

# THE CIRCLE OF TRUST

## A Comedy Feature Script

*"Sometimes the road to hell is paved with good intentions... and really good cookies."*

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### FADE IN:

#### EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - MARCH 2020

*A quiet cul-de-sac. "STAY HOME" signs in windows. DAVE PETERSON (45, earnest to a fault) stands in his driveway, waving at neighbors who wave back from safe distances.*

**DAVE:** *(calling out)* Remember, we're all in this together! From six feet apart!

*His wife JANET (48, practical, loving but exasperated) appears in the doorway.*

**JANET:** Dave, you're yelling at the mailbox again.

**DAVE:** I'm building community, Janet. Crisis brings out the best in people.

**JANET:** Or the weirdest. Come inside before Mrs. Henderson calls about noise complaints.

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#### INT. DAVE'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

*Dave sits surrounded by self-help books: "Reclaiming Masculine Energy," "The Modern Man's Guide to Emotional Wellness," "Leadership in Crisis Times." His laptop shows a Zoom call titled "SUBURBAN DADS SUPPORT NETWORK."*

**DAVE:** *(to camera)* Gentlemen, I've been thinking. We're all struggling with isolation, with purpose, with what it means to be men in 2020.

*On screen: MIKE TORRES (38, practical contractor), STEVE COLLINS (42, anxious accountant), and BRIAN WALSH (50, recently divorced).*

**MIKE:** Dave, we've been friends since high school. We know you're struggling. You reorganized your garage three times this week.

**STEVE:** I've been tracking my anxiety levels in a spreadsheet. Would anyone like to see the graph?

**BRIAN:** *(slightly drunk)* My ex-wife took the kids to her mother's "for safety." I'm living on cereal and regret.

**DAVE:** This is exactly what I'm talking about! We need real support. In-person connection. A brotherhood.

**MIKE:** Dave, there's a pandemic.

**DAVE:** My garage is well-ventilated.

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## **INT. DAVE'S GARAGE - APRIL 2020**

*Four folding chairs in a circle. A hand-painted sign reads "MEN'S CIRCLE - SAFE SPACE." Dave has prepared coffee and store-bought cookies.*

**DAVE:** Welcome to the first meeting of our support circle. Here, among men, we can be vulnerable. Authentic.

**STEVE:** Should we have name tags? I brought a label maker.

**BRIAN:** *(eyeing the cookies)* Are those Pepperidge Farm? My ex used to buy the cheap ones.

**MIKE:** Dave, what exactly are we supposed to do here?

**DAVE:** Share. Connect. Explore what modern masculinity means in a time of crisis.

**MIKE:** It means I can't work because construction is shut down, and I'm going crazy watching Netflix with my teenage daughter who thinks I'm an idiot.

**STEVE:** That's... actually really honest, Mike.

**BRIAN:** My teenager won't even talk to me. Says I have "toxic energy."

**DAVE:** *(excited)* See? This is working already!

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## **INT. DAVE'S GARAGE - MAY 2020**

*Same setup, but now there's a small whiteboard with "CIRCLE RULES" written in Dave's careful handwriting.*

**DAVE:** Week six, gentlemen. I've been reading about creating safe spaces, and I think we need to establish some ground rules.

**MIKE:** Dave, we're four middle-aged guys drinking coffee in your garage.

**DAVE:** We're a support network, Mike. And as such, we need to be inclusive, non-judgmental, and open to growth.

**STEVE:** I've been journaling like you suggested. Mostly about how weird it feels to journal.

**BRIAN:** I tried calling my ex yesterday. She said I sounded "different." Like I was "processing emotions."

**DAVE:** That's growth, Brian!

**BRIAN:** She hung up on me.

**MIKE:** Maybe because you called at 2 AM?

**BRIAN:** I was having a breakthrough!

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## **INT. DAVE'S KITCHEN - EVENING**

*Dave excitedly explains to Janet while she makes dinner.*

**DAVE:** It's working, Jan. The guys are opening up, sharing feelings. We're building something real here.

**JANET:** That's nice, honey. Just remember not everyone processes emotions the same way.

**DAVE:** Actually, I've been thinking we might expand. Include younger men from the community. Be mentors.

**JANET:** *(pausing)* Dave, you realize you're not qualified to mentor anyone, right? You still ask me to make phone calls for you.

