BASE CAMP
HOLDING CO.

THE BASE CAMP FIELD GUIDE

Better, Faster, Younger.

The Base Camp field guide to starting something real. Six camps. Real work. No wimping out.

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BEFORE YOU CLIMB

How to use this guide.

There are six camps. Read the lessons. Do the workbook activities and journal entries between camps, on paper, with a pen. Then actually go do the thing. You learn far more doing something than thinking about it. Lessons with a headphones tag have an audio companion at basecampholding.com/listen.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Welcome ELEV 0	**Who Am I?** ELEV 1,840	**Pre Revenue** ELEV 3,960	**Check In** ELEV 6,120	**What's Next?** ELEV 8,750	**Resources & Final Message** ELEV 10,214

CAMP 1 OF 6 · ELEV 0 FT

1 Welcome

Start here. In this camp: Why base camp

LESSON 1.1

Why base camp

Base camp is where you get ready to climb a mountain. You check your gear, you learn the route, you find your people, and then you go.

This guide is the gear check. Six camps, a handful of hard questions, and real work to do between each one. Read it, do the activities, and get in the arena.

> **Get in the arena, stay in the arena, stay in the work.**

CAMP 2 OF 6 · ELEV 1,840 FT

2 Who Am I?

Know your why. In this camp: Three Circles Activity · What do I want my 50th birthday party to look like? · Who am I, and what do I strive for?

WORKBOOK ACTIVITY

Three Circles Activity

Draw three overlapping circles. Fill each one honestly, then look hard at where they overlap.

- What do I love doing?
- What am I genuinely good at?

- What will people actually pay for?

JOURNAL ENTRY

Journal: What do I want my 50th birthday party to look like?

- Who will be there?
- Where will you be?
- How will you feel?
- What will people say about you?

JOURNAL ENTRY

Journal: Who am I, and what do I strive for?

Write it down. Not who you think you should be. Who you are, and what you are reaching for.

CAMP 3 OF 6 · ELEV 3,960 FT

3 Pre Revenue

Earn it in the dirt. In this camp: Developing skills: how to get started · Skateboarding · Make it happen · Making money vs. creating value · Workbook activities · Interview a mentor

LESSON 3.1

Developing skills: how to get started

Audio companion: How do I find my business idea?

1 Peter 4:12–16 says:

> **Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.**

Let's suffer shoulder to shoulder with the soldiers who have a purpose. Paid soldiers flee the battle. Soldiers fighting for a cause stay in the fight. What's your vision? What is your cause? Once you know your cause, darn near any job will get you there.

I don't do sexy or glamorous. I do meaningful, and something I believe in. You earn it in the dirt. Suffer the way Tiger Woods suffered: working day in and day out, giving up outside things to focus and become the best at what he found passion in.

LESSON 3.2

Skateboarding

Audio companion: Skateboarding

Work, and be laser focused. Or you can be like a buddy of mine who's 33, living with his mom and asking for gas money. He recently tried to start a business and quit a week later, because it's hard and it sucks.

Quitting a business after a week is like this: I give you a skateboard, and a week later you call me crying that you suck and you aren't Tony Hawk yet. I'm probably going to hang up on you.

No one is born a businessman. No one is a born skateboarder. You skate, you fall, you scrape yourself up, and you fail time and time and time again. Fight, and keep trying.

There's a correlation between the difficulty of the task and the size of the reward. I'd rather suffer the loneliness and self-doubt of starting a business than suffer the sad existence of a career I don't like.

LESSON 3.3

Make it happen

Audio companion: Who is Tom Stapley?

When your framework is selfless, you don't have to think about what you want to say. Accountability without shame, and positivity without delusion. That's the sweet spot. Courage, vision, enthusiasm, a refusal to quit, adaptability.

Tommy's story

He started a business, and it didn't work. He started another, and the financial world fell to pieces. They had set up a foundation for one thing and pivoted it to another.

