

FIVE FRIENDS

[Transcript]

NARRATOR: About a year ago, I found out I was having a son. I instantly became the proud papa. Puffed out my chest, bought a new camera. The height of my expectation was almost surreal. But then I realized I couldn't imagine what to expect. I have two daughters, so I'm not a new father. But I've never had a son before and somehow it seemed different.

Here I am as a boy, I had dreams as a boy and I faced obstacles as a boy. I had some idea of what life as a boy would be like and it certainly wasn't easy. I realized I didn't exactly know how I would prepare him for it all. Around that same time, I got a phone call.

I have an old friend, and by old I mean I've known him for a while. But he's also almost twice my age. While I was facing all these questions around having a son, he called to tell me he was retiring from his job, which is a big milestone on a man's journey.

This is Hank. I thought it would be dramatic and profound to have him walking through the woods.

Friendships are funny. Sometimes the most unlikely people make the most important companions. Hank has had a good life. He's married with two daughters and has had a prolific career. But as he reflected on his life, he realized that one of the most important parts of his life was the friends he'd made along the way. He wanted to tell that story.

I should mention here that we *did* discuss him using snowshoes at one point.

As we talked about friendship, Hank said that male *intimacy* is important. "Male what?" I said. I think we should find a different word. But that's when I realized that men talking about their relationships was actually a little risky. Men sharing their lives with one another and revealing their fears and dreams to each other was something we don't often see. I knew I had to help him tell that story. I discovered some interesting things, some honestly shocking things, and some things I could use to help teach another young man what I now realize is one of the most important things to know.

[TITLE SCREEN]

NARRATOR: To help me better understand Hank's friendships, and navigate this delicate subject of male intimacy, I turned to some experts. Michael Kimmel is a sociologist at SUNY Stony Brook. He specializes in men and masculinity, having written twenty books on the subject.

MICHAEL KIMMEL: What we witnessed in the 19th century, in the United States and Europe, was what one sociologist calls "the feminization of love." Where, when you have the separate spheres, man goes off into the work place, the competitive place, he has to guard himself, he has to be hard as nails, he can show no feelings, he can show no weakness. And woman, in the home, they get to be with children, they get to make it a, you

know sort of a, she's the angle in the house, as Virginia Woolf said. Well, she becomes the guardian of emotion. He's the guardian of rationality. And that idea that we have these two models that we're Martian and Venutian is a relatively recent one.

NARRATOR: Alan Frow was a pastor in Southern California, who speaks around the world, often to groups of men in a variety of cultures.

ALAN FROW: True friendship is being vulnerable enough to say, "I need help in this area," and, "I might have it together in some areas but not in this one, can you help?" And that's a, that's just a real key. I think woman are much better at doing that than guys.

NARRATOR: Friendships between men, or in pop culture terms the "bro-mance," has actually gotten a lot of attention these days.

I LOVE YOU, MAN:

Zoe, here's the deal, Peter's always been a girlfriend guy. He put all his focus and energy into his relationships and all his dude friends just fell by the way side.

Zoe, don't listen to him, all right? We're 8 years apart. Barely grew up together in the same house.

This is ridiculous, why is it weird that I had girlfriends?

Nothing, we're just saying that you never really had a best friend is all.

Well, who's your best friend?

I have two. Hank Mardukas has been my closest friend since our first year at IBM, best man at our wedding....

Yea, yea he was....

Talk to him two, three times a week on the phone for 30 years now. And then there's Robby.

What's up?

Robby is your other best friend?

Correct. And Hank Mardukass.

NARRATOR: The importance of other men to travel with through life wasn't even on my radar when it came to having a son. But society at large seems to be asking some key questions. It appears that I'm not the only on a bit of a quest.

JIM: I honestly can think of probably a half a dozen people that I've had this conversation with since this whole subject came up some time ago. And probably the over arching reaction is, "I just have never really thought about the depth, or lack there of, of my male

relationships.” So I don’t think it’s, I don’t think it’s on their mind, I don’t think most of these guys have been losing sleep over it. But when you present them with the, “Have you ever thought?” and “What are you getting and not getting from your male friendships?” It usually engenders some “Wow, I haven’t really thought of that, but you’re on to something.”

[JIM]

Try the beach?

Yeah.

Whoa. Now the wind’s picked up.

Big storms, I told you it was cold.

You never listen to me.

Yeah, but when I came in it wasn’t this windy.

So, the storm is supposed to be here in two or three hours, right?

Yep.

JIM: I first met Hank... Maybe seven years ago now. And he was at the bank and I was doing my consulting thing, and we were introduced by a neat lady, a mutual acquaintance, and I liked him right away. You know, he’s sort of irreverent. God knows he’s strange looking.

This one might work, ‘cause we’re going to have a contest.

I’ll try to find you a bigger set of stones.

Ok pick, pick your, pick your stones.

But you obviously don’t know what you’re doing. You have to have flat stones to skip.

These work though. Oh come on, these are good.

You, you probably grew up in the city, didn’t you?

HANK: Jim is a person who says what I think, and I’m afraid to say it. And, it just comes out of his mouth and it sounds so much better than I could ever say it. And his energy is contagious. He’s just this very energetic person who has great emotional intelligence and has been unbelievably successful in New York business.

JIM: I see some real roadblocks for men developing these kinds of relationships, especially if they have to stem from the work place because it’s not conducive, not conducive. It takes trust, generally speaking, an aura of trust and trust of that specific person. And I think, without sounding too negative of, sort of the American work place, you know there is, there is maybe rightly not a presence of great trust. I think you; it’s a competitive environment.

You know I get ahead by doing great things but I also get ahead by making sure other people don't get ahead in many cases. So I think you're hesitant to share deep, vulnerable, exposing aspects of yourself with other people 'cause it may be an admission of weakness. You may be arming them frankly, you know, to use the information against you.

