

# Building Critical Connection at Work with Tracy Brower (S8:E10) - Transcript

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**Chris Congdon:** I was just chatting with producer Katie Pace before we hit record and we wondered if we were wasting time. But it turns out that having friends at work makes us feel good and enjoy showing up everyday, but it's also the key to better performance.

Welcome to Work Better, the Steelcase podcast where we talk with experts about how to help the world work better. I'm your host Chris Congdon and today we're diving into a truth that's both simple and surprisingly overlooked: connection isn't a "nice to have." It's a critical driver of success.

My guest today is Dr. Tracy Brower, sociologist, workplace expert, and author of the new book *Critical Connections*. And in full disclosure, Tracy is the vice president of workplace insights here at Steelcase.

In her new book, she makes the case that our relationships at work aren't just about belonging, they shape everything from innovation and resilience to engagement, retention, and even wellbeing.

But here's the provocative idea at the heart of this conversation: in a world obsessed with flexibility and independence, are we underestimating just how much we need each other?

Here's my conversation with Tracy.

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**Chris Congdon:** Tracy, welcome to Work Better. Thank you.

**Tracy Brower:** I am thrilled to be here together, Chris.

**Chris Congdon:** Well, I'm thrilled to have you, too, because, you know, normally we don't have guests coming from Steelcase, so this is a little bit of a special occasion for us. But we're really excited about your new book, *Critical Connections*. And I just feel like that title really resonates now more than ever because this sense that we're disconnected, I think everybody's feeling it. And you argue in your book that connection isn't soft work, hence the title "Critical". So I'm just interested, like, what really inspired you to write a book about connection now?

**Tracy Brower:** Well, I think it's the critical issue that we're facing with 50% of people who say they're lonely, and it's an epidemic level, and record levels of depression, anxiety, mental health issues, which many stem back to connection and feeling so disconnected. We're more distant in our work. Social media makes us more distant. Technology allows us to do so many things from a distance and so we've lost this vital connection.

And the thing that I think is so interesting is a lotta times we individualize this or privatize it. Oh, people are lonely. But if we can think about this as a collective need for a solution, I think we get so much farther. So that was partly what motivated me to dig into it more.

**Chris Congdon:** Yeah, I think that's a really interesting insight because a lot of us do tend to think about it as maybe a personal thing, or there's still some stigma maybe to saying, "You know, I feel really lonely." You know, like, it might just feel a little bit uncomfortable. And- You know, it feels like we've been talking about loneliness for a while and increasing mental health issues, and it doesn't seem to be getting any better. Like, what's going on with that? Like, just the awareness of the problem, is it solving it?

**Tracy Brower:** Exactly. The awareness of the problem is not solving it, and I think the interesting thing is we have to think about individuals, teams, and organizations. There's really fascinating data that an organization called Sunny just did. And they said, "For every lonely employee, it costs a business about \$13,300 a year."

**Chris Congdon:** Oh my gosh.

**Tracy Brower:** I know. So they quantified it really specifically, and it's because of absenteeism and, you know, less discretionary effort. Maybe people who aren't offering help or asking for help in the same way, so performance declines. So I think we're at this place and, and we keep treading water, but to the extent that we can clarify that it's critical for business as well as critical for individuals and teams, hopefully we can kinda move off the dime and move forward with some pragmatic approaches.

**AT 2:46: INSERT EXTRA QUESTION HERE (END AT 4:28)**

**Chris Congdon:** So Tracy in your book, there's a lot of research and a lot of it is based in neuroscience, which I'm not sure, like it feels like that term is becoming more mainstream lately like a lot more people interested in brains and brain health can you talk about what is the science behind connections?

**Tracy Brower:** Yea there's so much science between brain connections. And I would just point to three things. There's so much but I promise I'll just point to three things:

**Tracy Brower:** So one of the things that's really interesting is perspective. When we feel lonely-we feel threatened, and we feel, we tend to close in, and we get kind of this amygdala hijack. We actually feel stressed about the fact that we're lonely, but

**Chris Congdon:** the amygdala is the part where we feel a lot of intense emotions. Is that right?

**Tracy Brower:** Yes. It's kind of that ancient brain. Okay. It's that fight, flight, freeze. Yeah. And we can't always be our best because we tend to, we tend to focus in. We literally lose peripheral vision when we have that amygdala hijack. Okay. Um, and that is, uh, instinctual, right? When we were running away from the saber-toothed tiger, we weren't- Right worried about the beautiful landscape. We were heading for the tree to climb to get away.

So, um, so when we're in that mode of feeling threatened or lonely, we can't necessarily be as broad in our perspective, and therefore can't solve problems as well- Oh ... and don't have the same access to all of those elements of creativity that help us get through and, and solve problems.

However, research has shown that when we have more friends and more people that give us different perspective, that actually helps us broaden our perspective and be, be more, uh, effective So we can, we can move out of just that amygdala hijack and be able to access more parts of our brain with blood flow in more parts of our brain because we feel the safety and security of other people. So one is about perspective and kind of how, how the, how the brain is operating in relationship to our f- feelings of safety.

Another is related to kinda reward and punishment. When we, um, when we are ostracized or betrayed or we feel social pain, we feel that in the same part of our brain that we feel physical pain. Like, if somebody, I don't know, steps on your foot or you- Yeah ... stub your toe or something, and you're like, "Oh, that hurts so much." Yeah. That is the same part of your brain that is controlling the pain if you feel left out or you just feel like the relationship isn't going well. So that suggests that we have some real deep neurological need for healthy connection with other people.

And the third thing I would say, this is fascinating, there's a decision-making component. There's so much more, but there's also a decision-making component. So what they did is they did an experiment with people where they hooked electrodes to their hands. And they would get a little shock. And, and what they would have to do is choose a- Shapes and colors, and if they chose shapes and colors well, they would not get the shock. If they made incorrect decisions about shapes and colors, they would get the shock. So it was like, how fast can you learn which are the shapes and colors that are safer?

Yikes. That- I know. It, like, it, it wasn't, you know, a deadly shock or anything like that- Yeah ... obviously. Right, but still. And so the experiment was they were making decisions on their own behalf- like I'm getting the shock. The second group were making decisions on someone else's behalf. Someone else was getting the shock, and the group that was making decisions on someone else's behalf actually learned faster and better.

**Chris Congdon:** Oh, so interesting. Why is that?

**Tracy Brower** There was an MRI component, and the belief is that it's because they were recruiting more parts of their brain, including the parts of, uh, their brain that were vigilant toward others expressed empathy. And so when, when they were making decisions just for themselves, they were working hard to learn quickly, but on behalf of others, they recruited this empathetic component that helped them to make even better decisions.

**Chris Congdon:** Yeah. The ways that we work have changed so much in the past five, six years, really dramatically, and I know in some ways people say, you know, "Oh, I don't wanna talk about hybrid work anymore. That's just the way work is," et cetera. But it does feel like it's had an ongoing impact, even if a lot of organizations are working out of the office more than they were a few years ago. So what do you think is happening there with this shift in the way that we're working?

**Tracy Brower:** I think it has partly to do with our assumptions. Like, every day, we don't make the assumption that we're coming to the office necessarily. We might have to think about, "Hmm, am I gonna be in the office all day or part of the day?"

So that just introduces a level of friction. But the bigger thing is synchronization of our schedules. There was this really cool academic study that was done in Scandinavia, and they looked at whether people were happier when they were at work or on vacation. And newsflash- they were happier on vacation.

**Chris Congdon:** Gosh, that's a surprise.

**Tracy Brower:** I know. Doesn't that seem like a surprise? Right. They got academic funding for this study. But the other thing they figured out, which is the really cool part, is that people were much happier when they were synchronized in their schedule... with their people. And so I think that's partly what's happening with hybrid work, is it... You know, like, if I'm in the office and nobody else is in at the same time, I'm not getting the benefits of. I'm not getting the benefits of connection and teamwork in the same way. Of course, we can work effectively remotely... but it depends on the task we're trying to accomplish as well. So I think this hybrid work is just introducing a new challenge in terms of how we sync up, how we connect, and the effort and intentionality that that takes.

**Chris Congdon:** You know, I really felt that just a couple weeks ago, because everybody was taking vacation at the same time, and the office was pretty empty, and I found myself feeling a little lonely, which normally I don't experience a lot at work because we have synchronized our schedules. But I totally get that for organizations that maybe, or teams that maybe haven't figured that out. Since we're talking about work, let's drill into that a little bit. Why is it that work itself is so important for people feeling connection and community today?

**Tracy Brower:** This is so exciting. As somebody who researches work. I'm a total nerd, and I just love this stuff. There's a few things about work, and then there's a few things about presence and place and proximity. But let me just talk about work for a second to answer your question. Work is uniquely good at helping us connect, partly because of continuity. We tend to get to know people over time. Even if the average person changes jobs every 12 to 18 months these days,

**Chris Congdon:** It's that frequent?

**Tracy Brower:** Yes, that's the newest. Oh, my gosh. I mean, in the olden days it used to be every seven years, right? Wow.