> **Business is moving from one setback to another with enthusiasm.**

Nothing happened according to plan. But they got in motion, became experts through experience, and then one of the biggest investment firms in the world showed up. I dare you to try to get that meeting. Zero percent chance. Tommy went and made something happen, and out of nowhere they landed on his doorstep asking to do business.

If you are asleep, you'll think Tommy's story sounds like a lot of luck. It wasn't. They had been grinding, building a platform that works, learning, studying, becoming experts. "Sure, no one's ever done this. We'll try." That is the entrepreneurial spirit right there.

Your whole life matters

By the time someone needs you, it's too late to show them who you are. Be a good person, always, to all people in all situations, and the world opens up. If you're not, people will smell it on you.

Do you have the self-belief to bet on yourself and go make it happen? Are you a creator? I can't build, but I can create businesses that work. That's my art. What's yours?

You can be a victim, or you can see opportunity. NFNR: nice for no reason.

LESSON 3.4

Making money vs. creating value

Audio companion: Making money vs. making value

Use this one to help you fill out your business plan.

WORKBOOK ACTIVITY

Workbook activities

- Interview a mentor (see the journal entry below).
- Create a business plan: look for a niche your community is missing, look at your talents, see where you can add value. Now go get a sale.
- Brainstorm a list of five businesses you could start.

- Approach 20 potential customers.

Goal for the month

Find something unsexy and unglamorous and take rigorous action toward it. Sell trash bags door to door. Offer to take people's trash out for ten bucks a month, then hire your little brother to do it for five. Get in the arena, get roughed up, and see what you learn.

Small businesses you could start this week

- Mow lawns
- Clean pickleball courts
- Hang Christmas lights
- Clean gutters
- Trash can valet
- Trash can cleaning

JOURNAL ENTRY

Journal: Interview a mentor

Reach out to one successful person you admire. Ask if you could come by to ask a few questions, or take them to lunch.

Don't give them assignments. Don't ask them to rescue you. Don't try to impress them, and don't recruit them. Show up like someone who's going to take over the world whether they help or not, with a few thoughtful questions about their journey and what you might take from it for yours.

> **Ask them: What principle or practice has shaped your life?**

CAMP 4 OF 6 · ELEV 6,120 FT

4 Check In

Through the dip. In this camp: Check in · Your relationship with yourself and failure · The dip · Entrepreneurship · Mentorship · A good mentor / mentee relationship · Workbook activities · Business journal

LESSON 4.1

Check in

Welcome to the club. I am so proud of you. You made it to the few, the proud, the people who actually take action. Be proud of yourself. You will never suck worse in your whole life than you did these last two weeks.

So: these last two weeks, what went right and what went wrong? Most importantly, what did you learn from each failure?

LESSON 4.2

Your relationship with yourself and failure

Audio companion: Role identity collapse

The number of people selling something they don't believe in is devastating. If you just want money, stop chasing. Be 100% committed long term, be selfless, and don't worry about short-term feedback. Give your audience what they need, not what they want.

I have three purposes: to prove you can be honest and kind and make a bunch of money, to be a rough stone rolling, and to have an impact. I wanted an arena to step into, like the man in the arena. A place to get roughed up.

So whenever an opportunity comes my way I ask: will this refine me as a person, and can I use kindness and honesty to grow this business? If yes, I'm in. If no, it doesn't align, and I move on quickly.

If I make $500,000 a year being kind, that's decently impressive. If I make $5,000,000 a year being kind, that's incredibly impressive. If I want to have an impact, I need to make more money. Not to buy a yacht. To make a difference.

> **People give up when their purpose is smaller than their pain.**

A purpose bigger than money puts fuel in your tank when things are tough. It's how you get through the dip and come out the other side. If you want long-term success, have a long-term vision that can be your north star when it doesn't feel worth it.

This is a group about leadership as much as entrepreneurship, and leadership is about vision and decision making. When you know who you are and who you're trying to become, you can make confident decisions and take meaningful action.

LESSON 4.3

The dip

Audio companion: The dip

Talk to each other. Share with each other. Help each other out. At this stage of your life you aren't necessarily trying to make money.