MICHAEL KIMMEL: To be a man means to be in control. To be a man mean have everything organized, to have everything together. To disclose how you don't, how you have questions, how you're confused. I mean look at the way we imagine woman's friendships. Take the iconic female friendship model in 'Sex and the City'. They're always talking about how they *don't* have it together, can't figure men out, what am I suppose to wear here, what should I do about my career, how should I be managing al this. They're constantly talking about how they don't have it together.

SEX AND THE CITY:

I wanted to kill him. And he's standing there giving me the "What's the big problem?" eyes. You know I don't understand you, like it's my problem.

OK just calm down. There are ways to make this work, it's just seven months and you can go visit him in Paris and can come back here.

No, it's not about that. It's about the fact that I wasn't even a factor in his decision making process.

Totally.

Men do this all the time.

I mean, just tell me what's going on. Is that too much to ask? "Carey, I'm thinking about going to France for the rest of my life." Am I right?

Totally .

You know one minute he's all over me and the next minute he's pushing me away, and I just, I just cannot believe this [Bang] is happening again!

Yes, all right, calm down. There'll be no breaking of things.

Why do I keep doing this to myself? I must be a masochist or something.

MICHAEL KIMMEL: Now imagine a you going out to dinner with your three best male friends. Do you sit around and say "I can't figure this out. I can't figure out women, I can't figure out like what to do with my career." No, because then, you know, the other guys, their response will be, [chuckle] "What a weenie."

HANK: Talk to me about how tough that, being Mr. Mom and taking care of Julia all these months has been.

JIM: Well I'm not sure I rose to the occasion all the time to be honest, it was... You know at times it was frankly it was just an imposition. It was tough. 'Cause you're trying to do the right thing, but you still need to carve out time for yourself and my piece of the family didn't go away, which is to go out and make a living.

And the logistics got very tough with the four kids, you know in a given week, I mean literally in a given week we probably have 23 things going on between gymnastics and ballet and something at school and extra help and swimming and, you just... You're in the car, and you're back, and in the car, and I get exhausted by the middle of the evening and then you got to hunker down and do three hours of work that you didn't do during the day. And physically, I mean I've been tired for the past couple months so I'm trying to work out a little bit more, and just keep my energy level up, 'cause honestly it's been hard. I'm glad it's... I'm glad this piece is coming to an end.

HANK: Because every time we talk I could tell this was really tough for you.

JIM: It's been tough.

JIM: There's something about the nature of Hank, and I guess maybe how we interacted by definition, that allowed us very quickly and comfortably, to segue from: work only, watch what you're saying, don't be too vulnerable, to sharing things on a personal level, to then find you're sharing almost anything. I mean, I don't even process "Gee there's something on my mind, but would I... You know would I talk to Hank about it? Would I share it with Hank?" I don't even go through those filters, so something happened logically. I mean, you don't process this, you don't work on it. Something happened logically where you just went from a, you meet a new guy, there's a rapport, there's a trust, and suddenly you're sharing anything that's on your mind without thinking about it.

HANK: We would have a meeting set up on a Thursday in June, he'd call me up and say, "Do you want to meet for lunch or do you want to come out on the boat? And let's do it on the boat." And we began to blend it slowly. And the more we did it the more we liked it, and it just began to evolve with our wives [begging] to get together, and we broke the boundary.

JIM: As you get a little bit older and you've done this dance, you start to sense in somebody else, I mean your accuracy is not one hundred percent, but you start to sense in somebody else the potential receptivity, so then you kind of put out more with the expectation with it's probably going to come back. And our instincts say, in this case, this guy is special, he's different, or at minimum he's more like me and I have a fair degree of confidence that what I put out he'll pick up, he'll put it out and I'll pick it up.

HANK: A lot of the people I work with don't approve of the personal relationship in the business relationship. I happen to think business works better that way, but a lot of people don't. At a point when he got fired I think one of the reasons is people didn't appreciate everything about him, and so they let him go but they didn't tell me.

One day I was leaving his house and as I was saying goodbye to Jim he said to me, “Hey Hank, I love you. Can we say that now?” And I looked at him and I said, “Yeah, I think we can say that now ‘cause I love you.” And now every time we see each other you know we hug, sometimes we kiss on the cheek, you know European style. And, and we say “I love you”.

ALAN FROW: Guys, they’ll say “Love you bro”. But the moment you say “I love you” and you don’t put “bro” on the other side it’s like... Just ” go to a guy and say “I love you’ it’s like no no no no that, you have to say, love you bro” and I think that’s just something of this politic of men working out what is appropriate and what is not. And I think at the back of our minds is designed not step over that line but deep down every single one of us need genuine male friendships.

HANK: It’s so wonderful for another man to say that to me and then for me to feel it back. It’s a gift.

JIM: As I get older I find I’m spending a lot less time thinking about the future ‘cause it just worries me that there’s not a lot of it. When I think of a guy like Hank it’s a given in my mind that we’ll know each other and we’ll be close *literally* for the rest of our lives.

JIM: Shall we head back in?

HANK: I think so. I’ve had enough of this warmth.

JIM: We’ve gotten our exercise for the day.

HANK: Yeah.

JIM: Felt good though.

HANK: Yeah.

NARRATOR: It’s true as Jim says, that men are mostly competitive at work and friendships only go so deep. Even guys who hangout together are often one-upping each other. So how do these relationships begin? How does this dance, as Jim calls it, really work?

I LOVE YOU, MAN:

So what do I do? I mean, how do I meet friends? It’s such a weird concept.

Well, I can do some recon around the gym. But you’re going to have to be aggressive about this man. Use the internet to meet guys. Get mom to fix you up. I mean if you see a cool looking guy strike up a conversation and ask him on a man date.

A what?

A man date. You know what I mean?

No.

By that I mean casual lunch or after work drinks, OK. No dinner and no movies. You're not taking these boys to see "The Devil Wears Prada".

Oh God I love that movie. No I won't, I got you, I know what you mean.

This is really exciting. We're going to find you some friends.