**DAVE:** That's different. Phone anxiety is a legitimate condition.

**JANET:** I love you, but maybe don't save the world just yet.

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## **INT. DAVE'S GARAGE - JUNE 2020**

*Now six chairs. Two new faces: TYLER (23, lost college graduate) and MARCUS (19, community college student).*

**DAVE:** Let's welcome our younger brothers, Tyler and Marcus, to the circle.

**TYLER:** Thanks for having us, Mr. Peterson. My mom said you guys might help me figure out my life.

**MARCUS:** My guidance counselor thought this would be good for college applications.

**STEVE:** *(whispering to Mike)* Did he just call Dave "Mr. Peterson"?

**MIKE:** *(whispering back)* Are we old enough to be called "Mister"?

**DAVE:** Age is just a number, gentlemen. What matters is our shared experience of masculinity.

**BRIAN:** When I was nineteen, my biggest worry was beer money. Now these kids are dealing with economic collapse and climate anxiety.

**TYLER:** Actually, my biggest worry is student loans.

**MARCUS:** And whether I'll ever be able to afford a house.

**DAVE:** See? Intergenerational wisdom sharing!

**MIKE:** I think they just made us feel older.

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## INT. DAVE'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

*Dave researches on his laptop: "Inclusive Masculinity," "Expanding Support Networks," "Allies and Advocacy."*  
*Janet appears with tea.*

**JANET:** Still researching your man group?

**DAVE:** I'm learning about expanding our reach. Being more inclusive. Apparently, traditional masculinity can be... problematic.

**JANET:** Dave, you iron your underwear and cry during insurance commercials. You're not exactly traditionally masculine.

**DAVE:** That's the point! We need to redefine what masculinity means. Be open to all expressions of male identity.

**JANET:** *(sitting down)* Honey, can I ask you something? What's this really about?

**DAVE:** What do you mean?

**JANET:** I mean, you've reorganized the garage, started a men's group, and now you're becoming an expert on gender studies. Are you okay?

**DAVE:** *(long pause)* I just... I want to matter, Jan. I want to help people. Make a difference.

**JANET:** *(touching his hand)* You already matter. To me, to your friends, to the community. You don't have to save everyone.

**DAVE:** But what if I could?

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## INT. DAVE'S GARAGE - JULY 2020

*Eight chairs now. The group has grown. Dave stands with a clipboard.*

**DAVE:** Brothers, I've been doing research on inclusivity and allyship. I think we need to examine our assumptions about who can benefit from masculine support.

**MIKE:** Dave, what are you talking about?

**DAVE:** I'm talking about expanding our definition of brotherhood. Being truly inclusive.

**STEVE:** *(nervously)* Are we getting homework? Because I'm already behind on my feelings journal.

**TYLER:** Mr. Peterson, my girlfriend asked if she could come sometime. She says she relates to a lot of masculine energy stuff.

**DAVE:** *(lighting up)* That's exactly the kind of thinking we need! Progressive, inclusive, non-binary in our approach to support.

**BRIAN:** Non-binary? Dave, I'm still figuring out regular binary.

**MARCUS:** My sister says gender is a construct anyway.

**MIKE:** *(to Steve)* Are you writing this down?

**STEVE:** I stopped understanding what to write down three weeks ago.

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## **EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY**

*Dave walks with his neighbor CAROL HENDERSON (55, mail carrier, practical), discussing the group.*

**CAROL:** So this men's group of yours, Dave. What exactly do you do?

**DAVE:** We create a safe space for exploring masculine identity and emotional support.

**CAROL:** Sounds fancy. Most men I know just grunt and watch sports.

**DAVE:** That's exactly the kind of toxic masculinity we're trying to address, Carol.

**CAROL:** *(laughing)* Toxic? Honey, I've been delivering mail to men for twenty years. Most of them are just confused and trying their best.

**DAVE:** But what if we could help them be better? More enlightened?

**CAROL:** What if you just let them be human?

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## **INT. DAVE'S GARAGE - AUGUST 2020**

*Ten chairs. Among the original group sit SUSAN MARTINEZ (42, Dave's neighbor) wearing a baseball cap and flannel shirt.*

**DAVE:** Today I want to welcome... uh... *(checking his notes)* ...Samuel to our brotherhood.

**SUSAN:** *(in a slightly deeper voice)* Thanks, Dave. I've always felt very connected to masculine energy. Very... uh... sports-oriented.

