

CHARACTERISTICS OF EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY PERSONS IN MISSIONARY FORMATION

Emotional health is a vital foundation for holistic growth in missionary formation. It enables individuals to live their vocation with authenticity, resilience, and relational maturity. Emotionally healthy persons are not those who are free from struggle, but those who are self-aware, integrated, and capable of navigating life's challenges with grace and responsibility. In the context of missionary life, where constant demands, intercultural encounters, and pastoral complexities are present, emotional maturity becomes essential. This section outlines the key characteristics that help formees grow into mature missionaries who can serve with compassion, clarity, and inner freedom.

	Characteristic	Formation-Relevant Description
1	Accepting Self and Others	Missionaries are called to encounter diverse peoples and cultures. Emotional maturity begins with self-acceptance and extends to embracing others with compassion and non-judgment. This fosters intercultural dialogue, respect, and fraternal life.
2	Striking a Balance Between Autonomy and Dependence	Missionary life involves both personal initiative and deep communion. Emotionally mature formees are able to discern and act responsibly while remaining open to guidance, collaboration, and obedience in community and mission.
3	Experiencing and Expressing a Wide Range of Emotions	Formation must help formees name and integrate their emotions. Mission work involves joy and pain, success and failure. Being emotionally aware allows missionaries to remain authentic, avoid burnout, and accompany others empathetically.
4	Living Gratefully	Gratitude is central to missionary spirituality. Emotionally healthy missionaries cultivate a grateful heart, recognizing God's presence in daily life, in the people they serve, and even in trials. Gratitude sustains long-term mission engagement.
5	Living with Hope and Optimism	Missionaries often work in challenging or discouraging contexts. Emotionally mature persons hold fast to Gospel hope, trusting in God's providence and the transformative power of the Kingdom, despite immediate results.
6	Engaging in Playfulness	Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. Playfulness and a sense of humor make community life lighter and mission more human. Formation should allow space for recreation, celebration, and creativity.
7	Finding Life Meaningful	A missionary vocation is grounded in deep meaning and purpose. Emotionally healthy formees engage in their call with conviction, seeing their life as a meaningful response to God's love and the needs of the world.
8	Being Creative	Missionaries are often called to serve in new, changing, or complex environments. Creativity enables adaptive pastoral responses, dynamic evangelization, and innovative community-building. Formation should stimulate this capacity.
9	Having a Clear Sense of Identity	Knowing who one is in Christ is foundational. Emotionally mature missionaries are rooted in their identity as beloved children of God and committed disciples. This prevents identity crises, fosters stability, and supports intercultural mission.
10	Enjoying Intimacy	Healthy intimacy is vital for community life and pastoral relationships. Emotionally healthy missionaries can be vulnerable, build trust, respect boundaries, and maintain chaste and enriching relationships.

11	Being Generative	Missionary life is essentially a life poured out for others. Generativity includes mentoring younger members, sharing resources, and fostering life in the community and in those served. It flows from interior freedom and maturity.
12	Experiencing Integrity	Integrity gives witness to the Gospel. Emotionally and spiritually mature persons live with coherence between their values, beliefs, and actions—essential for credibility in mission and trust within the community.
13	Being Resilient	Mission involves uncertainty, loss, and sacrifice. Resilience enables missionaries to remain faithful, learn from failures, and continue to grow despite hardships. Formation must include space for processing wounds and building inner strength.

Formative Implications

- These traits are **not prerequisites**, but **goals of formation**. They guide **human-spiritual growth** and help form **well-integrated missionaries**.
- They are nurtured through:
 - **Personal accompaniment and mentoring**
 - **Psychological and spiritual assessments**
 - **Structured experiences** (e.g., pastoral immersion, silence, community life)
 - **Emotional literacy training**
 - **Regular self-reflection and prayer**
- Formators should be attentive to the **gradual development** of these traits and **create spaces** where formees can grow in self-knowledge, vulnerability, and resilience.

EMOTIONAL MATURITY ASSESSMENT TOOL

PART A: FORMATORS' OBSERVATION TOOL

Purpose: To assist formators in identifying areas of growth and strength in the emotional development of the formees.

Instructions: Rate each item based on your consistent observation of the formee over the last few months. Use the scale below and add observations if needed.

