

THE SCIENCE OF POSITIVE BEHAVIOR CHANGE:

WHAT EVERY PERSON
NEEDS TO THRIVE



ELEVATE
USA

*Impact Report
2024-2025*

“No significant learning can occur without a significant relationship.”

-DR. JAMES COMER, PROFESSOR
OF CHILD PSYCHIATRY AT THE
YALE CHILD STUDY CENTER



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Report*

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USA

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Letter from our CEO

DEAR FRIENDS,

At Elevate USA, we've long understood that thriving doesn't happen by accident. It's the result of something much more intentional: the right people, in the right place, providing the right kind of support at the right time.

When clinical psychologist Dr. Henry Cloud learned about our model, he found that Elevate was exactly aligned with the clinical elements that have proven to bring about positive human change: Information, Relationship, Experience, and Structure. Our model has been refined over 40 years of mentoring youth, and **proven in some of the toughest urban schools in America to consistently transform lives through long-term, relationship-based mentoring.**

When these elements come together, we see something extraordinary: students move from surviving to thriving, from being overlooked to being leaders. More specifically, the transformation Elevate facilitates moves students in the following ways:

EDUCATION FAILURE → EDUCATION SUCCESS

FEW CAREER OPPORTUNITIES → ACHIEVING CAREER GOALS

FAMILY DISINTEGRATION → HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

HIGH RISK ACTIVITY → SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH

NEGATIVE ECONOMIC IMPACT → THRIVING CONTRIBUTION

LONELINESS → BELONGING

This transformation doesn't come from a single moment. It happens over time, through deep relationships, consistent exposure to opportunities, and a belief that every student is full of potential.

This year's Impact Report is organized around what every person needs to thrive. It's also a data-backed affirmation of what we've known all along: **consistent relationships are the foundation of human thriving.**

With gratitude,

KEVIN BYERLEY
CEO, Elevate USA



THE SCIENCE BEHIND HUMAN THRIVING

Dr. Henry Cloud, clinical psychologist, author, and leadership expert, outlines a framework of four things every person needs to grow and thrive:



Information

Relevant knowledge about how to live, lead, and make wise decisions.



Relationship

Support and accountability from people who care.



Experience

Real-world opportunities to try, fail, reflect, and succeed.



Structure

Systems, routines, and mentorship that guide personal development over time.

Scan to hear more
of Dr. Cloud's
message:



OUR MODEL

THIS REPORT WALKS
THROUGH EACH OF THOSE
FOUR ELEMENTS.

NOT AS THEORY,
BUT AS PRACTICE,
BACKED BY DATA.



We teach life-changing knowledge in the classroom.

→ ELEVATE BRIDGEPORT CROSS MENTORING



We build consistent, caring relationships through Teacher Mentors.

→ ELEVATE METRO KC MENTORING



We give students hands-on experiences that grow character and resilience.

→ ELEVATE SAVANNAH ADVENTURE



We surround students with systems and support to stay on track and graduate with a plan.

→ ELEVATE DALLAS COLLEGE & CAREER



Information

“The Elevate program is great for people who have big goals and want others by their side to reach them.”

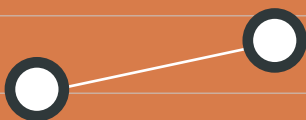
— ELEVATE STUDENT

We teach life-changing knowledge in the classroom.

In Elevate classrooms, students learn character qualities, decision-making strategies, and essential life skills. Elevate USA's accredited classes provide a highly-aligned, standardized, yet flexible curriculum for 4th-12th grade students. Each curriculum year has over 140 scoped and sequenced lessons which equip students to navigate the pressures of adolescence and make informed choices about their future.

Future-oriented thinking offers high school students significant academic and personal benefits, including improved motivation, higher engagement in learning, better academic performance (GPA, attendance), and enhanced self-efficacy and self-esteem. It also leads to better health outcomes, reduced risk-taking behaviors, and fosters adaptability, planning skills, and a stronger sense of purpose, preparing them for future success in their careers and lives¹.

“Before I make a decision, I think about how it will affect my future.”