Between you and great success are milestones: life lessons and experiences. Get as many as you can, as young as you can. They are ingredients in a recipe. Mentorship is one. Real-life experience is another. Problem solving and dealing with failure is another.

Go round up ingredients, and don't get too hung up on what the business is. Experience is the key. Don't wait for your future wife to show up before you learn how to talk to girls. Get some reps, so when she walks into the room you're not an amateur. (Good dating advice, and also an analogy about starting a business.)

LESSON 4.4

Entrepreneurship

One thing I've chronically under-discussed: it is incredibly hard. Long days and nights of constant work, and the people you want to date thinking you don't have a real job.

What it might look like

You're in college. One friend is pre-med and knows exactly what the next 40 years look like. Another is pre-law, same thing. People are impressed. You say you'd like to own your own business. You have no idea what that means or where it goes, and nobody is impressed. They'll think you're poor and sad until you prove yourself.

What it might cost

Ego. That's how people end up pre-med or pre-law: it sounds good and looks cool from the outside.

Certainty. People don't start businesses because they're scared it will fail, while they work a corporate job that can fire them the second someone cheaper shows up.

The illusion of certainty. There are three jobs: working for yourself; working for someone else, where you trade real security for the illusion of it and get very little time freedom; and working as a professional, where you give up the upside and your time in exchange for some financial certainty.

What it can be

A bunch of failure and uncertainty for a long time. Trying a lot of things that don't work. It's kind of terrible and kind of terrifying. Then, if you're lucky, you find an opportunity worthy of your full commitment, and your prize is to grind it into dust for the better part of a decade.

What you get: maximum time freedom, unlimited earning potential, meaningful personal growth, and unlimited positive impact on your community.

> **Do you want the pain of growth, or the pain of a crappy life?**

There is no better place to become the best version of yourself than this refiner's fire. Choose the right hard, instead of having the wrong hard thrust upon you. Too often the easier-looking path wins only because of a lack of vision or courage.

LESSON 4.5

Mentorship

Audio companion: Hero, mentor and tribe

I will take the right person over a good business idea any day. It's the business of people, all day, every day. Pick teams schoolyard style: you can have all the good ideas. I'll take the people who want to be there and want to work to become their best, because they find success wherever they are.

Value creation as a way of being. Create value and money follows. Where can you serve? How can you be valuable? If all you want is money, you'll always be chasing it.

How do you draw high-quality people and outcomes into your life? What attribute or practice has drawn people to you?

- Role models: authors and heroes you learn from at a distance.
- Mentors: people above you whose wisdom you want. Don't try to act like their peer. Don't muddy the water.
- Tribe: friends who are in the trenches with you.

LESSON 4.6

A good mentor / mentee relationship

Audio companion: A good mentor / mentee relationship

Don't wimp out. Actually do the things your mentor recommends. The people who are serious put in the work.

> **Ask a question that will result in a task.**

WORKBOOK ACTIVITY

Workbook activities

- Complete the role identity collapse exercise.
- Keep a business journal (below).

JOURNAL ENTRY

Journal: Business journal

- How many sales pitches did you attempt?
- What was your approach?
- What was your success rate?
- What did your successes have in common? Warm leads, a specific pitch, the same age, neighborhood?
- What will you refine based on the data?
- Will you keep going with this business, or take what you learned and try a new one?

CAMP 5 OF 6 · ELEV 8,750 FT

5 What's Next?

Pick your mountain. In this camp: The framework · Time freedom · What's the scoreboard? · Goal planning activity

LESSON 5.1

The framework

Here's how to think about obstacles. There are two kinds: people being difficult, and things that are hard because they're hard. When I started my first company and something went wrong, I had to take responsibility. It sucked, and it was awesome.

Entrepreneurship is learning the difference between pain and suffering. Greatness has a price, and it's on you to tell when you're paying the price of greatness and when you're suffering the pain of the wrong path. We aren't afraid of pain. Pain is the entry fee. What we avoid is unproductive misery.

