

You Don't Need Understand

I don't understand.
I don't get it.
This doesn't make sense.
What do you mean?
Why not?
Why can't you?
What's the problem?

We've all heard these words and
we've all spoken them at least
once in our lives.

We found ourselves caught trying
to understand something that our
minds just couldn't comprehend or
wrap our minds around.

Or we found ourselves trying to
explain something to a person
who just couldn't get it.
Who didn't understand.
Who could not grasp whatever concept
we were trying to explain to them.

Everyday we hear so much about
how important it is to understand
each other. To free ourselves from
ignorance and learn what others
are dealing with and going through.

But what if you can't? What if you don't?
What if despite your best efforts *you*
just don't get it?

Well then here's a news flash for you.

You don't always have to get it.
You don't always have to understand it.
You don't always have to kill yourself
trying to make sense of what others are
going through.

But you do have to respect them.
Respect their lives, their choices,
their feelings, their emotions, their
identity.

You don't need to understand that
I grew up in a racist town. You don't
need to understand that I was called the
N word by whites and told that I was just
trying to pass by the black girls I only wanted
to be friends with.

You don't need to understand how angry
I got when I went into a store and saw them
following my mother around because she was black
and they thought she might steal something.

You don't need to understand my
personal history to know that I don't
want to do this. To know that I'm
getting uncomfortable being here.

You don't need a detailed lesson on
the racism I experienced to know
that I don't like this and I want to leave.

The fact that something is making someone
you care about uncomfortable or upset
should be all you need to understand.
It should be all you need to see in order to stop.

You don't need to understand every aspect
of a person's gender identity to know that
they don't like being called a girl, a boy,
or any variation thereof.

You don't need to have a person explain to
you how many times they attempted suicide to
understand that joking about it is not okay.

You don't need to know how long it has been since
she last cut herself to see that she doesn't like you
pointing out her scars.

We get so upset, so obsessed with
getting people to understand us.

Well you know what?
Some people aren't going to get it.

No matter how many times you tell them.
No matter how many monologues you give.
No matter how many poems you write

or songs you sing or analogies you give.
Some people are *never going to get it*.

But that doesn't mean they don't love you.
That doesn't mean they can't support you.
That doesn't mean they can't stand up for you.
That doesn't mean they won't spend their dying
breaths telling others what a beautiful person you are.

Maybe they don't understand, but they still try.
Maybe they don't get it and it doesn't make sense
but they still use whatever pronouns you prefer.

Maybe they've never experienced racism or
homophobia and they just don't understand
what your life has been is like but still they
try to support you and avoid words they know
you consider to be slurs and insults.

You don't need to understand every detail
of a person's life to show them the respect
that they deserve.

You don't need to understand in depth their
entire history of pain and suffering to know
that they just need someone to listen to them
while they vent.

We aren't always going to understand each other
but we do owe it to people to try and if we still
don't get it and we still can't fully grasp their
point of view then we can still respect them.

I don't need to know why you are uncomfortable
if you don't feel like explaining it to me. The fact
that you asked me to stop is more than enough for me
and it should be enough for anyone.