



Harnessing Your Empathic Abilities

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Before we begin this course, I want to state clearly that this course is for **everyone**. We all have some amount of innate sensitivity within ourselves and to the people around us, and the type of training Jedi do, or the type of person drawn to the Jedi path tends to only increase that sensitivity, whether it is sensitivity to energy if that is something you believe in, the emotional states of others, or just increasing your natural understanding and empathy of your fellow humans.

Unlike the fictional Star Wars world, one does not need to be born 'force sensitive' to be able to access the force. However there are different levels of baseline ability, and we tend to label those with a high natural level of ability (sometimes high to the point it can be scary and difficult to manage without training) empaths, and everyone else not. These are just labels, and everything in this course will strengthen and expand your path, empath or not, Jedi or not. If strong and healthy boundaries, emotional health, and self-awareness sound like goals you want to pursue, this course is for you.

There are a lot of ideas and training about empathic abilities out there, and it's difficult to tell which ones have any legitimacy or weight. There is so little actual research on a topic that matches so many people's (and especially so many Jedi's) personal experiences.

So let's start at the beginning: what is an empath?

An empath (also sometimes referred to as a HSP, or a Highly Sensitive Person) is someone that, to one degree or another, experiences emotions that belong to someone else. Based on the word *empathy*, meaning "the ability to understand and share the feelings of another", and first coined with the character of Deanna Troi in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (a character who senses the emotions of others in a somewhat telepathic sense), empaths go beyond empathy and literally feel the emotions being felt by another, to one degree of intensity or another. The effects of this emotional entanglement vary from person to person, but common experiences include having feelings (especially intense ones) come out of nowhere that you cannot explain through any of your experiences or thoughts, trouble controlling your emotions (many empaths share the experience of having been told they were 'too emotional' or 'too sensitive' as children or young adults), and having the emotional reactions of others 'stick' in a way that is hard to shake off.¹

¹ This course is not a substitute for psychological and physical care. I am not a healthcare professional. There are, of course, mood disorders that have similar symptoms, and empathic ability is unproven and rarely researched. Please consult a doctor or professional if you experience physical pains, severe mood swings, depression, or thoughts of self-harm. Those are things that

Some people even experience feeling or knowing things they would not be able to otherwise, or sensing the distress or joy of people they know well across distances, feel overwhelmed emotionally in intense situations or crowds, develop similar ailments or sympathetic pain with people you are close to, are very sensitive to even fictional depictions of pain, violence, or cruelty, are trusted easily by strangers, and are frequently emotionally worn out. According to some studies, up to 20% of the population is predisposed to this heightened awareness, and I have found that the Jedi Path frequently attracts individuals with this characteristic.

Why people experience this is not clear; whether it is a side effect of being a highly empathetic person or if it has to do with energy is up for debate, and people tend to have strong opinions on the subject. **I believe the meditations and practices here are good for all people and Jedi, not just the empathic ones.** It's about being grounded, building a good emotional foundation, and knowing yourself intimately. Let's get started.

Empath Pros and Cons

Empathic abilities are a great boon, but they can also be a serious obstacle to your physical, mental, and emotional health. Before you can harness and use your abilities, you need to be able to control them.

So let's talk about the negatives first.

Physically, empaths often share similar ailments, such as digestive issues, lower back problems, and reproductive issues (like cramps and PMS, or other conditions). Many of these are shared with people with high levels of stress, which makes sense, considering the difficulties of dealing with unexpected intense emotion (especially those of stress, anger, or depression). Another possibility is based in the chakra system. Empaths, being emotionally focused people, tend to center on their emotions, opinions, intuition, and heart. This makes them excellent listeners, nurturers, and leaders, but often leads to being 'ungrounded', emotionally, energetically, and physically, with health issues manifesting around the first and second chakras.

Emotionally, empaths are very strong, but this also tends to be their point of vulnerability. Feeling the emotions of others without being able to control it takes a toll, leaving them exhausted, unmotivated, and hollowed out. Empaths also tend to give of themselves to others, making them nurturing people, but rarely take care of their own emotional needs. This leads to energetic imbalance, physical and mental exhaustion, introversion in those who are not naturally introverted, and dissociation (feeling like you are not in your body). This can lead to energy blockage and difficulty telling how you feel or what you want from others or from your life, even to the point of being swayed to the viewpoints of others or unable to hold on to your own goals and desires.

Mentally, the prolonged effects of feeling the emotions of others as strongly as your own can lead you to neglect your own interests, struggle with building and maintaining healthy boundaries with others, prioritize the feelings and opinions of others above your own, and

leaves empaths open to emotional manipulation by others, as you feel their viewpoint as strongly or more strongly than your own. Learning to distinguish between your own emotions and that of others allows clearer analysis of your interactions and relationships, revealing manipulation and the intentions of others in a more objective light.

Now that that's out of the way, how do we address these issues?

