Marks of effective and sustainable life and ministry

A self-assessment tool for helping missionaries achieve and maintain personal health in key areas of life and ministry



INTRODUCTION

Whenever missionaries are approached with suggestions that involve reading books and filling out forms for the purpose of doing self assessment, it may be tempting to look at such tasks as something to add to an already jam-packed schedule. After all, who wants to do the demanding work of self-evaluation and reflection when you are barely able to keep up with normal responsibilities and deadlines? Or, such tasks initially may seem like an uninvited critique of your life and ministry, hardly a delightful assignment when you are looking for affirmation and encouragement. Yet this is the very thing that the Scriptures call us to do, and with good reason. Our default mode is to drift away from biblical priorities (Hebrews 2:1). Therefore, we need to be intentional about how we live our lives, always seeking to understand what the Lord's will is in everything we do (Ephesians 5:15-18).

Did you know that many missionaries leave the field within the first 5 years? And did you know that the majority of all the missionaries who leave the field do so for preventable reasons? It is a matter of fact that missionary life comes with a unique set of pressures and challenges which require thoughtful reflection and intentional action. But the truth is, you don't need more busy work. You don't need to be reminded yet again of past failures. What you really need is a mirror and a flashlight - a mirror to help you see what you are doing well and what you still need to change and a flashlight to proactively illuminate the way toward changes that last. The practice of honest self-reflection, coupled with a plan for change, has the potential to significantly increase your effectiveness and extend your length of service as a missionary. This tool may not change your whole life, at least not all at once, but it is our hope and prayer that it will enable you to:

- 1. **Focus** to define and honestly examine some key areas of your life that will help you achieve and maintain an effective and sustainable life and ministry.
- 2. **Recognize** to evaluate and rate your personal health and consider what you need to change first and foremost.
- 3. **Respond** to develop a simple but consistent action plan in order to more consistently experience the joy of growing and changing (John 13:17; James 1:25).

INSTRUCTIONS

For each mark, read the description and then complete the self-check chart by honestly rating yourself on a scale of 1-5 for each statement. The goal of this self-check chart is not to induce guilt, but to provide insight for areas of needed growth. Below the self-check chart are some ideas for possible action steps that you could take, people who could help you take steps forward, and resources that you could personally use. For more resources (links, downloads, etc.) please visit: senduwiki.org/marks. These various ideas and resources are intended to help you create personal goals, which is the final step. For each item rated 2 or less in the self-check chart, we encourage you to write down a specific goal and a person you want to ask to help you reach that goal. After you have worked through all the marks, follow the evaluation instructions at the end of this document.

Repeat this assessment periodically, and, hopefully, this tool will encourage you in areas where you can see significant growth and make you thankful for all that God has already done in your life. Undoubtedly, this tool will also point out areas where you can and should improve. It is designed to make you aware of that which God already knows and is fully committed to helping you address in order to please Him (2 Corinthians 5:9) and to become more like His Son (Matthew 3:17). Remember, God does not expect you to be perfect, but to be growing one step at a time. May these words from Paul to Timothy be true of each one of us:

"Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers." (I Timothy 4:15-16)

MARK - Personal spiritual care

- A. **Description:** Personal spiritual care is the "heart" of an effective and sustainable life and ministry, and it relates to one's developing relationship with the Lord, cultivated by practicing spiritual disciplines and Christian community. Some of the essential elements of personal spiritual care are consistency of spiritual disciplines, a less frequent propensity to give in to temptation, a growing desire to cultivate spiritual life, a feeling of joy and satisfaction, an esteem for the accountability of others, and an openness for contact and spiritual conversations with other believers.
- B. **Self-Check:** Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 (1 being low; 5 being high).