67%
AFTER 1-2
SEMESTERS

74%
AFTER 3+
SEMESTERS

13 CHARACTER & LIFE SKILLS

VISION • COURAGE • RESPECT • CARING
RESPONSIBILITY • POSITIVE WORK ETHIC •
INTEGRITY • CAREER-MINDEDNESS •
COMMUNICATION • PROBLEM-SOLVING •
LEADERSHIP • DECISION-MAKING • GOAL SETTING

BOTTOM LINE

Future-oriented thinking is evidence of better decision making. The longer a student participates in Elevate the more they think about their future before making a decision.



Relationship

We build consistent, caring relationships through Teacher Mentors.

It's not just what students know, it's who walks with them. At the core of our model is the Teacher Mentor: a full-time, salaried role that stays with students year after year. These mentors provide 24/7 relational support, and model what healthy adulthood looks like while developing the youth.

74%

ALMOST 3 IN 4 ELEVATE STUDENTS AGREE THEIR TEACHER MENTOR CARES DEEPLY ABOUT THEM AND EXPERIENCE STRONG DEVELOPMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR TEACHER MENTOR.

"My Teacher Mentor is a trusted adult I can count on to provide love, comfort and good advice; someone who understands me and listens without judgment."

— ELEVATE STUDENT



BOTTOM LINE

Search Institute's research has shown that when young people experience developmental relationships with caring adults, they tend to report a wide range of positive outcomes including social emotional strengths², increased resiliency³, and greater academic motivation⁴.



Experience

We give students hands-on experiences that grow character and resilience.

Lessons become real when lived. That's why Elevate includes retreats, service projects, college visits, job shadowing, and community involvement. They also show students what's possible, and give them the tools to step into it.

Studies consistently show that when high school students engage in structured, real-world leadership experiences they develop essential life skills like communication, problem-solving, and accountability, while also growing in empathy, prosocial behavior, and overall well-being. These experiential opportunities don't just teach leadership; they form it—building confidence, resilience, and a sense of purpose that prepares students to thrive in college, career, and life⁵.

68%

OF ELEVATE STUDENTS HOLD AT LEAST ONE LEADERSHIP POSITION, MAKING A CONTRIBUTION TO THEIR COMMUNITY.

"Elevate has prepared me to be a leader by building my confidence, improving my communication, increasing my perseverance, and to lead with empathy and purpose. Mentoring with Little Elevate has given me a chance to lead by example."

— ELEVATE STUDENT



BOTTOM LINE

Holding at least one leadership position grows the longer a student participates with Elevate which in turn influences an average of over 12 people. This is the Ripple Effect: every student impacted by one Teacher Mentor goes on to positively impact 12 other people.



Structure

**“I have learned to believe
in myself and not give up
when life gets hard.”**

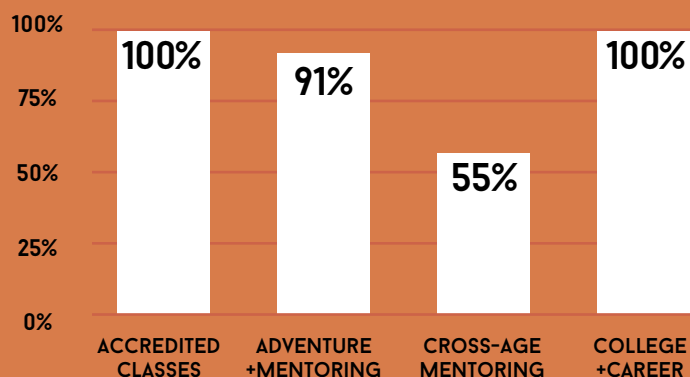
— ELEVATE STUDENT

We surround students with systems and support to stay on track and graduate with a plan.

Change doesn't last without a structure to support it. Elevate provides comprehensive programming that provides accountability and care and motivates students to succeed in the classroom and beyond graduation.

The National Mentoring Partnership shows that youth in high-quality, structured mentoring programs—those with consistent contact, clear goals, and strong oversight—develop stronger academic outcomes, improved behavior, and higher rates of college enrollment than youth in loosely structured or short-term programs⁶.

STUDENTS ARE HIGHLY ENGAGED IN THE 4 PROGRAM AREAS OF ELEVATE.



BOTTOM LINE

Change endures only when anchored in intentional structure. Programs that layer goal-setting, regular mentoring check-ins, accountability systems, and personalized planning create the scaffolding that helps students sustain life change rather than revert.



