

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF COMING TO AMERICA

Authenticity, Inherited Roles, and the Loneliness of Privilege

FAMILY DISCUSSION GUIDE

Use this guide to explore authenticity, family expectations, relationships, and what it means to be loved for who you are rather than what you represent.



BEFORE WATCHING

Set the stage and open hearts and minds.

- What makes someone feel truly known?
- Have you ever felt pressure to become the person others expected you to be?

Do people sometimes judge others based on money, popularity, appearance, or success?

What is the difference between admiration and genuine connection?



WHILE WATCHING

Pay attention to identity, status, and belonging.

- Why does Akeem leave a life that seems perfect?
- What is he searching for that money cannot provide?
- How do people treat him differently when they think he is ordinary?
- What moments show who Akeem really is beneath his title?
- What does the movie suggest about happiness and success?



AFTER WATCHING

Reflect together and make meaning.

- What was Akeem truly looking for?
- Why is it difficult to know whether people like us for who we are?
- How did secrecy affect trust in the movie?
- What qualities made Akeem a good partner regardless of his status?
- What does the film teach about authenticity?



FAMILY REFLECTION

Go deeper with empathy, honesty, and connection.

- Have you ever felt valued more for what you do than for who you are?
- What expectations influence your choices today?
- Who in your life knows the real you?
- What helps people feel safe enough to be authentic?
- What is one role, expectation, or pressure you could let go of this week?

DR. Z TAKEAWAY

“Many people spend years trying to earn approval through achievement, status, appearance, or success. Yet genuine connection begins when we allow others to know who we are beneath the role. The healthiest relationships are built not on admiration, but on being truly known.”



DR. MICHAEL ZAKALIK, PSY.D.
Psychologist for Parenting | Z Psychology



Understanding minds.



Strengthening connections.