“What does it mean to be an empath, and why is it fraught with these basic life challenges? Derived from the Greek “em” (in) and “pathos” (feeling), the term empathic means you’re able to “feel into” others’ feelings. But for empaths, this sensitivity is magnified to the nth degree. An empath is more tuned in, more empathetic, and more sensitive to others than the average person. Being this tuned in, empathic, and sensitive is an asset, but it [can] come at great cost.”²

Most empath training focuses on blocking, shielding, or tightly controlling the symptoms of empathic ability. And that does work for some people (and I will cover those methods as they often work as emergency stop-gap measures), but methods of blocking out emotion cuts you off from the incredible source of intuition and information you have been gifted with. Which brings us to the positives. When **properly trained, understood, and under control**, what can your empathic ability do for you?

Empaths are **trusted**; people will open up to you with little prompting, and it is easy to find your way into leadership roles when you care about the people you would be leading. People trust you to look out for their interests, and try to look out for yours to make up for the empath's tendency to neglect themselves in favor of the group or beloved individuals.

Empaths are **charismatic**. The trust we engender, along with the kinds of energy we project create a magnetic quality that draw people to us and help make and keep lifelong friends.

Empaths are **great in a crisis**: our ability to process tremendous amounts of information and direct and manage people clearly and concisely helps keep confusion and chaos in dire circumstances to a minimum, making us excellent in stressful situations.

Empaths are **healers**. You can use your innate understanding of others to help them understand themselves, work through trauma, or mend rifts between people who have had a misunderstanding with an instinctive ease. Empathic ability can also be a signifier for high energetic potential, making empaths excellent energy workers and healers, sometimes even without training (but we are Jedi, and ‘there is no ignorance’, so get some training 😊).

Empaths are **skilled at diplomacy**. Because the basic definition of an empath is someone that can connect with others and read their emotions, people's hidden insecurities, motivations, worries, and intents are often clear as daylight. Depending on how sensitive an empath is they can often finish someone's sentence, predict their responses, detect lies more easily, and with training, craft their responses so they will be received a particular way. This is a tremendous gift

²Quoted from this great yoga-based essay, [“I Feel Your Pain: An Empath's Guide to Staying Balanced”](#) by Bo Forbes.

of diplomacy and leadership, but it is not one without pitfalls. Although empaths also have a high natural level of empathy, this level of clarity into another person's mental workings makes it easy for empaths to manipulate others if they choose. This is the shadow side of being an empath, and I will go into it more detail later in the course.

There are a wide variety of levels of sensitivity and specific skills or leanings within the empathic population. Some people are highly sensitive and can sense emotion over long distances, or even send emotions to others intentionally. Some people have this kind of bond with animals, plants, or even (rarely) machines. These are highly specific versions of empathy that will not be explored in this course, but I encourage you to experiment (with the full consent of anyone who helps) and explore what you are capable of.

Harnessing Your Abilities

So we have all these abilities, but we're blocked from using them as long as we are not in control of our sensitivities. So how do we learn control?

There are three parts to understanding and harnessing your empathic abilities: **knowing yourself well, grounding/filtering, and building an emotional foundation**. We will go through techniques and theory for each of these steps, and talk about practice and how to synthesize the benefits at the end of the lesson.

The following meditation is the core of this course; I will refer to it continually, and it will become a core practice for you if this class appeals to you. Untrained empathic ability always leads to emotional confusion and burnout. To begin to control your abilities is to know where these problems are coming from: what they feel like, where you are weakest, how you can become stronger and more competent in navigating and understanding your own mental landscape. As Qui-Gon says, "training to become a Jedi is not an easy challenge, and even if you succeed, it's a hard life." Even if you succeed, holding yourself to this standard of self honesty takes constant work, maintenance, and a special blend of forgiveness and determination. You will be forced to confront your biases, your personal weaknesses, your most basic needs and where they come from. But in the end, knowing that personal landscape, ups and downs, easy and rough patches, will lend you an incredible resilience, strength, and a solid foundation for your abilities.

Know Thyself

There is an ancient proverb: in Greek it is *gnothi seauton*, in Latin, *temet nosce*. In English, it is usually phrased "Know Thyself". The core of each Jedi's path, no matter how diverse, is deep self-understanding, and this goes doubly for empaths; our goal must be to take control of our mind and emotions by understanding them.

Emotions don't come out of nowhere for anyone. We become angry or sad or happy not because there is some set response to each moment, or because people "make" us feel a certain way. Our emotions are clues to our internal landscape. This landscape is shaped by all our experiences, and in turn shapes our ideas, emotions, and tendencies.

If someone says something to make me angry, my first reaction as a Jedi cannot be just to squash down the anger, and certainly isn't just reacting with knee-jerk rage; I need to ask a question: *Why?* Why am I angry? What about this person, this statement, this moment is making me see red? Is it actually that I am hurt by their opinion of me? Why do I care about that opinion? Is it that I find their statement offensive? Why am I offended? It is when you can take a moment and find honest but non-judgemental answers to those questions that you can begin not only to act instead of merely react, but begin to shape and understand your own emotional landscape.

