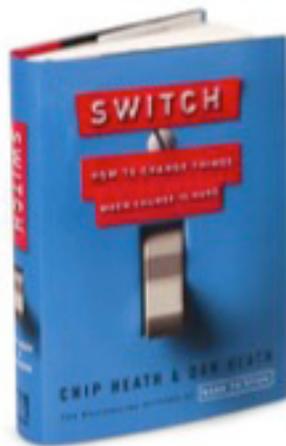


Change = the Rider, the Elephant and the Path

By Sarah Bodily, MS
Program Director

Psychologist Jonathan Haidt used an analogy when considering behavior change. He claimed that our brains have two sides; an emotional side (the elephant), and a rational side (the rider). The rider has the brain and the rational thinking part covered. The elephant, on the other hand, is the muscle. Imagine yourself atop a huge African elephant, who would win in a battle of wills if the elephant wants to go one direction and the rider wants to go the other? The elephant would win every time. So the two areas have to work together to accomplish their goal. The rider needs the emotion of the elephant to get where he wants to go.



All of the first year students read a book by Chip and Dan Heath called *Switch: How to change things when change is hard*. This is a fantastic book for any person wanting to effect change in his or her life or the lives of others. We talk about the analogy of the elephant in our classes and refer to the importance of engaging both parts of the brain. You do not get nearly as far without the elephant and the elephant would just wander without the rational side of the rider.

If you really want to change, it is important to do the following:

- “Direct the Rider”-- this happens with offering clear, concise directions.
- “Motivate the Elephant”-- tap into the emotion and give feeling to the reasons why you are doing some-

thing.

- “Shape the Path”-- this is done by shortening the distance to the goal or removing the obstacles that are in the way.

Changing behavior can be hard and this analogy sheds some light on why it is—it takes a lot of work to get everyone one to have the same goal. However, it also helps us recognize that there IS a way to make change actually happen. As your students experience the changes of transitioning to college life, you may see some resistance to change in areas that you feel are most important. You may see a holdup related to reaching their goals or meeting new people. Working together to both motivate the elephant and direct the rider is tough work, but can be very beneficial when the elephant and rider reach the final destination together.

For a visual representation of this analogy, see this link: <https://youtu.be/X9KP8uiGZTs>

Heath, D. & Heath, C. (2010). *Switch: How to change things when change is hard*. Massachusetts: Crown Publishing Group.

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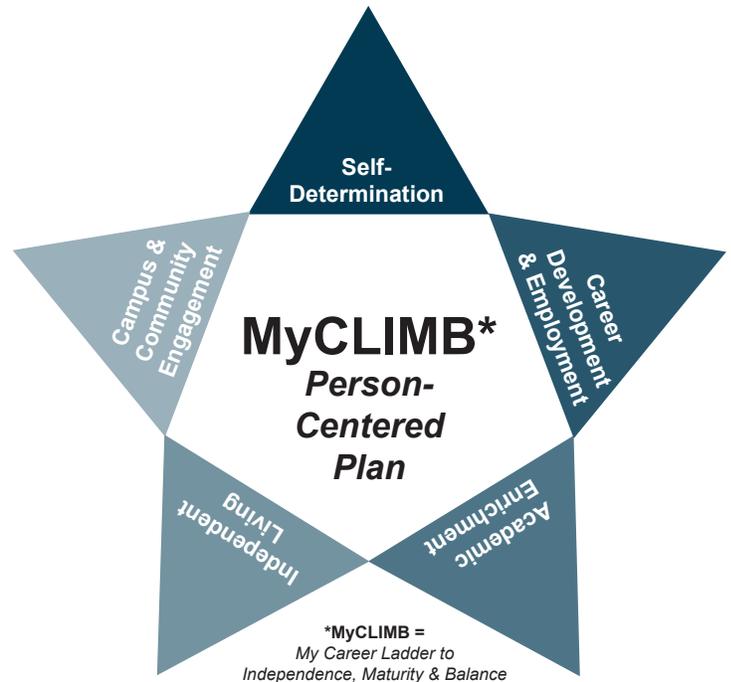
MyCLIMB: What does this mean for your student?

By Jeff Sheen, MSW
Co-Principal Investigator

Throughout their time in the Aggies Elevated program, your students work closely with Sue and Sarah to develop their individual MyCLIMB plan. MyCLIMB stands for My Career Ladder to Independence, Maturity & Balance. This person-centered planning model helps guide and focus your student's effort to develop and work toward big goals in the areas of Self-Determination, Career Development & Employment, Academic Enrichment, Independent Living, and Campus & Community Engagement.