**Chris Congdon:** It's totally cha- Or every three years even.

**Tracy Brower:** It's just- Wow ... declined and declined. Wow. And sometimes that's you stay with the same organization, but you're on a different team. Different roles. And it's an average, but even at 12 to 18 months, there's that continuity of relationship. That's one.

Secondly, the reason that work works really well to build relationships is you get kind of ebb and flow. Like, I see you on that day- ... when you're, like, top of the world and the project went well. I see you on the day when it's just a struggle and I can offer support. Like, we see each other through ups and downs. And that builds relationships. And the third thing is that we interact at both a task and a relationship level.

**Chris Congdon:** Talk about that.

**Tracy Brower:** So I see you at the coffee machine and I say, "Oh, I just became a grandmother." Yes. And you say, "Oh, my gosh, my child"- That's so exciting ... "such and such," right? Or my neighbor or my this is the thing that's going on for me. So you get that relationship lift, but then we also get the task piece which is a fundamental way that we tend to bond, when we have shared accountability, shared outcome, shared goals that we're rolling up sleeves together. And so we get to work on the project or the deliverable or solve the problem. So it's that task and relationship. So it's continuity, it's ebb and flow, it's tasks and relationships that make work kind of a special place for us to connect.

**Chris Congdon:** Do you hear that there's a sense that, well, I don't really need to have that sense of community at work because I feel it in my physical community where I live, I'm involved in, you know, a neighborhood group, or I'm involved in a social group, I've got a book club or whatever it is? Do you think that having those relationships outside of work- Does that compensate for it?

**Tracy Brower:** It helps. Yeah. When we're happier outside of work, we perceive greater happiness inside of work as well. That's one. Another topic is dimensionality. We get a healthy sense of identity from our work. But when we have other places where we derive a sense of importance and identity from friends, family, and volunteers, that's a really good recipe.

But the other thing about work that I think is unique is *the number of hours it takes to make a friend is 60 hours. Like, it takes a lot of intentionality and investment. And you think, you know, like, you have coffee with a friend once a month for an hour. You chat with somebody before yoga class for 15 minutes. So in our personal lives, that friendship may add up more slowly. But work, you get all that inherent time together. You're in the project for, you know, an eight-hour work session, or you drive to the client together for a half hour each way. And you worked on that, you know, problem-solving meeting for an hour. Like, it adds up, and so therefore work is really important for connection, and as we have less connection outside of work, work becomes a center of gravity for mental health as well.* 'Cause we wanna feel seen, and we wanna feel that level of connection.

**Chris Congdon:** Yeah. Well, and plus, you know, for a lot of us, it's where we spend most of our waking hours, at least during those career years for sure. So I wanna move a little bit from there to one of my favorite topics, which is around the role of, like, physical place.

Because so many of our listeners, of course, are folks who are thinking about physical places. And so I would love to hear from you... This book is so well-researched, and I would love to hear about the evidence for the place because I think that's still something that maybe people feel intuitively, but they... I hear a lot of times, like, is there proof?

**Tracy Brower:** Yeah, and there's so much proof. It's... I'm with you. Yeah. This is really, really good stuff. So if we think about gathering there's some really interesting data from cities and communities. One is that when cities and communities have more gathering places people are much more likely to report they have friends and much less likely to report they don't have friends. And in general, people are reporting less and less that they have enough friends. Like, people are saying, "I don't have enough friends." The younger people are, they say- I don't, I don't have enough friends. The younger they are, the more likely they are to say that

**Chris Congdon:** That's so interesting.

**Tracy Brower:** And it's, and it's scary because friendship is correlated with peace, with prosperity with positive social interactions. And so friendship is critical, and connection is critical, but gathering places help drive it. So when cities and communities have parks, park benches, yoga studios, restaurants, coffee shops, libraries, city centers, community centers. Those drive friendship. That's one.

Then there was another study that looked at investment in the public good. Public good is, like bridges, and sidewalks, and roadways, again, parks, park benches, community centers, libraries. Some of the same overlap. And when there was more investment in that infrastructure and the public good people had higher levels of wellbeing and happiness. And those are so applicable to the workplace. 'Cause what do we do at work but gather? We gather in meetings to solve a problem. We gather in the work cafe, and we get to know each other. We gather for the, you know, small, uh, one-on-one meeting where you're giving me feedback. So gathering is one.