12345	My personal relationship with God is deep and healthy.
12345	I am experiencing great joy and consistency in my spiritual disciplines.
1 2 3 4 5	I read my Bible and pray frequently.
12345	I am experiencing much victory in areas of personal temptation.
1 2 3 4 5	I am welcoming the spiritual accountability of others.
12345	I am often experiencing positive and encouraging Christian community.
	1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5

- C. Possible Action Steps: An honest evaluation of personal spiritual disciplines and practice, repentance before God for sin and neglect, accountability to others for growth, practicing spiritual disciplines even when desire is lacking. People who can be asked for help and support: team leader or area director, coach, trusted friend, accountability partner, pastor of home/supporting church, family member.
- D. **Resources**: Bible Reading Plan (i.e. "Growing deeper in the Word"), Bible reading and journalling (i.e. "S.O.A.P."), Spiritual Gifts Test, Helps for Day Alone with God, Broken-Down House (by Paul Tripp), A Shelter in the Time of Storm: Meditations on God and Trouble (by Paul Tripp). More resources: senduwiki.org/marks.

E.	My Personal Goals: For each item rated 2 or less, write down a specific goal person you want to ask to help you reach that goal:	I and	а
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MARK - Personal physical care

- A. **Description:** Personal physical care relates to a well-balanced life in areas such as Sabbath-keeping, rest, sleep, nutrition, exercise, and vacationing. Some of the essential elements of personal physical care are frequently observing a weekly day of rest, infrequent tiredness/fatigue, sufficient and regular sleeping patterns, eating balanced/consistent/healthy meals, having regular physical activity of various kinds, taking recommended vacation time, rare illnesses, and constant and healthy weight.
- B. Self-Check: Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 (1 being low; 5 being high).

1 2 3 4 5	I am healthy and feel well most of the time.
1 2 3 4 5	I am qualitatively and quantitatively sleeping very well.
12345	I feel refreshed and energetic throughout the day.
1 2 3 4 5	My eating habits are very healthy.
12345	My weight is constant and at a healthy level.
1 2 3 4 5	I exercise frequently.
1 2 3 4 5	I consistently take a weekly day of rest.
	1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5

- C. Possible Action Steps: Re-evaluation of ministry description, accountability in weekly (over)scheduling, consultation with a doctor, vacation out of ministry context area, participation in an enjoyed physical activity. People who can be asked for help and support: team leader or area director, coach, trusted friend, accountability partner, health professional.
- D. **Resources**: The Daniel Plan (offers practical solutions to improving your health physically, spiritually, relationally, and emotionally), Nutrition Action Guide (objective research on modern trends in food with information on fast foods, prepared foods, diets, etc.), Carnivora (17 essential nutrients in their natural state working synergistically to support the natural healing process). More resources: senduwiki.org/marks.

E.	my Personal Goals: For each item rated 2 or less, write down a specific goal person you want to ask to help you reach that goal:	and a

MARK - Personal emotional care

- A. **Description:** Personal emotional care relates to one's overall psychological well-being. It includes the way one feels about himself/herself, the quality of their relationships, and their ability to manage feelings and deal with difficulties. Some of the essential elements of personal emotional care are stable and healthy patterns (e.g. eating, sleeping, how free time is spent, time spent with people, problem solving), balanced moods (evidenced by joy, motivation, peace, serenity, light-heartedness in contrast to apathy, anger, dullness, irritability, anxiousness, worry).
- B. **Self-Check:** Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 (1 being low; 5 being high).

My mood is often characterized by negative feelings such as: apathy, anger, dullness, irritability, anxiousness, worry.	1 2 3 4 5	My mood is usually characterized by positive feelings such as: joy, peace, trust, serenity, light-heartedness.
I am not content with my current life and ministry, and I have a hard time being thankful for anything related to it.	12345	I am content with and thankful for my current life and ministry.
I constantly feel stressed.	1 2 3 4 5	I usually feel relaxed and content.
I see significant changes in my normal patterns of eating, sleeping, or interacting with others.	1 2 3 4 5	I see no significant changes in my normal patterns of eating, sleeping or interacting with others.
The littlest thing seems to "put me over the edge" these days.	12345	I find I am able to deal with most of the challenges that come my way.
I often feel intense emotions, and I don't understand the source of them.	1 2 3 4 5	I understand and am able to process my various emotions well.
I have a sense of dread about an upcoming transition.	1 2 3 4 5	I am emotionally ready to face the challenges of an upcoming transition.

