

Sample Responses for the "Ishmael Beah - Emotional Intelligence Reflection Worksheet"

1. Recognizing Emotions

Question:

How does Ishmael recognize his emotions when arriving in New York, especially after losing his baggage? How does his reaction reflect his emotional state at that time?

Sample Response:

When Ishmael arrives in New York, he feels a deep sense of loss and disorientation. Losing his baggage symbolizes his inability to hold on to any part of his old life. He recognizes emotions like sadness, frustration, and confusion, but doesn't know how to express them. His reaction—sitting silently in the airport, feeling "empty"—reflects his deep emotional exhaustion from the trauma he's experienced. His emotions are overwhelming, but he doesn't fully understand them yet, which makes the situation even harder to process.

2. Understanding the Causes and Consequences of Emotions

Question:

What causes Ishmael to feel disconnected and out of place when he arrives in New York? What do you think the consequences are of these emotions for him as he adapts to his new life?

Sample Response:

Ishmael feels disconnected in New York because everything is foreign to him—he's left behind the war-torn country of Sierra Leone, and now he must learn how to survive in a peaceful society where people don't understand the horrors he's witnessed. The consequences of these emotions are profound: they cause him to withdraw into himself and struggle to form connections with others. His feelings of alienation make it harder to adapt to his new life, as he feels like he doesn't belong anywhere. The emotional disconnect becomes a barrier to healing, but over time, Ishmael begins to slowly open up as he finds new sources of support.

3. Labeling Emotions

Question:

Ishmael's experience in New York brings out a variety of emotions. Instead of just labeling them as "confused" or "sad," can you describe these emotions with more specific words based on his experiences?

Sample Response:

Ishmael feels **disoriented** and **detached** as he navigates his new life in New York. He experiences **nostalgia** for his home, but this is mixed with **guilt** because he survived when so many others didn't. He feels **helpless** because he can't seem to reconcile his past with his present. There's also a sense of

hopelessness, especially when he's reminded of the things he's lost. These emotions are much more specific than just confusion or sadness—they reflect his complex inner state as he tries to find a way to belong in a world that feels completely foreign.

4. Expressing Emotions

Question:

When Ishmael feels alienated or misunderstood, how does he express his emotions to others? Do you think his way of expressing his feelings is effective in these situations?

Sample Response:

Ishmael doesn't initially express his emotions directly to others; instead, he often shuts down and isolates himself. He may appear cold or distant, even when he's feeling overwhelmed by his past trauma. His silence makes it difficult for people to understand what he's going through, which in turn deepens his sense of isolation. While his withdrawal is a natural response to his emotional pain, it's not the most effective way of expressing his feelings. Over time, though, he begins to open up more, particularly when he meets others who understand his experiences, like the therapist who helps him process his emotions.

5. Regulating Emotions

Question:

How does Ishmael regulate his emotions when faced with overwhelming situations in New York, such as losing his baggage or feeling misunderstood? Does he manage his emotions well?

Sample Response:

At first, Ishmael struggles to regulate his emotions. Losing his baggage in New York is a trigger for his trauma, and he reacts with a mix of anger and despair. He doesn't have the coping skills to handle these overwhelming emotions, and this often leads to outbursts or withdrawal. As he begins his therapy and starts connecting with others, he learns new ways to cope, like expressing his feelings through writing or talking to someone he trusts. While he still faces challenges, Ishmael improves in regulating his emotions over time, especially as he gains insight into his trauma.

6. Reflecting on Your Own Emotions

Question:

Can you think of a time when you felt alienated or misunderstood, similar to Ishmael's experience in New York? What caused these emotions, and how did you cope with them?

Sample Response:

I remember feeling alienated when I moved to a new school in a different city. I didn't know anyone, and everything felt so different from where I came from. I was shy and felt like no one would understand me. The cause of my emotions was the fear of not fitting in and the loneliness that came with it. I coped by keeping to myself at first, but eventually, I reached out to a few classmates who shared similar interests.

Talking to them and finding common ground helped me feel more understood, and over time, I started feeling more comfortable in my new environment.