Rating Scale:

4 – Consistently Demonstrated

3 – Often Demonstrated

2 – Occasionally Demonstrated

1 – Rarely or Not Demonstrated

	Characteristic	Observable Indicators	Rating (1–4)	Notes/Examples
1	Accepting Self and Others	Shows self-acceptance, avoids excessive self-criticism, respects others' differences		
2	Autonomy & Dependence Balance	Acts responsibly, open to correction, neither too dependent nor isolated		
3	Emotional Expression	Can name, express, and manage emotions constructively		

4	Grateful Living	Demonstrates gratitude in daily life and interactions		
5	Hope & Optimism	Shows positive outlook, doesn't give in to despair or negativity		
6	Playfulness	Engages in healthy recreation, brings joy to community		
7	Meaningfulness	Connects daily tasks and vocation with deeper purpose		
8	Creativity	Offers fresh ideas, adapts to new situations creatively		
9	Identity Clarity	Displays self-awareness, stands by values, avoids role confusion		
10	Intimacy	Builds trusting, respectful, and chaste relationships		
11	Generativity	Mentors others, contributes to community well-being		
12	Integrity	Lives with coherence between words, values, and actions		
13	Resilience	Bounces back from setbacks, remains committed in difficulties		

Overall Observations / Recommendations:

PART B: SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR FORMEES

Purpose: To promote self-awareness, responsibility for growth, and openness in accompaniment.

Instructions: Reflect honestly and rate yourself using the scale below. You may add examples or insights for deeper reflection.

Rating Scale:

4 – This is usually true of me

3 – Often true of me

2 – Sometimes true of me

1 – Rarely or not true of me

	Characteristic	Self-Reflection Prompt	Rating (1–4)	My Insights / Examples
1	Accepting Self and Others	Do I accept my flaws and strengths? Am I respectful of people different from me?		
2	Autonomy & Dependence Balance	Can I make decisions responsibly and ask for help when needed?		
3	Emotional Expression	Am I aware of my emotions and can I express them constructively?		
4	Grateful Living	Do I regularly give thanks and appreciate the good in life and people?		
5	Hope & Optimism	Do I look to the future with hope, even during tough times?		

6	Playfulness	Do I allow myself to rest, laugh, and enjoy community life?		
7	Meaningfulness	Do I see my missionary journey as meaningful and guided by a purpose?		
8	Creativity	Do I bring new ideas and adapt creatively when challenges arise?		
9	Identity Clarity	Do I know who I am and what I stand for?		
10	Intimacy	Am I able to build honest and healthy relationships while maintaining boundaries?		
11	Generativity	Do I give of myself for others with joy and generosity?		
12	Integrity	Do I live honestly and align my actions with my beliefs?		
13	Resilience	When I fall or face setbacks, do I get back up and learn from them?		

Summary Reflection

- Areas I feel strong in:
- Areas I want to grow in:
- What support or guidance do I need?

How to Use This Tool in Formation

- **Frequency:** Use it **bi-annually** or **before major evaluation moments** (transitions, pastoral assignments, etc.).
- **In Dialogue:** After completing, have a **one-on-one accompaniment session** to discuss patterns, affirm progress, and set personal goals.
- **Community Use:** Adapt for group sharing or workshops (e.g., reflection groups, emotional growth seminars).
- **Formative Planning:** Results can inform **tailored interventions**, such as workshops on emotional intelligence, self-awareness, or conflict management.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR ACCOMPANIMENT TOWARD EMOTIONAL MATURITY IN MISSIONARY FORMATION

1. Build a Trusting Relationship

- **Create a safe space** where the formee feels welcomed, accepted, and not judged.
- **Ensure confidentiality**, which fosters openness and vulnerability.
- **Be consistent and present**—your reliability communicates care and stability.
- **Begin with listening** before giving any evaluation or guidance.

“A good accompanier listens more than they speak, and listens with the heart.”

2. Know the Stages of Emotional Development

- Understand that growth is **gradual and non-linear**; setbacks are part of progress.
- Each formee brings their **own story**—background, culture, wounds, and strengths.
- Use the **assessment tool** (see previous section) to map the emotional development journey.

