

Psychological Assessment Guidelines for Psychologist



_____ has applied to Servants with a desire to join one of its long-term mission teams living and working among the urban poor, and has given your name as an assessor.

Work with Servants is as demanding as it is rewarding. Volunteers will live with and share in the lives of urban poor people from a very different culture. This will require ability to:

- Adapt to new and/or different cross-cultural settings
- Effectively work as part of a team
- Adjust to conditions of urban degradation, to quickly form sustaining relationships
- Deal with stress and powerful experiences and process these effectively
- Exhibit the skills necessary to complete the tasks they take on in their work and ministry

The applicant will be working as part of a team, requiring high social and emotional maturity. Servants workers will have to show lots of initiative, adaptability, self discipline, and emotional resilience.

As part of the steps to joining the team, Servants requires a psychological assessment to screen for strengths and vulnerabilities in crossing cultures and being a member of a team working in this context. Recommendations in the areas of suitability of the applicant for this type of work, as well as recommendations for care under stress would be very helpful.

Servants has found success with using the **Tennessee Self-concept Inventory** and the **NEO Personality inventory**. We recognize that all psychologists have their own preferred tools for assessments and ask the psychologist to use their best discretion in determining which test(s) to use. We have also found that the Inventory of Spiritual/Emotional Maturity from *The Emotionally Healthy Church* by Peter Scazzer is a helpful supplement to be used with one of the above stated inventories.

A counselor trained in assessments, whom we work closely with, has drawn out these “Predicting factors” from the research on cross cultural workers, to guide herself through the assessments she does. You might find these helpful too.

Cross-cultural adaptability is found to be predicted by:

- Quality of long term relationships at home and abroad
- Fit with job skills and solid job knowledge
- Adjustment of spouse and stability of family
- Personality traits of perseverance and patience
- A strong definition of oneself
- Ability to form new, good interpersonal relationships

A successful (functioning and effective) missionary profile tends to include the following:

- May report some emotional difficulties and psychosomatic illnesses which are not experienced as overwhelming
- A strong definition of self: less defensive, able to regulate one’s emotions, able to be autonomous
- Values interpersonal relationships, has satisfying relationships with peers, at home and abroad
- Respect for authority and social standards

Factors that tend to predict non-persevering missionaries:

- Psychological symptomatology, including mood disorders
- Family background that contributes to a weak development of one's sense of self. (One report suggests that 70% of missionaries who burn out, report coming from backgrounds of child neglect and abuse
- Lack of fit with required job skills
- Less satisfying relationships with peers, including: social alienation, overly dependent relationships, conflictual relationships with authority, and disappointment with sending agency
- Spiritually – greater disappointment in relationship with God

Waiver for release of information:

To be filled in by applicant.

I, _____ (*Applicant's name*), allow the psychological assessment report to be seen by the following people within Servants: field-team leader, sending office director, pre-field preparation coordinator & member care liaison and International Coordination Team.

I also give permission for the sending office to be in touch with my psychologist, if necessary, to discuss in more detail the results of the assessment.

_____ (Signature) Date: _____

Sample report:

Dear x,

Re: Psychological assessment of 'Sam'

This is a report on the psychological testing that I have completed on 'Sam'. The assessment is only for the purpose of identifying those features of the personality of 'Sam' which relate to her suitability to serve in an overseas placement, and should not be interpreted beyond that.

The assessment consisted of a one and a half hour interview, and of 'Sam' completing two inventories which have been scored and interpreted according to the published norms:

- The Tennessee Self-concept Inventory measures self esteem using a matrix of three measures of the person's overall satisfaction with him/herself and then more specific measures about how confident they are in five areas of their life. This inventory also provides a screening for past and current emotional problems (including mental health disorders such as depression or anxiety).
- The Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R) is a concise measure of the five major dimensions, or domains, of personality and some of the more important traits or facets that define each domain. Together, the 5 domain scales and 30 facet scales of the NEO PI-R allow a comprehensive assessment of adult personality.

The interview took place in Vancouver on May yth, 200X. 'Sam' presented as a relaxed person and appeared comfortable with the questionnaires and the interview.