- C. Possible Action Steps: Regular evaluation will help in recognizing problems and in seeking solutions before they get to a crisis state, understanding and education around this issue will lead to more openness in finding support. People who can be asked for help and support: team leader or area director, coach, personnel directors from home offices, trained mental health professionals.
- D. Resources: ProQOL (measure of the negative and positive effects of helping others who experience suffering and trauma), CHOPS (grid/chart to help address and deal with stress), Missionary Training International (debriefing & renewal retreat), Missionary Care (resources for missions and mental health). More resources: senduwiki.org/marks.

E.	My Personal Goals: For each item rated 2 or less, write down a specific goal person you want to ask to help you reach that goal:	and a

MARK - Healthy family / healthy single (I)

- A. **Description** (family): Healthy family relates to the overall proper functioning in areas of interpersonal communication and relationships, child rearing and development, and home environment. Some of the essential elements of healthy families are effective communication, resolved conflicts between family members, increasing child development (behavioral, physical, educational, social, spiritual, etc.), regular time spent together, enjoying the presence of one another.
- B. **Self-Check:** Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 (1 being low; 5 being high).

My family is having trouble adjusting to life in our host culture.	1 2 3 4 5	My family is adjusting well to life in our host culture.
My spouse and I have been arguing quite a bit lately.	1 2 3 4 5	My spouse and I are able to quickly and successfully settle our differences.
My spouse and I do not have adequate time and resources to cultivate our relationship.	1 2 3 4 5	My spouse and I regularly make time to cultivate our relationship.
I have a significant worry (physical/educ./ emotional/social/spiritual) about one or more of my children.	1 2 3 4 5	As far as I can tell, my children are developing and thriving.
There are ongoing, unresolved conflicts within our family.	1 2 3 4 5	We have no unresolved conflicts that bother the relationships within our family.
There is tension in our family dynamic when we all spend time together.	12345	Our family regularly enjoys time spent together.

- C. **Possible Action Steps:** Family counseling, professional help (if necessary) for specific child-related concerns. People who can be asked for help and support: team leader or area director, coach, MK education consultants of your mission organization, family counsellor, pastor of home/sending church, child-development professional.
- D. **Resources**: Couple Checkup (a scientifically-based assessment that identifies relationship strengths and weaknesses across key relationship areas), SHARE (organization committed to help with educational and developmental needs for expatriate families). More resources: senduwiki.org/marks.

Ė.	My Personal Goals: For each item rated 2 or less, person you want to ask to help you reach that goal:	write	down	а	specific	goal	and	8

MARK - Healthy family / healthy single (II)

- A. **Description** (single): Being a healthy single relates to the overall proper functioning in areas of interpersonal communication, relationships, and home environment. Some of the essential elements of a healthy single are supportive and growing relationships, resolved conflicts with those who are closest to them, having peace regarding singleness, and being able to see the blessing and advantages of using singleness in ministry and activities where families are not able to.
- B. **Self-Check:** Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 (1 being low; 5 being high).

I find myself being bitter/angry/ depressed/overwhelmed about my singleness, and feel that I am struggling alone.	12345	While sometimes I struggle with my singleness, I am able to continually entrust this area of my life to God, and I have someone with whom I can process this struggle.
I am often overwhelmed by the expectations that people place on me because I am single.	12345	I have good boundaries and am able to communicate clearly what I am able to do for others and can say "no" when needed.
I receive the vast majority of my emotional support from people in my home country.	12345	My emotional support is well-balanced, including people from both my host and home countries.
Lately, I have been pulling away from / am more irritated with / am more argumentative with those closest to me.	12345	I have a healthy level of intimacy with those around me.
I have trouble feeling like I belong to any particular group of people here, and I feel very isolated and lonely.	12345	I feel like I have "family" here that I belong to and people with whom I can be myself.

