



THE HUMBLE FORGE

THE INNER CITADEL

FOR PARENTS

Understanding a son who's stuck, and what
actually helps

FORGE THE SOUL. LIVE THE VIRTUE.

READ THIS FIRST

IF YOU'RE READING THIS

Someone you love is stuck, and you've probably already tried everything you know how to try.

I'm a father of six boys. I've also spent over two decades in a job built entirely around developing people through parts of life they didn't choose. I coach young men, eighteen to twenty-four, who aren't in crisis but aren't moving either. Working part time, mostly home, and everyone around them can see what they're capable of except them.

This isn't a parenting book and it isn't a diagnosis. It's what I've learned works, and what I've learned doesn't, from sitting across from these guys and from their parents. I'll tell you plainly where the line is between what this program can help with and what needs a professional, because that line matters and I take it seriously.

Read it once, then keep it around. Most of it will make more sense the second time, after you've watched him do one of the things described here.

Kyle Loftin

Founder, The Humble Forge



THE CORE IDEA

IT'S NOT GIVING UP ON HIM

Everything in this program rests on one idea: nobody is coming to save him. Not you, not a partner, not timing, not luck. If he doesn't do the work, the work doesn't get done.

Read that again, because it's easy to hear it as cold. It isn't. It's the most respectful thing anyone can hand a young man who's stuck. It says: I believe you're capable of carrying this, so I'm going to stop carrying it for you.

Here's the trap most of us fall into as parents. We see him struggling, so we soften the landing. We cover the gap he left. We remind him one more time, cover the bill one more time, make the call for him one more time. Every time we do, we hand him proof that he doesn't have to be the one who handles it. Not because we're weak. Because we love him and it's unbearable to watch him struggle.

THE ACTUAL SHIFT

It isn't "stop caring." It's "stop rescuing." You can love him completely and still let a consequence land. That's often the most loving thing available, because a consequence that lands teaches him something no lecture ever will: that his choices are actually his. This will feel wrong before it feels right. It's supposed to.



SETTING EXPECTATIONS

WHAT'S ACTUALLY NORMAL

Anger. Avoidance. Low motivation. Pulling back from the family. Resistance to being coached in the first place, even resistance to this program specifically.

On their own, none of that is a red flag. These are the starting conditions for almost every guy who walks through the door. They're exactly what this work exists to move. If you're waiting for him to arrive already fixed before he's ready for help, you'll wait a long time. Nobody arrives that way.

WHAT THIS ISN'T

This is not therapy, and I want to be direct about that. I don't diagnose anything and I don't treat anything. If your son is dealing with depression, anxiety, or trauma, a licensed therapist is the right first call, and I'll tell you that honestly, not sell past it. What I do is different: I work with young men who are mentally healthy but directionless, who need structure, a way of thinking that holds under pressure, and someone paying real attention.



WHAT'S NOT NORMAL

What is different: self-harm, harm to others, suicidal ideation, an abuse disclosure, or a substance problem driving the behavior in a way accountability alone won't move.

Trust your gut here. You know your son better than any framework does. If something feels bigger than "stuck," it probably is.

IF ANY OF THIS SHOWS UP

It stops being a coaching conversation immediately. The move is to name it directly, make sure he's safe, and get both of you to the right resource: a crisis line, a therapist, a doctor. That's the actual help in that moment, and I'll tell you so directly rather than trying to handle it myself.

WHERE YOU FIT IN

Because a parent typically sets up this kind of engagement, anything safety-related gets shared with you even though he's an adult. I say that up front, not after the fact. Coaching can pause or continue alongside professional care once the real concern has somewhere to go. It doesn't replace it.



THE LENS WE USE

Two ideas do most of the work in this program. Knowing them will help you understand what he's actually being asked to do.

The dichotomy of control: some things are his to control (his effort, his attitude, how he responds), most things are not (outcomes, other people, what already happened). A lot of his stuckness comes from spending all his energy on the second category. The work is redirecting it to the first.

Ego, checked honestly: he needs to believe he's capable of hard things before he'll attempt them. That's healthy. It goes wrong when his confidence becomes something to protect instead of something to use, when he stops being able to hear feedback because it threatens who he thinks he is. Part of the work is helping him hold up an honest mirror without it becoming an attack.

AT HOME

You'll see both of these show up in ordinary moments. When they do, you don't need to coach him on them yourself. You just need to recognize what's happening instead of reacting to the surface behavior.



WHAT YOU CAN DO THIS WEEK

You can't do his work for him, but you're not powerless while he does it.

FOUR THINGS TO TRY

Pick one thing you've been doing for him that he's capable of doing himself. Stop doing it, without announcing it as a punishment, and let him notice. Ask him one real question this week, something with an actual answer, not "how are you," then let him answer without fixing or filling the silence. When he messes up, respond once, calmly, and stop talking about it. Repeating the lecture doesn't add information. And notice one thing he did right this week, no matter how small, and say it out loud.





WHERE THIS GOES FROM HERE

You can't do this part for him, but you can put the door in front of him.

I run a limited number of free 45-minute conversations for young men eighteen to twenty-four. No cost, no pitch. One conversation, one real thing for him to work on.

If you want to understand where he's starting from, the Forge Score at thehumbleforge.com is a short, honest assessment built around these same ideas.

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