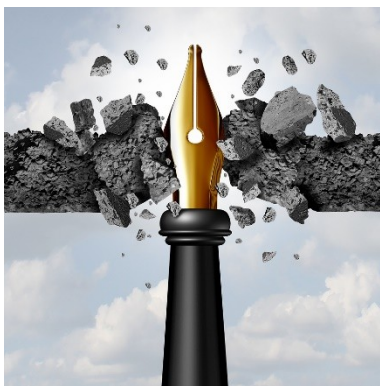
mind to brain, where neurochemicals are released. They course throughout your body’s tissues and impact your gut. In addition, your neuro-muscular network is impacted by your mind’s content in ways that alter the baseline level of tension you carry throughout your body. This tension level powerfully influences the activity, motility, digestive efficiency, and gut lumen permeability of your digestive tract, too.

It is no wonder that leading researchers have dubbed the “gut-brain axis” as sitting at the forefront of what we must better understand as we develop ever newer methods for managing IBS. The microbiome regulates the gut-to-brain direction, while the brain-to-gut direction, regulated most directly by the managing contents of our mind, regulates our whole bodily system in the opposite direction with positive and health enhancing results.

### Looking at IBS through a Holistic Lens

There is more to managing IBS than merely attending to the microbiome and the mind’s content. What we are after here is a truly holistic approach. When we approach IBS holistically, we lose something but we gain so much more. In a holistic focused world, you no longer fit into a pre-set category or bin. You are no longer primarily defined or described primarily in terms having diarrhea or constipation-dominant IBS. While those descriptors may be true at a symptom level, with a holistic lens we are going beyond symptoms into a search for recurring underlying themes that speak to your specific life experiences.

So, while we lose the comfort that comes with having a condition where “one size fits all,” thereby fitting neatly into the crowd of other people with whom we share an IBS diagnosis, we instead gain traction in being able to express our individual uniqueness. Living our truth, expressing our singular voice, and pursuing our unique life mission with energy and focused purpose is hard and intimidating but that is path to follow in search of healing your specific IBS pattern.



This point was driven home to me in a personally powerful way when I spoke to an editor before my first book was published. I told her how frustrated I was because every time I sat down to write another chapter, I

found that the subject matter seemed to have been tackled by someone else whose book had already

been published. I felt that I had nothing “unique” to say; that I was just another aspiring author who was no different from so many other aspiring authors.

She spoke directly and honestly to me. She said that of course others had tackled the book’s topic before. She chided me that I even thought I was the first to attempt to write about the subject. She challenged me by saying that the goal of writing the book was not, and should not be to write what has never been written about before. We are all human beings and share the experience of living our lives just like every other human being who has ever struggled with the same challenges. She said that the writer must have the commitment and dedication to express what may be universal challenges and subjects in a way that is unique to me, in my “voice,” and though my specific life experiences.

In a similar way, my goal in creating this program is not to express ideas, devise tools, and model techniques and practices, that have never existed before.



My goal is to outline for you a set of proven tools that have existed for a while but have never been put together by anyone else in just the way that you will assemble them because of how well your unique plan of care works for you. We are after your unique solution path. Ralph Waldo Emerson spoke about the bold challenge of creating your own path to health when he said, “Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

### The Keys to Positive Holistic Change

Becoming a trail-blazer seeking your unique experience of health is daunting. When it comes to IBS, however, attention to the six dimensions of holistic health I outline below can be a useful outline as you continue forward on your healing journey. Any truly comprehensive plan of self-care involves, in my view, specific practices drawn from the six basic

dimensions of holistic health These dimensions include:

1. The microscopic world that occupies us
2. The physical world defined by our bodies
3. The psychological world shaped by our perceptions, emotions, thoughts, and mindsets
4. The relational world of our connections to others
5. The macroscopic world of which we are a tiny part
6. The immaterial world of spirit, meaning, and purpose

Holistic IBS health weaves together all six dimensions. There is no single template applicable to everyone. Each individual needs to design their own blueprint. What I offer are some general hints and suggestions.



However, just as important as what we put into our mouth is the importance of our eating behavior. Preparing to eat initiates a sequence of steps leading to absorption of life-sustaining nutrients. Eating in a rush or while sitting at our desks with our mind focused on our computer screens is confusing for our digestive tract. Digestion and our metabolic engines work best not only when the food we eat is carefully selected for its nutritional value. It is also enhanced by eating slowly, taking the time to thoroughly chew what we eat, pausing between bites, and ultimately by also being able to eat in the company of others so that “breaking bread together” – even gluten-free bread – is also an experience of social connection.

2. We deceive ourselves if we believe we are ever truly separate from the physical world around us. We are embodied beings. Not only is who we are inseparable from our physical bodies, but who we are is also inseparable from the physical space in which our bodies move.

