

Resources for Managing Emotional Demands

Strong emotions like depression or anxiety help us know we are overstressed. Read “General Principles for Managing Stress” on pages 17–22 for overall suggestions. In addition, the suggestions below may help with specific emotions.

A

Feeling Homesick

- **Keep busy.** Homesickness is common, especially if you haven’t been away from home much. Let yourself feel sad for a few minutes, but then get up and get busy. The best way to combat it is to distract yourself from worry or self-pity by keeping busy and serving others.
- **Unpack and settle in.** Don’t live out of your suitcase. Set up your personal space. Put up a picture that helps you feel the Spirit and remember why you want to serve the Lord. Clean out old trash, and make your apartment “yours.” Make foods you enjoy.
- **Make a long list of things that have not changed about you.** Think of your relationships, your strengths, and other things that are still the same, even though a lot has changed. Examples: “I have a sense of humor; my parents love me; I want to serve.” Add things you would still have to do if you were home: “I would still have to make decisions; I would still have to get along with others; I would still have to work hard.”
- **Review your reasons for coming on a mission.** Consciously offer your mission as a gift of thanks to the Savior, and list your blessings. Remind yourself of what supportive leaders or loved ones at home would tell you about your service.
- **Ask for a priesthood blessing.**
- **Remove distracting photos.** Put away any photos or pictures that distract you from feeling the Spirit or that stir homesickness. You may choose to bring some of them out again once you are more adjusted. Encourage your family to write only once a week so you, like Jesus’s disciples of old, can leave your “nets” behind (see Matthew 4:18–22) and focus on the work.
- **Be patient.** It generally takes about six weeks to begin to adapt to a new environment. Put off making any decisions, and give yourself time to adjust. Take one day at a time. (See *Preach My Gospel*, 120.)

“When our hearts were depressed, and we were about to turn back, behold, the Lord comforted us, and said: ... bear with patience thine afflictions, and I will give unto you success.”

—Alma 26:27

B

Feeling Depressed or Discouraged

- **Review uplifting scriptures and stories.** Collect scriptures, personal experiences, quotations, and family stories that encourage and uplift you. When you read these accounts, imagine your name in them. (Examples: 2 Nephi 4; Mosiah 24:13–14; Alma 36:3; D&C 4; 6; 31; Proverbs 3:5–6; Helaman 5:12; and “Adversity” in True to the Faith.)
- **Review your patriarchal blessing for guidance.** Look for ways your gifts and strengths can contribute to the work.

- **Don't procrastinate.** Putting things off can lead to depression. Break down big tasks into smaller pieces. Get started, reminding yourself, "All I have to do right now is _____" or "I'll just do this a few minutes and then take a break if I want."
- **Listen to approved music or sing.** Choose music that is calm and soothing if you are anxious, or music that is upbeat and cheerful if you feel down.

Listen to Hymns

"Hymns move us to repentance and good works, build testimony and faith, comfort the weary, console the mourning, and inspire us to endure to the end" ("First Presidency Preface," *Hymns* [1985], x).

30	Come, Come, Ye Saints
85	How Firm a Foundation
97	Lead, Kindly Light
102	Jesus, Lover of My Soul
105	Master, the Tempest Is Raging
114	Come unto Him
115	Come, Ye Disconsolate
124	Be Still, My Soul
129	Where Can I Turn for Peace?
140	Did You Think to Pray?
142	Sweet Hour of Prayer

- **Don't let resentment build up.** If you feel resentful about something, ask for help with solving the problem without criticizing or blaming others. If you don't want to talk about it, then don't let yourself resent it.
- **Set realistic goals, and make specific plans for how you will accomplish them.** Tackle things that distress you one at a time. Depression responds well to goals and plans. (See *Preach My Gospel*, 146.)
- **Let go of what you cannot control.** The past, the agency of others, the rules, the weather, government bureaucracies, the culture, your limitations, or the personality of other missionaries are outside of your control. Focus on things you can do something about, such as your behavior, your part in a relationship, your current choices, and your attitude.
- **Accept the reality of some boring routines.** Not all of life is deeply meaningful and exciting. Avoid creating drama, intensity, or conflict to deal with boredom. Instead, appreciate and enjoy the good around you, and look for ways to improve and serve.
- **Find things to enjoy.** While respecting the dignity of your calling, rediscover humor, savor the beauty in the world, notice the kindness of others, and delight in the Spirit's presence.
- **Do the basics: prayer, scripture study, and service.** Focus on gratitude. When reading scriptures, be careful to focus on the parts that most apply to you. For example, don't overfocus on God's anger with sinners if you tend to be a perfectionist. (See *Preach My Gospel*, viii.)
- **Read Alma 26 and discover what Ammon did when he was discouraged.** Also read Doctrine and Covenants 127:2 and note how Joseph Smith kept discouragement at bay. Don't get depressed about being depressed, creating a vicious circle. It is normal to have days when we feel discouraged, stressed, or homesick. Most of the time it will pass.

C

Feeling Self-Critical

- **Focus on what you do right, and avoid comparing yourself to others.** People with excessively high expectations tend to overfocus on their weaknesses and failures. Then, instead of improving, they may feel hopeless. When reading scriptures, focus on the parts that most apply to you as a beloved servant of God. Look for evidences of God's patience, grace, hope, and mercy with those who love and desire to serve Him. (See *Preach My Gospel*, 10–11.)
- **Talk positively to yourself.** See "Talking Back to Negative Thinking" on page 21.
- **Realize that everything you do can't be above average.** You still want to work hard to improve, but no matter how good you become at something, you will perform below your personal average some of the time. This is not a cause for alarm.
- **Give yourself extra credit for doing something you don't enjoy or don't do well.** Don't tell yourself it only counts if you are happy about it or if you did it perfectly.
- **Work on one or two major goals at a time.** Avoid the common practice of trying to improve too many things at once; this can be overwhelming and may lead to failure.