But then there's some other really interesting research about performance and productivity. So if you sit within 25 feet of a top performer, your performance increases 15%. So there's that proximity of performance. If we sit within 65 feet of other people, there is a measurable knowledge spillover. There was this very cool study where they,

**Chris Congdon:** I'm gonna start sitting 65 feet away from Tracy more often.

**Tracy Brower:** I'm gonna sit within 65 feet of you. I know this is when you say to yourself, "Huh, where do I sit? Who do I sit by?" "Who wants to sit by me? Does anybody wanna sit by me?" Anyway, yes. There was this other study that was fascinating. They took the sales team in an organization, and they had them in, you know, kind of a neighborhood setting working together to drive sales. And they, and they did an intervention where they asked the team to focus on coaching. Do more coaching for each other. Cool. So the coaching resulted in more knowledge sharing. Cool. Well, that's-not rocket science, 'cause what is coaching but knowledge sharing?

But the result was that sales increased 15%. And this is the really cool thing, they checked back 10 months later after the intervention, and sales were still up 15%. So it had this residual effect.

And the last thing I'll say, there's so much we could talk about, but there was some really cool research on citations and patents in academic and innovative environments. So when academicians write papers and publish their research, one of the elements of evidence of success is the number of citations. How many times was it cited?

**Chris Congdon:** Yeah. That tells you that people read it and used the work.

**Tracy Brower:** You got it. The, the more there was proximity between the authors of the paper, like they were in the same building, same department, you know, had connective, you know- hallways between them, the more citations there were.

**Chris Congdon:** Super interesting.

**Tracy Brower:** And in another academic setting that was all about innovation, they did geolocation with all of the people who were working together on the innovations, and found that when they had more contact with each other, they had more patents.

**Chris Congdon:** Oh, so interesting.

You know, we've interviewed several guests, a lot of the guests coming from academia, and I've heard them talk about, you know, sometimes their colleagues just aren't in the office, or because of their class schedules or when they do office hours or whatever it is, that they seem to not see each other as much as maybe they would like. So that seems like an interesting learning for anybody who's in education, is how, how can we get, you know, faculty and staff and students to be around in the same space more often.

**Tracy Brower:** Yeah. And in a corporate environment or in even a healthcare environment, right? Sure. Like, there's... It's just, I think, generalizable evidence that the more we are in contact together- Yeah ... the better our outcomes are.

**Chris Congdon:** But then you know, so playing out that city analogy, the park benches, um, the parks, the, you know, the g- the coffee shops, et cetera, I mean, I feel really fortunate in the spaces that we work in that we have all of those amenities, but not everybody does, you know? So I don't know. Would you, do you have any advice for those, uh, facilities people out there, or whether it's the finance people who need to buy into it? Like How do we, like, what happens when people don't have those kinds of spaces? It's a big,

**Tracy Brower:** Yeah, it's a big deal. Um, there's a very strong business case for belonging. When people have a sense of belonging, they're more likely to stay with the organization. Their performance is more likely to be, more effective and when we're lonely, we tend not to ask for help from others. We tend not to offer help. We may not be as engaged because we're just feeling closed in and we're not necessarily connecting with our colleagues. And, and to the extent that we can invest in the kinds of places where people can connect, we build belonging, and that ends, helps us with organizational outcomes. So places that we feel belonging are places like city centers, for example or work cafes where we can see and be seen, and we're reminded that, hey, we showed up here together. When we have places for privacy, like enclaves, when we're, when we have the opportunity to be alone, we can be better together. When we have things like business districts where we're connecting around those goals and outcomes that we talked about.

Another really big deal is when we learn together, we tend to really, really bond, because we're increasing our capability together. Learning requires some vulnerability. Like, I don't already know it. Like, I don't- therefore, I've gotta learn it.

**Chris Congdon:** Yeah. So- I don't know how to write a good prompt. Yes. I could use somebody else to work on that.

**Tracy Brower:** Exactly. So if we have things like university districts or learning commons- where we can learn together, those help as well and so place has a bearing, as we know, on behavior and norms and the culture, and then that, in turn, drives some of these wonderful outcomes.

In fact, some of the literature on proximity suggests that the reason face-to-face or proximity, even virtually, matters is because of a healthy sense of peer pressure and a healthy sense of messaging about the culture. Like, I'm, I'm around you, and I see that you're super engaged and super productive, and that has a measurable outcome, partly because I say, "Oh, that's how we do it around here." You know? And, and that's, that's how work gets done around here.