We evolved in relation to nature and our biological rhythms, include our gut’s rhythms are thrown off when we are too disconnected from nature. A powerful medicine for treating IBS is to spend more time out in nature. Most people have access to places where they can walk safely. Ideally, walks in parks, visiting streams, lakes, or ocean fronts, forest hikes, or even sitting on a front stoop or porch in the evening or early morning is something you can do routinely. A leisurely walk after dinner aids digestion and discharges the day’s stresses. The point is that an important dimension of IBS self-care is to assure that you regularly see the sun, moon, and stars, smell nature’s scents, and listen to her songs. Reconnect with nature. Your body’s rhythms will thank you for it.

3. Our psychological mind is a blessing that has produced discoveries, ideas, inventions, and solutions the likes of which are seemingly boundless. Our mind is also one of the single

## Designing Your Plan

### What you can begin doing NOW

1. The gut microbiome plays a major role in most people’s IBS patterns. While I can’t know the specifics of your situation, there are important elements to stabilizing your microbiome. Look into the role that pre-biotics, pro-biotics, and gluten play in your diet. Resources such as Raphael Kellman’s, The Microbiome Diet, can be useful in designing dietary plans that nourish you and your microbiome while helping to stabilize IBS.

greatest sources of our misery and it plays an active role in IBS.

There is a large and growing body of literature that illustrates how our mindset has measurable physical effects on our health. For example, a 2011 study showed that depending upon whether subjects thought they were drinking an over-the-top, calorie-filled drink or a sensible and nutritious one, their secretion of ghrelin, a hormone that signals we are “full” changed. Even though the drinks were the same, a mindset that they were “indulging” caused more ghrelin release and the subjects felt satisfied and full.

When we consider that we bring a mindset to every moment of our days, we can begin to appreciate just how powerful a force it can be in alleviating IBS symptoms. Developing a less reactive, fear or worry-based mindset, addressing the effects of past emotional wounds, and generating instead an attitude of curiosity, wonder, and eagerness to discover the positive possibilities your future hold for you is central to addressing this holistic health dimension.

4. We are social beings. We need each other to grow and thrive. Unfortunately, due to a variety of circumstances, many of which are out of our control, the relationships we had early in life or that we form later are not necessarily supportive of our emotional and physical health. For many people, IBS can function like an emotional barometer that signals when our environment is safe, supportive, and loving.

Assessing the emotional health of our relationships is fundamental to our overall health. Toxic relationships are horrific activators of IBS patterns. The number of people I have treated



for IBS who have been living in emotionally unsafe and even abusive relationships, or where betrayals of trust have been present, is quite large. I have been amazed by how often IBS symptoms settle down when a partner takes proactive steps to address the abuse or the betrayal of trust. In many instances, I’ve come to believe that “their gut knew” something had to change even before they did, and the symptoms of IBS were the body’s ways of expressing that intuitive certainty.

Take the time to observe the emotional health of your relationship world. Do you have people with whom you can safely confide? Are there people in your life you regularly give you the feeling you are respected, valued, and loved? If not, take a deep breath and then begin exploring the steps that must be taken to assure that your relationship world is a supportive and nurturing world.

5. The previous dimension – our relationship world – focused on whether what we receive from others to whom we are connected is healthy for us. But, relationships are a two-way street. Just as important is the question of what we bring and what we offer in our connections to others.

One of the most powerful health promoting actions we can engage in is to take



actions that make a positive difference in someone else’s life. Studies of people who regularly engage in random acts of kindness, such as taking extra time to thank a sales clerk, buying someone a cup of coffee, sending someone an unexpected card to say hello, or lending a hand to a stranger, shows that it is often the “giver” who benefits even more than the “receiver.”

We are wired to connect and consciously seeing ourselves as here to serve others is important for our mental/emotional well-being and for our physical health. Clearly, living with humility and a commitment to serve others is good medicine. Volunteering for causes in which we believe is one example of how to translate this value of serving into concrete action.

6. Living humbly is not solely about giving to others. Humility is also a mindset that opens the door to living with greater meaning and purpose. Living humbly is powerful spiritual medicine.



There is an old teaching tale that suggests everyone should have two pockets, with each containing one scrap of paper. On one scrap, it should be written “I am but ashes and dust.” On the other, it should say, “the world was created for me.” This tale speaks to the spiritual and life-changing value of living with humility. If I see myself as nothing special in the sense of not being better than others, and if I am ultimately going to return to “ashes and dust,” then of what consequence is my life?

But, the other scrap’s message answers this question. If the whole world was created for me, then there is no one else in the world who can fill my shoes. I am here for my purpose, to pursue my unique mission, and to do so with my specific set of abilities and passions. The job opening of being anyone else is already occupied! The only job opening is the one that defines you.

