

The Beauty of Empathy

It was on December 18th, 2017. I was driving to school, like any other normal day when to my utter horror, I read a news article which revealed that someone who I admired and thought fondly of had committed suicide.

At first I thought, why him? Out of all people, what made him become this way? And so, I went online and read his letter that he addressed to everyone before he died. It was very heartbreaking to hear his final words, wishing that everyone tells him that he did a good job, that the life of fame was never for him and that the depression had already engulfed him. At the time, I still didn't quite understand the pain he felt, I was more in shock really. But as I began to discover his music and recent performances, I realized how obvious it was that he was hurting inside. All alone. And no one noticed. And then, I fell into a dark place. I no longer wanted to see the positive side of things. I was confused and sad and I didn't know how to get back up. It wasn't until I started to feel similar sentiments; loneliness, feeling misunderstood, not alive in the present moment and waiting for each day to go by.

I really did try to understand why he felt this way. But every time I did, I would feel a huge sense of grief. Part of me wanted to be kept alone in my own space where I could mourn but another part of me wanted to move on with my life. It wasn't until a certain individual reached out to me when I most needed it. He asked me, "Why are you crying?" and I told them the entire story. He empathized with me and shared his experience with losing someone he loved. He lost his father at a very young age but as time went by, he moved on from it. I asked, "How can you move on so easily?" and he replied, "You never forget. It becomes a part of your life but it should not dictate your entire life. If I were still mourning, I would not be the same person that I am today". He told me that I should be grateful. I still have my family. My family is all I have and it would've been far worse if I had lost a family member. After that experience, I began to focus on other things. Slowly, my attention withdrew from this fatal incident and I realized that despite the ups and downs in life, there are beautiful moments and it is *me* who can decide whether or not I choose to live happily or in misery. At least I have that choice.

Looking back, this experience has taught me so many things; from the importance of family, how little we know about others and how wrong it is to make assumptions about people and even enjoying the little things in life. Until I experienced his suffering, I began to realize how

serious of an issue it was. With that said, I believe that before we choose to love one another, we need to love ourselves first. Believe that we are worthy of love, acceptance and happiness. If we cannot empathize with ourselves, how can we empathize with others? If we cannot accept the pain and grief that we are feeling, how can we understand the hardships of others?

There is something special when we connect with others who share similar experiences. There's a feeling of reassurance, whether it's a consoling hug or word of encouragement, someone who will go out of their way to tell you that it's ok and that you can get through this.

For anyone who is feeling the same way, you are not alone. There will always be someone who will love and appreciate you for all that you are. It is okay to suffer and make mistakes. But never be selfish about it because out there, someone is having a harder time.