This ability to see and sculpt our biases, tendencies, and problems internally is a human trait; we have both the ability to reason and reflect and the power to choose our actions. However it is the responsibility of each Jedi to know themselves deeply, in order to fulfill our goal of acting objectively, not influenced by hidden emotion or unfounded bias. As empathes who can pick up the emotions and biases of others from moment to moment, we must be extra vigilant. The Jedi code says 'There is no emotion, there is peace'. To act peacefully, serenely, and objectively we must first understand ourselves deeply, to see what makes each of us tick. This process requires frequent, frank self-examination, and meditation is the most effective way to do that. If you are new to meditation I suggest you experiment with these two meditations before you begin the following one.

[Basic Jedi Meditation](#)

[Jedi Meditation: The Calming Breath](#)

Jedi Meditation: Know Thyself

Carve out a little time where you will not be disturbed, where you can be by yourself and think. Sometimes it helps to write, or speak aloud what your thoughts are, or you can keep them in your mind. Also keep in mind that as you do this it will become a faster and more natural process, and you can start to practice it before, during, and after moments of stress or high emotion to help you act instead of react.

Close your eyes, and breathe naturally and deeply. Let the darkness behind your eyelids and the coolness of the air in your lungs calm your mind.

What are you feeling, right now at this moment? What ideas or emotions begin to float to the surface of your consciousness? Try to tease apart the ball of tangled feelings that is normal for most people. Don't let this stress you out: all you are here to do is look at who you are, not who you were, or could be. You are not here to judge or regret. Examine your emotions as you would the horizon, or a familiar but new object in your hands. What is there?

Likely there will be one or two things that pull your attention in particular. Let yourself be pulled, examining those closely. How do you know that you feel this way? Are there physical sensations, like tightness in your throat, chest, or shoulders, associated with those feelings? Are there memories or events that come up when you examine these feelings?

Remember to keep breathing and relax as you continue.

Next, delve a little deeper. Why are you feeling these emotions now? What sparked them? It could be something specific, or as nebulous as a rough week. Think about what parts of yourself could spawn these emotions. Are you nervous about your position at work? Worried about a friend? Conflicted about who you are, or what you want? No judgment is attached to whatever you reveal, you are merely following a stream back to its source.

Lastly, what is this emotional reaction based on? We feel emotion, especially strong emotion, as a response to fundamental needs that are either being filled or not, such as our need for love, stability, approval, and independence. When we lack a fundamental need, or feel it is threatened somehow (assessments not always based on logic or reality), we are often swamped with emotions like fear, insecurity, and anger. Has someone changed or challenged a firmly held or fundamental belief? Are you feeling trapped, or insecure in your life somewhere? If you find that your emotion comes from a lack or need, how can you fill and stabilize that need? Is it healthy for you to do so? If not, how can you learn to be less dependent on that need?

Give yourself space to feel the emotion and recognize it, and make a note of all you've learned. As you do this more, you will start to understand yourself and your reactions in a new way, and start to be able to predict and control how you react or will react based on past experience or recognition of small signals and clues your mind and body give you; this is the key to balancing objective Jedi behavior with proper emotional self-care. All this meditation is about is self-understanding, gaining knowledge that will help you shape yourself and your actions in the future, so anything you learn is important on your path to emotional wellness and unbiased understanding.

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This meditation is not a one-and-done activity. You will have to incorporate this kind of productive, non-judgmental self-reflection into your meditative routine, and learn to do it on the fly. This way, when you feel an emotion out of nowhere, you will soon be able to identify if it's something rooted in your psyche, or if it truly belongs to someone else. This is step one on the process of separating your emotional headspace from those around you.

Building a Foundation

Now that you are starting to understand your own emotional landscape, it's time to shore up yourself and your progress. There are several ways to do this, and we will focus on those that help shore up the areas where empaths tend to wear out quickly or be weakest in.

“As an empath, you give too much space to others’ emotional lives. You solve their problems with ease and help them restore equilibrium, often at the expense of your own energy stores.”³
In order to avoid depleting your ability to give back to others need well-defined **boundaries**.

³ [“I Feel Your Pain: An Empath’s Guide to Staying Balanced”](#) by Bo Forbes.

Some of us may never have had or witnessed what strong, healthy boundaries look like, so let's delve into that a bit. Think of boundaries as rules set up to protect you in sensible ways. They change as you do, and sometimes apply to different people differently. They are the lines you set that say what you will and won't allow. For a deeper explanation of basic boundary setting and how to set effective boundaries check out [this link](#).⁴

Learn to take time and space for yourself, communicate your needs carefully and without guilt about the space and energy you are taking up, and make sure that as you use or dole out your physical, social, spiritual, emotional and mental energies, you are choosing intentionally and actively to do so, not reacting to the needs of others. Not only is this more satisfying, but it will help tremendously with feelings of being overdrawn or extended.

