

Demands of Missionary Life

Adapted from *Adjusting to Missionary Life* (resource booklet, 2013)

As you begin any new experience (like joining the Church or attending a new school), you feel excited about the opportunity—and nervous because you don't know quite what to expect. Over time you learn to meet these challenges, and you grow in the process.

Missions are no different. Sometimes a mission feels like a wonderful spiritual adventure—or at least a challenge you can handle. At other times, however, you may face unexpected problems or experiences that are more difficult or unpleasant than you anticipated. You might wonder how you can succeed. Resources you once relied on to help you cope may not be available. Instead of feeling motivated to try, you might become anxious, irritable, exhausted, or frustrated. You might have physical symptoms like pain, upset stomach, sleeplessness, or illness. You could have trouble learning or connecting with people. You might feel discouraged or want to quit.

The demands of missionary work fall into several categories:

General

You experience many changes and transitions throughout your mission. Familiar ways of coping are not always available, and you must learn new ones. Evenings and weekends that used to be relaxing are now your busiest times. You may feel awkward. At times you may struggle. You may wonder how to help other missionaries who struggle.

Physical

You may be on your feet 11–12 hours a day, walking, biking, climbing stairs, and standing. You may not get as much sleep as you are used to. The food may be unfamiliar. You will be out in bad weather and exposed to new germs. Just the newness of the situation can be fatiguing.

Emotional

You may feel anxious about all you have to do, and you may have trouble unwinding. You may get homesick, become



discouraged, get bored, or feel lonely. You may face rejection, disappointment, or even danger. You may worry about family and friends when you are not there to help them.

Social

You will live in close quarters with a companion with whom you may or may not have much in common. You are expected to talk to strangers, interact with Church leaders, get to know Church members quickly, and learn to love investigators.

Intellectual

You may be learning a new language. You will need to master lessons and scriptures, acquire teaching skills, and resolve concerns that arise. You will need to plan, manage goals, adapt to changes, and solve all kinds of practical problems.

Spiritual

You will stretch to strengthen your testimony, resist temptation, and learn to feel and recognize the Spirit. You will need to take correction, repent, face your weaknesses and regrets humbly, and rely on the Lord more than ever before.

Adjusting to New Experiences

Like many who are entering a new situation, missionaries often go through four phases or stages in their emotional adjustment when they enter the MTC and again when they enter the mission field:

1. Anticipation

You may feel eager for the challenge (see 1 Nephi 3:7).

You may feel an increased sense of purpose and allegiance to Heavenly Father (see 3 Nephi 5:13).

2. Unexpected discoveries

You may begin to miss home, family, and friends and even question your decision to serve (see Alma 26:27).

You may notice physical manifestations of stress, such as disturbed sleep, appetite changes, or irritability.

You may unexpectedly find yourself critical and impatient with rules and expectations.

These feelings are normal. If you have any or all of these issues, please know this is a temporary situation that many new missionaries go through. Take courage in the knowledge that these feelings will pass and you will be able to adjust.

3. “I can do this”

Your teaching and language skills begin to improve.

You learn to willingly comply with mission rules and expectations.



You display patience with yourself as you learn “precept upon precept” (see Isaiah 28:10; Mosiah 4:27).

Your physical symptoms of stress, if you had any, begin to diminish.

4. Emotional self-reliance

You feel comfortable navigating the daily routine.

You recognize your personal strengths and progress.

You attain an understanding of what it means to take life one step at a time (see D&C 98:12).

You develop greater self-confidence and an increased desire to serve.