HOW WE KNOW THIS PROCESS IS WORKING

We are building a generation of thriving contributors — young people who are educated, emotionally healthy, rooted in community, and prepared for the workforce.



Over time, we consistently see our Elevate students thriving in the following four areas:

DEPTH x TIME = CHARACTER TRANSFORMATION
DEPTH x TIME = EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION
DEPTH x TIME = SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL TRANSFORMATION
DEPTH x TIME = COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION



“My experience with Elevate has been really positive. I’ve learned about setting goals, managing my time, and working with others. The program has helped me feel more confident in my abilities and has taught me skills I can use in both school and everyday life.”

— ELEVATE STUDENT

EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION

91% ON TRACK TO
GRADUATE

ELEVATE STUDENTS (3+ SEMESTERS):

Have an on-track-to-graduate rate that is 10 points above the national benchmark for economically disadvantaged students⁷.

WHY IS GRADUATION IMPORTANT?

High school graduation provides immense value for economically disadvantaged students, significantly improving their future earnings, employment opportunities, health, and overall well-being. For society, increased graduation rates among these students also mean lower public costs associated with unemployment, crime, and welfare, alongside higher tax revenues.

GRADUATION UNLOCKS:

- **HIGHER LIFETIME EARNINGS**
- **MORE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES**
- **BETTER HEALTH OUTCOMES**
- **GREATER LIFE SATISFACTION**

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

80% REPORT SOFT
SKILL GROWTH

ELEVATE STUDENTS (3+ SEMESTERS) BUILD:

- **DECISION-MAKING**
- **SOCIAL AWARENESS**
- **SELF-MANAGEMENT**
- **BOUNDARY SETTING**

SKILLS ESSENTIAL FOR COLLEGE & CAREER SUCCESS.

WHY ARE SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SKILLS IMPORTANT?

Social-emotional learning offers high school students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds significant value by improving academic performance, increasing graduation and postsecondary enrollment rates, reducing behavioral problems, and promoting long-term success in careers and life.

CHARACTER TRANSFORMATION

68% EXPERIENCE
CHARACTER
TRANSFORMATION

ELEVATE STUDENTS (3+ SEMESTERS) REPORT:

- **STRONGER RESILIENCE**
- **HIGHER MOTIVATION**
- **BETTER ATTENDANCE**
- **IMPROVED GRADES**

WHY IS CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IMPORTANT?

Character development truly matters—especially for economically disadvantaged students—because structured character programming that builds self-control, perseverance, and emotional awareness leads not only to personal resilience, but also measurable gains in academic motivation, reduced absenteeism, and improved achievement⁸.

COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

62% OF ELEVATE STUDENTS
(3+ SEMESTERS)
VOLUNTEER

**THAT'S MORE THAN DOUBLE THE NATIONAL RATE
OF 28.3% AMONG AMERICANS AGES 16+⁹!**

WHY IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPORTANT?

Volunteering profoundly benefits high school students—it cultivates leadership, communication, teamwork, empathy, and social awareness, while strengthening psychological well-being, sense of purpose, and future opportunity. Youth who engage in service demonstrate higher self-efficacy, improved health, reduced behavioral risks, and greater long-term success in education and employment.

A 2023 national study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA Network Open) found that adolescents who volunteer are more likely to report excellent health, flourishing well-being, and lower levels of anxiety and behavioral problems¹⁰.

STUDENT HIGHLIGHT: JOHN RIGGINS

A Story of Resilience, Leadership, and Giving Back

When John Riggins lost both his mother and grandmother just months apart, his world was turned upside down. The grief and instability that followed led John and his family into homelessness, leaving him searching for hope and direction. It was during this difficult season that a friend introduced John to Elevate Tampa Bay.

At first, John was hesitant, but he quickly found something he hadn't experienced in a long time: deep, caring relationships. Through Elevate, John connected with Teacher Mentors, staff, and even board members who saw his potential and refused to give up on him—even when he struggled to believe in himself.

Although John did not graduate on time with his class, his Elevate family stood by him every step of the way. Their encouragement and support helped him persevere, and this summer, John proudly earned his high school diploma. But his journey didn't stop there. Inspired by the leadership skills and sense of purpose he gained through Elevate, John made the bold decision to join the Army, where he now serves as a diesel mechanic.