Creating boundaries isn't just a matter of mental discipline or making choices about other people. You do need to know where other people begin (in terms of their responsibility, interactions and expectations with and for you, or their energetic and emotional presence), but you also need to know where you end. The 'Know Yourself' exercise is an excellent way to bring your awareness into your emotional space and attend to, deal with, and validate your emotional needs. However emotions have physical ramifications as well, and empaths often find that emotions can get stuck somewhere inside you, even if they aren't your own. You need to **bring awareness into your body**.

"Imagine that you've left to visit a friend in another city and forgotten to lock your house. And that's not all: You've left all the doors and windows wide open, so anyone can get in. This is what it's like to be an empath. You can abandon your own home, your direct experience, in favor of someone else's. The more you do this [without locking up], the more difficult it is to return. What makes matters worse is that not inhabiting your body (and the moment) keeps the benefits of... mindfulness-based practices just beyond your reach."⁵

It is an amazing advantage to be able to experience someone else's direct experience, but to do so without training and control is to abandon your sense of self, your own boundaries, a bit at a time. That being said, bringing awareness into your body, through exercise, meditation, physical contact and affection, and self-care (baths, walks in the park, reading a good book etc.) can help you learn what it feels like to live in just your body, and feel just your thoughts. Be present, get to know who you are, and feel rooted in yourself and confident in your space. That way you know what it should feel like as you start to build healthy boundaries with those around you. This also includes taking a break from spaces that add to your emotional 'noise' (and yes that includes social media or the internet). The exercise in the 'Know Yourself' section can help with this, but here is another excellent exercise for some emotional spring cleaning.

Become Space⁶:

⁴ I also highly recommend perusing [Captain Awkward](#): it's a modern advice blog with a strong focus on building healthy personal and relationship boundaries, and understanding your own behavior in the context of those boundaries.

⁵ "[I Feel Your Pain: An Empath's Guide to Staying Balanced](#)" by Bo Forbes.

⁶ Adapted and extended with permission from a meditation in the IFJRS Introductory Workbook, copyright Jackie Meyer, edits by Katie Mock.

To begin, take a few deep breaths to relax. Close your eyes and focus on the space inside yourself, between the molecules of your body. Expand that space, out in every direction. Expand all of the cells in your body, even the space within the individual atoms of your body. Expand that space, and your entire body with it, and fill the room you are in. Then continue expanding, to fill the building. Then, your town. Then your state/region. Continue expanding to your country, and then the whole earth. Keep expanding, until you are present throughout the solar system, and onward to the galaxy until you fill the entire universe! Don't latch onto anything or look, just expand and breathe. Stay here as long as you'd like, just sensing what is there but not holding onto anything.

As you expand, you will notice there is a sensation of matter stuck between the spaces (they may be physical, such as tension in your lungs or between your eyebrows, or mental/emotional such as holding your breath, feeling stressed or heavy, feeling distracted). Breathe into those areas of tightness or density, and let anything stuck in the net of your being float away or dissolve. As you slowly come back together remain aware of yourself, emotionally and physically. Sometimes a last sort of energetic shake is required (or just feels nice), like a dog shaking off water. Take one last deep *deep* breath, and exhale slowly but intentionally, pushing any sort of emotional or energetic detritus you might feel on the outside of your skin or aura off into the air, into nothingness, the same way you might blow dust off of a table.

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Many people who struggle with their empathic ability often just want to turn it off or make it stop. Whenever I hear this it saddens me greatly, but I understand the impulse. Empaths, especially those that have made it to adulthood without any training or without developing some kind of coping mechanism, but with their abilities intact are frequently exhausted, overwhelmed, and despairing. I say intact, because it is possible to lose your empathic abilities. Not knowing how to deal with the sensory input, feeling overwhelmed and exhausted, and receiving judgment from their peers for being 'too sensitive' or 'unable to take a joke' or being told that they are acting immature, some people purposefully stamp out or cut themselves off from that part of themselves, often permanently damaging their ability to interact emotionally with the people around them, even those they are closest to.

However I discourage this thinking. I know from experience that empathic ability can be exhausting and stressful, but the ability is not the problem. Distress and pain is a sign of a problem that needs fixing; if you stop feeling the pain, it doesn't solve the problem; it merely buries it, allowing the issue to become worse, more complex, and more difficult to solve or heal. Many empaths with interest in energy work resort to constantly cleansing their aura, treating the symptoms instead of the cause; this might make you feel better, but it can't be all that you do. Meditations like 'become space' should be used whenever they are necessary, and are part of regular maintenance, but a real solution does not just treat the symptoms. Another common solution is shielding, or blocking out all of this extra emotional input. I do not encourage this as a regularly used or permanent strategy because it can create unhealthy emotional distance, and make the affected empath seem cold, aloof, and socially inept (as most of them do not realize how much they rely on their abilities in everyday situations); it can also be frankly exhausting and unhealthy to cut off or block off a natural part of yourself. You also block yourself from

using your abilities, which is a shame (can't sense others emotions if they can't get in ever).