Record in your planner

- Favorite scriptures
- Goals you want to accomplish

- **Listen to the Spirit, not negativity.** If you are having thoughts that are belittling, mocking, angry, sarcastic, murmuring, critical, or name calling, they are not from the Lord. Shut them out.
- **Seek good counsel.** Ask your mission president and others to help you know if you are trying hard enough or too hard, and accept their counsel. Many self-critical people are not very good at making this distinction.

D

Feeling Anxious or Inadequate

- **Enjoy being a beginner when you are new at something.** You aren't expected to be an expert. It is enough to be curious, interested, humble, and willing to try. Enjoy it!
- **Cheerfully do what you can, and let God make up the difference.** Sometimes missionaries feel useless or ashamed when others look more successful. If Satan tempts you to doubt yourself or compare yourself to others, remember that this is God's work, and He chooses the weak and simple to do it. He has chosen you! Trust Him. He trusts you!
- **Envision success.** Worrying can be a way of mentally practicing failure. Instead of rehearsing what can go wrong or constantly worrying about "what if," mentally practice positive outcomes and make plans to achieve them. Then if things don't work out as you hope, imagine yourself learning from the setback and going forward.
- **Don't try to control what you can't.** Trying to control things you cannot control only makes you feel more out of control, increasing your anxiety. Focus your energy on things you can do something about.
- **Ask, "What is the worst that can happen?"** If the worst possible outcome is something you can live with or something the Savior can help you overcome, move on without fear.
- **Try slowing down by 10 percent if you tend to rush a lot.** You may be more efficient if you are calmer.
- **Serve.** As you serve your companion, investigators, members, neighbors, or the poor and needy, you will think less about yourself and be happier. (See *Preach My Gospel*, 168–69.)

"By small and simple things are great things brought to pass; ... and by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls."

—Alma 37:6-7

E

Feeling Easily Irritated or Angry

- **Give your brain time to override your emotions.** The part of your brain that can reason and use good judgment is slower than the part of your brain that gets angry. Turn away from the situation for a few minutes, and take some deep breaths to give your rational brain time to engage.
- **Don't feed anger.** People are more likely to feel angry when they choose to see others as (1) threatening, (2) unfair, or (3) disrespectful. Instead, see if you can think of a more charitable explanation for their behavior. For example, perhaps they are tired, uninformed, insecure, or think they are being helpful. Make the choice not to fuel anger.
- **Be calm, curious, and compassionate.** Be curious about what others are thinking and feeling. Ask questions, listen carefully, tell the other person what you think you heard, and ask if you understood correctly. If not, try again.
- **Resist the tendency to blame or shame others or yourself.** Instead, figure out what the problem is and ask the other person for help in fixing it, regardless of whose fault it is.
- **Be willing to apologize and ask what you can do to make things right.** Apologizing is a sign of spiritual strength, not a sign of weakness.
- **Smile and be willing to laugh at yourself.** Look in the mirror to see what you look like when you are angry.
- **Serve those you are prone to be upset with.** Apply the Savior's counsel to "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you" (3 Nephi 12:44).
- **Take good care of yourself.** Make sure you are eating well, sleeping, exercising, and praying so you have more emotional resources for dealing with frustration.

F

Feeling Exhausted or Unmotivated

- **Focus on your strengths.** What are the values, talents, experiences, and gifts you bring to the mission? How could you use those strengths in creative ways this week? If you have trouble seeing your strengths, ask others for help.
- **Take one step at a time.** Remind yourself, "All I have to do right now is _____."
- **Make it fun!** Respecting the dignity of your calling, set interesting goals for yourself, and make a game out of meeting them. Be creative and congratulate yourself for success.
- **Don't overwhelm yourself with too many personal goals at once.** Set one or two personal goals at a time (like being more cheerful or less messy). Don't expect perfection, and include a plan for how you will get back on track when you have a bad day. Remind yourself often of why you want to change.
- **Share your goals with your companion and mission president.** They can support you and offer helpful ideas.
- **Realize that motivation follows action.** Getting started is often the hardest part. Tell yourself, "Just do it for 10 minutes" when you need to start something you don't want to do. Once you get started, you will feel more motivated.

G**Worrying about Loved Ones at Home**

- **Study Doctrine and Covenants 31:1–6.** From the early days of the Church, missionaries have been called to leave loved ones in difficult circumstances. Pray that blessings of your service will be consecrated to the benefit of your loved ones. Honor them by serving the Lord with all your heart. Trust the Lord to bless them and you, according to His timing and will.
- **Write your family every week.** Share your testimony and positive experiences and stories. Tell them often when you have seen the hand of the Lord in your life. Pray for them. Remember birthdays and special events.
- **Expect some challenges to come to your loved ones.** Most of these would occur whether or not you were serving a mission. Your loved ones have agency and may make decisions that worry you, especially if you are used to being a leader or peacemaker at home. It may bless their lives to work through challenges on their own. Respect their choices, and continue to express your love and confidence.

“Therefore, dearly beloved brethren, let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed.”

—Doctrine and Covenants 123:17

H**Feeling Lonely**

- **Get curious about others.** Ask how they handle feeling lonely. Ask about their experiences and feelings so you’ll understand them better.
- **Share more.** We feel lonely when we don’t feel known and valued for who we really are.
- **Write in your journal.** It helps to at least feel understood by yourself.
- **Define what you mean by “lonely.”** Define what feelings, thoughts, and behaviors go with it for you. Then address these specifically.