**MIKE:** *(whispering urgently to Steve)* That's Susan from next door. She borrowed my hedge trimmer last week.

**STEVE:** *(whispering back)* Should I write that down as suspicious activity?

**MIKE:** Steve, that's literally Dave's neighbor in his old Red Sox cap.

**DAVE:** Remember, we don't question anyone's journey of self-discovery. The important thing is that Samuel feels supported in exploring their masculine identity.

**SUSAN/SAMUEL:** Right. I've always been very... *(long pause)* ...bearded on the inside.

**BRIAN:** *(confused)* Bearded on the inside?

**SUSAN/SAMUEL:** It's a metaphor. For... masculine... hair feelings.

**TYLER:** That's actually kind of deep.

**MARCUS:** Gender is fluid, man.

**MIKE:** *(standing up)* Dave, can I talk to you outside?

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## **EXT. DAVE'S DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS**

**MIKE:** Dave. That's Susan Martinez. She's been our neighbor for five years.

**DAVE:** We can't judge people's authentic expression, Mike. What if they really identify as—

**MIKE:** Dave. She's wearing your high school baseball cap. The one that says "DAVE PETERSON 1993" on the inside.

**STEVE:** *(joining them)* Also, "Samuel" just asked if anyone has a hair tie for their ponytail.

**DAVE:** Maybe it's a... man bun situation?

**MIKE:** Dave, this is getting weird.

**DAVE:** Or maybe it's getting progressive. Maybe we're breaking down barriers and creating something revolutionary.

**STEVE:** Should I be documenting this revolution?

**MIKE:** Steve, stop writing everything down!

**STEVE:** But what if this is historically significant?

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## **INT. DAVE'S KITCHEN - EVENING**

*Dave and Janet prepare snacks for the group.*

**JANET:** So how's the group going?

**DAVE:** Great! We've really expanded our understanding of inclusive masculinity.

**JANET:** That's nice. Who's coming tonight?

**DAVE:** The usual guys, plus Samuel, and I think a few more new members interested in exploring masculine identity.

**JANET:** *(pausing)* Dave, you know Susan Martinez isn't actually named Samuel, right?

**DAVE:** *(defensive)* People can choose their own names, Janet. We live in a progressive society.

**JANET:** Dave, she asked me yesterday if she could borrow one of your old shirts for "man group."

**DAVE:** She said "man group"?

**JANET:** She also asked if you had any fake mustaches left over from Halloween.

**DAVE:** *(long pause)* Maybe she's... method acting her masculine identity?

**JANET:** Honey, I think Susan just wants to hang out with you guys. She's been lonely since her divorce.

**DAVE:** So you think she's not genuinely exploring masculine identity?

**JANET:** I think she heard you guys laughing and wanted to join in.

**DAVE:** *(considering)* But what if excluding her would be discriminatory?

**JANET:** What if including her under false pretenses is just... weird?

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## **INT. DAVE'S GARAGE - AUGUST 2020 (LATER)**

*Twelve chairs. The original four men now sit among: SUSAN/SAMUEL (in flannel), CAROL HENDERSON wearing a fake mustache and going by "CHUCK," LINDA WRIGHT (50s, librarian) in a baseball cap calling herself "LUKE," and several other neighborhood women in various masculine disguises.*

**DAVE:** *(consulting his clipboard)* Tonight's topic is "Embracing Our Inner Alpha."

**CAROL/CHUCK:** *(mustache sliding down)* I definitely felt my inner alpha today when I... uh... lifted heavy things. Very heavy. Male things.

**LINDA/LUKE:** My alpha energy was very strong during... *(looking around for inspiration)* ...car maintenance activities.