Life History information

- 'Sam' (aged 23) was born in Vancouver and has lived in the same house and attended the same church all her life.
- She has one younger brother and they live with their Dad. 'Sam's' mother died of cancer when 'Sam' was 16.
- 'Sam' grew up in a Christian home, her parents returning to church when she was born. She recalls prayers of commitment as a child, and different times of deciding that she wanted to live as a Christian.
- Youth ministry friends have been a great support, as she was involved as a junior leader from age 15, and experienced older leaders investing in her and mentoring her.
- As a child her family traveled together to Disneyland and Australia. Her mother's sickness for 18 months before she died changed the way they lived, with the kids needing to take a lot more responsibility. 'Sam' reports she was able to accept her mother's death, and decided she wasn't going to dwell on it and feel tragic about it. Women in the church were a great support to her at the time, and continue to be so.
- One thing 'Sam' wonders is if she would have talked in depth to her Mum. She died before they had developed this more adult relationship. 'Sam' gets on well with her Dad, though their relationship is more in arguing frankly with each other than in sharing more personal things.
- 'Sam' attended Vancouver uni when she left school, expanding her friends and studying Japanese and English. She's always been interested in mission and has had 3 visits and 4 missions team trips to Asia.
- Her youth work in the church has given 'Sam' experience in managing others, solving problems and raising difficult subjects. She feels that her main fault is her lack of discipline and work- she tends to rely on impromptu lessons rather than preparing material as she could.

TSCS results

The TSCS results (see attached graph) indicate that ‘Sam’'s overall self-esteem, at the time of testing, was a little below average, and below average for missionary candidates. Her level of satisfaction with her sense of identity (“What I am”) was below average. Her satisfaction with how she feels about the self she perceives (“How satisfied I am with myself”) was average. Her level of satisfaction with her behaviour (“What I do”) was below average.

With respect to her sense of confidence in the five areas of her life the results were as follows:

‘Sam’'s satisfaction with her physical self and her moral/ethical self was average.

Her satisfaction with her personal self and her family self, was below average.

Her satisfaction with her social self was average.

‘Sam’'s score on self-criticism was below average but within the normal range. (A very low score suggests a person is defensively making a deliberate effort to present a favourable picture of one’s self

There were no concerns raised with respect to anxiety, depression or other emotional difficulties, other than a slight suggestion that there may be some emotional difficulties or stressful experience in the past from which ‘Sam’ has not completely recovered. The TSCS is not specific as to what this is. The major difficult event in ‘Sam’'s life has been her mother’s death, and while ‘Sam’ is not aware of any specific ways in which she has not ‘fully recovered’, this is likely to be the source of this indication in her profile.

A summary of the TSCS psychological assessment results.

Below is a summary of the results from the Tennessee Self-concept Inventory. The various measures are presented in terms of where the respondents (when they answered the questionnaires) fit in relation to the range found in the general population. This is based on what statisticians call the “normal distribution” where half the population fit in the percentiles 5 - 50 (ie 50%) and half in the 55 - 100 percentile. The bold line at the bottom of each section represents the average plus and minus one Standard Deviation (a statistical measure of variability) for a group of 240 Canada missionaries who have completed these assessments. 68% of this group had scores within the range marked by this bold line. The most important thing to remember in considering this information is that God made the persons and He has a part for them in his purposes. ‘Sam’

Self Esteem (TSCS)	Percentile											
	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	
Overall (low)					C							(high)
Sense of Identity (what I am) (low)				C								(high)
Self-perception (How satisfied I am with myself) (low)						C						(high)
Satisfaction with behaviour (what I do) low				C								(high)
Physical (low)						C						(high)
Moral/Ethical/Church (low)					C							(high)
Acceptance of yourself (low)					C							(high)
Relationships with family and friends (low)				C								(high)
In social settings (low)					C							(high)
Level of self criticism (low)				C								

The NEO PI-R results:

Emotional Stability: Average
 Extraversion/Sociability: Average
 Openness to Experience: High
 Agreeableness: Average
 Conscientiousness: Very Low

Strengths and areas for development

From the information provided by her test result profiles, together with information provided in the interview, the following have emerged as strengths that 'Sam' has which relate well to the demands of missionary service and cross-cultural living, together with areas for development.

Flexibility, openness to new experience and willingness to learn from others

'Sam's' profile indicates she is open to new experiences, having broad interests and being very imaginative. Compared to others, 'Sam' sees herself as more open to new activities and going to new places, and more intellectually curious and open minded. On the other hand she may tend to accept authority, honour tradition, and as a consequence be generally conservative. She is likely to be willing to learn from others in theory, but may at this age, lack the commitment to follow through and make changes.

Energy and drive to accomplish tasks

'Sam's' scores indicate she is easy going, not always very organized, sometimes careless, and not always following through on plans. 'Sam' may have a lower need to achieve than many others.