During this semester, first-year students will develop their initial MyCLIMB plan that will guide their plans for this summer and next year. Second year students have been working toward their initial MyCLIMB goals for the past year and a half and recently reported to families and staff about their progress to date. As graduation from Aggies Elevated quickly approaches for the second year students they will now start to focus on developing their final MyCLIMB plan and accompanying resource binder to guide their transition into the next phase of their journey.

The final MyCLIMB plan and binder will contain post-Aggies Elevated goals in the same five domains listed above, along with steps to achieve these goals and supports and resources they will need to be successful. Staff will be working closely with the second-year students to make concrete plans, especially in the areas of housing, employment, and continuing education. The final MyCLIMB binder will contain the information about community resources and supports (tailored to the student's anticipated living location) and as much as possible, the specific names and contact information for individuals within community agencies that will be most supportive of the student's long-term life goals. This binder will be organized in



a way that will be most beneficial for how the individual student accesses and processes information and will include both paper copies and electronic files as appropriate.

The final MyCLIMB binder is intended to be an evolving resource that students and families continue to add to as needed and helpful, well into the future. We encourage you to ask your second-year students about their MyCLIMB binder throughout the semester and discuss with them what resources that you think they might include to support their next steps after Aggies Elevated.

Parents of first-year students, you will be receiving additional information about your student's initial MyCLIMB plan in the coming weeks and will be invited to a formal presentation by your student where they will present their plan and lead a discussion with you and any other people that they invite.

Have you misplaced the previous parent newsletters?

They are archived on the web site at www.aggieselevated.com!

IL Seminar evolves to meet student needs

By Jeff Sheen, MSW
Co-Principal Investigator

This semester in the Independent Living Seminar your students will be taking more responsibility for deciding what topics we cover each week (see the student generated list below). They will also be co-presenting with me on one of these topics in order to practice their communication and research skills.

- Online banking safety and identify theft protections
- Weekly and monthly budgeting
- Managing online payments
- Using debit cards responsibly and safely
- Relationships- friends, dating, being inclusive versus exclusive in social situations
- Car buying/selling and routine maintenance
- Filing your taxes
- Independent traveling-buying airline tickets, planning trips, etc.
- Learning public transportation

Additionally, we will be incorporating a number of role plays each week to continue refining social skills that support making friends, doing well in school, and finding a job.

The students will also continue to



engage in activities that take them off campus and into the broader community. All students are required to attend three community activities. Two community based activities of their choice such as, a concert, play, art gallery, local fun run, lecture, etc... and a third activity with Options for Independence, the local independent living center for people with disabilities.

Options supports youth and adults in developing and maintaining independent living skills ranging from self-determination to cooking and cleaning skills. While participating in these community events, students are supposed to observe the different types of jobs they see

people doing. Then students are asked to 1) reflect on whether they observed a job that they would like to do someday, 2) determine at least one skill they would need to develop to do this job well, and 3) consider how this skill might help them be more independent in other areas of their lives. At the end of each event, students either submit a short reflection paper or make a brief oral presentation to the class about their experience and observations.

Please ask your students about the community activities that they participate in this semester and what they learned. We are looking forward to a great semester!

CAPS workshops on resilience offered

By Sue Reeves, CRC
Rehabilitation Counselor

The Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) office will once again be offering its "Metamorphosis" series of four workshops on resilience. In the last newsletter, I mentioned an emphasis in Aggies Elevated on resilience, or emotional self-regula-

tion, as an employment skill. I am going to require that they attend two workshops, entitled "Shifting Perspective" and "Managing Stress." To encourage the students to take advantage of the free resources offered by CAPS, I will also offer extra credit points if they attend the other two: "Maximizing SMART Goals" and "Improving Relationships." Ask them if they are planning to go, and what they learned!

Learning to become effective job seekers

By Sue Reeves, CRC
Rehabilitation Counselor

It is a busy semester in Career Exploration, where we have started to turn our attention to job-seeking activities. The students are learning the ins and outs of Career Aggie, which is a job board maintained by the Utah State University Career Services office.

They are now able to determine if a job posting is full-time or part-time, where the job is located, whether it offers benefits, and how to apply. Identifying keywords in a job posting was a bit more challenging, but they are starting to see how keywords make it so much easier to write a targeted cover letter.

We are well into our first of four cycles of practice interviews, for which I have a wonderful group of volunteers from across the university community. Most of them would never encounter our students during their day-to-day lives, but have volunteered their time to help with this important activity. They are essentially strangers to the students, making this experience as “real-life” as I can make it.