- C. **Possible Action Steps:** Counseling, investing time and energy in close friendships. People who can be asked for help and support: other singles, team leader or area director, area women's representative, women's ministry team of your mission organization, other team members, coach, pastor/care group of home/sending church.
- D. Resources: https://senduwiki.org/marks.

E.	My Personal Goals: For each item rated 2 or less, write down a specific goal person you want to ask to help you reach that goal:	l and a

MARK - Healthy team relationships

- A. **Description:** Healthy team relationships relates to a group of diverse people, with different skills and different tasks, who interact in an atmosphere of belonging, encouragement, mutual respect, understanding, and trust in order to achieve a common goal. Some of the essential elements of healthy team relationships are caring relationships between team members and quick resolution of interpersonal conflicts, an ability to have open and honest conversations, valuing the opinions of every team member, a desire to work together and play together, motivated involvement and participation in team events, thinking the best of teammates or team leadership, having realistic expectations about others on the team, having an attitude of encouragement and support for those in need.
- B. **Self-Check:** Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 (1 being low; 5 being high).

I feel under-valued, alone and isolated in regards to my team relationships.	1 2 3 4 5	I feel very valued, welcomed and included by my team.
I feel my team isn't cultivating open communication and trust.	1 2 3 4 5	I feel my team strives to build and maintain communication and trust.
Our team rarely gets together for anything other than business meetings.	1 2 3 4 5	Our team regularly gets together for times of fellowship and team building.
I often feel conflict between me and another member(s) of my team.	1 2 3 4 5	I rarely feel conflict between me and another member(s) of my team.
There are things I want to say, but can't because I fear the reaction of others or how my words will be understood.	12345	I feel free to honestly share what is on my mind and in my heart.
I consistently distance myself from others, am hesitant to involve myself in team activities.	12345	I feel bonded with my team, I am glad to be together with them, and I enjoy relationships that are open and honest.

- C. Possible Action Steps: Time spent together where no business is conducted, conflict resolution in a biblical way, group discussions about how to better care for and support one another, eliciting the opinions of all team members, encouraging open dialogue while emphasizing that different opinions are welcome. People who can be asked for help and support: team leader or area director, other teammates, coach.
- D. **Resources**: 10 Signs of a Healthy Team (by Mars Hill Church), Organizational trust survey (concerning team leadership), Self-trust survey (concerning the influence of individuals towards the health environment of their team). More resources: senduwiki.org/marks.

person you want to ask to help you reach that goal:	·	J

E. My Personal Goals: For each item rated 2 or less, write down a specific goal and a

MARK - Ministry fit and satisfaction

- A. **Description:** Ministry fit and satisfaction relates to one's personal call and the role that each team member plays in accomplishing the team's purposes and goals. Some of the essential elements of ministry fit and satisfaction are clarity in one's personal ministry role, alignment of one's personal ministry role with overall team goals, the frequent use of personal spiritual gifts, the fulfillment of personal calling and passions, enough "things to do", the feeling of "being needed or important".
- B. **Self-Check:** Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 (1 being low; 5 being high).

My ministry involvements do not match my passions and spiritual gifting.	1 2 3 4 5	My ministry involvements match well with my passions and spiritual gifting.
I drift throughout most days because I don't have enough intentional things to do.	12345	I am active and productive most days because I know what I am supposed to accomplish.
I struggle with thoughts of whether I am "worth" the cost to be here or am needed by this team.	12345	I believe my ministry is important and that I am a necessary part of this team.
I don't know how my ministries help my mission organization as a whole reach its mission statement.	12345	I know how my ministries help my mission organization as a whole reach its mission statement.
I don't understand and/or agree with the goals our team is trying to accomplish.	1 2 3 4 5	I understand and agree with the goals our team is trying to accomplish.
I am very critical and find myself permanently complaining about the host culture or other team members.	12345	I feel integrated and appreciate the culture I am living in and the team I am working with.