3. Help the Formee Name and Own Their Emotions

- Encourage regular **emotional check-ins**: “What are you feeling? Why do you think that is?”
- Use **tools** like mood journals, the “feelings wheel,” body-sensation mapping, or prayer journaling.
- Normalize all emotions (even anger or sadness) and **discourage emotional repression**.
- Teach the difference between **reaction** and **response**.

4. Promote Honest Self-Awareness and Reflection

- Ask reflective questions:
 - “What does this experience reveal about you?”
 - “What were you needing or hoping for?”
 - “What did this emotion lead you to do?”
- Guide the formee in identifying **patterns**, **triggers**, and **unhealed wounds**.
- Use Scripture or life events to shed light on their **inner movements** (à la Ignatian discernment).

5. Help Formees Find Balance

- Support them in **holding tensions**: autonomy vs. obedience, joy vs. grief, desire vs. self-control.
- Encourage healthy expression of **dependence without losing identity**.
- Promote integrated living—prayer, work, relationships, rest—as a source of **emotional balance**.

6. Reinforce Growth through Concrete Practices

Offer practices for emotional growth:

Practice	Example
Daily Review of Emotions	Examen prayer or short reflection journal
Expression Through Art	Drawing, music, or storytelling
Role Play	Practicing assertiveness or conflict resolution
Breathing / Grounding	Body-based practices for emotional regulation
Gratitude Exercises	Gratitude journaling or group sharing moments
Pastoral Exposure	Reflecting on emotional reactions to mission challenges

7. Encourage Integration in Community Life

- Use **community life** as the primary “laboratory” of emotional maturity.
- Support the formee in processing interpersonal tensions, misunderstandings, and bonds.
- Model and teach **conflict transformation**, **fraternal correction**, and **forgiveness**.
- Celebrate emotional milestones in community—growth in assertiveness, reconciliation, joy.

8. Be Attentive to Signs of Deeper Issues

- Refer the formee for **professional help** (psychological or therapeutic) when:
 - There are persistent emotional dysregulations (e.g., chronic anger, anxiety, withdrawal).
 - There’s trauma, unresolved grief, or signs of depression or personality disturbance.
- Don’t replace therapy, but **collaborate with professionals** where necessary.

9. Set Personalized Growth Plans

- After assessments or conversations, set **1–2 emotional goals** at a time.
- Help the formee name concrete steps: “What will you do differently this week?”
- Revisit goals periodically and celebrate progress.

10. Integrate Prayer and Spirituality

- Link emotional maturity with **spiritual freedom and discernment**.
- Encourage praying with one's emotions—Jesus in Gethsemane, the Psalms, prophetic laments.
- Explore the **image of God** the formee holds: Is it punitive, distant, or loving?
- Facilitate healing experiences: **inner healing prayers**, reconciliation, spiritual reading.

Sample Accompaniment Questions

Area	Guiding Questions
Self-Acceptance	What do you appreciate about yourself? What's hard to accept?
Relationships	What relationships bring you joy? Which ones drain or confuse you?
Emotional Experience	When did you feel most alive or most discouraged recently? What does that say to you?
Resilience	How do you usually respond to failure? How do you support yourself through it?
Mission Meaning	What does your experience of God in the mission look like lately? Where do you find meaning?

Final Word

Emotional maturity is not a **peripheral** aspect of missionary formation—it is **essential** for effective witness, intercultural living, and pastoral fruitfulness.

The accompanier's role is not to “fix” the formee, but to **create a sacred space** where grace and growth can happen.

RED FLAGS IN THE EMOTIONAL AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT OF FORMEES

1. Emotional Dysregulation

Formees may:

- Have frequent **emotional outbursts** (anger, crying, frustration) disproportionate to the situation
- Appear **overly reactive** or impulsive in their emotional responses
- Show **difficulty calming down** after being upset
- Exhibit **emotional numbness** or suppression (not showing any emotion)

Watch for: sudden mood swings, extreme sensitivity to criticism, or shutting down emotionally.

2. Chronic Low Self-Esteem or Identity Confusion

Formees may:

- Express **persistent negative self-talk** or self-hatred
- Show **insecurity** in roles or relationships
- Depend heavily on others for validation or approval
- Appear **confused about their vocation, values, or personal history**

Watch for: Repeated identity crises, low confidence in leadership roles, or idealization of others can mask deeper wounds.

3. Rigid or Extreme Behaviour Patterns

Formees may:

- Show **perfectionism**, over-control, or need to always “be right”
- Be extremely **rigid with schedules or rules** to an unhealthy degree
- Exhibit **black-and-white thinking**: “all good” or “all bad” mentality
- Demonstrate **resistance to feedback**, change, or authority

Watch for: Rigid behaviour often hides fear or anxiety and inhibits growth and communion.

4. Relational Difficulties

Formees may:

- Frequently **isolate themselves** or avoid group interaction
- Display **clinginess**, overdependence, or possessiveness in friendships
- Have difficulty **maintaining boundaries** (too distant or too intrusive)
- Struggle to **handle conflict** constructively (passive-aggressive, aggressive, avoidant)

Watch for: Repeated conflicts, jealousy, or inability to sustain friendships may signal emotional immaturity or attachment issues.

5. Inability to Express or Process Emotions

Formees may:

- Say “I don’t know what I feel” even in emotionally intense situations
- Regularly **intellectualize or spiritualize emotions** (e.g., using prayer to avoid feelings)
- Be **uncomfortable with vulnerability** or empathetic sharing
- Avoid any **emotionally charged conversations**

Watch for: Formees must gradually learn to name, feel, and integrate emotions in a healthy way.

6. Recurrent Anxiety or Depressive Symptoms

Formees may:

- Appear **constantly worried, restless, or fearful**
- Complain of **persistent fatigue, sleep problems, or body complaints** (psychosomatic symptoms)
- Show **persistent sadness, loss of motivation**, or emotional flatness
- Make **negative generalizations**: “Nothing I do is good enough.”

Watch for: Watch for long-term patterns and functional impact, not just temporary moods.

7. Addictive or Escapist Behaviours

Formees may:

- Engage in **compulsive use of phone, social media, food, pornography**, etc.
- Show **dependency on entertainment** or distractions to avoid inner silence
- Use **alcohol or substances** excessively (even if “socially”)
- Exhibit signs of **obsessive behaviours** or self-soothing rituals

Watch for: Addictive patterns often signal deeper emotional pain or lack of inner coping resources.

8. Signs of Unresolved Trauma or Abuse

Formees may:

- Speak vaguely or avoid topics around **family, sexuality, or past pain**
- Show **hypervigilance**, exaggerated startle response, or withdrawal
- Have **recurring nightmares, flashbacks, or emotional triggers**
- React strongly to minor stressors (emotional flooding)

***Watch for:** In such cases, immediate referral to professional psychological support is crucial.*

9. Disconnection Between Spiritual and Emotional Life

Formees may:

- Use **spiritual language to avoid facing human realities** (e.g., “God will fix everything”)
- Display **scrupulosity**, spiritual perfectionism, or religious rigidity
- Experience **dryness or disorientation in prayer** without emotional reflection
- Express **resentment or despair** masked as “holy resignation”

***Watch for:** A healthy spirituality integrates emotion, body, and life story with faith—not avoidance.*

10. Persistent Resistance to Growth

Formees may:

- Consistently **blame others** or circumstances for personal struggles
- Dismiss feedback with **defensiveness or denial**
- Refuse to engage in **self-reflection**, counselling, or formation tools
- Express **closedness to accompaniment or community discernment**

***Watch for:** Growth resistance may indicate deep fear, psychological blocks, or lack of readiness for vocation.*

Guidelines for Formators When Red Flags Emerge

1. **Document Patterns:** Note consistent behaviours over time (not just isolated events).
2. **Use Supervision:** Discuss observations with the formation team and spiritual director.
3. **Approach the Formee:** Engage in a gentle, honest conversation with clarity and compassion.
4. **Refer When Needed:** Do not hesitate to seek professional psychological help—early intervention is better than late repair.
5. **Discern Suitability:** If red flags persist and deeply affect mission readiness, initiate vocational discernment with the formee and team.

Red Flag Checklist for Formators

Use this checklist to help observe and record consistent patterns of concern in a formee’s emotional, relational, and spiritual behaviour. It is not diagnostic but is meant to aid formative discernment and timely intervention.