**SUSAN/SAMUEL:** I opened several jars today. Very masculine jar-opening energy.

*The women nod supportively at each other. The original men look increasingly bewildered.*

**MIKE:** *(to Brian)* Is this real life?

**BRIAN:** I don't know anymore. My therapist says I have trouble distinguishing reality from anxiety dreams.

**TYLER:** This is actually pretty cool. My generation is really breaking down gender barriers.

**MARCUS:** My sociology professor would love this.

**STEVE:** *(frantically writing)* I can't keep up with documenting all this sociological significance.

**DAVE:** Let's go around the circle. How did everyone's masculinity manifest today?

**CAROL/CHUCK:** Well, I delivered mail very... aggressively. Like a man would.

**LINDA/LUKE:** I organized books by the Dewey Decimal System with strong masculine energy.

**SUSAN/SAMUEL:** I watched football highlights and grunted appropriately.

**MIKE:** *(standing up)* Okay, time out. Dave, I need to talk to you. Privately. Now.

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## **EXT. DAVE'S BACKYARD - NIGHT**

*Mike paces while Dave sits on a lawn chair. Steve hovers nearby with his notebook.*

**MIKE:** Dave, this has gotten completely out of hand.

**DAVE:** How so?

**MIKE:** How so? Your wife's book club is in there wearing fake mustaches and calling themselves masculine names!

**DAVE:** We can't judge people's—

**MIKE:** Dave! "Chuck" just asked if anyone has tampons for their "masculine nose bleeds!"

**STEVE:** I wrote that down. Should I categorize it under "medical concerns" or "gender identity"?

**MIKE:** Steve, put the notebook away!

**DAVE:** Maybe we're witnessing something unprecedented. A breaking down of societal barriers.

**MIKE:** Or maybe we're witnessing a bunch of bored housewives who heard us having fun and wanted to crash the party.

**STEVE:** *(still writing)* Should I record this as "societal breakthrough" or "party crashing"?

**MIKE:** STEVE!

*Steve reluctantly closes the notebook.*

**DAVE:** But what if we're being discriminatory? What if we're perpetuating harmful exclusionary practices?

**MIKE:** Dave, it's okay to have a men's group that's actually for men.

**DAVE:** But who defines what a man is in 2020?

**MIKE:** Biology? Genetics? Reality?

**DAVE:** That's very traditional thinking, Mike.

**MIKE:** Sometimes traditional thinking exists because it makes sense!

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## INT. DAVE'S GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

*Inside, the women are talking among themselves in their regular voices.*

**CAROL:** *(mustache hanging off one ear)* Honestly, this started because you guys looked like you were having such a good time.

**LINDA:** Plus, Dave always has those good Pepperidge Farm cookies.

**SUSAN:** And frankly, since my divorce, I could use some emotional support too.

**JANET:** *(entering from the house)* How's everyone doing?

**CAROL:** Oh, hi Janet. We're just being masculine.

**JANET:** *(sitting down)* You know, you could just ask to join without the costumes.

**LINDA:** We thought it was a men-only thing.

**SUSAN:** Dave seemed very serious about the brotherhood aspect.

**TYLER:** Wait, you're all just neighbors who wanted to hang out?

**MARCUS:** This is either really progressive or really weird.

**BRIAN:** *(slightly drunk)* At this point, I'll take any social interaction that doesn't involve my ex-wife's lawyer.

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## EXT. DAVE'S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

*The debate continues.*

**DAVE:** Mike, what if we're creating something bigger than we imagined? A truly inclusive support network?

**MIKE:** Dave, what if you're just overthinking everything like you always do?

**STEVE:** Can I say something?

**MIKE:** Only if you're not reading from your notebook.

**STEVE:** I've been documenting this whole thing, and you know what I've noticed? Everyone seems happier when they're just being themselves.

**DAVE:** What do you mean?

**STEVE:** I mean, the women seem more relaxed when they drop the fake voices. You seem more stressed when you're trying to be the perfect inclusive leader. Mike seems irritated when he's not allowed to call things what they are.

**MIKE:** Steve, that might be the smartest thing you've said all year.

**STEVE:** I wrote it down first to practice.

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## **INT. DAVE'S GARAGE - LATER THAT NIGHT**

*Dave addresses the full group, who are now all sitting in their regular clothes and voices.*

**DAVE:** So, after some reflection and conversation, I think we might have lost sight of our original mission.

**JANET:** You mean when you three were just trying to cope with lockdown depression?

**DAVE:** Well, yes. But also, I think I got caught up in trying to be the perfect ally and inclusive leader.

**CAROL:** Dave, you're a good guy, but you don't need to solve everyone's problems.

**LINDA:** Sometimes people just want to belong somewhere.

**SUSAN:** And sometimes they want cookies and adult conversation.

**BRIAN:** And sometimes they want to complain about their ex-wives without being judged.

**TYLER:** And sometimes they want to figure out what adulting actually means.

**MARCUS:** And sometimes they just want to understand why their parents' generation is so weird.

**MIKE:** And sometimes they want to fix things with their hands instead of talking about their feelings all the time.

**STEVE:** And sometimes they want to write it all down because they're afraid they'll forget how they felt.

*Everyone looks at Steve with new understanding.*

**DAVE:** So what you're all saying is... everyone just wants to belong somewhere?

**JANET:** That's exactly what we're saying.

**CAROL:** The question is, what kind of group do you actually want to have?

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## **INT. DAVE'S GARAGE - ONE WEEK LATER**

