



# Relating to Neurodivergent People

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Crystal Byrd Farmer



# What we submitted to Coho US

Have you ever been annoyed at someone who is disorganized or forget things easily? The person who wants rules followed to the letter or makes a face when they smell strong scents? Neurodivergent people (those with autism, ADHD, and other so-called disorders) live among us, and they are probably just as annoyed at you! In this workshop you'll learn about the characteristics of neurodivergence, important accommodations people may need, and how we all can coexist peacefully in community.

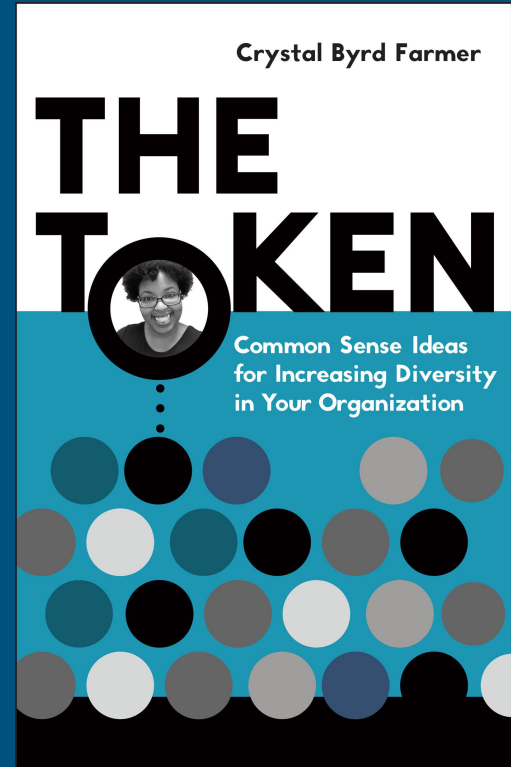
# Intro

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Crystal Byrd Farmer

- Autistic
- Board member of FIC
- Co-President of BIPOC Intentional Community Council
- Runs Gastonia Freedom School for disabled children
- Diversity consultant for intentional communities
- Author of The Token: Common Sense Ideas for Increasing Diversity in Your Community

Thanks to Erin Roundy who developed this presentation with me!



# Definition of Neurodiversity

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- Neurodiversity refers to variation in the human brain regarding sociability, learning, attention, mood and other mental functions in a non-pathological sense.
- Neurodivergence examples
  - Autism
  - ADHD
  - Dyslexia
  - Tourette's
  - Down's Syndrome
  - Schizophrenia
  - May include mental illnesses such as anxiety, depression, and bipolar

# Important Points

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- Neurotypical vs neurodivergent
- Neurodiversity is a neurological difference, not an illness to be cured
  - People seek treatment for symptoms of neurodivergence and many do need medication/therapy to function in society
  - Accommodations (including societal change) help people participate fully
- Disabled people prefer direct language instead of euphemisms
  - ~~Special needs~~
  - ~~Differently abled~~
  - Disabled
  - Autistic is preferred over person with autism

Have you ever talked to someone who  
identified as neurodivergent?

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What was important to them about their  
identity?

# “Benefits” of Neurodivergence

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- Thinking outside the box
- Creativity with problem solving
- Logic and a desire for order
- Moral clarity
- Ability to focus
- Direct communication
- Attention to detail
- Capacity to remember facts
- Special interests

# Drawbacks of Neurodivergence

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- Rigidity
- Slower processing time
- Difficulty with social norms
- Better at one form of communication over another
- Lack of “common sense”
- Need for clear instructions
- Disorganization
- Impulse control
- Special interests



# Spoons Theory

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- People start the day with a certain number of spoons
- Each time we do a psychologically demanding task, a spoon is taken away
- When all the spoons are gone, the person is more likely to have an irrational/unpleasant response
- Depleted spoons over time is called burnout



Nothing About Us Without Us

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What does this mean to you?

# Neurodivergence in Community

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- Common sense is not common sense
  - Don't assume every adult has the same knowledge set
- Check for understanding during or after meetings
- Use multiple forms of communication (in person, verbal, text, phone)
- Use visual aids with instructions
- Avoid idioms and euphemisms unless you know they understand
- Always be direct
- Ask if they need support with tasks while working with a team
- It's ok to vent but not ok to gossip

# What Neurodivergent People Want in Community

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- Understanding of neurodivergence
- Neurodivergent people in leadership
- Equitable and accessible ways to contribute
- Separate/private living spaces
- Affordability
- Accommodations specific to their needs
- Inclusive decision making
- Presumption of competence
- Boundaries

# Resources

## BOOKS

**The Token: Common Sense Ideas for Increasing Diversity in Your Organization** by Crystal Byrd Farmer

**Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice** by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha

**We're Not Broken** by Eric Garcia

**PATHFINDERS: People with Developmental Disabilities and Their Allies Building Communities That Work For Everybody** by John O'Brien & Beth Mount

**Neurotribes** by Steve Silberman

## ORGANIZATIONS

[Autistic Self Advocacy Network](#)

[Autistic Women & Non-Binary Network](#)

[Autism and Race](#)

[NeuroClastic, Inc.](#)

[Neurodiversity Network](#)

## CONSULTANTS

[AsiatuCoach.com](#)

[NeurodivergentConsulting.org](#)