Instructions: Mark (✓) when a behaviour is noticed repeatedly over time. Add comments where necessary. Review during accompaniment or team meetings.

I. Emotional Dysregulation

☐	Behaviour	Comments
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☐	Frequent emotional outbursts (anger, tears, etc.)	
☐	Sudden mood swings or overreactions	
☐	Difficulty calming down after stress	
☐	Emotional flatness or numbness	

II. Self-Esteem and Identity Confusion

☐	Behaviour	Comments
☐	Persistent self-criticism or inferiority	
☐	Identity confusion (e.g., inconsistent sense of self)	
☐	Overdependence on others for validation	
☐	Idealizing or imitating others excessively	

III. Relational Difficulties

☐	Behaviour	Comments
☐	Social isolation or withdrawal from community	
☐	Clinginess or possessiveness in friendships	
☐	Frequent interpersonal conflict	
☐	Inappropriate boundaries (too closed or too open)	

IV. Emotional Avoidance / Expression Difficulties

☐	Behaviour	Comments
☐	Inability to name or express feelings	
☐	Avoidance of emotionally difficult conversations	
☐	Over-intellectualization or spiritualization of emotions	
☐	Discomfort with vulnerability or empathy	

V. Signs of Anxiety or Depression

☐	Behaviour	Comments
☐	Constant worry, restlessness, or tension	
☐	Fatigue, low energy, or sleep issues	
☐	Persistent sadness or apathy	
☐	Negative worldview (“Nothing will work out”)	

VI. Addictive or Compulsive Behaviour

☐	Behaviour	Comments
☐	Excessive use of phone, social media, food, etc.	
☐	Repeated sexual boundary issues (including pornography)	
☐	Escapist behaviours (e.g., constant distraction-seeking)	

VII. Trauma Signs or Deep Wounds

☐	Behaviour	Comments
☐	Hyper-reactivity to minor stressors	
☐	Avoidance of personal history topics	
☐	Flashbacks, nightmares, or emotional shutdown	
☐	Chronic distrust or hypervigilance	

VIII. Disconnection in Spiritual Life

☐	Behaviour	Comments
☐	Excessive spiritual language that avoids human issues	
☐	Rigid or scrupulous spiritual practices	
☐	Apathy in prayer with unresolved emotional pain	
☐	Spiritual bypassing (e.g., "God will fix it" without responsibility)	

IX. Resistance to Growth

☐	Behaviour	Comments
☐	Repeated denial of issues or feedback	
☐	Blaming others for personal problems	
☐	Refusal to engage in tools (journaling, therapy, etc.)	
☐	Closed attitude toward accompaniment	

Intervention & Follow-Up Template

Use this form when red flags persist to plan intentional accompaniment and, if necessary, professional referral or vocational discernment steps.

Formee Intervention Plan

Formee Name	
Date of Meeting	
Formator(s)	
Area(s) of Concern	Emotional / Relational / Behavioural / Spiritual / Other

Brief Description of Observed Concerns

(Summarize key red flags and examples)

Objectives of the Intervention

(What outcomes are you hoping for?)

- Increase emotional awareness
- Stabilize mood regulation
- Improve relational boundaries
- Begin psychological support
- Discern vocational suitability
- Other: _____

Proposed Actions / Commitments

Action / Recommendation	Responsible Person	Timeline
Example: Begin monthly sessions with counsellor	Formee & psychologist	Within 2 weeks
Example: Submit emotional reflection journal weekly	Formee	Start this week
Example: Review situation in team discernment meeting	Formation Team	Next monthly review

Follow-Up & Review Plan

Date of follow-up Focus Who is involved

Formator Comments / Recommendations*(Note progress, openness, or resistance here)***Formee Response & Signature***(Formee affirms understanding and participation)*

TRAINING MODULE FOR FORMATORS

Accompanying Emotional Maturity in Missionary Formation

Module Objectives

By the end of this training, formators will be able to:

1. Understand the importance of emotional maturity for missionary life.
2. Identify key characteristics of emotionally healthy persons.
3. Utilize assessment tools for evaluating emotional development.
4. Practice accompaniment strategies that foster emotional growth.
5. Recognize when and how to refer formees for professional help.
6. Integrate emotional development into the spiritual and community life of the formation house.