**Chris Congdon:** Yeah. Well, and emotions are contagious, too. Like, if you're feeling energy kinda coming from other people- You, you pick that up, right?

**Tracy Brower:** Yes, completely Yeah. Emil Durkheim coined the phrase collective effervescence which I think is a really fun phrase. I love it. Collective effervescence, or the bandwagon effect, where we're picking up that energy from others. There's another study about when we're face-to-face together, we tend to be more engaged. And statistically, if you perceive someone to be energized and passionate, they will have an even bigger spillover in terms of your engagement. So your point about energy, exactly.

**Chris Congdon:** Yeah. So leaders seem to... This is my sense, that they seem to underestimate the importance of this. I mean, like, maybe they are more focused on the transactional and the task, and this is what we've gotta get done. And of course, you know, you're being measured on that performance. What is it that you think that leaders need to understand about their role- in shaping connection?

**Tracy Brower:** Leaders have such a bearing on connection, and mental health as well. 69% of people say that their leader matters more to their mental health than their doctor or their therapist and are on par with their partners. It's like, leaders who are feeling pressure, right? There feels like more pressure.

But it also is an opportunity. Like, we have an amazing opportunity to influence. The other thing that's relevant here is, that I like to think about is, your family knows your leader's name.

So leaders are so important that families know who they are. Like we'll mention at the dinner ta- I used to report to Rich. We would mention it at the dinner table-"Oh, I have a one-on-one with Rich tomorrow," or- Yeah ... "Rich said that." Not to an extreme- Right ... but appropriately. Like, our families know what's going on for us. Yeah. So when leaders remember that there is that ripple effect in terms of their influence, that's a big deal.

And I think the thing that they can really focus on is not only their influence, but also the extent to which they can help build social relationships between themselves and employees. That's one.

Realize the extent to which they can help employees build relationships with others on the team. That's another. Realize the extent to which our personal relationships drive outcomes. Like, just like you said, a lot of times we're in a meeting and we wanna get to the issue and, you know, get right on task- Get it solved, yep ... and, right. But that little bit of small talk in the beginning where we feel that personal responsibility or, or we start to get to know each other at a personal level actually drives follow-up, follow-through, and task completion. When we feel a personal relationship with other people, when we feel that healthy sense of obligation, when we feel that sense of visibility, like I know that you're the receiver of my work. Or I'm the receiver of yours, that drives more discretionary effort.

So I think the thing that leaders can make sure to realize is not only their own influence in terms of their relationships with team members, but also in terms of their opportunity to create the conditions for those connections among team members. Does that make sense?

**Chris Congdon:** It makes total sense. But you've got me thinking now, like, if somebody were saying my name around their dinner table, what would they be saying about Chris? I hadn't really thought about that, you know? Like, what, what are those conversations that go on in the evening that would be talking about me as a leader, you know?

**Chris Congdon:** So what did, uh, we also see people who are trying hard, and maybe it feels a little forced. You know? Like, okay, we're gonna have this team lunch at this time, or, you know, something again, that maybe doesn't feel as genuine. What are some other ways that you think that you can build connections with teams? Like I notice, for example, you know, maybe 10 years ago people were more likely to go out, go out after work, and like that just doesn't seem to happen anymore, you know? So what are some other things that you see successful leaders doing?

**Tracy Brower:** Yeah, I think the big thing here is that we have to put our connection efforts kind of in line with the work, as part of the work. Otherwise, "Oh my gosh, I don't have enough time. I love you, but I wanna have dinner with my family instead of-" Right ... you know, my- Right ... my wonderful coworker team."

But when we are in project meetings and we take a minute to check in and see how people are doing when we assign tasks across departments and we can get to know each other that's a really good idea. When we have formal mentoring programs that helps. So people are, people are gonna get mentoring at some point, and so when that becomes part of the culture and that is built into the work process, that's another really good idea.

We have a kind of a myth that the best team building happens with social, escape rooms or pasta making... right? And those are great ideas- Yeah ... but in reality, the biggest boost to relationships is when we share tasks together. And part of that's because we're relying on each other. Part of that's because we're appreciating each other's capabilities. Part of that is because we each have a role to play. So getting together in the shape of the work, in the content of the work to share responsibilities is one of the very best ways we can create connections.