NARRATOR: I've never heard men talk about this. But these relationships are difficult to initiate. Especially as you get older.

I LOVE YOU, MAN:

I hate this. There's no rules for male friendships.

What are you freaking out about? You went out with those other guys.

I'm really nervous about this one.

Because you really like him.

MICHAEL KIMMEL: Men's friendships tend to be more episodic not existential, not taken through the life course, but episodic. You're really great friends with guys from high school. You're going to be best friends for ever. Then you off to college, not so much. Then you have your college bros. And your bros in college are your best friends and you're going to stay together forever and you're bros before hoes, and you know, you're just, you know bond forever. And pretty soon you leave, you get married, you get a job, and your new friends in your work place are the guys you spend your weekends with. And once a year you go back to the college for a weekend of drunken revelry where you remember that those were your bros and you stay connected to them. And then your next group of friends is the next work place and you don't necessarily take them with you.

[BOB]

BOB: The fact that we retained a relationship over time is very, very strange because we are almost polar, in a general sense, polar opposite. Black, white, Baptist heritage, Jewish heritage, 6'3", 5'9", everything about us is so completely different which means, it could mean that these things would separate us, but as it turns out these are the things that we could learn from one another. That made a very rich group of things we could learn from one another if we have that trust element. The trust is needed to learn from someone else and I think we had that.

HANK: I really appreciate where Bob's been in his life and where we are and where we've been over these forty years. I don't expect him to be like me, to communicate like me, and he doesn't expect me to communicate like him. And as long as we're willing to meet in the middle - have balance in the relationship - it works pretty darn well.

ALAN FROW: Cross-cultural relationships are pretty powerful. When we hang around with people that have had very different life experiences it shines a totally different light on where we're at.

BOB: There's something about being black in the world in the sixties that would be impossible for anybody who's not black in the world in the sixties to understand. Also, what's important to you is different based upon where you stand, depends upon on many issues, depends upon where you sit. And so I have to accept where he's coming from and what his world is like, and he had to accept that from me. I was going through a divorce, which [was an] extremely painful experience for me and I had no idea what to do next. And he offered to let me stay in his house. I said, "I'm not staying at any white guys house."

HANK: When we were living together I had a date in the house and he streaked through the living room. (Laughter) When I saw that black ass running through my living room, the girl turned to me and said, "What was that?" I said, "My roommate."

BOB: Differences can produce problems and differences can provide opportunities. I think we've both chosen to see it more as an opportunity rather than obstacle.

HANK: Help me with a problem. I went out and I saw Brianna. And, Brizer is almost 29 now. Right, so as a parent I don't have very much control anymore right.

BOB: You have no control.

HANK: No control. She's out in California, she's been there now for a lot of years, right. She just got a promotion in the company she works for so she's now an assistant manager. Which is great. And she's in love. They've been dating now for a year, just about. And I have concerns about him.

BOB: Oh boy.

HANK: There's something unique about being a man, being loved by a man, being helped by a man, and growing with a man, and a man who constantly, constantly, and this is true of other men, constantly, constantly reinforce who you are but yet help you become better than you are.

BOB: What comes to my mind, you explain how you feel to her.

HANK: Yeah.

BOB: Exactly.

HANK: Exactly.

BOB: And then you behave in a loving way toward him.

HANK: Hmm.

BOB: As long as she understands.

HANK: That's the hard part.

BOB: Yeah. But, that's saying, "I love Bri." So that's what's most important to me right now.

HANK: Yeah.

BOB: So I want to be... make sure I'm in the position... She gonna make mistakes like I did?

HANK: Yeah, absolutely.

BOB: I want to make sure that at the end of that I can be as helpful to her as possible and that I still maintain my relationship.

HANK: I said to her, "I wish when I got married the first time one of my parents said to me, "Why are you doing this you crazy. Don't do this."

BOB: Why, would you have listened too?

HANK: I probably wouldn't have. But I still wanted someone to say it. As I look back, I wish someone had said it, you know. And so I have my own kind of failed marriage mixed up into this, as well as dealing with Brianna's situation.

BOB: It was not part of my style to talk about personal stuff about myself to my friends. But it was for Hank to do that and so since he could do it, I could do it with him. Those discussions were about things like: what's important in life, what's missing in me, what do I need, what do I want, what my fears are and that sort of thing. I'm not sure whether Hank did that with other people or not but I didn't.

NARRATOR: These guys have known each other for longer than I've been alive. And given the length of their lives it's no surprise that they've begun to consider and even plan for death. At first I found it morbid, but then realized it's quite intimate.

HANK: You might want to tell me, and I might want to tell you some things that I want you to do at my funeral or your funeral.

BOB: Yeah, I'll send you my stuff.

HANK: You can send me yours.

BOB: I've written this stuff up already.

HANK: Hold on, wait a minute. You've written my speech?

BOB: No.

HANK: What do you mean you've written stuff?

BOB: I've written stuff for you, for your speech.

HANK: For my speech?

BOB: Yeah.

HANK: That's what I'm saying; you've written my speech.

BOB: Oh, just the content.

HANK: Kind of historical...

BOB: Yeah.

HANK: Things about yourself...

BOB: Yeah, thing you might not know, that's all.

HANK: Oh, you've done that?

BOB: Yeah, I've already done it.

HANK: Oh that'll help me write mine.

NARRATOR: Watching Hank and Bob, I realize there are things I won't be able to help my son do. So I have to show him how to find that help. But going beyond that typical guy interaction is something we struggle with. The concept of men not discussing their feelings is all around us, even from an early age, no pun intended.

ICE AGE:

You know, I think there's something bothering Diego.

Na, I'm sure everything is fine.

You should talk to him.

Guys don't talk to guys about guy problems. We just punch each other on the shoulders.

That's stupid.

To a girl. To a guy that's like six months of therapy.

NARRATOR: Our childhood seems to have a lot to do with how our relationships unfold. As I talk more with Hank I found out that the way his journey through male relationships began is actually quite sad, and disturbing.