Duration: 1–2 days (can be adapted for half-day or multi-session formats)

Session Overview

Session	Title	Focus	Methodology
1	The Role of Emotional Maturity in Missionary Formation	Rationale and theological/psychological foundations	Input, group sharing
2	Characteristics of Emotionally Healthy Persons	Deep dive into the 13 traits	Input, case studies
3	Tools for Assessment	Introduction to formee self-assessment and formator observation tools	Workshop, role play
4	Practical Accompaniment Guidelines	How to accompany emotional growth	Skills training, dyad work
5	Handling Emotional Difficulties	When to refer; integrating spiritual and psychological support	Panel discussion, Q&A
6	Integration and Planning	Creating personal and house-level action plans	Guided planning, feedback

Detailed Session Guide**Session 1: The Role of Emotional Maturity in Missionary Formation****Key Themes:**

- Emotional maturity as essential for intercultural living, pastoral effectiveness, and spiritual depth
- Formation that integrates heart, head, and hands

Suggested Activity:

- Reflective group sharing: "What emotional struggles have you observed in your community or in yourself that affect missionary life?"

Session 2: Characteristics of Emotionally Healthy Persons

Key Themes:

- Overview of 13 traits (as listed earlier)
- Scriptural and Claretian references (e.g., Jesus' emotional life, Fr. Claret's resilience)

Suggested Activity:

- Case Study Exercise: Present brief vignettes of formees struggling with specific traits and ask small groups to discuss how to respond as a formator.

Session 3: Tools for Assessment

Key Themes:

- How to use the **Formator Observation Tool**
- How to introduce and review the **Formee Self-Assessment Tool**
- Interpreting scores and identifying growth areas

Suggested Activity:

- Role Play: Practice giving feedback to a formee using the tool. One plays the formator, the other the formee.

Session 4: Practical Accompaniment Guidelines

Key Themes:

- Building trust and safe spaces
- Asking the right questions (open-ended, reflective)
- Promoting emotional literacy, balance, and expression
- When to challenge, when to affirm

Suggested Activity:

- Dyad Exercise: In pairs, practice a 15-minute accompaniment conversation focusing on emotions and identity.

Session 5: Handling Emotional Difficulties and Referrals

Key Themes:

- Red flags: persistent anxiety, emotional shutdown, aggression, trauma symptoms
- How to speak about professional help without shame or stigma
- Collaboration with psychologists and spiritual directors

Suggested Activity:

- Panel or Q&A with a psychologist or spiritual director to answer practical questions

Session 6: Integration and Planning

Key Themes:

- How to integrate emotional development in:
 - Monthly accompaniment
 - Community life (conflict, celebration, recreation)
 - Formation sessions and retreats

Suggested Activity:

- House/Team Action Plan:
 - How will we monitor emotional growth in our house?
 - What practices will we introduce or improve (e.g., gratitude sharing, emotional check-ins, reflection groups)?

- When will we review emotional development?

Training Materials to Prepare

- Slides summarizing the 13 traits
- Printable or digital versions of assessment tools (formator + formee)
- Case studies and role play scripts
- Handouts on signs of emotional distress
- Integration planning template

Optional Add-ons

- Invite a psychologist or therapist for one session
- Include prayer/reflection time focusing on Jesus' emotional life
- Use artistic expression (e.g., mandala drawing, music, journaling) to explore emotions

Post-Training Suggestions

- Create a regular **inter-formators circle** for peer sharing and support
- Offer a **yearly formation audit** of emotional development
- Make emotional maturity a theme in **annual retreats or assemblies**

Conclusion

Fostering emotional health in missionary formation is not a secondary task—it is integral to forming joyful, credible, and resilient missionaries. When formees develop emotional maturity, they are better able to live in community, engage in mission with empathy, and sustain their commitment even in the face of hardship. These characteristics must be intentionally cultivated through accompaniment, self-reflection, and a formation environment that promotes openness, healing, and growth. In doing so, we prepare not just workers for the mission, but witnesses who embody the Gospel with both strength and tenderness.