However in an emergency situation (to prevent panic attack, to deal with a traumatic event in the short term, or if you just need a quick fix to stop feeling so overwhelmed), you can temporarily shield yourself from the emotions of others. Use these techniques like you would an umbrella in a rainstorm: you'd be silly to not use one to keep you dry if you have it, but its not something you can live under permanently to avoid ever getting wet. This is also a great exercise for our future, more stable, techniques, especially if you are new to energy work. (If you are completely new to energy work, Please try to experiment with [these exercises](#) first.)

If energy is not your thing or part of your beliefs, that is perfectly fine. Treat these exercises as a visualization meditation, envisioning the imagery I use as a way to root you back into the present moment or distract you from whatever overwhelming sensation that might prompt you to explore these exercises.

Shielding:

Shielding feels different for everyone, just as energy feels different for everyone, but the technique is the same. Feel for the energy around you, your personal aura or force, or just bring your awareness into the present moment. Find a metaphor that makes you feel protected and insulated from harm: perhaps it's a memory of hiding under the sheets as a kid, warm and soft and invisible, or perhaps its something more fantastical, like clear diamond-hard walls being thrown up around you; whatever imagery feels strongest or most appealing to you in that moment is what will work best. Use your empathic strength to embody that feeling, really imagine and feel what that would feel like. As you do so, pull your own energy around you, solidifying it into your vision to hold it in place. Pull any sensory information into making this vision stronger; the sensation of wrapping a blanket around yourself, perhaps the sound of rain on an umbrella, or scent of a moment in time where you felt safe.

Stay in your protective bubble as long as you need to, meditating, or focusing long enough to get through what needs to be done during your crisis. Shields take focus to maintain (even when you store them in an object or after much practice), so be careful to stay grounded and not overextend the energy you have by keeping them up longer than necessary, and take care of yourself afterwards, both because of whatever you needed shielding from and because of the aftereffects of energy work/extended focus and meditation (which are most easily counteracted by physical contact, warm water, such as showering, washing your hands, drinking tea, and eating; essentially, taking care of your physical body will bring you more fully back into your physical body).

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Growing Strong Roots and Grounding Yourself

Grounding is a key part of being a successful and balanced empath. Rooting yourself into your own space and into reality is an excellent way not only to build the kind of strength and

awareness these self-reflective practices require, but to learn to meet your own needs and build healthy boundaries and healthy bonds between you and those around you.

Grounding is, at it's most basic, a way to grow roots. Empaths often dissociate mentally and emotionally as a way to 'get away' from all the noise, and as a result we become flighty and unstable. Just as we dissociate in all these ways, so we need to ground in all of those ways.

Physically the best way to do this is through touch and exercise. Self-care, cuddling, platonic or nonplatonic hugs, wearing your coziest sweater, laying in the grass, taking a bath, all of these things can bring you back down to earth and root you into your physical form, as well as strengthen the appreciation and bond you have for your physical self. Humans are tactile beings, so lean into touch in ways that make you happy. Exercise, especially core exercises such as low back and abdomen exercises, as well as practices like restorative yoga (which relies on gravity, the original grounding force, to stretch and strengthen your body) also help combat physical ungroundedness, and strengthen the energy centers that empaths often weaken through uncontrolled emotion hopping.

Mentally we can ground ourselves by listening attentively to others and ourselves with an eye to our own growth. Things like journaling, [active listening](#), and reading or watching media that helps us understand and grow in our ideas and opinions, can help ground you mentally. Especially writing or talking about why you believe what you believe, or think what you think, can be a great grounding activity. The more you understand and are open and confident about your intellect and beliefs, the more grounded and relaxed you feel mentally.

Particularly useful are the emotional and spiritual/energetic methods of grounding. These can include spending time in nature, exploring and discussing your feelings with a non-judgmental partner, therapist, or journal, and meditations involving emotional digging (such as the Know Yourself meditation at the beginning) or forgiving yourself.

The most commonly practiced method of grounding is a simple energetic exercise that people do before and after practicing energy work, which you can find [here](#). Basically it involves releasing your extra energies and tensions into the ground or universe, but remaining open to the universal force, so that the flow and exchange of energy within you is smooth, connected, and stable. You should feel rooted and solid, just like the tree used in the first exercise in the link. Again, all of these can be done as either visualization meditations, or energy work depending on your preferences and understanding of the Force.

