

By Linda Chamberlain, PhD, MPH
For the Connections Matter community
initiative www.connectionsmatter.org



WHAT IS CONNECTIONS MATTER?

We are a community-based initiative that educates the public on trauma, brain development, and resilience in adults and children. Through workshops and trainings, we use an evidence-based program to demonstrate how trauma adversely affects the brain and how relationships can help prevent negative health outcomes.

CONNECTIONS MATTER IN THE WORKPLACE

Connections Matter offers a workplace curriculum designed to help organizations:

- 1 Successfully support employees through difficult times
- 2 Better communicate about serious issues that affect workers
- 3 Build on their existing best practices to foster supportive relationships

THE WORKPLACE CURRICULUM

BENEFITS OF THE WORKPLACE CURRICULUM

After attending the training, employees will be able to:

- Better manage their own daily stress
- Improve their communication methods
- Identify existing supports in their lives
- Explore ways to strengthen current relationships, including those with co-workers
- Build new connections with co-workers and acquaintances
- Improve their health through stress-management techniques
- Cultivate resiliency to cope with difficult experiences
- Contribute to a positive and productive workplace environment

This half-day training offers a deeper knowledge of stress, provides a common language for discussing stress and trauma, explores the importance of relationships, and teaches resiliency skills.

After completing the training, your employees will have the tools to better manage their stress, improve their workplace relationships, and communicate more effectively with co-workers.

The curriculum applies to leaders and workers at:

- Small businesses
- Large corporations
- Nonprofits
- Government agencies
- Other workplaces



HOW TRAUMA AFFECTS YOUR BUSINESS

Your employees bring their whole selves to work, including stress and trauma from the past. Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs, are traumatic events that occur between the ages of 0 and 17. Science shows that ACEs affect brain development, as well as physical and mental health, well into adulthood.

5 OUT OF 30 EMPLOYEES HAVE EXPERIENCED

SIGNIFICANT CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

(4 or more ACEs)



EMPLOYEES EXPERIENCING **FOUR OR MORE ACEs** (COMPARED TO THOSE WITH ZERO) ARE:



2.2x
more likely to have a heart attack



2.5x
more likely to have absenteeism



6x
more likely to have clinical depression



3.6x
more likely to have serious job problems

STRESS AND TRAUMA IN THE WORKPLACE



In any organization, daily stressors can pile up, overwhelming workers over time. Too much stress can become toxic and affect employees' health, attendance, and productivity. Without support, prolonged stress can lead to physical and mental health problems and unhealthy ways of coping, such as using alcohol and drugs.

Fortunately, research shows that caring relationships—with co-workers, friends, and family—counteract the effects of stress. **Positive social experiences help us cope and even thrive through tough times.**



By promoting connections among employees, businesses can create a happier, healthier workforce and a more positive, productive workplace culture.

PREVENTING ACEs

A 2019 report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that preventing ACEs could lead to:

- 44% reduction in depression
- 26% reduction in COPD
- 24% reduction in heavy drinking
- 12% reduction in coronary heart disease

Relationships Improve Quality of Life

- Less depression
- Feeling richer
- Lower blood pressure
- Less likely to get sick

CULTIVATING COMMUNITY AT WORK

Science shows us that healthy relationships can mitigate the effects of trauma. To promote whole-person wellness for employees—not just physical health—your organization could help workers manage stress and build stronger connections. These actions can also improve your bottom line.

POSITIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE = STOCK PRICE GROWTH

From 1998 to 2001, the annualized returns of the Fortune 100 **Best Companies to Work For in the U.S.** were **11%**, compared to 3.83% for the S&P 500.

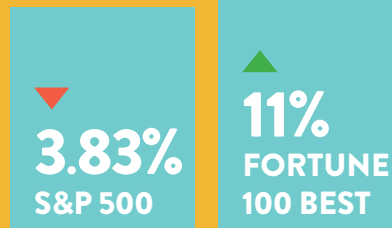



Photo by Christina @ wocintechchat.com on Unsplash

WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN DO:

- Implement policies like flex-time that create healthier and more productive employees
- Train managers on trauma-informed care principles
- Use corporate-sponsored events to inform employees about community services that can support their well-being
- Promote training and development

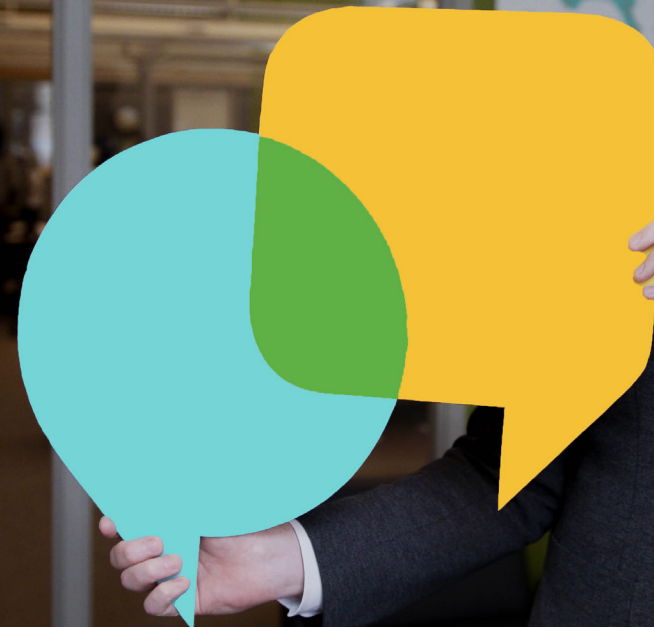
 Host a **Connections Matter** training for employees by emailing:

WHATSYOURCONNECTION@GMAIL.COM

CASE STUDY: IRON HORSE WEALTH MANAGEMENT

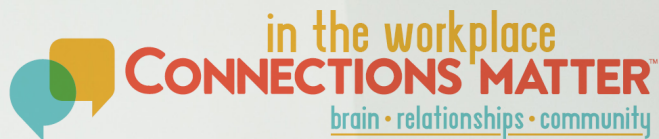
Iron Horse Wealth Management, LLC, located in Johnston, Iowa, participated in a pilot program of the Connections Matter curriculum for workplaces.

Danny Beyer, a lead advisor at Iron Horse, learned new communication strategies that have already impacted his personal and professional life. Now, when a client coping with a traumatic event—such as the death of a spouse—asks for financial advice, he has the language and perspective to meet the client where they are, rather than making assumptions about what they need.



“THE CONNECTIONS MATTER CURRICULUM
**HELPED CHANGE
MY PERSPECTIVE.**
IT GAVE ME NEW LANGUAGE TO ASK
BETTER QUESTIONS AND HAVE
BETTER CONVERSATIONS
WITH MY CO-WORKERS, CLIENTS, AND FAMILY.
UNDERSTANDING WHAT ACES DO TO KIDS AND
HOW THAT TRANSCENDS INTO ADULTHOOD
GAVE ME A NEW LENS
WHEN I AM TALKING TO PEOPLE,
ESPECIALLY ABOUT FINANCES AND THEIR
HOPES AND DREAMS.”

– Danny Beyer, Iron Horse Wealth Management, LLC



HOST CONNECTIONS MATTER AT YOUR WORKPLACE

SCHEDULE A WORKSHOP FOR
YOUR ORGANIZATION BY EMAILING

WHATSYOURCONNECTION@GMAIL.COM

Connections Matter promotes caring connections as the foundation for developing healthy brains, supportive relationships, and strong communities.

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