Over the past few weeks we've started building a framework: a way to see your life and make decisions, in business and everywhere else. Make it so steady you can handle any decision life throws at you.

Quick decisions

I asked a friend if I could go dirt biking with him and his boys. His first question: do you know how to ride? Sort of. He gave me two options on the spot. Go learn the basics and come ride with us when you're confident. Or bring a friend at your level, eat breakfast with us, ride at your own pace, and we'll meet up around the campfire.

He never changed his values to fit what I wanted. He made me feel seen and made his sons feel seen, without compromising. When you know your framework, even simple questions have clear answers. He is always awake to his choices.

The dip

"Winners never quit and quitters never win" is wrong. Winners quit all the time. They quit early and often, whenever the size of the opportunity doesn't match the size of their ability. If something doesn't align, the smartest thing you can do is get out.

Everything starts fun, then you hit the part where you have a thousand hours of being a bad snowboarder ahead of you. For a 30-year-old who's never ridden, the sensible move is not to start. The typical move is to go twice a year and never get good. The committed move is to commit to getting good, climb back up the mountain, and work until you're amazing.

> **The stupid thing is to start, give it your best shot, waste a lot of time and money, and quit right in the middle of the dip.**

Try lots of stuff. Fail at lots of stuff. Quit lots of stuff. That's all great. What I hope for you most is that you find the right mountain, with enough courage, vision, grit and joy to make it to the top, because the top is where your beautiful life is waiting.

- What mountain are you going to climb?
- Where can I find great enthusiasm and great devotion?
- Where can I spend myself in a worthy cause?
- Where can I be a powerful steward of the gifts God has given me?
- Where can I bless, serve and create value?

The universe will conspire

> **When you pursue your life's purpose, the universe conspires in your favor.**

I've found this deeply true in my life and in the lives of people I admire. If it's clunky and hard in the wrong ways, it may not be what the universe wants for you. Every hero's journey has dragons to slay. Only real wisdom tells you the difference between a hero's journey and a fool's errand.

Advice from a business partner

My business partner once texted me a thought I keep coming back to:

> **Movement allows iteration, which is a form of revelation. Stagnation is death.**

He reminded me that whatever I was put here to do, it isn't for my own gratification. Popularity and money aren't the answer. All that matters in the end is who you impacted and how they changed because they knew you. Avoid anything that only feeds the ego. Focus on what is lasting and others-oriented.

Try a thought exercise. If you and God sat down before you were born to talk about a life well spent, what would you have discussed? Being cool? Rich? A big house and a social feed that makes people jealous? Surely not. Here's my guess at that conversation:

Be yourself. You were given talents, gifts and opportunities made for you. Don't try to be anyone other than who you were made to be.

Discover who you are. As you do, think about how to use your strengths to serve. He who loses his life for My sake shall find it. If your vision board is all about you, it's probably not the right vision.

Make an impact. Real estate has a phrase: highest and best use. What is the highest and best use of your life? I feel closest to it when I'm serving others, magnifying my talents, and engaged in a good cause, and free from jealousy, insecurity and trying to prove myself to people who don't matter.

Don't wait for the dream job or the perfect idea. Action is magic. I learn far more doing something than thinking about it.

> **Get up, get in the arena, and seek inspiration as you actually do the work.**

A life lived in service of others is a life well spent. A business built on serving others is a business worth having. You don't have to be a brain surgeon. Know who you are, and make your work noble, dignified and of service.

Advice from a friend

You are not boring or regular, and there's a reason for that. Don't waste your life on stupid things. You will hate yourself if you turn 40 without stretching yourself toward something big. Sit, think, listen, and ask God for breadcrumbs. It will take time. It will be hard. Good. Anything worthwhile is hard.

Watch for the breadcrumbs. Your next step is close. Wealth is not the yardstick. Changing lives and serving is the reward. What matters is what you can take with you: knowledge, faith, a strong family, and accomplishments that made you and others better. Make yourself better, then your family, your neighbors, and your community.