Here is another more involved grounding exercise I developed. Before I begin this meditation, I want to stress that your anchor cannot be another person, as it is the empath's tendency to meld with those the feel close or reliable around them, which exacerbates the relationship and the empath's own stability and boundaries. I even recommend against making a physical object your anchor (although you can store extra anchoring energy in an object and use it the way you would an emergency medkit—if you are interested in this method please contact me directly). This works best when what you anchor to is a concept within yourself. In the exercise I use the earth, because it can act both as a tangible, physical touchstone, but I am also rooting myself to the concept of stability, of gravity, of reliability. Experiment with what works best for you.

Jedi Meditation: Finding an Anchor

Although the Jedi Path is often concerned with spiritual or intellectual matters, we all need to ground ourselves from time to time. This is a great meditation to do at the end of the day, or when feeling overwhelmed. It is also a particularly useful meditation for empaths, or people who are feeling panicked, dissociated, disphoric, ungrounded, or unsafe about something in their life.

Get comfortable. Light some candles, dim the lights, and find a nice pillow to sit on. If you have a little fountain or some soft indistinct background music (basically some soothing white noise), that can also be helpful. If the room is chilly, maybe drape a robe or a blanket around your shoulders. Sit comfortably, either in a chair or on the floor with your spine upright in its natural curves, as if a string attached to the crown of your head was pulling you upwards.

Close your eyes. Take a nice deep, slow breath, in through your nose, and release it slowly with your mouth closed. Continue breathing at your own pace with slow, deep breaths. Let everything but the sound of your breath, the light smoky scent of the candles and the awareness of this quiet space around you drop away.

When you feel ready, begin to catalog your thoughts and feelings from the day. Don't try to relive or re-feel them; pick them up and examine them as if they were personal and interesting objects on a table in front of you. Assess what feelings have broken through, overwhelmed you, or have been making ripples in your usual demeanor. What is the origin of that feeling, where is it coming from? Don't push for answers; let them float up as you calmly probe the experience. When you have an answer, let the feeling sink back down, or quietly tuck it away into the corner of your mind, like putting something back onto its designated space on a neat, quiet shelf. Do this as many times as you need to.

When no more difficulties or thoughts seem to present themselves, focus yourself on your chosen anchor. An anchor is something that makes you feel rooted and safe, something you have deep but uncomplicated feelings for. You may choose anything you wish, an idea, a principle, a memory, but in my opinion, the ideal anchor is the earth itself. Earth is solid, it is our home; it nourishes us, and literally anchors us to its surface with gravity as it whirls through space. It is heavy, solid, and reliable, with enough spiritual weight as an idea on its own to require very little work for it to serve as an anchor. Whatever you choose, let it be a stable form, an anchor for your consciousness.

Picture earth, our beautiful blue and green globe, floating in your mind. Feel the weight of it anchoring you down, both physically with its gravity, and emotionally. Feel rooted like a tree digging its roots through the soil, and protected like the warm weight of heavy blankets on a cold day. Like silt settling to the bottom of a deep dark lake, let the solidity and safety of your anchor help the tumult of the day and anything that has been bothering you sink down from the surface of your awareness and dissolve. You are like a buoy on the surface of that lake, floating calmly on its surface, but firmly tethered to the earth. Continue breathing deeply.

Let that solidity and weight make you more aware of your body; notice any soreness in your muscles, or tension in your face. Slowly scan across your body, breathing into and releasing any tension you find, starting at the top of your head and ending with your legs and feet.

Sit with the warm weight and safety of feeling grounded and solid for as long as you like. When you are finished, take a long deep breath and start to breathe regularly again. Open your eyes slowly, stretch carefully, and unfold.

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Knowing yourself well, building a strong emotional foundation, and learning to stay more grounded are not one and done kinds of strategies. All of the methods in this course require maintenance, just as you need to shower most days, or get your hair cut to keep it healthy.

All three of these elements combine to create a mindfulness practice that should protect you from the worst of the emotional storms empaths face, while helping you to develop a better sense of self and emotional strength. They require weekly, if not daily practice; find ways of breathing and meditating related to them that you could do on the fly; quick check-ins at work or a scan of your feelings in the shower. Incorporate them into your life and pay close attention to the ways in which you start to see the world un-fog. Perhaps you see that someone that was stressful in your life is no longer someone healthy to be around, or ways in which you have been holding yourself back from success or intimacy. For me, it felt like the sun had come out after a rainstorm that had gone on so long I'd started to not notice it.

So we have the tools to build emotional control and awareness, and separate your emotions from the emotions of others. So the question you have now I'm sure is, "Now What?"

Using Your Abilities

Before we dive into the specifics of how to train and use your empathic abilities, there are a couple things to discuss; building in long-term protections and strategies, and discussing the particular dark sides of empathic ability.

Empathic Shadow Side: The Manipulator

Empaths can have access to an incredible wealth of very personal, private information, are skilled at reading others, and often know just the right thing to say. People trust you and share themselves with you, both accidentally and happily. These are all powers that can be used for good and healing, but they are a tremendous responsibility. Just as if you could read someone's thoughts, or had been told an important secret, you do, in some way, have power over those around you, frequently without them knowing it, and this can be a tremendous temptation, a pull towards the dark side.