The challenge is in how we discover the answer to these timeless questions. What I do know, from my thirty years of working with

1000’s of clients is that when people align their energies, their time, and with a search for answers to how to live their one and only life authentically, their overall health and feelings of well-being blossom.

## More Resources

If you want to delve more deeply into any of the topics we have covered in this course, I have put a list of accessible, practical resources for you. I have divided them into six categories, each one representing one of the six dimensions of holistic health I have identified in this issue of the **Deeper Dive**.

If you imagine a bicycle wheel and your whole and healthy self as the central hub, you can recognize that each of the six spokes fanning out from the hub are necessary to allow the tire to turn safely. In that vein, each of the categories I've identified represents one path (or spoke) to explore, none inherently more important than any other, but which, together, create a stable, strong, and useful means by which you can navigate your life's journey. Use this program and its resources to design your IBS self-care management plan. Then, use it as the jumping off point for seeking to restore not only digestive wellness, but also general physical health and overall holistic well-being.

### **The Gut Microbiome**

Brain Maker: The Power of Gut Microbes to Heal and Protect Your Brain – For Life – David Perlmutter

Digestive Wellness: How to Strengthen the Immune System and Prevent Disease Through Healthy Digestion – Elizabeth Lipski

10% Human: How Your Body's Microbes Hold the Key to Health and Happiness – Alanna Collen

I Contain Multitudes: The Microbes Within Us and a Grand View of Life – Ed Yong

The Microbiome Diet: The Scientifically Proven Way to Restore Your Gut Health and Achieve Permanent Weight Loss – Raphael Kellman

Gut: The Inside Story of Our Body's Most Underrated Organ – Giulia Enders

### **Re-connecting to Your Natural Rhythms**

The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes us Happier, Healthier, and More Creative – Florence Williams

Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants – Robin Wall Kimmerer

Walden – Henry David Thoreau

Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of the Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness – Jon Kabat-Zinn

Secrets of Your Cells: Discovering Your Body's Inner Intelligence – Sondra Barrett

### **Putting Your Mind Where It Matters Most**

Mindset: The New Psychology of Success – Carol Dweck

Become What You Are – Alan Watts

The End of Stress: Four Steps to Rewire Your Brain – Don Joseph Goewey

The Gift of Our Compulsions: A Revolutionary Approach to Self-Acceptance and Healing – Mary O'Malley

A Life of Being, Having, and Doing Enough – Wayne Muller

In Touch: How to Tune In to the Inner Guidance of Your Body and Trust Yourself – John Pendergast

Rising Strong: The Reckoning. The Rumble. The Revolution – Brené Brown

A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy – William Irvine

### **Growing an Authentic Network of Connections**

Attached: The New Science of Adult Attachment and How It Can Help You Find- and Keep-Love – Amir Levine and Rachel Heller

Daring Greatly: How the Courage to be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead – Brené Brown

Daring to Trust: Opening Ourselves to Real Love and Intimacy -- David Richo

Wired for Love: How Understanding Your Partner's Brain and Attachment Style Can Help You Defuse Conflict and Build a Secure Relationship – Stan Tatkin

Empathy: Why It Matters, and How to Get It – Roman Krznaric

Soul Friends: The Transforming Power of Deep Human Connection – Stephen Cope

Situations Matter: Understanding How Context Transforms Your World – Sam Sommers

### **Living in Service to Others**

Let Your Life Speak: Listening to the Voice of Vocation – Parker Palmer

The Power of Kindness: The Unexpected Benefits of Leading a Compassionate Life – Piero Ferrucci

Radical Compassion – Shambhala Publications

Simple Truths: Clear and Gentle Guidance on the Big Issues in Life – Kent Nerburn

Well Designed Life: 10 Lessons in Brain Science & Design, Thinking for a Mindful, Healthy, & Purposeful Life – Kyra Bobinet

A Heart as wide as the World – Sharon Salzberg

Emotional Chaos to Clarity: How to Live More Skillfully, Make Better Decisions, and Find Purpose in Life – Phillip Moffitt

### **A Small Place in an Immense Universe**

The Exquisite Risk: Daring to Live and Authentic Life – Mark Nepo

The Map – Colette Baron-Reid

The Seat of the Soul – Gary Zukav

Self and Soul: A Defense of Ideals – Mark Edmundson

The Soul of a Pilgrim: Eight Practices for the Journey Within – Christine Vaiters Paintner

The Untethered Soul: The Journey Beyond Yourself – Michael Singer

The Power of Soul: Living the Twelve Virtues – Robert Sardello



**Stay Tuned:** You have done it! You have worked your way through the eight **Deeper Dives** that are designed to give you more ideas

*and practical tools for managing IBS and the various aspects of your personal narrative – both past and present – that can help position you to develop a brighter and healthier future. I will continue to generate more resources to support you along the way. So, don't forget to stay in touch! Thank you.*