

## WEEK 22 EMPATHY

*“Compassion, which I would define as unconditional love, is essential to a Jedi's life” – Anakin Skywalker*

Anakin Skywalker is one of the most misunderstood and tragic characters in the Star Wars saga. From the beginning the boy Anakin was destined to be the chosen one who would bring balance to the Force, yet his destiny was to fall to the Dark Side and he would become Darth Vader. Anakin was an enigma of character and a contradiction.

Anakin was a deeply emotional man inside a hard shell. Despite his training he wore his heart on his sleeve. A turmoil of emotions churned within him often to extremes. Anakin suffered the loss of his mother deeply. He loved those close to him intensely. Values and principles were non-negotiable to Anakin.

Anakin was also one of the most empathetic and compassionate of the Jedi. He cared for the downtrodden and fought for their rights. In battle he would willingly risk his life for others. Anakin expected the same from those around him. Many Jedi were benevolent in comparison with a detached and impartial attitude to the suffering they witnessed. Emotion was shunned.

Anakin was unable to be impartial or detached to suffering around him. He carried the suffering of others within him as a personal burden that he had to bear. Anakin wanted nothing more than to end all suffering and death in the Galaxy because he too had suffered. He only wanted his suffering to stop.

Darth Sidious recognised the strong empathy that Anakin carried and used it against him. When Anakin confronted the scene of Mace Windu standing over a defeated Chancellor Palpatine his empathetic nature kicked in. Anakin saw an old and withered man being tortured. Confused and tormented by the injustices and hypocrisy he had seen Anakin turned on the

Jedi Master to save Palpatine, whom he saw as the victim. Destiny was set, the Rubicon was crossed, and Anakin was lost.

Empathy is a trait that we see more often in small children and animals than we tend to see in ourselves and others. When we feel “sorry” for someone, we are not really feeling empathy. We do not really share or understand their pain or loss.

People confuse empathy with sympathy or pity, yet it is none of these things. Empathy is a deeper and more spiritual sense that recognises the intrinsic bond between people. To empathize is to understand the suffering of others in the way they understand it without judgement. It is to see the world through the eyes of others, to feel what they feel and to “walk a mile in their shoes”.

Empathy is a Jedi trait because without it there is only room for judgement. Suffering becomes an object, a symptom that can be treated with kind word and acts of charity. Empathy creates a partnership between you and that other person. Sympathy reaches down to help while empathy lifts the person up by sharing the load. Its why facial expressions and body language are so important in conveying true intent and concern for others.

Empathy carries compassion and a desire to sacrifice for the sake of another. It is more than platitudes but moving from sorrow to action. Empathy carries momentum. Compassion builds on empathy and leads to altruism. Was it not empathy and compassion that guided Luke Skywalker when he refused Darth Sidious and chose to spare and redeem Darth Vader, his father?

Anakin is one of the most misunderstood and tragic characters in the Star Wars saga. The character is sometimes treated with sympathy and at times with pity but rarely do people feel empathy for Anakin. That is a shame because the character is a tragedy worth understanding. Anakin serves as a warning but also a reminder that with empathy and compassion redemption is always possible. Try walking a mile in Anakin’s shoes.

**DAY 148**

*“Are you allowed to love? I thought that was forbidden for a Jedi.” - Padme Amidala*

**Today I am Grateful for:**


**Morning Contemplation**


**Evening Reflection**


**DAY 149**

*“Why do I get the feeling you're going to be the death of me?” -  
Obi-wan Kenobi*

**Today I am Grateful for:**


**Morning Contemplation**


**Evening Reflection**


**DAY 150**

*“Don't say that Master... You're the closest thing I have to a father... I love you. I don't want to cause you pain.” - Anakin*

**Today I am Grateful for:**


**Morning Contemplation**


**Evening Reflection**


**DAY 151**

*“You are strong and wise and I’m very proud of you.”*  
– Obi-wan Kenobi

Today I am Grateful for:


Morning Contemplation


Evening Reflection


**DAY 152**

*“None of the stories people tell about me can change who I really am.” - Luke Skywalker*

**Today I am Grateful for:**


**Morning Contemplation**


**Evening Reflection**


**DAY 153**

*“Don’t confuse refusing help with not needing it.”*  
- Leia Organa Solo

Today I am Grateful for:


Morning Contemplation


Evening Reflection




## DAY 154

*“Attachment is forbidden. Possession is forbidden. Compassion, which I would define as unconditional love, is essential to a Jedi's life. So you might say, that we are encouraged to love.” – Anakin*

Today I am Grateful for:


Morning Contemplation


Evening Reflection


## WEEK REVIEW

Reflect on your daily practices and personal goals for the week. How did you do? Where can you refocus your attention?

Meditation:


Physical Exercise:


Diplomacy:


Awareness:


Self-Discipline:
