

# 8 Ways To Spot Emotionally Elite Candidates

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Think back to the last time you had to deal with a difficult team member. I'm willing to wager that the difficulty centered on an issue related to their emotional health. If you have ever led a team, you know that an emotionally healthy candidate is worth their weight in gold. I have seen super talented team members who are personally out of balance and thus a detriment to the team.

So how do you identify emotionally elite candidates when interviewing them?

At Vanderbloemen Search Group, we're spending more time and energy than ever examining candidates' balance in life (emotional, spiritual, family, etc.) as we identify top talent for our clients. That study has convinced me that hiring emotionally healthy team members is a key ingredient in the secret sauce of building a superior team.

Why? Emotionally healthy people relate well to others. They can deal with stress, tension, and failures with grace. They are low on the "drama meter." They are at peace with the past, undaunted by the present, and optimistic about the future. They are less preoccupied with their own problems and more open and free to be used by God. In short, emotionally healthy people are able to effect significant change for the Kingdom.

As you interview candidates for your church staff, I'd challenge you to look first at emotional health.

Here are 8 key questions to ask yourself as you're searching:

1. Does the candidate constantly compare themselves to others?

Theodore Roosevelt is attributed to saying, “Comparison is the thief of joy.” Emotionally unhealthy people compare themselves to others, think the grass is always greener, and even resent others’ success. In contrast, emotionally healthy people are content with what God has given them, confident that God has perfectly equipped them for what He has called them to do, and can [celebrate the success of others](#). Ask your candidates to rate their level of contentment with their lives or to describe a recent success of a friend or family member, and listen closely to their responses.

## 2. Does the candidate have a victim mentality?

Emotionally unhealthy people keep company with people who bring them down and then blame everyone else when their life isn’t how they want it to be. Conversely, emotionally healthy people don’t act as though the world owes them anything. They don’t waste their time having pity parties or feeling sorry for themselves. Ask your candidates about a significant failure in their life and how they responded. Listen for if they take responsibility for their lives and failures and how they bounced back from a low point.

## 3. Do you hear about forgiveness when talking to this candidate?

Closely related to number 2, emotionally healthy people don’t hold grudges. They know that harbored anger and resentment will imprison them and affect every aspect of their lives. Emotionally healthy people don’t dwell on the past or obsess about a time someone hurt them. If they are willing, have your candidates describe a time when they were hurt or disappointed by someone. Did they actively work toward forgiveness?

## 4. Does this person need to be the center of attention?

Ever been around that person who is needy for attention or constant affirmation? It’s just a guess, but that person probably has some deep insecurity that they need to deal with. Emotionally healthy candidates don’t need or demand recognition. In fact, the most successful people I’ve ever

been around almost refuse to let the conversation become about them. They ask about others in the room. They give credit to others. They believe in themselves and “do their own thing,” not needing to fit in or craving affirmation. Are any of your candidates showy or needy, or do they demonstrate humble confidence?

## 5. Can this person say “no?”

Overcommitting yourself may be a sign that you think you’re superman or that you want others to think you are. If someone can’t say no, they are probably too worried about what everyone else thinks of them. And if someone is too fixated on pleasing others, they may not be emotionally healthy. Likewise, overcommitting yourself might mean that you’re placing a higher priority on work than on your family/home life. Ask your candidates about their thoughts on work-life balance and how they say no when a commitment may interfere with their family time. Ask them to talk about the last time they turned down a commitment or opportunity.

## 6. Is this person high on the “drama meter.”

“And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:7). A firm trust in the goodness of God gives a deep peace that makes one relatively unfazed by change, daily stressors, worries, and tough situations. Emotionally healthy people don’t have knee-jerk emotional reactions to change or get worked up about things that they can’t control. Question candidates about a stressful situation they have encountered at work and how they dealt with it.

## 7. Does the candidate have a record of giving back and giving their all.

Emotionally unhealthy people hoard their time, talents, and even love. Emotionally healthy people have a spirit of servanthood and give of themselves. Emotionally unhealthy people are afraid to try hard because they might fail. Emotionally healthy people give their all regardless of what they might get in return or what the outcome might be. And if they do fail, are

hurt, or are rejected, they don't give up or begin to withhold their gifts. They continue to give back and give everything they've got.

## 8. Does this person know that joy is a choice?

When Walt Disney said, "Happiness is a state of mind," he was on to something. Emotionally healthy people know that they have control of their attitude and their response to situations. Listen for if your candidates communicate a positive outlook on their lives and the future. And listen for candidates choosing to live out all of the fruit of the spirit, which are clear determiners of emotional and spiritual health: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Here's a news flash about the Church: It's run by a bunch of people who need a Savior. No team member is perfect, and waiting to find perfect before you hire means you will always be a team of one. Everyone you hire will have flaws. But you can mitigate the effect of those flaws if you hire people who are balanced and healthy. When emotionally healthy people are in leadership in the church, it creates an entire culture of emotional health and healing. We encourage you to learn how to spot emotionally healthy candidates and cultivate an emotionally healthy church staff. It will make a bigger difference than you can imagine.

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*Vanderbloemen Search Group is a pastor search firm that helps churches and faith-based organizations find great staff. If you are interested in conducting a compensation analysis for your church, consulting about your staffing or church development, or hiring us to find your next team member, contact us at [info@vanderbloemen.com](mailto:info@vanderbloemen.com).*