Don't believe me? Here's an example. Palpatine was an empath. He read Anakin like a book; saw his greatest flaws, his weak points, and fault-lines. He knew exactly what to say and how to say it, isolating Anakin from his friends and support system, positioning him to rely on Palpatine to the point of total obedience. And Palpatine knew just where to push to finally break Anakin, turning him into Darth Vader, a vicious dog on a leash. That is not only a terrifying abusive and

manipulative relationship, a perversion of what should have been a mentorship, it is also a terrible abuse of empathic ability.

As Jedi and regular people, we all have shadow sides. Every skill has a way to misuse it, and every moment is a choice between doing the right thing or not. Every Jedi has or will make mistakes along their path, some bigger than others, but a Jedi perseveres, fixes their mistakes, and makes the right choice the next time. It is no different with your ability. Seeing the places where you could manipulate someone doesn't make you a bad person. Even being tempted to do so (and you will be sometimes) doesn't make you a bad Jedi. But acting on those dark-side impulses, giving in to the perfectly healthy emotions of anger, envy, fear, etc. and using your talent for personal gain or to harm others is not Jedi behavior.

Take the Jedi code to heart, especially the Skywalker code in this case. Jedi are **guardians of peace**. We **use our powers to defend and protect**. We **respect all life, in any form**, especially when it comes to their *consent* and ability to make their own choices without being manipulated or misled. Jedi **serve others rather than ruling over them**. And we **improve ourselves through knowledge and training**. If at any point your conduct with your abilities seems to deviate from these principles, take a hard look at your intentions and possible consequences, and back it up until you feel confident that you will harm no one and can interact with respect for the choices and consent of others. Sometimes even you will feel that your interest, involvement, and actions are in the best interests of a person: know that **without their consent to involve yourself, your actions are not truly in their interests**.

So if we are to 'improve ourselves with knowledge and training, without further ado, here is your knowledge and training:

Sensing Other's Emotions Safely

So we've spent all this time increasing your own self awareness, building emotional knowledge and stability, and shedding any emotional weight you no longer need or that didn't belong to you in the first place, and we have methods for avoiding it in the future, and solving the problem when we mess up. Now we need to learn to reach out from ourselves safely. I will be using visualization for many of the following exercises; if the imagery I use doesn't do it for you please feel free to play around with different ones. This is an exercise that seems like it can only be done with energy manipulation, but at its core, this exercise is one of deep listening and observation.

You already know how to sense the emotions of others; you've likely been doing it instinctively or accidentally, or had them shoved at you when it comes to particularly intense emotions. Now we can learn to do it purposefully. Pay attention to what it *feels* like when you do this; that way you can recognize what is happening to you if you start to do so accidentally or randomly, and pull back or control the experience. Also notice what feelings of your own emerge as you allow yourself to feel and understand the feelings of others.

So we'll begin with Obi-Wan's direction to Luke: "Stretch out with your feelings!" During a conversation with someone, (nothing heavy or stressful) breathe naturally and bring your attention to your own self: remember how you feel and what the amalgamation of emotion and sensory experience that makes up your sense of self feels like, then extend your awareness

outward gently towards the other person. Can you tell what is yours or what is not? What are you feeling, and what do you feel from them? Do you have a sense of how they feel or the way in which they function internally? How does this information alter or enhance the information you are already receiving from their body language, word choice, and your knowledge of this person?

Practice this regularly, not letting anything you sense stick on, but stretch out beyond yourself, then retreating back into your own space. It's usually a good idea to let someone know you might be practicing this, so they don't get confused or weirded out if the first several times you get a little spacey or distracted.

Another method is to open yourself up. Take a deep breath and stretch your energy so you feel open, receptive, as if there is new space inside or immediately around you, and see what comes. Do you feel anything, either physical sensations, or emotions? Where are they coming from? Can you identify what is going on? And then on your next exhale expand back into that space, gently pushing the emotions or sensations back from you where they came from.

The goal here is to interact with emotions without melding or drowning in them. Your regular exercises have strengthened your awareness of who you are and what feelings and energies are yours; use your awareness of that as a way to stay separate, but feel and understand the information that comes your way.

Sometimes you'll get hit by a big wave of emotion, whether it's something lovely like joy or excitement, or something intense like anger, fear, or vitriol. These waves can swamp even the most dedicated empath, especially if they are coming from someone who is very close to you. We all have a tendency to wear away the boundaries between us and our loved ones, as a method of getting closer to them. This is not necessarily unhealthy. Although we all need sensible and healthy boundaries with our loved ones, where you place those and what kinds are good for you is up to you as an individual. To cut off or alter those boundaries merely because they can also occasionally be weaknesses is counterproductive. To avoid losing our cool and being swamped by the strong emotions of people close to us, I often use visualization.