> **Goal: make sure you know how to use these tools.**

LESSON 5.2

Time freedom

Audio companion: Beware of the job just good enough not to quit

Meet my friend Larry. At 20 he had no ambition. He followed me to community college one day, a counselor talked him into a placement test, and he landed a full scholarship. After a couple of years he decided entrepreneurs were too dumb to work an honest job, and set out to become a doctor.

From 21 to 30 he was in school. Late nights, high stress, high anxiety, constantly wondering if he'd get in. A decade in a cave of pain and $400,000 in debt. Along the way he married a great woman, then barely saw her for five years.

From 30 to 33 he finally became a doctor, and his reward was 80-hour weeks for $50,000 a year. From 34 to 40 life gets good: real money, loans paid off, some balance, and people are impressed at dinner parties. From 40 to retirement he's a highly paid employee. He doesn't make money on vacation.

If saving lives (or filling cavities) is your calling and it fills you up, God bless you on that path. It's a wonderful life. But if you're considering law or medicine because you lack the courage or creativity to do something else, I strongly urge you to reconsider.

LESSON 5.3

What's the scoreboard?

Audio companion: Wisdom of the shipwrecked

Develop yourself and opportunities are everywhere. For me they show up in the dull and normal. It doesn't sound sexy. How's your ego with that?

How will you measure your life? It's okay to suck at something for a while. It's not okay to wimp out. Build your scoreboard and your self-esteem around effort and courage, not around outcomes you can't always control, like short-term money.

Your life will always be bigger than your career. I love entrepreneurship, not just because it served me financially, but because it's been a refiner's fire that made me a better husband, friend, father and leader.

Good people succeed, because people only want to work with and for good people. You can fool people for a while, but not forever. Early on, customers bought me. Now they buy because they believe we are excellent and will serve them well. That's freedom. What are you selling?

Be grateful when it's hard. Hard is what makes other people quit, and it's what makes your work valuable. Find the right dip and don't quit. If it's the wrong dip, get out.

> **The scoreboard has to be measured in courage, grit, continued effort and learning. Measure yourself that way, and the money, success and freedom will follow.**

> **If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted. — Martin Luther King Jr.**

WORKBOOK ACTIVITY

Goal planning activity

Set your goals for the next stretch. Each one should be:

- Specific: what do I want to accomplish, and why?
- Measurable: how will I know when I've done it?
- Achievable: how can I accomplish it?

- Relevant: is this the right time frame for me to work toward it?

CAMP 6 OF 6 · ELEV 10,214 FT

6 Resources & Final Message

The summit. In this camp: Final message · Great books to read · People worth following · Whose advice to skip

LESSON 6.1

Final message

The world is scared, bad at communicating, and short on vision. If you can find courage and perseverance, you have a superpower.

Don't give up, and don't lose sight of what you want most.

> **Get in the arena, stay in the arena, stay in the work.**

LESSON 6.2

Great books to read

- The Alchemist
- Outwitting the Devil
- The Automatic Millionaire
- Switch
- Good to Great
- Leadership and Self-Deception
- Boss Life
- Start With Why
- The 4-Hour Workweek

LESSON 6.3

People worth following

People I generally think are smart and share good stuff:

- Mike Rowe
- Clayton Christensen
- Milton Friedman
- Jordan Peterson
- Simon Sinek
- John Maxwell

- Gary Vaynerchuk
- Zig Ziglar
- Jocko Willink
- Jesus Christ

LESSON 6.4

Whose advice to skip

- Anyone pretending to help who is really just trying to sell you something.
- Anyone who tells you you aren't enough unless you hustle, grind and get rich.

Generally, if you wouldn't want to trade lives with someone, be cautious with their advice. Someone might have a career you don't want but be a great spouse or strong spiritually. Take their marriage advice. Listen to their thoughts on God. Skip their career advice.

SUMMIT REACHED. NOW PICK THE NEXT MOUNTAIN.

Get in the arena. Stay in the arena. Stay in the work.

WANT HELP?

Work with Jason

Tell me what you're building and where you're stuck.
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