HANK: I was ten years old and my parents wanted to send me to camp. I had gone to camp since I was seven and they wanted to send me to a new camp. And they decided to send me to Camp Paradox in the Adirondack Mountains. And as soon as I got there one of the things that happened at Camp Paradox was that you had rest period after lunch for an hour. And the first day I was there I was summoned by a counselor. One of the counselors said, "The head counselor wants to see you." So we took a walk from our bunk to the head counselors bunk and he said, "The head counselor is waiting for you on the second floor." And I climbed the second floor and he was there and he was lying in bed and he asked me to lie down next to him, which I did. And for the next half hour I would be sexually abused. And when it was over he would tell me to go back to the bunk and not say anything, which I never did, for years. And that went on for the eight to ten weeks that I was there. And then the second year when I went back, because I never told anybody what was going on, there was not a safe place in my home and I didn't know what to do with it other than keep it a secret and it happened again. It's like he was waiting for me to come back. And I have no idea if he did this to other boys or if I was the only one or whether... what the situation was, but that's what happened to me.

NARRATOR: Hank didn't feel that he could tell anyone, including his father. So the abuse continued. As a father, I would want to know even the worst things so I could help. How can I make sure my son would tell me these things? I began to wonder if Hank didn't value these friendships because he knows first hand what can happen when men can't talk about difficult, personal things with each other.

[BARRY]

HANK: I don't have many creative people who I'm close to, but Barry is probably the one that is the most.

BARRY: So right now the essence of our relationship is the size of your nose, which is quite distinct. See the thing is in doing one of these things is that, look at the defining characteristics, and I'm not saying I'm going to be able to capture these defining characteristics, but you have very dramatic features.

HANK: I hate my nose Barry.

BARRY: OK well lets see what we can do about that.

HANK: Can you make it smaller?

BARRY: Sure Hank.

HANK: We sat down with each other every month for years and talked with each other about our life journey. And it's very funny, we frequently do it in a specific restaurant in New Haven, Connecticut and it has paper place mats. And about twenty minutes into the discussion one of us will go, "Oh I have to write that down. What you just said about me, I have to write that down, I have to remember that." And then before the meal is over, which will take three hours of talking about ourselves and questioning each other, all the placemats will be filled and ripped and put in the pocket and everything because the other person has given you insights of things you should think about.

BARRY: He's not judgmental, he's discerning, very important difference, and he's also compassionate. He's open to people because he's open to who he is. I don't think there's too much we don't talk about.

ALAN FROW: Guys are great, you know, watching football with the beer and, "How you doing?" "I'm doing good bro." But when it comes to saying, "How are you really doing?" many guys are not good at that and unfortunately we have put that thing on people, of fear a moment a man does that we say, "Oh he's in touch with his feminine side." And that's ridiculous 'cause actually if only feminine people can vocalize how they're doing, we're in trouble as men. And I think a lot of the anger, the rage, probably even the physical abuse that happens in families is because of men with bottled up feelings and they haven't been able to express them in a safe environment.

BARRY: When you look at anyone for any length of time, if you really look at them, you have a relationship with them that you wouldn't have otherwise, that's for sure.

HANK: I thought our relationship was pretty awesome before that.

BARRY: Yeah, it's really, it's a different dimension actually. Someone's physicality, there is... the face is precisely what it is, it's the face. I think there's a deep sympathy for the currents that run through each of our lives. And because, the extraordinary thing about a relationship that spans, you know geees... What's the math on this? You know, 25 years... is that we're not the same people we were 25 years ago.

HANK: He's a brilliant architect, he's a brilliant artist, and he's a brilliant musician, he's a kind, kind person. He understands the importance of communication in art, architecture, business, family and friendship. And he works hard at it all the time. And for someone to be committed to that in so many creative environments as he is, it's an amazing experience.

BARRY: We're still wondering who the hell we are, we're still asking why it is we're doing what we're doing, and those are not insignificant questions and they can be; you can do it as a skipping stone. But there's a really important dimension I think, in terms of the conversations that we have with each other, as that, there is a demand for sincerity.

HANK: I love how you look at me then you go, you smile like, "Ah yes, that's it."

BARRY: I'm thinking to myself, I'm so sorry Hank, I really am. I'm doing my best, but this is really...

HANK: I hate to be doing this to you.

BARRY: I hate to really be doing this to you, exactly right.

HANK: Nah, times up. Oh Jesus. [Laughter] I look like I'm dying.

BARRY: My former friend Hank... That was really informative.

HANK: Oh, that is funny.

BARRY: Funny.

HANK: Funny, hmmm.

BARRY: I don't know what ah... funny, I think it's you know.

MICHAEL KIMMEL: We separate all the emotions, attitudes, traits and behaviors into a masculine side and a feminine side. And what women have said is, you know, you've always said we were nurturing and caring and loving, but you know what, we're also competent, competitive, assertive, aggressive, you know, and so watch us in the work place. And men have said, well we've always known how to be competent, assertive, aggressive and competitive. But we haven't known how to be nurturing and caring and loving. We haven't known how to do that because we suppressed a lot of that. We want to be a man's man, so we want men's evaluation of us. So my, my sense is that the next step in some way, of this gender transformation, is for men to look inside and say, "You know what, it is a *human* quality, not a masculine quality, not a feminine quality, it is a *human* quality to be nurturing and compassionate and caring. And since I'm human I can develop those parts of myself as well."

BARRY: There is a topic that needs to be aired more because people just don't admit it. Guys don't admit it because they think it's not a guy thing. It is a guy thing. It's a really important part of male relationships that is completely undiscovered country, huge, really huge, and that is shopping. There are a lot of guys out there, you know, I'm kind of out front with this, you know, I just... I tell people and a lot of people say, you know, "Actually, I love to shop too you know, and I shop with friends of mine." Now I have guys who call me and say, "Would you like to go shopping?" I'm not kidding and this is something, I'm admitting this, I'm admitting this on camera, I just want to say, I shop. And I'm proud of it.