John's goal is to continue serving his country and to use the leadership and life skills he learned in Elevate to make a difference wherever he goes. He also dreams of giving back to the program that changed his life. One day, John hopes to return to the Elevate classroom—not as a student, but as a Teacher Mentor, ready to share his story and inspire the next generation to overcome, achieve, and lead.

LEARN MORE ABOUT ELEVATE TAMPA BAY
ELEVATETAMPABAY.ORG



**WATCH JOHN'S
STORY:**



“Elevate helps my daughter a lot with her social skills. She’s more confident, speaks up for herself, and her grades have risen — she’s now an honor roll student.”

-ELEVATE PARENT



PARTNERS IN THE WORK: FAMILIES AT THE CENTER

At Elevate USA, we believe that lasting transformation doesn’t happen to a student, it happens with the people who know and love them best. That’s why we see parents and grandparents as essential partners, not bystanders.

We reserve the word partner for only two relationships: schools and families. That’s because both are foundational to a student’s success, and to the health of the broader community. When parents are supported, respected, and included, outcomes improve not just for students, but for the whole family.

We’re proud to report that in 2025, we implemented an intentional parent and family engagement approach across the network – facilitating conversations and check-ins with parents and grandparents of Elevate students around the country. This intentional approach builds trust, drives measurable outcomes, and ensures every student is surrounded by a sustainable network of care and accountability.

Based on feedback from members of our Parent Council, **parents are 100% likely to recommend Elevate to another parent.**

“[The Teacher] Mentor is very active — does home visits and has gotten my son involved in outside activities. He is also able to confide in his Elevate mentor to help him regulate his emotions.”

-ELEVATE PARENT



THE PATH FORWARD

DEEPER. STRONGER. WIDER.

Over the past decade, Elevate USA has expanded to 20 cities, serving over 100 schools and more than 10,000 students through life-changing relationships.

Now we're entering a season of depth and strength: equipping our current affiliates with the systems, standards, and support they need to thrive in a changing world.

Our Deeper, Stronger, Wider Campaign will ensure every local team is equipped to deliver long-term impact - fortifying the foundation so we can grow responsibly, sustainably, and boldly in the years ahead.

We believe every child deserves a life-changing relationship, and every community should have the support of the national office and Elevate's proven model of transformation. **No One Gets There Alone.**



ELEVATE
USA

ELEVATE AFFILIATES

Atlanta
Augusta
Birmingham
Bridgeport
Denver (CO Uplift)
Dallas
Indianapolis
Jacksonville
Louisville
Metro KC
Navajo Nation
New England
New York
Orange County
Orlando
Phoenix
Savannah
St. Louis
Tampa Bay
West Alabama

ELEVATE USA SUPPORT IN ACTION

Every year, Elevate USA hosts an in-person event dedicated to connecting Elevate Teacher Mentors from around the country.

WATCH HOW:



JOIN THE WORK

Your support strengthens the foundation of this movement. Together, we can build the next generation of thriving leaders.

**Please consider
making a gift today.**

elevatetheusa.org/donate



ANNOTATIONS & SOURCES

Dr. Henry Cloud is an acclaimed leadership expert, clinical psychologist and New York Times bestselling author. His 46 books, including the iconic *Boundaries*, have sold over 20 million copies worldwide. He has an extensive executive coaching background and experience as a leadership consultant, devoting the majority of his time working with CEOs, leadership teams, and executives to improve performance, leadership skills and culture.

The Search Institute promotes positive youth development and advances equity through research and practical solutions. Search Institute is a nonprofit organization with a sixty-plus-year history of collaboration with partners to conduct and apply research that promotes positive youth development and advances equity. Their tools build connections that help all young people learn and grow. searchinstitute.org

Thriving Youth Survey Data represented in the Impact report was collected April 2025 from 1,901 high school students in 37 high schools who were enrolled in an Elevate elective class throughout the Elevate National Network.

Developmental Relationship Survey Search Institute's Developmental Relationship Survey was administered April 2025 to students enrolled in an Elevate elective class. 1,954 participated in the survey representing 35 high schools throughout the Elevate National Network.