*The same circle, but now it's clearly a mixed group. A new sign reads "COMMUNITY SUPPORT CIRCLE - EVERYONE WELCOME." Dave still has his clipboard, but it's less formal.*

**DAVE:** Welcome to our newly restructured community support group.

**MIKE:** Much better. No more fake mustaches.

**CAROL:** Hey, that mustache was quality!

**LINDA:** I actually enjoyed being Luke for a while. Very liberating.

**SUSAN:** I learned that I look terrible in baseball caps.

**JANET:** You all look better as yourselves.

**BRIAN:** My therapist says this is the healthiest social interaction I've had in years.

**TYLER:** My mom's proud that I'm part of a "real community group."

**MARCUS:** My sociology professor wants to interview us about grassroots social formation.

**STEVE:** *(excited)* Can I document the interview?

**EVERYONE:** No!

**STEVE:** But it might be historically significant!

**MIKE:** Steve, some things don't need to be documented.

**STEVE:** *(writing)* "Mike says some things don't need documentation."

**DAVE:** You know what? This is actually better than what I originally planned.

**JANET:** How so?

**DAVE:** I was trying so hard to create the perfect inclusive space that I forgot the most important part.

**CAROL:** Which is?

**DAVE:** Making sure people actually want to be there.

**LINDA:** And that they can be themselves.

**SUSAN:** And that there are good cookies.

**BRIAN:** The cookies are really important.

**TYLER:** What kind of cookies are we having next week?

**DAVE:** *(consulting clipboard)* I've created a rotating schedule based on everyone's dietary preferences and

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**JANET:** Dave?

**DAVE:** Yes?

**JANET:** Maybe just ask people what they want.

**DAVE:** *(pausing, then smiling)* That's... actually a better system.

**MIKE:** Look at that. Dave's learning to be less Dave.

**DAVE:** I'm still keeping the talking stick, though.

**STEVE:** Dave, that's still a pool noodle.

**DAVE:** It's a *symbolic* pool noodle that represents our shared commitment to—

**CAROL:** Dave?

**DAVE:** Yeah?

**CAROL:** Just pass the cookies.

*Everyone laughs. Dave puts down his clipboard and reaches for the cookie plate.*

**DAVE:** You know what? Sometimes the best support groups are the ones where people just show up and are themselves.

**JANET:** Even when themselves includes overthinking everything?

**DAVE:** Especially then.

**STEVE:** *(quietly writing)* "Dave learns to embrace imperfection."

**MIKE:** Steve, what did we say about the notebook?

**STEVE:** This is different. This is my personal growth journal.

**BRIAN:** As long as you're not documenting my personal growth. I'm still figuring out what that means.

**TYLER:** Mr. Peterson?

**DAVE:** Just Dave is fine, Tyler.

**TYLER:** Dave, thanks for not giving up when this got weird.

**DAVE:** Thanks for sticking around when I was being weird.

**MARCUS:** Are we going to keep meeting?

**CAROL:** As long as there are cookies.

**LINDA:** And good conversation.

**SUSAN:** And no fake mustaches required.

**JANET:** And Dave promises not to turn us into a social experiment.

**DAVE:** I promise to try to be less... experimental about it.

**MIKE:** That's probably the best we can hope for.

**STEVE:** *(looking up from writing)* Should I document that promise?

**EVERYONE:** STEVE!

**STEVE:** *(grinning)* Got it. Some things are better left undocumented.

*He closes the notebook with a satisfied smile.*

**FADE OUT.**

**THE END**

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*A comedy about good intentions, community building, identity, and the simple truth that sometimes the best support comes from people who care enough to show up - even if they arrive wearing fake mustaches and calling themselves Chuck.*

**Final Title Card: "Based on a true story that definitely didn't happen exactly like this, but probably should have."**