STORE CLERK: When you walk, does your toe kick the end of the shoe? (Music)

HANK: Yeah, it is at the end of the shoe but not at the front. It actually feels pretty good

STORE CLERK: That's what matters because they will give as you wear. They will loosen.

HANK: Will they? They will expand?

STORE CLERK: Yes.

HANK: I'm going to wear them while I'm shopping.

HANK: We go to the same store *Rags* and we meet there monthly. And it's a little competitive between us of who looks best in what outfit and all those kinds of things.

HANK: You have to look at this coat, this coat is beautiful, you have to look at this one, look at this one over here.

BARRY: Oh, yes.

HANK: Oh, yes? See I have the leather but I love the inside, I love the inside. Barry if you get this coat I'm going to be jealous, that is beautiful. Oh my God that is you.

BARRY: I don't know if I want to admit really how much fun it is to do this, putting on clothes and showing it to one another saying, "God you look, you look fabulous in that, you look really great in that." Saying, you know, "That is you, that is you."

HANK: And the combination of the inside and the outside, I mean it is ridiculous.

NARRATOR: Now it occurred to me that if some people saw these guys out and about they might wonder a bit about the nature of their relationship. And even though Hank and Barry are happily married with kids, the elephant in the room around this whole subject of male relationships...

MICHAEL KIMMEL: ... is homophobia. Not the fear of gay people and not the fear that even your like deep down inside, but rather the fear that other people will see you as gay.

NARRATOR: So, this is obviously a sensitive issue and part of an ongoing debate.

THE 40-YEAR-OLD-VIRGIN:

Do you know how I know you are gay?

How? How do you know I'm gay?

'Cause you macramé-ed yourself a pair of jean shorts.

You know how I know you're gay? You just told me you're not sleeping with women anymore.

You know how I know that you're gay?

How? 'Cause you're gay and you can tell who other gay people are?

You know how I know you're gay?

How?

You like Coldplay.

MICHAEL KIMMEL: So this is what inhibits us from being as expressive or as emotional or as vulnerable and intimate as we would want to be. That's why I think it's, you know, intimacy is difficult for men. Because you will bump against this at some point, what do I look like to others?

NARRATOR: All of these things swirled in my head as my son lay unaware in his protective cocoon. Here he is staring at me as if I have all the answers. But being a man is complicated. Not all guys want to talk about this stuff. They'd rather just stay in their protective cocoons. Incidentally, this is when we find out that is boy was, all boy.

ALAN FROW: We want to look like we've got it together. And it takes a humble man to admit that he's weak, that he is struggling, that he doesn't have it all together but, wow, just an incredible gift to be in a relationship where you don't have to pretend.

[CHARLIE]

CHARLIE: Omelets.

HANK: Omelets. Let's do some omelets.

CHARLIE: Okay.

HANK: These are great, I love these.

CHARLIE: This is an Abigail, I think that's probably a Charlie. That's my guess, I'm not sure

CHARLIE: I think getting to know Hank was kind of a process of growing up for me. It started when I was over thirty years old and I'm almost forty years old.

HANK: I can't do this. I'm not a baker.

CHARLIE: I had a lot of male relationships, I still do and they are very important to me, very critical to me, but he is the only one that I can remember that would have described it as loving relationships.

CHARLIE: So cut up some onions, chop them up, we are going to sauté some onions. I'm going to get the eggs.

HANK: I'm not used to using these big knives, Charlie.

CHARLIE: I have smaller knives.

HANK: These are ...

CHARLIE: I have smaller ones don't cut yourself.

HANK: These are knives for cutting cows.

CHARLIE: I think we will do onions, peppers...

HANK: Yeah. Like it,

CHARLIE: Potatoes and some fresh herbs, maybe I think I have...

HANK: Oh, definitely fresh herbs.

CHARLIE: Yeah.

HANK: When I left Yale I was working at a leather and jewelry store and I was the manager of that store, and Charlie had a used bookstore down the street. And one day he came in to *Old Ways*, which was the name of the store, and was looking to buy a hat.

HANK: So what was your first impression of me? Then, I'll tell you what my first impress of you was.

CHARLIE: You know, I...

HANK: You don't even remember me.

CHARLIE: My first impression of you was you had this really attractive girlfriend.

HANK: Oh, well I still have a really attractive girlfriend (laughing) but this one's my wife.

CHARLIE: And she wasn't just physically attractive, I mean, she was physically attractive but she was also just really, you know, attractive woman, I really was, I really liked her.

HANK: Yeah, you were impressed she could type fast.

CHARLIE: She could type very fast, you're right.

HANK: Charlie, you know, is more reserved than I, less expressive, less, maybe, emotionally in touch than I, but he is a generous, generous, generous human being.

CHARLIE: You know, he talks a lot about, about all the things we've done over the years and all the things I've done for him over the years, and I have different recollections of it. I don't remember it as me being so giving and I think he misinterprets, in a way, how incredibly giving he was. And how I was sort of, all these years learning to be a receptor of that.

HANK: There were two events in my world with Charlie that had great meaning for me. There were two times in my life when I didn't have a place to live. And Charlie both times said, "come live with me." Now, he had a wife and he had kids, and all that kind of stuff, he didn't have to do that.

CHARLIE: He thinks that I was so generous to him at one point and I remember not at all being generous at that point. I remember being really pissed off at him at that point. And I think that's because of his nature. I think that's his... And I think it's what he brought to me over the last thirty years in many ways was this, really teaching how to love people.

HANK: So are we, are we two people of equals now?

CHARLIE: No, no I think, I think I'm much smarter than you are but I think you're a better focused and better on any given thing you'll do better at it 'cause you'll just do it. I'm more likely to think about it more and better than you would but not do it as well.

HANK: I have to tell you, I disagree.

CHARLIE: You don't think I would think about it...

