

The following text is by Robert Aronson for use in his *Alternity Star Wars RPG*, and is inspired by the Star Wars universe created by George Lucas (for whom all rights are reserved).

Email:
raronson@gmail.com

The Dark Side (v1.3)

Not every Force-user wishes to follow the strict tenants of the light side. They want power, and they want it fast. They're tired of denying themselves emotions that feel all too natural—and pleasurable. They feel like they're not living up to their fullest potential. For whatever the reason, such Force-users allow their passions to consume them, and fall to the dark side.

The Nature of the Dark Side

Across the known galaxy, every Force-user or character undergoing training in the Force has one thing in common: an inclination towards strong, absolute emotions. The more these beings focus their minds and become attuned to the Living Force, the more they desire to indulge in their passions, whatever those passions may be. This is an unfortunate side-effect of learning to manipulate the midichlorians within the body. As a character's midichlorians are configured to become increasingly potent, natural control over emotions and impulse control begins to deteriorate. If a character simply allows this to occur and doesn't fight it, he eventually reaches a point where his emotions are so out of control and his impulse control is so shattered that he no longer has the power to do so. When this tragic event occurs, he becomes known as "lost to the dark side."

When a character is lost to the dark side, he is a mess of extreme, black-and-white emotions and no impulse control; he no longer has the ability to suppress/control such aspects of himself. To make up for this lack of true control (and to gain what he considers true power instead), a dark sider slowly learns over time how to focus his now absolute, extreme feelings like the burning light of the sun through a magnifying lens. He feels that his emotions give him power and focus unlike anything he have ever experienced. In short, he is no longer concerned with inner balance and harmony.

Now sunk beneath the turbulent waves of the black, murky, bottomless ocean of the dark side, a Force-user is pure evil taken physical form. He is cold, calculating, remorseless, and

most of all, fully aware of his state in all its evil glory (or at least understands and accepts that others consider him evil). He needs no excuses for what he does; he is of the dark side. Might makes right. The strong rule the weak. That's all that matters. He wants what he wants, and he's now willing to do anything to achieve his goals.

If our fallen Force-user is smart, he'll soon realize that the chaos of his reborn state won't keep him alive for very long. He realizes that even he, a follower of darkness and shadow, must learn to manipulate his emotions and impulses to maintain a continued existence. However, as previously suggested, the "control" of a dark sider is very different from that of a follower of light. Whereas a follower of light seeks to "smooth" and suppress his emotions and bring them into a serene state of balance with one another (creating inner harmony as a result), a follower of darkness seeks only to melt down and combine the strongest of his emotions to forge a powerfully potent weapon with them; a trump card used to acquire anything he wants.

In terms of interpersonal skills, a member of the dark side is incapable of true love, joy, kindness, goodness, gentleness, compassion, mercy, empathy, friendship, brotherhood, or any such feelings. He may feel twisted versions of them, but he is virtually forever barred from their true iterations. Any rare, internal encounters with them become perverted by selfish desires.

Lastly, it is virtually impossible for a member of the dark side to cast off his cape and hood of shadow and return to the light. However, under the right, exceedingly rare circumstances... see "Redemption", below.

Eyes in the Darkness

Whenever dark sider gives into his preternaturally powerful feelings and/or passions, the irises of his eyes also start to glow yellow, and remain in that form until such time as those emotions dissipate.

There is another way to have yellow irises: to be so steeped and powerful in the dark side that the irises simply glow yellow on a consistent basis... unless their owners wish to hide their true nature, of course.

The Heresy of Physical Degeneration

It doesn't seem that dark siders slowly deteriorate over time. This a fallacy imagined by

the Star Wars community before Episode III came to theaters. It's very clear in all six films that dark siders do not deteriorate as once thought. Maul didn't look deteriorated in the slightest. Tyranus didn't, either. Sidious was old man, steeped in the dark side for decades (probably his entire life) before he saw even his first deformation. Anakin gained his deformation from Obi-Wan, not the dark side.

So let's look at the only Force-based deformation we're provided with in the films: Darth Sidious. Sidious gained his deformation while blasting Force lightning at Mace Windu. It seems at first glance that Sidious expended so much power that he almost melted... but is this the case? If you study the film carefully, the Force lightning, due to such a confined space, was actually *reflecting* off of Windu's lightsaber and striking Sidious. Sidious took an extremely long, continuous blast of potent Force lightning—a blast that lasted much, much longer than any of the other blasts in the six films. In other words, he did it to *himself*—it had nothing to do with the dark side, other than Force Lightning being a dark side power. Supporting this idea is both Sidious and Tyranus and their use of Force Lightning; they didn't seem at all phased by its use; they weren't even filled with (apparent) rage when they did so.

The Heresy of Dark Side De-Evolution

A fallacy brought about by the d20 Star Wars RPG is that dark siders grow weaker in their attunement to the Force over time. This is obviously not true, and was fabricated entirely as a way to create more differences between followers of light and followers of darkness.

Redemption

Once an addict to the dark side's lust for emotional extremes, almost invariably always an addict. The nature of the Force itself can be thanked for that. It is virtually impossible to return to the light. However, as long as a Force-user has the following two conditions going for him, he's redeemable (in theory): he must have lived at least roughly half or more of his life in the light, and had to have been a generally good person before his fall.

If those two conditions are met, a fallen character who for some reason performs an utterly selfless, heroic act that draws forth great,

powerful swells of *positive* emotion can wash away the darkness within himself just long enough to finally swim to the surface of the dark, murky, bottomless ocean of the dark side. At that point, he may still be drowning and exhausted, ready to go under again at any moment, but he is now, at the very least, at a place where he can be spotted and rescued.

The question that remains is, "Why on earth would an utterly *selfish* and *evil* creature perform an utterly *selfless* and *good* act?" That depends on the dark sider, and who they were before they fell. We have only one example in the movies of a dark sider who returned to the light: Anakin Skywalker. Before he fell, all he cared about—to the point of (literally) sacrificing everything and everyone—was the safety of his wife and unborn child. When he watched as Sidious slowly tortured his son to death, it suddenly occurred to him that Luke was all he had left of his wife, and it was for his wife and Luke in the first place that he did something he didn't want to do at the time: he joined the dark side and sacrificed his own future. It had all been for them! And here he was, just watching his son die. Something just snapped in his head, and he lifted up Sidious and hurled him down a pit, killing himself in the process... but also *saving* himself.

If you're using this information for a Star Wars RPG, work with your GM to determine what personal circumstances might force your character back to the light (as long as he lived roughly half of his life or more in the light and was generally a good person before he fell). Obviously, strong emotions pulled him into the murky depths of the dark side; whatever the circumstances surrounding his fall, they invariably had to be frightening and tragic. What if your character were suddenly confronted with the option to "fix" that tragedy, to set things right, to destroy an incarnation of that which was so frightening, like Anakin was in the Emperor's throne room? How would your character respond, being a person dominated by emotion? It's important to remember that a character doesn't necessarily need to die to be redeemed; that's simply the way it happened with Anakin. However, a large amount of personal, selfless sacrifice should be part of the equation. If he can somehow pull off that sort of an action, he will conquer his lack of emotional and impulse control and be redeemed.