**Chris Congdon:** That helps a lot. I think that's very actionable.

So tell me a little bit about, you know, given your work, I know you're in a lot of places, you're, you meet a ton of people, you're kinda moving all over the place, and I'm just... I would love to hear about a critical connection that you've had, you know, that really changed your career or your way of thinking.

**Tracy Brower:** Yeah, this is a big question and a little question, right? Uh. The big question, my... This is gonna sound really silly, but my very first boss was so formative for me. Like, he believed in me, he pushed me, he helped me stretch my capabilities. His belief in me helped me to believe in myself. And he was so passionate about what he did that I kinda caught the passion around organizational culture and you know, how we connect and how we think about the role of work. So that was a big one that kind of probably changed the course of my career.

But then there are all these details and all these interactions that matter in terms of how we feel valued, in terms of how we feel connected. So just the week before last, I was doing a presentation over lunch and we had this great group and this great discussion, and of course, my goal was not lunch. My goal was the discussion. That's why I was there. So I hadn't eaten anything, and that was cool. And, you know, we said goodbye to everybody graciously, and then I turned around, and there, sitting on the table, was this plate of lunch with a side dish and a dessert and a drink and a napkin and fork and knife, and it was just incredible to me.

So Aga made up this plate for me and said, “Here, I thought about you.” and it was just... It really moved me. And I think it’s such a, such an indicator of culture when we are all doing things that seem like the right thing to do and we’re not thinking hard about it but we’re creating those moments of interaction, and those lead to connections with, which lead to this kind of fabric of the organization which matters in terms of each of our fulfillment.

**Chris Congdon:** Yeah. You know, when you describe that, that reminds me of some work that I think we both read, um, about, uh, I don’t love the term when it says, like, a weak connection, but people that you interact with at work, like maybe you’re not super close friends with Aga, who left you the m- the meal, um, just like the barista, you know, who’s here.

It’s not like we’re socializing outside of work, but it feels like those weak connections are things that- We overlook a little bit. Could you just explain first of all for people who don’t know what a weak connection is, what that is and why it matters?

**Tracy Brower:** Yeah, absolutely. As we think about our connections, it’s really helpful to think about that in concentric circles. So we have our two or three closest friends, and then our five, and then our 10, out to about 150. That’s how neurologically we can kinda keep track of enough to remember what’s going on in their family or their life or, or their career.

**Chris Congdon:** I don’t think I can remember 150. I feel like I have trouble remembering my own kids’ lives.

**Tracy Brower:** I know it’s so many details to remember. I know. The weak ties are the furthest out, even beyond that 150. It’s the people that we worked with for a short time, or the friends of friends, or the links of links. And the interesting thing is that statistically, new opportunities come from weak ties. And the reason for that is that by definition, our weak ties have access to information that we are less likely to have, or our close ties are less likely to have. Because information flows through these connective networks as well.

So weak ties are especially helpful because they may help us, you know, by saying, “Hey, I heard about this job that you’d be great for.” Or we might reach out to them and hey, say, “Hey,” “Could you introduce me to somebody who’s a friend of a friend?” Yep. So those weak ties make a really big difference in terms of our feelings of connection, but also the ways that we gain access to information.

**Chris Congdon:** Yeah. Well- Back on the health issue, you know, when we started out talking, we were talking about what feels like sometimes insurmountable things that organizations and people are struggling with in terms of, you know, loneliness and mental health, et cetera. So what makes you optimistic at this moment about connection and community, people feeling belonging?

**Tracy Brower:** Yeah. I... What makes me optimistic is that we’re having the conversation. That, we have quantifiable data that tells us just how tough it is today. And I think we’re in this conversation about what do we should do about it.

You started us out saying, “Oh my gosh, we’re in this spot. Why are we still in this spot?” And I feel like we can gain momentum from the awareness and now from the discussion about what do we do about it. So I’m optimistic about where we can go and how we can improve social connections, social health, social cohesion, both at individual and team and organizational levels.

**Chris Congdon:** Yeah. Well that’s great. That gives me optimism too, because, you know, again, it can feel overwhelming, and you can just go throw your hands up but I feel like what you’ve done really well in your book is you’ve built a steady, you know, drumbeat of evidence and proof that this actually matters to any organization that wants to thrive and achieve.

So thank you, Tracy, so much for joining me today. I'm excited. I'm excited about your new book, and just wish you the best as you're out promoting it and talking about it.

**Tracy Brower:** Thank you. It's such a great topic. I really love it. And I so appreciate coming on with you. I know it's unusual, so thank you, thank you for the opportunity.