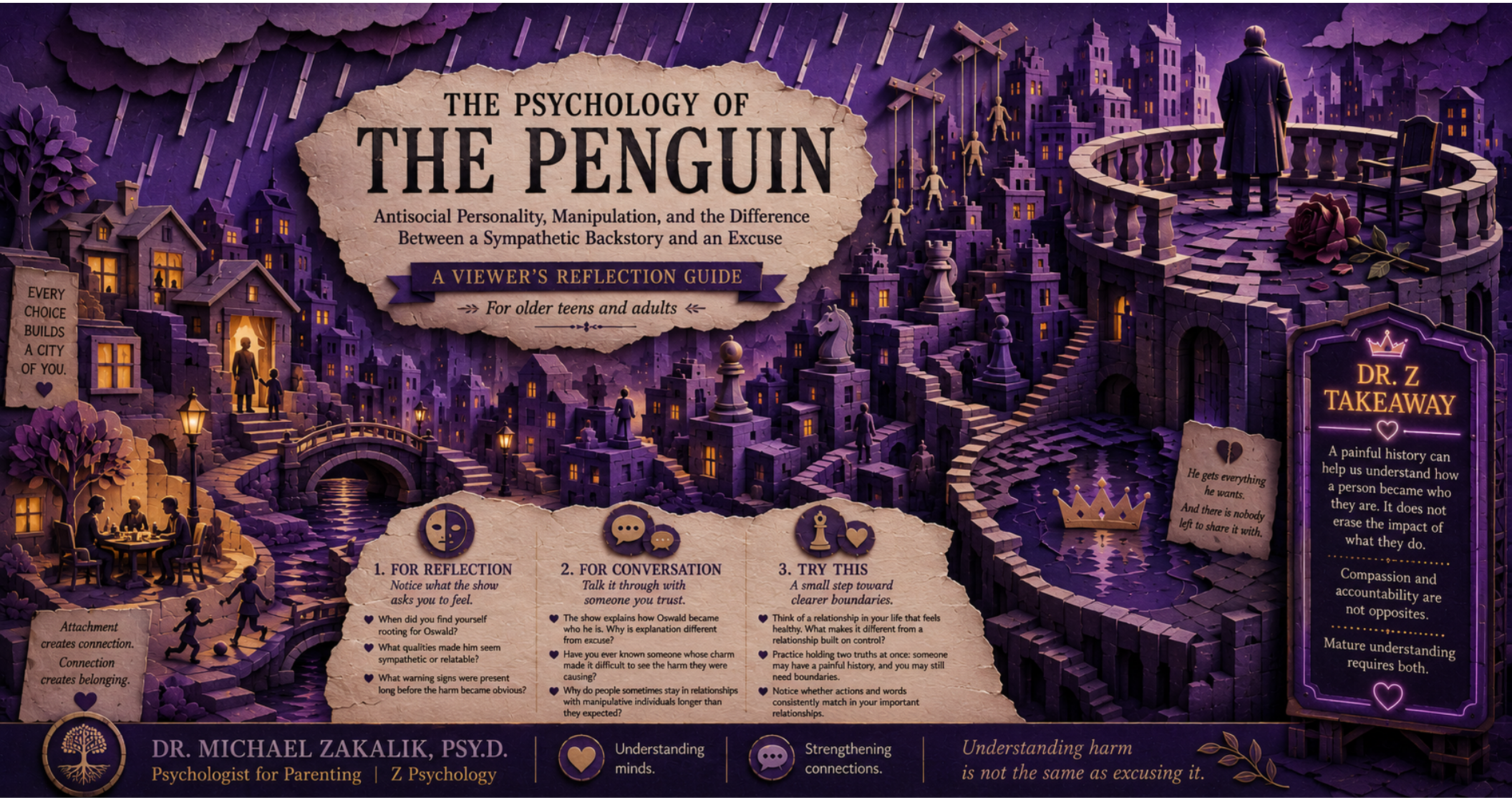

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF
THE PENGUIN
Antisocial Personality, Manipulation, and the Difference Between a Sympathetic Backstory and an Excuse
A VIEWER'S REFLECTION GUIDE
For older teens and adults
EVERY CHOICE BUILDS A CITY OF YOU.
Attachment creates connection. Connection creates belonging.
He gets everything he wants. And there is nobody left to share it with.
1. FOR REFLECTION
Notice what the show asks you to feel.
When did you find yourself rooting for Oswald?
What qualities made him seem sympathetic or relatable?
What warning signs were present long before the harm became obvious?
2. FOR CONVERSATION
Talk it through with someone you trust.
The show explains how Oswald became who he is. Why is explanation different from excuse?
Have you ever known someone whose charm made it difficult to see the harm they were causing?
Why do people sometimes stay in relationships with manipulative individuals longer than they expected?
3. TRY THIS
A small step toward clearer boundaries.
Think of a relationship in your life that feels healthy. What makes it different from a relationship built on control?
Practice holding two truths at once: someone may have a painful history, and you may still need boundaries.
Notice whether actions and words consistently match in your important relationships.
DR. Z TAKEAWAY
A painful history can help us understand how a person became who they are. It does not erase the impact of what they do.
Compassion and accountability are not opposites.
Mature understanding requires both.
DR. MICHAEL ZAKALIK, PSY.D.
Psychologist for Parenting | Z Psychology
Understanding minds.
Strengthening connections.
Understanding harm is not the same as excusing it.