With more and more people in Wisconsin coming from different cultural backgrounds, it’s worthwhile to learn how to understand other cultures. There are a couple of ways to understand cultural differences. But, the most important thing to remember is that everyone is ultimately a person first - so judging each person on their own merit is the best way to become a more understanding and emphatic person.

The United States is becoming more multicultural. This means that people and traditions from other countries and cultures are becoming more noticeable and celebrated. Since it’s highly likely you’ll come across someone who is different to you, or a situation that is unfamiliar, it’s definitely helpful to know how you can become more aware and understanding of other cultures.

Trying to understand cultural differences can open you up to many new and exciting experiences. Here are some ways to be more culturally aware:

- **Become self-aware.** By working out your own beliefs, values, and personal biases. In doing this you are able to think about how these personal traits might impact on your approach to understanding cultural difference.

- **Do your own research.** Learning about different cultures can be a great way of developing an understanding of cultural diversity. Engage in a bit of research either online or through books and study some of the history and traditions of other cultures.

- **Talk to someone from a different cultural background,** and try and get to know them a bit better. You don’t necessarily have to ask them directly about their culture, but by getting to know them you’ll automatically find out more about their life and experiences.

- **Travel!** One of the best ways to experience and understand other cultures is to actually be among the people. Planning a trip overseas (or across the state) to a community you’re interested in learning more about can be the best way of opening yourself up to new cultures.

- **Just be more accepting.** Sometimes it’s not that easy to gain an understanding of cultural difference for whatever reason. In these situations the best approach is just to accept that some people are different and that’s ok.
A few things to remember:

Even if you hear or read something about a certain culture, it’s important to realize it doesn’t mean everyone from that particular background acts/thinks/believes the same thing. Just as not everyone you know has identical beliefs; people who come from different cultural backgrounds aren’t all a certain way either.

One of the biggest difficulties to overcome in understanding cultural differences is making judgements based on one opinion. Do your own research and make an effort to actually learn about people instead of making broad brush statements.

The main thing to remember is that everyone, no matter what their cultural background, has different opinions, habits and ways of life. The quicker we accept that everyone is different, the easier it becomes to understand and embrace cultural differences.