The practice interview is actually a series of steps: the student finds a job posting on Career Aggie for a job in which he or she is interested (regardless of experience level, for now!); identifies keywords and writes a cover letter based on those keywords; contacts the interview-



er to set an appointment, making sure to confirm the time, date and place; sends the interviewer the job posting, cover letter and a resume; dresses appropriately for the interview; arrives on time and interacts appropriately; and finally, completes a self-evaluation of the process. The volunteer interviewer also completes an evaluation, which is shared with the student.

In addition, the students are preparing appropriate answers to a weekly interview question, so that by the time they are actually interviewing for a summer job, some of the more common (and tricky!) questions won't trip them up.

An activity that the students seem to enjoy is the lab portion of the class, which happens on Fridays from now until the end of the semester. Each student will spend one hour per week, for four weeks, at a job shadow location, before moving to a different site. The goal of this lab experience is not so much to build a specialized skill, but for the student to become

familiar with appropriate work behaviors such as being on time, following directions, and social interactions.

This semester, the students are completing their labs at the USU Campus Store (clothing side), Aggie Blue Bikes, and the Up to 3 program at the Center for Persons with Disabilities.

The Internship students are busy too, identifying and beginning to work on individualized internship objectives, approved by the employer and me. These objectives are intended to help the student build specific skills related to his or her intended career and range from completing a learning module in Microsoft Office to learning how to teach someone to use a pizza for skiing (The employer assures me that this is a real thing ...). The students also identified “leadership” as a skill that would be helpful to them, so we will be learning more about transformational leadership through a series of activities during February.

Follow us on Facebook! www.facebook.com/aggieselevated

You can do it: Stay active this winter!

By Kayla Currier, BS
Rehabilitation Counseling Intern

It's never too difficult to develop reasons to avoid your workout, especially during the winter months. It's cold, dark, and the snow dusts can seem to push you right back inside to the warmth of your cozy recliner. When combined with the natural gravitation towards heavier foods in the winter months, skipping your workout could be extremely detrimental to your overall health. The advantages of regular exercise are too great to compromise. As I have previously discussed regular exercise can help an individual sleep better, maintain a healthy weight, concentrate, de-stress, and boost their self-esteem. Here is a list of tips that can help get you through the hard winter months:

Invest so you can continue to do what you love: My passion is running, but it's just not the same for me when I am on the treadmill. I have run in -8 degree temperatures thanks to my UnderArmour winter wear, studded sneakers, and my protective head gear, gloves, and socks. If you love hiking, invest in a pair of hiking boots specifically designed for the winter months and look for open trails. If biking is your favorite, sign up for a cycling class, or invest in a winter bike with large tires. Take my word for it, getting outside and doing any type of exercise during a snow storm makes you feel like the strongest person alive!

Gym memberships: If being out in the cold isn't your thing, don't worry! I totally get it. This is where



a temporary gym membership can help. Gym memberships often include free group fitness classes and these classes can help you maintain cardiovascular endurance so that when you hit the trails this summer you don't feel a winter lag. Some summer cardio bunnies will use the winter months to work on strength and conditioning inside, so they feel strong and ready for the distance they will endure throughout the summer.

When deciding on a gym, look for one that will work with your needs. Some gyms, such as CrossFit, offer only group fitness classes but don't have individual use equipment. This means you can only work out during their scheduled time. Others such as Anytime Fitness, will allow you to work out on your own, 24/7, this is great for the early birds and night owls. Kubex Fitness requires that their members independently follow a step workout video in an individual cubicle. This is great for those who like to leave their home for a workout, but dislike the classic gym setting. Some gyms,

such as Planet Fitness, even offer free personal training. Don't forget that yoga studios, dance classes, and community pools often remain open during the winter months, this may be a great opportunity to become an expert in swing dance!

Workout at home: An at home workout can have benefits far beyond health and fitness. For example, these workouts can be equipment free and you don't have to leave your house! Heck yeah! In order to get the most of your at home workout, utilize resources such as on-line workout videos and DVDs. Develop a plan before you start and commit to accomplishing your goals. Your home has a lot to offer, walls for wall sits, stairs for cardio, rugs for core, and open spaces for plyometrics and strength.

Remember that every workout doesn't have to be a marathon. The benefits of a 20-minute walk or 20-minute YouTube Yoga class are too great to be discarded. Don't hibernate. Good luck and stay active this winter!