Inter-personal skills

'Sam' is likely to be experienced as laidback, generally trusting and agreeable, but she can sometimes be stubborn and competitive. The facet scores suggest she may be reluctant to get involved with the problems of others.

Resilience and resourcefulness

'Sam' is likely to be as resilient as most other people, generally calm and able to deal with stress, but she sometimes experiences feelings of guilt, anger, or sadness. The facet scores indicate that she may view her self as a little more relaxed and calm than the average woman. She is not likely to be overly distressed by failure, and is likely to be able to respond quite well to demands as they come along.

Leadership and Management potential

'Sam's' leadership and management experience with young people has been valuable, and she has learned some good skills. She is probably good at starting innovative projects, but less successful in completing them, and is likely to require help in staying focused.

Team working skills and functioning

'Sam' scored average on extraversion, the summary suggesting she is moderate in activity and enthusiasm, enjoying the company of others but also valuing her privacy. The facet scores indicate she may be a little more assertive and excitement seeking than the average person, but that she may be a little less warm and affectionate. She may tend to be more concerned with comfort and pleasure than with the well being of others. 'Sam' may well contribute ability as a 'critical thinker' to a team, being able to consider all views, without being swayed by sentiment or tradition, and to make her own judgments on what is right and wrong.

Intelligence and task specific knowledge

While this was not tested, 'Sam' appears to have above average intelligence. She has generally been able to succeed and to perform as needed without a lot of preparation. She is quite confident of her intelligence, and her profile indicates that she is a little less modest than the average person.

Reliability and conscientiousness

'Sam' scored very low on conscientiousness, and compared to others, she is likely to be unmethodical. She may procrastinate, and be easily discouraged and distracted from tasks.

Structured vs Unstructured

'Sam's profile suggests she is able to tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity, is likely to be attracted to new ideas and able to develop them with imagination. While she is likely to be comfortable with lack of structure, having accountability is more likely to bring the best out of 'Sam' and to help her to achieve more.

Cross-cultural skills

Her interests often revolve around the new and different, and her profile indicates she would be open to meeting people from different backgrounds. In fact her life has shown this, and 'Sam' is likely to have a good natural ability to learn about another culture and to be open to its perspectives.

Summary

This is a significant opportunity for 'Sam', where she has chosen to take on a challenge and stretch herself. I believe that a short term assignment such as this will be an ideal environment for 'Sam' to learn that she has it in her power to make a real difference for some individual people, in the limited time that she has, and that her choices of how seriously she takes this opportunity will matter to other people.

Main strengths: 'Sam' profiles as a stable and calm individual, with confidence in her ability to respond spontaneously to what comes along. She is likely to have good abilities to get along with a wide range of people, to communicate in a comfortable and straightforward manner with others, and to be open to new things. She has experienced a lot of adventure and variety in her life already, and is now ready for something more focused and challenging.

Environments 'Sam' would naturally do well in and where she may need additional support: 'Sam' will probably fit in well to a range of environments, and will enjoy variety and being active. If in an environment where she is required to meet deadlines, and where others are expecting her to prepare well for something and give it her best, she would be greatly helped by having accountability to make sure the work gets done.

Supervision needed on field: Because of her propensity to procrastinate, and be easily discouraged and distracted from tasks, supervision in time management, as long as she still has the freedom to be creative and develop something in her own way, would enable 'Sam' to channel more of her ability in the direction of a task.

Vulnerabilities:

- 'Sam's lack of self-discipline is an area of vulnerability for her. It is balanced by average scores on 'impulsiveness' and 'deliberation' so her lack of self-discipline is likely to show itself more in things left too late than in things done impulsively and regretted later. 'Sam's self-esteem is a little below average, especially in the areas associated with her behaviour and her perception of who she is.
- Another area of vulnerability is loneliness, as 'Sam' has usually traveled in a group before. She finds it hard to break into a group she feels excluded from, and she expects to miss her friends and family very much, especially at first.
- She also expects that she could easily become discouraged by slow progress at language learning.

Recommendations:

- While 'Sam' expects that the assignment proposed for her in Asia will provide her with opportunities for friends of her own age, Servants to Asia's Urban Poor in Canada and her supervisor in Asia, should check that this is happening.
- Especially during the early months of language learning, I recommend that 'Sam' should have accountability to help her put in the required study time, and to provide the encouragement of achieving something tangible.
- She is likely to have good ideas and skills with young people – supervision to help her set goals and evaluate her progress towards them will be of benefit to help 'Sam' channel her work most productively.