Building a Filter

We are looking for a way to share and sense a feeling without it settling on our own being when the emotional pressure gets intense, so the best image for this is a filter. Imagine a fine mesh over wherever you feel the emotion hitting you, physically or emotionally; it might be over your face, or heart, or even a different one of your chakras; no need to expend the focus to surround your body like you would a shield, as the goal is merely to catch some of the extra energy coming at you before it has a chance to impact.

There's still energy exchange through the mesh, but the filter catches emotional debris as it streams towards you, the kind of thing that would upset, hurt, or unbalance you, or rob you of your ability to act in that situation. Let the debris slide off the filter easily, or burn up as it touches it. Obviously holding an image while you listen or interact naturally with someone going through an intense emotion requires a good deal of focus, but with practice, it becomes something you can switch on in your mind when you require, just like we can close the screen door when mosquitos come out at night.

Practicing Sending and Receiving Emotion

This exercise works best with other empaths, as you can take turns going back and forth, but you can easily practice with non-empaths as well. People with experience in energy work that aren't empaths might also be able to sense the emotions when they are sent with purpose. Sit across from your partner and have them pick a fairly simple emotion (an uncomplicated joyful memory, thinking of a lost pet they still miss, meditating on the first line of the Jedi code or a personal goal, a phobia they might have, etc). If the person wants to or is capable, have them intentionally project that emotion in your direction, and, reaching out with your feelings like Luke, see if you can pick it up. Sometimes sensing straightforward emotion like this will have physical sensations, colors, or even specific ideas attached to them, depending on the sensitivity of the participants, or if either of them have things like synesthesia. Try not to guess, and take your time. Interpret whatever you are receiving; is there an emotion you associate with a tightness in your chest or throat? What does the color purple make you feel? Then state what you think you are receiving, and discuss with your partner. Try and take a few deep breaths and shake off the previous round between each turn, and switch back and forth so both people get to try both roles. Through discussion you should be able to figure out a bit where the miscommunication or any difficulties are, and slowly get more accurate as you and your partner get more comfortable.

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Other Resources:

The energetic/visualization side is not enough to improve your ability; the other half is to understand humanity and the people you interact with better, to be able to follow and project their logic and feelings. Here are other resources to pursue this goal.

- **Active Listening:** don't try and jump ahead, even if you already know what people are going to say. How they say it and when they say it matters, and it builds trust and respect between the person talking and the listener. [This article](#) is a concise and extremely useful overview of how to build your skills as a listener, and is well worth the read.
- **Expand your social circle:** socialize or interact with more than just people you already know. If you can find people to hang out with that are quite different from you in situation and experience, even better. This is especially true for people who have had very different experiences of society than yourself. Broaden your emotional horizons.
- **Practice Emotions:** this sounds silly, but literally practice feelings that you don't get to feel regularly. Play pretend. Pretend to be Captain America and feel a paladin-y sense of Justice and Righteousness. Watch the Clone Wars and compare how it feels to pretend to be brash young Ahsoka versus her older, more determined self. With a little more care (especially for those of you with conditions like PTSD or sensitive triggers), imagine what it would be like to be panicked by shots whizzing by, or fighting off someone much stronger than yourself, or holding someone you love as they die, or lovely things like finding a first love or having a child or changing the world. Emotions are healthy and natural, and the more you can imagine, the more likely you can recognize and act on the information you will receive as an empathy. Play pretend, cry at movies, get obsessed

with books and stories, speed a little when a badass song comes on... (I kid, please don't speed. :P). Embrace your emotions and play around with them; just like muscles, stretching is good for them in the right context.

- I cannot stress enough, **practice self-care!** Take care of your physical, social, emotional, spiritual, and mental needs. Working towards wellness in all these areas is a must for all Jedi, but the happier and more stable you feel as a baseline, the easier it is to use and control your abilities healthily and easily.
- **Talk** to those you care about: Let people around you know when you're having a rough time; your ability to let the emotions of others slide off you will be lower, just like we can do less when we catch a cold. You are responsible for your actions, and empathic ability is never an excuse for bad behavior on your part, but letting people you know and love about your abilities or at least that you are feeling sensitive and to be a little gentle with you goes a long way towards building yourself back up.

Thank you for your time!

I hope you've enjoyed this crash-course on empathic ability! My name is Kai-An Tatok, or Katie Mock, and I'm the leader of California Jedi. Everything here is based on what I have learned over the past decade and change of training as a Jedi and an empath, and I apply all these exercises in my own life. With time and practice, trial and error, these techniques have helped me tremendously. However, everyone is different. If something isn't working for you, ask around; find different answers until something does. If you have any questions, concerns, comments, please feel free to reach out to me over Facebook, through the California Jedi Facebook page, our website's contact form (californiajedi.org), or our Tumblr (californiajedi.tumblr.com).

May the Force Be With You!