HANK: I could never run the mammoth business that you run. So I feel you've accomplished things I could've never accomplished and on the other hand, you may have better intellectual intelligence than I, but I think I have greater emotional intelligence than you.

CHARLIE: Oh, is that's, yes, I think...

HANK: So, I think we are both intelligent but in very different ways.

CHARLIE: Yes. But I think on balance I'm a lot smarter than you are.

NARRATOR: The thing I find most fascinating about Hank and Charlie is they don't seem to agree on anything, a true odd couple. That actually appears to bring them together. It's funny to watch them but it's obvious that, especially in their younger days, conflict has stood in the way of their relationship.

CHARLIE: We butted head over business a little bit and that was a mistake that I make, it's a huge, huge mistake that I make and I still make it these days of engaging friends to do work for me and I did that with him.

HANK: So he asked me to be part of solving some problems he had at his business and he said he would pay me three thousand dollars for a certain amount of work, so I did the work and sent him the bill and he said he didn't want to pay me.

CHARLIE: I've always sort of put one toe in the water. Well, I wanted Hank to come over and work for me and then I'd get a bill and I'd go, "Oh, Christ, what am I doing here?" 'Cause that was really my inability to really understand that quality about him, and not just specifically about him but about that concept of people development management.

ALAN FROW: I think guys are generally not all that good at conflict resolution. Good at settling it with our fists or good at settling with kind of separation, silence, feuds. But to sit with a guy who is a buddy and you've had a disagreement and work that out in a spurt of graces is I think one of the most manly things you can do.

HANK: For years, we didn't talk to each other. And then we began to get reconnected. And I pointed out to him that he was wrong for not paying me for the work he asked me to do.

CHARLIE: It's sort of like he won't take no for an answer, he won't take refusal to relate to him for an answer, he won't take, you know, a put down as an answer, he just comes back. He knows what he cares about, he knows where he is coming from, and it's not like he would equivocate on his, you know, right to be paid for what he was doing, he wouldn't equivocate a minute for that. You know, and he would stand strong on that. But whereas I would take it personally, Oh Christ, what am I going to do this guy, you know, he wouldn't take it personally.

HANK: He's a stubborn man, when he wants to be, but he's a forgiving man too and he's humble, can admit that he was wrong and he said, "Hank, you're right." And he gave me a check for three thousand dollars.

CHARLIE: You know you always do these wonderful things with other men and it does get me jealous, you know.

HANK: Like what?

CHARLIE: Like what you were just talking about, like going to Europe with them.

HANK: Oh, that wasn't just men though.

CHARLIE: I get jealous.

HANK: Really?

HANK: Yeah, I do, I do. I was always jealous of your relationship with Russell too.

CHARLIE: Well, I want to tell you, I'll tell you upstairs later and show you my, the six sport coats he's handed me down. It's a major part of my wardrobe.

HANK: I know it is-

CHARLIE: If you did, I mean, got any clothes you've ever given me?

HANK: My clothes would be so big on you, Charlie.

CHARLIE: Russell's bigger than I am, I wear all his, I wear his sport coats.

HANK: Well...

CHARLIE: You really jealous of that relationship?

HANK: I had been, yeah. I'm not so much jealous now but, you know, it gives me twinges of jealousy once in a while.

CHARLIE: You have other man friends?

HANK: Yeah. That's what I put, you know. Somehow when you go on these wonderful vacations and jaunts without me I feel like I'm not good enough

CHARLIE: Huh, very interesting.

HANK: I'm not asking you to change your behavior either, I'm just telling you how I feel.

CHARLIE: How can you say you're not asking me to change my behavior?

HANK: Because you don't need to. I still love you even if you don't invite me on those events.

CHARLIE: I'm going to Paris in March for my birthday.

CHARLIE: Well I think male friends for me have been a very important part of a sort of a feedback mechanism, a very important part of my self-image. They think I'm OK and they think I'm good or they think I'm generous and that's important to me.

HANK: This is really good.

CHARLIE: This is pretty good. I like this.

HANK: I don't usually do anything this good.

CHARLIE: You did well.

HANK: They don't usually come out this good.

CHARLIE: My prestige in many ways comes from... has for many years come from male friends who accept and respect me.

MICHAEL KIMMEL: One of my favorite poets, William Butler Yeats said, in one of his poem, "He ruffles in a manly pose for all his timid heart." And I thought that just captures it. The very verb, "I ruffle", you know, you could almost see, you know ruffling in a manly pose for all his timid heart. That's what we can't show. The power of male relationships is if they work, you can show it, you can let down, you can relax, you can exhale, you can say, "You know what? I don't have everything together and that's okay and I'm still a man despite that."

[SCOTT]

HANK: The two of us are such crazy advocates of the Giants, I mean, we travel all over the country to see the Giants together and he's out in California and I'm in Connecticut so it's a way for us to be together all the time to get to the football games.

SCOTT: To worship the Giants the way we do adds whole new meaning to the whole experience and we, you know, we go overboard, but its fun, it's a great, healthy thing to do.

HANK: For the Super Bowl, he sent me these life size figures of the New York Giants to, you know, tape to the walls of the house. So when he came there we would be surrounded by the images of the New York Giants, that's the kind of thing he does and then we have our Super Bowl parties they are filled with the most outrageous food you should never eat.

SCOTT: We both watch our diets carefully, but when we get together its off. Whatever you want to do, whatever you want to eat. And I've, I've tried in the past couple years, you know, we should watch your diabetes and my cholesterol. No! We're doing everything that we always do. We're eating everything in excess. So, we do.

HANK: Its like napoleon's and éclairs and lox bagels and cream cheese and cakes and you name it and we just gorge ourselves on this food and just have the best time in the world rooting for our team and we've been doing that for twenty-seven years.

