



Navigating Life With IBS and Fibromyalgia

by SOPHIE LEE

Coping With IBS and Fibromyalgia

For those of you who are luckily uninitiated to the wonderful world of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) or as I like to call it, irritating bowel syndrome. IBS can be an extremely painful, uncomfortable, and at some points, rather embarrassing condition which tends to take two forms.

So, you could either get very loose stools kind of diarrhea. Or you could be constipated. So, from one extreme to the other, pooping too much or not quite pooping enough.

A lot of people who suffer from fibromyalgia also suffer from IBS, whether you don't have to have one to have the other. And the link for this is not yet understood fully.

Both conditions are aggravated by stress, which could explain why if you have a flare-up of the one you have a flare up of the other. Which I think is quite ironic, because they're caused by stress, and then they cause stress, which then causes more stress.

And then you're stressed, and then things happen and it just is a horrible cycle of stress and poop, basically.

Openness Is Key!

My biggest tip for coping with IBS is to be open to people, as gross as it sounds sometimes you just have to be. That way, when you say you need the bathroom, like now, they understand that it's important that you go, like now.

I find humor is a good coping strategy. And my openness in my bowels in every sense of the word makes others around me feel comfortable about talking about theirs, too. Which, all in all, can only be a good thing, right?

Know Your Triggers

Another important tip is to make note of what triggers you. So for example, I find eating out is quite difficult for me. And if I eat certain fast foods, I know I have about a half an hour window before I have to run to the nearest toilet. Be prepared.

So, in my handbag, I always have a little pack of tissues, or little handy Wet Wipes because public toilets are notoriously bad for having loo roll which is fine if you're just going for number one. But if you have number two, it's a bit more of an issue.

And also, spare underpants, because you might need them. I'll hold my hand up and say, I've had an accident on a train. Because, I can't control it, and it's horrible and it's embarrassing but, there you go. It's out on the Internet now for everyone to see.

It's Important to Stay Hydrated

If you suffer from the diarrhea side of the spectrum it's really important to stay hydrated, so make sure you drink a lot of water. Always have water with you. You can get some things that kind of are specifically for diarrhea and help replenish everything you've just evacuated out of you.

So it's really important to have those kinds of things and make sure that as much as you can't necessarily stop what happens, you can kind of combat the symptoms after it, so the bloating, the dehydration, the awkwardness.

You will be surprised how many people suffer from IBS. Since the kind of being open about mine, I found a lot of people who are like, "Oh my gosh, me too." So it's okay, it's nothing to be ashamed of, we all poop. Some of us just do it a lot more frequently, or less frequently and more painfully than others and that's okay.

So there you are, my top tips for surviving with IBS — particularly if you also have fibromyalgia. Let me know in the comments below what your tips are, whether this is something you experience and let's have a conversation.