- C. **Possible Action Steps:** Coaching, conversations with your team leader or area director about what you are passionate about and how this passion fits into the vision and the goals of your mission organization, evaluation of personal motivation and communication to team leader about what is needed to feel intrinsically motivated. People who can be asked for help and support: team leader or area director, coach.
- D. *Resources*: StrengthsFinder 2.0, Managing Those Called.docx (by Dr. Ken Harder), The Three Signs of a Miserable Job: A Fable for Managers (And Their Employees) (by Patrick Lencioni), Intrinsic Motivation at Work: What Really Drives Employee Engagement (by Kenneth Thomas), Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us (by Dan Pink, see also Ted Talk by Dan Pink). More resources: senduwiki.org/marks.

E.	My Personal Goals: For each item rated 2 or less, write down a specific goal person you want to ask to help you reach that goal:	and	а
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MARK - Ongoing growth in ministry competence

- A. **Description:** Ongoing growth in ministry competence relates to one's continual equipping and development in order to grow personally and serve more effectively. Some of the essential elements of ongoing growth in ministry competence are intentional time devoted to personal training, a desire for ongoing development, knowing what to do and where to find necessary training and resources.
- B. **Self-Check:** Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 (1 being low; 5 being high).

Ongoing training and development is not a high priority for me.	12345	Ongoing training and development is a high priority for me.
I never do an Individual Growth Plan.	12345	I always do an Individual Growth Plan.
I rarely seek out ongoing personal equipping because I don't know what I need and assume that what I need isn't available.	1 2 3 4 5	I consistently seek out ongoing personal equipping because I know it's necessary, and I seek out the resources that will help.
I have never personally benefited from the helpful processing a coach can give.	12345	I have personally benefited from the helpful processing a coach can give.
My mission organization has not significantly invested in my growth and development as a missionary.	12345	I am content with how much my mission organization has invested in my growth and development as a missionary.
I feel insecure and uncomfortable using the language of my host culture.	12345	I feel confident and comfortable using the language of my host culture.
I have no idea where to get resources or help for my ministry.	12345	I do know where to go and where to look if I need resources in order to do my ministry well.

- C. Possible Action Steps: Develop an Individual Growth Plan (IGP), receive coaching to identify personal development needs and available training opportunities. People who can be asked for help and support: team leader or area director, coach, training and development department of your mission organization (i.e. SEND U), language & orientation coordinator of your mission organization.
- D. **Resources**: IGP (instructions for developing an Individual Growth Plan), Language Learning (specific helps in the area of language and orientation), Biblical training (free online Christian education courses). More resources: senduwiki.org/marks.

E.	person you want to ask to help you reach that goal:	write	down	а	specific	goai	and	8
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MARK - Appropriate leadership direction

- A. **Description:** Appropriate leadership direction relates to the relationship between one's mission organization and/or national leadership and the individual missionary for the purpose of ensuring clear ministry goals and strategies, maintaining ministry effectiveness and satisfaction on the part of the missionary. Some of the essential elements of appropriate leadership direction are good communication between mission/national leadership and the individual missionary, clarity and good communication concerning team goals and strategies, frequent "check-ins" related to ministry progress and accomplishments, being accountable to local/area leadership, being open to meet with and listen to leadership.
- B. Self-Check: Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 (1 being low; 5 being high).

I feel that leadership doesn't give me the direction I need to be effective in ministry.	1 2 3 4 5	I feel that leadership gives me the direction I need to be effective in ministry.
My leader doesn't really know what I am passionate about or what I need from leadership.	1 2 3 4 5	I believe that my leader really understands my passion, strengths and gifts, and he seeks to lead me in a way that fits my needs.
My leadership tends to make decisions that primarily benefit their personal ministry goals.	1 2 3 4 5	I trust my leadership to make decisions that are in my best interests and in the best interests of the whole team.
My leadership never asks for my opinion on team vision or strategy.	1 2 3 4 5	My leadership regularly asks for input from the whole team and carefully evaluates them before making a decision.
My leadership doesn't pay much attention to what I am doing and rarely gives me any feedback.	12345	My leadership gives me encouragement and constructive feedback on my ministry.