Sources

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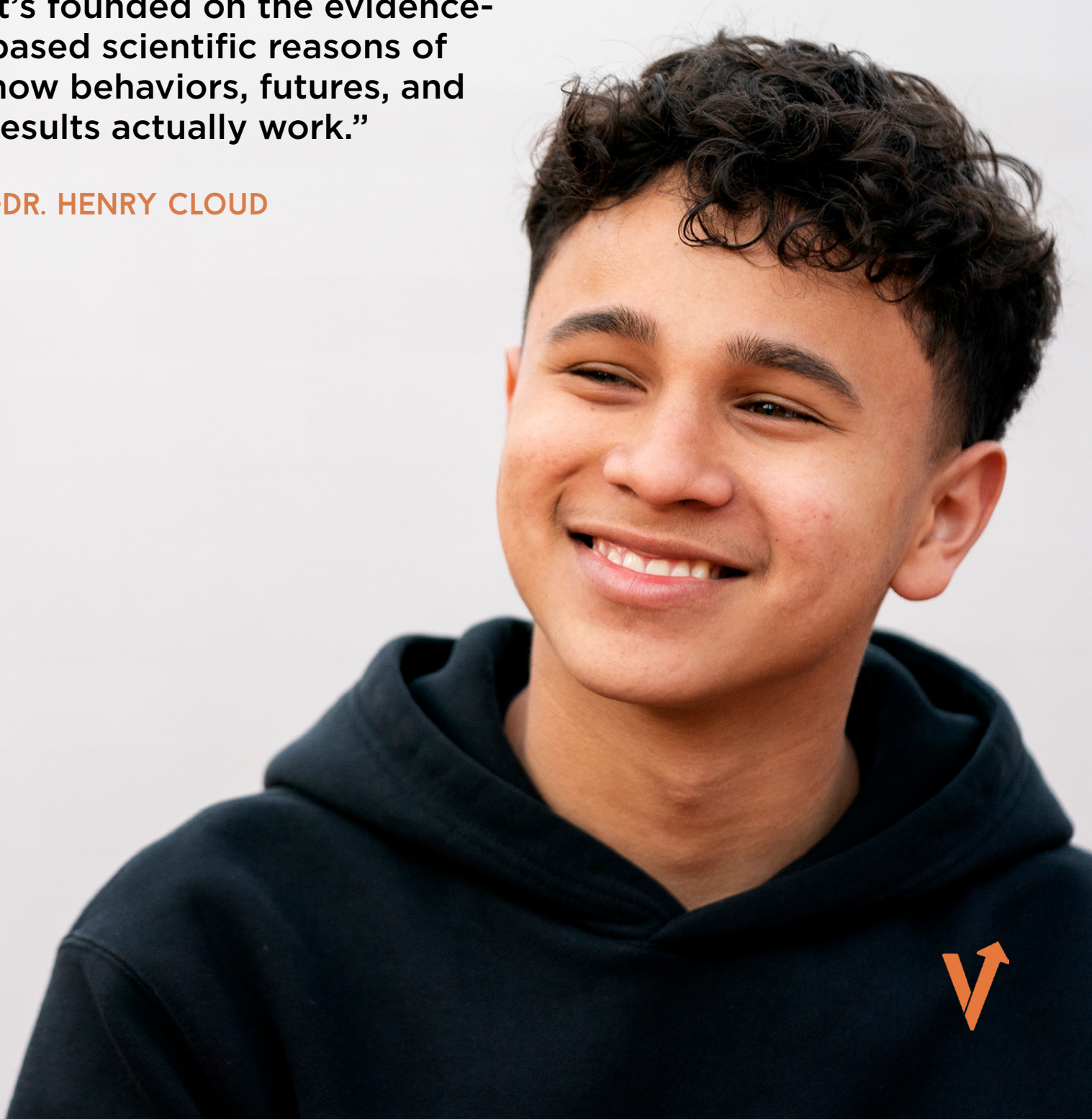
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“There are huge challenges in our communities and we’ve got to find answers to turn that around. Elevate is one of the best answers I’ve seen.

What excites me most about the Elevate program is that it’s founded on the evidence-based scientific reasons of how behaviors, futures, and results actually work.”

-DR. HENRY CLOUD



ELEVATE USA

TO GIVE, PLEASE REACH OUT TO

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OR VISIT ELEVATETHEUSA.ORG/DONATE

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