SCOTT: He fantasized pre-season all the time about how great they are going to be and I'm the pessimist and so we offset each other. "Don't get your expectations too high, Hank." "They are going to be great, super." "I'm not sure, you know, we have these weak spots. We have to be careful of that, don't just don't set your expectations too high," and he does that so I kind of drag him back down. We talk pre-game every Sunday, analyze the game, but after Super Bowl, the phone call frequency changes and I think we're both like, "OK, we don't have a reason to talk every single Sunday." You know, we have our lives and wives and they're football widows for the season and we travel for usually a week and it takes away from your family so you want to sort of balance it out.

HANK: All I can say about Scott is, I love him, like a brother, like a father, like a mother, like a son. And there is no one in the world I feel that way about, other than Scott.

HANK: I think that's one of the things you and I have in common, we both came from extremely dysfunctional families.

SCOTT: Really?

HANK: Really.

SCOTT: Dysfunctional?

HANK: Really?

SCOTT: Michael and June dysfunctional?

HANK: Lucille and Henry dysfunctional? And Richard? And Todd?

SCOTT: Oh, god.

HANK: And so, you and I became family.

HANK: The first question that people frequently have about Scott and I is, are we gay. And we're not. To people's, I think, disappointment, that two people can love each other as much as we actually love each other, who can have the intimate relationship that we have, who have gone through the kinds of things we both have gone through together. It just is what it is and it's wonderful for the two of us.

HANK: You know one of the things about healthy family is that no matter how far apart you get you still come back to each other.

SCOTT: Right.

HANK: And you and I have gone three thousand miles apart.

SCOTT: I know.

HANK: And we hurt each other by leaving.

SCOTT: I don't look at it that way though.

HANK: I do.

SCOTT: I don't-I'm telling you, I never, see, this is what we, we never talked about this.

HANK: Scott comes into the house and he says to me, "I'm leaving." And I said, "But Scott, you just got here." And he said, "Oh, no, no I'm leaving Connecticut, I'm moving away from my wife and I'm leaving." And we had like a two minute discussion and he was out, you

know, with me trying to persuade him not to leave, like, there was no discussion here? You just all of a sudden decide to do this? I felt he had betrayed me as his best friend at that point and I was deeply, deeply, deeply hurt.

HANK: I felt totally rejected by you when you left.

SCOTT: Why?

HANK: Well, because you were like my bro.

SCOTT: Not really, rejected is not the right word.

HANK: Yes it was. That's how I felt. Don't tell me how, its how I felt. I felt you were rejecting me for this woman and this, this decision to go out west with her.

SCOTT: Move west.

HANK: Move west.

SCOTT: Well, I'm sorry that you felt rejected. I wasn't, I wasn't rejecting any... I was in the zone.

HANK: I wasn't angry at you, I was just...

SCOTT: Well I'm glad that you weren't.

HANK: I was sad that I wasn't going to see you every week.

SCOTT: That I can understand.

HANK: We weren't going to probably talk every week.

SCOTT: Well remember at that time we were watching giants games and doing everything every Sunday alternating between homes so I can understand.

HANK: Absolutely.

SCOTT: I mean, that was something I dealt with too, but remember, the person that's doing it, that's a secondary thought.

HANK: The person who's leaving has a much easier time than...

SCOTT: Right.

HANK: ... the person...

SCOTT: Exactly.

HANK: Who's staying behind, no question.

SCOTT: Exactly.

SCOTT: He's non-confrontational and so it takes him a very long time to process difficult situations and when he... Even when he figures out what he wants to do or say, he doesn't want to do it because it can be painful and he doesn't want to hurt anybody. But sometimes, you know, in all of our lives, there are times we need to say something that maybe the other person doesn't want to hear, he doesn't like to do that.

HANK: Conflict, was an everyday occurrence in my family and so I don't like it. Everybody tells me I don't handle it well. My employees, the people who I work with, my wife, my best friend, my other friends, they tell me this is, this is a shortcoming.

SCOTT: The interesting thing is, he may not want to address that with other people but between he and I, we've never had that hurdle. If I do something or say something that's inflammatory or disrespectful he will let me know immediately. Its OK to say things that maybe people aren't happy with but once you get it out there they can process it and move on from it and understand that maybe something needs to change one way or the other and I think that's good for him.

HANK: He had just good, natural instincts about how to support people and how to ask good questions to get you to think about your life. The relationship is always fun, is always filled with humor and is always filled with wisdom and that's why its so valuable. Very few relationships you have, has that complete package.

SCOTT: We've given each other support, stability, friendship, guidance, and the Giants.

HANK: It's been an amazing week.

SCOTT: It's been one of the better weeks I can remember.

HANK: It's been one of the worst weeks too.

SCOTT: Well because the giants suck.

HANK: The Giants were terrible. The Giants were terrible.

NARRATOR: Father, son, brother, friend they call it and I wonder if it wasn't because they felt they were missing those things. Again, it has become clearer and clearer that men need each other, often times because of what they never had which brought me full circle to the role I will play in my son's life.

MICHAEL KIMMEL: If you ask me if father plays an important role in the development of masculinity in the, for young men, there is no question. Father's central, it's the first person who tells you what it means to be a man.

ALAN FROW: Many of us grew up with probably emotionally pretty cold relationships between us and our dad. And I have a pretty good relationship with my dad but it was my mom who taught me how to put my finger on how I was feeling and how to vocalize it. And unless you've had either an extraordinary dad who has helped you to vocalize that, or otherwise a mom who has helped you, you'll generally be pretty kind of anally retentive in terms of just expressing your emotions.

MICHAEL KIMMEL: Very few guys would say as boys that their father is not a real man. So their father is the first image of what a real man is. Now, despite the bombardment that you get from the media about what real men are, you know your father's a real man.

HANK: I look just like my father; I have my father's name. He was very gentle, very lovely; he tried to be a good father to me.

MICHAEL KIMMEL: The well of emotion that men actually still walk around with about the stuff they didn't say to their father, the stuff they wished they said to their father, they wish they heard from their father, the stuff they wish their father didn't say to them. I mean, it's really quite extraordinary and I've seen men, you know, having a conversation just as we are now and within a, within a... On a dime they'll start to weep.