- C. Possible Action Steps: Read "I've Got Your Back" and then (together with a coach) evaluate what type of a follower you are and how you can help your team leader become a better leader, study "Situational Leadership" principles and communicate to your team leader what type of leadership you need for what kind of tasks. People who can be asked for help and support: team leader or area director, regional director (if problem persists at local/country level), coach.
- D. **Resources**: I've Got Your Back: Biblical Principles for Leading and Following Well (Leadership Parables) (by James Galvin), "Becoming an Effective Leader of a Team" (Handouts from the SEND U workshop). More resources: senduwiki.org/marks.

E.	person you want to ask to help you reach that goal:	and	а
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MARK - Stable financial support

- A. **Description:** Stable financial support relates to the consistent receiving of the determined monthly amount required for a missionary to remain at 100%. Some of the essential elements of stable financial support are consistent 12-month averages of 100% support and a lack of large unexplained fluctuations in monthly giving.
- B. Self-Check: Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 (1 being low; 5 being high).

I/We are often not meeting our monthly support requirements.	12345	I/We always meet our monthly support requirements.
In the last few months, my/our support has been declining for a variety of reasons.	12345	In the last few months, my/our support has been stable or steadily improving.
I/We feel unable to keep up with the communication expectations from our support base.	12345	I/We feel on top of regular communication with our support base.
I/We feel inadequate in knowing how best to "do support discovery well".	12345	I/We feel confident in knowing how best to "do support discovery well".
Support-raising and communication with supporters is a source of much stress.	12345	Support-raising and communication with supporters comes quite easily and is often a joy.

- C. Possible Action Steps: Creating a support-raising strategy with the team leader and/ or someone on the team who has maintained good support, increased communication with supporters about ministry and needs, personal interaction with churches/ supporters, ask others for help in using tools such as blogs, websites, or use of other technology and media to raise awareness and connectedness between supporters and missionaries. People who can be asked for help and support: team leader or area director, home office staff, coach, home church (ministry staff or missions team).
- D. **Resources**: Donor Manager (Windows-based program for tracking donor information), <u>IntMPD</u> (Windows/Mac-based program for tracking donor information), <u>Partner Development</u>. More resources: <u>senduwiki.org/marks</u>.

E.	My Personal Goals: For each item rated 2 or less, write down a specific goal a person you want to ask to help you reach that goal:	and	а
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EVALUATION & NEXT ACTION STEPS

Now that you have read through each description, completed the self-check chart for each mark, and written a specific goal for each area where you rated yourself 2 or less, it's time to consider next action steps. Don't try to change everything all at once. Rarely is it possible for a person to work on more than 2-3 personal goals at the same time, so we encourage you to look at the goals you've already written under the marks and prioritize the 2-3 goals that you want to work on first. Remember the "Watermelon Principle" - you can pick up one, maybe two watermelons at a time. After that, you will end up dropping all of them. Therefore, start either with the most important areas or with the goals you can accomplish quickly. By addressing the most important areas, you will begin to tackle the most urgent areas of needed growth. By addressing goals you can accomplish quickly, you will experience the joy of more immediate change and you will gain momentum for the more challenging areas in your life. We also encourage you to seek out help and accountability from another person you trust in order to more likely experience successful and long-lasting change. In any case, feel free to contact your team leader, area director, or area council member.

MY NEXT ACTION STEPS:	
1. In the area of	_ I want to set the following goal:
I will ask	to help me reach this goal.
2. In the area of	I want to set the following goal:
I will ask	to help me reach this goal.
3. In the area of	I want to set the following goal:
I will ask	to help me reach this goal.

FEEDBACK

This document has been created by missionaries of SEND International. Please feel free to use and copy it. Is this tool helpful to you? Did we miss something important? Are there questions or statements that should be added or changed? Please tell us (healthyMarks@gmx.net) and help to make this tool even better!

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