HANK: He was over dominated by all the rest of the family dynamics and he was minimized and so the times we had together were very special, like playing in the park, but it showed me failure, it showed me weakness, it showed me sadness, it showed me the inability to stand up for yourself. And I remember this one scene when I was saying goodbye to my father one night, he was going to work in the morning, rather he was going to work and I had seen him for breakfast. And he was walking down the street and he had two big bags and he was 72 years old and he was still working hard, I looked at him with his shoulders, you know, just stooped over and carrying his bags and I said, "I'm never going to end up like that. I will not let that happen to me." Its inside here, its my soul, its what I'm made of, I carry my dad with me all the time, I love him. It's amazing after all this time its so raw still.

NARRATOR: I mention that Hank is an old friend, but that's not the whole story. I first met hank when he hired me to do some video production for the bank where he worked.

ERIK: He was kind of, a little bit of a fish out of water in this place, even though he was like a senior manager and my business was very creative, it's what I enjoy. And so he just like got so excited about the opportunity that we were going to have to create something together.

HANK: We did very corporate things so it's a different kind of an energy in the corporate world.

Welcome to the effective manager and the engaged employee class. My name is Hank Mandell executive vice president organizational effectiveness, and I'm pleased you are here today to learn more about the workplace of choice partnership strategy, the employee strategy of the bank.

ERIK: It was a bank, which is not necessarily like the most creative kind of atmosphere, nothing against bankers. At the time he was 55 years old and I was 27. So was actually, you know, twice my age. But we started to develop this bond this friendship that I honestly didn't think would go a lot further, but it did.

HANK: And we got to know each other's families and, as has happened to me in other relationships, we crossed that boundary between work relationships and friendship.

ERIK: I like to tell people, I have a friend who is 65 years old, one of my closest friends.

HANK: I have a friend who's old. Is that what you're saying?

ERIK: I use the word ancient but if you, if you want to say old. No, I do. I value that. I have a lot of friends my age, they're great, but it's not like having somebody who's, you know, 30, 28 years older than I am, that's amazing.

HANK: You have my back, my best interest, and I think you know I have your back and your best interest. There is just a deep seeded trust that no matter what happens we are going to certainly take care of each other and I really feel that about you.

ERIK: One of the most important points over the last ten years for me is making a big career decision.

HANK: He wanted to go to California to study film and he didn't think he could afford to do it.

ERIK: There was a big decision to move my family across the country and to really make huge changes for me and my family. And in the midst of it I started having incredible fears about it, even though on one hand, it felt like the right thing to do. On the other hand, I was like, I was just gripped with fear. He and his wife just happened to be coming over for dinner and I had not shared any of these fears with anybody, and so at that time they came over and we're all just kind of hanging out and they did the whole, "How you doing?" and I said, "Oh, I'm doing fine" and then I was like, "I'm not doing great" and in that moment I made this decision like I looked... I looked at you and I was like, "I can tell him about this", I can, I can share this without feeling like he's going to judge me, use it against me, whatever the issues of trust might be and I said but I can't imagine taking time off work, I can't imagine, you know, spending the money, I can't justify it, I don't think its going to lead to anything. All of these fears that I had, and Hank was just like, "That's ridiculous. You have to do it."

HANK: I understood how important it was for you and it was... You were blocking yourself from taking that step because of money; you were using money as your excuse to deal with your fear.

HANK: I've done fundraising for a lot of different events in my life and I said to him and I said, you know, I think we can come up with a way to raise funds for you. I think there are a lot of people that would like to see you go to Hollywood for a month or two and get more training because people really care about you.

ERIK: And so he said, "I'm going to help you raise money and I'm going to give you one thousand dollars." And I was just... I was shocked.

HANK: We put together a fundraising program for him with friends and family and he raised enough money so he could take the trip.

ERIK: It just encouraged me at a time when I was completely discouraged. It was because I shared my life with him, because I was willing to say to him, "Here's what's going on with me." I trusted him enough

HANK: I think it changed his life 'cause he eventually moved out to Los Angeles.

ERIK: If it wasn't for him, I don't think I would have done that and I think its one of the most important moments of the last ten years.

NARRATOR: I can't remember a time when someone other than my own family believed in me enough to help me like this and looking back now years later, money was helpful, but not what I really needed. I needed someone I could talk to, someone who believed in me, someone who would help me take this huge step. What I needed was a friend.

I guess I've just never put it this way but it seems as though our lives are defined, more than anything else, by relationships. And not just the ones we have, but often the ones we don't. I find it's difficult to define depth or meaning or intimacy between men, but at this point I have to acknowledge that it's important. There appears to be something we need in these relationships that we just can't get anywhere else. Only men know what a man feels, experiences, loves, and fears.

HANK: The last thing I want people to think is that you have to be damaged in some way in order to want male relationships. It just so happens that I was damaged and looking for these relationships but you can be very healthy, and a lot of the men that I have relationships with are very healthy and never have been sexually abused and they're in search for the same thing I'm in search with, which is strong, intimate relationships.

MICHAEL KIMMEL: I think that somehow, you know, we're afraid that if we actually showed who we really were, that no one would like us, that we're afraid that its really ugly in there. And I think if we really construct an idea of masculinity is about bravery and all

that, this is the thing we have to be bravest about. We have to be brave enough to show ourselves.

NARRATOR: Hank's life has been primarily influenced by the men he has known. Although disappointed and even abused by his role models, he ultimately found some redemption in the men he was able to help, and the men who helped him.

[EMMETT]

NARRATOR: We all start out with a clean slate, which is then colored by relationships for better or for worse, beginning with our parents and family, then on to mentors and friends. The experts, and even my own experience tells me our relationship is the most important one you will have. I'll teach him many things, some helpful and some not. I now realize a deep relationship comes at a price. I have to be willing to reveal myself to him to share my dreams, but also my fears. The best way to show him how this works is to let him see who I really am.

[End]