

Absurd World vo.3

A hardcore Dungeon World hack

Authored by Jarrod Ingram.
Edited by Mitchell Parry.
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Quick-start guide

Stress

- A debility inducing status, the character becomes hungry and thirsty becoming weak, or exhausted becoming shaky.
- A condition check is made at certain points in a story or at the GM's discretion.
- Weak is relieved through eating while shaky is relieved through sleep. Other debilities require more time to be relieved.
- Failing to attend to a character's needs escalates their stress until they have all debilities and even the slightest knock will leave them near death.

Vice & Virtue

- Vice & virtue replaces Dungeon World's alignments and bonds.
- The vices & virtues are: pride & humility, envy & gratitude, wrath & patience, sloth & diligence, avarice & charity, gluttony & temperance, and lust & chastity.
- An additional means of relieving debilities caused by stress or marking XP respectively.

Attributes

- Assign attributes as follows: +2, +1, +1, 0, 0, -1.
- Attribute scores are not increased on level up; if this is undesirable, add +1 to an attribute every even level.

Angles

- Instead of roll+CHA on a Parley, roll+MOD where MOD is the attribute appropriate to the angle the character is taking in a conversation.
- One of: Strength (Aggressive), Dexterity (Graceful), Constitution (Enduring), Intelligence (Witty), Wisdom (Empathetic), Charisma (Glamorous).
- It's at the GM's discretion if a conversation angle is appropriate for a given situation.

Wounds

- Blood loss plays a part in determining a character's condition.
- A wound starts at a designated stage depending on damage and progresses to the next stage as debilities are accumulated.
- Consult the *Wounds* section in *Mechanics* for a table detailing damage to wound ratios.

Damage

- Damage has been modified to just use a single d6 to better cater to groups with just a pair of six-sided dice on hand.
- The formula for damage conversion is: $dmg = 1d6 + (x-6)/2$, where $dmg > 0$ and x is the size of the original damage die.

Light

- The standard period of time is a “round”.
- The amount of time that’s passed to dictate a round is at the GM’s discretion. An example round is the resolution of a conflict, be that combat, negotiation, etc.
- Light sources last between 2-4 rounds.
- Depending on the source, light is provided for a certain amount of characters, while dim or no light is provided for the rest.
- Dim light is **-1 ongoing**. Darkness is either negotiate or flee.
- An additional GM move is that of light sources being put out, either from the extent of their duration or from some other means appropriate to the fiction.

Mechanics

Apart from Stress and Conversation Angles, each of the following mechanics is for a character's flavour as a replacement for Bonds and Alignment found in Dungeon World. The Absurd World is gritty, filled with terrifying individuals which will inflict stress on a character. The player is given tools to manage stress through vices and purpose, but at the end of the day the GM is encouraged to hard press the characters from not developing symptoms of mental illness.

Stress

Stress is another major form of damage in Absurd World. That is, stress creates debilities which makes it easier for a character to die if they sustain wounds. Starting off hungry & thirsty making the character weak, adding on exhaustion later making the character shaky, and then progressing into sick, stunned, confused, and scarred depending on what the fiction demands.

Condition checks at given points in the story or at the GM's discretion are what generate stressful situations like hunger and exhaustion. Failing to cater to a character's needs, that of eating and sleeping will result in a stress spiral that could lead to a character's premature death.

Think of stress as mental exhaustion as well as the character fights with hunger and sleep deprivation. Sure they can push through it but it still has its toll. Mental and physical exhaustion causing stress debilities combined with wound debilities make for a character that isn't at peak performance and this should feel natural in the fiction.

Vice & Virtue

A vice can come in many forms but overall they're separated into the following categories: pride, envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, gluttony, and lust. Each vice has a corresponding action to go along with it. For example, Envy demands that you interfere with another player as you're jealous of what they have. Interestingly, performing a vice relieves stress resulting in the ability to relieve a debility of choice at the next camp.

The polar opposite of vice is virtue. There's humility, gratitude, patience, diligence, charity, temperance, and chastity. Each virtue has a corresponding action to go along with it. For example, Gratitude has the character requiring them to aid another character as you're thankful for what you have and want to provide it to others. Performing a virtuous act results in the ability to mark XP at the next camp.

Think of the relief of a debility caused by stress or the marking of XP as a reward system for being filled with vice or virtue. Naturally the players should act in their own interest when they have debilities up to their ears, inconveniencing other players. While a character who is going well will

perform a virtuous act for those in need. It typically takes two to three days to normally recover from a debility so this is a tempting compromise for most players.

Attributes

Attributes are now just modifiers instead of scores and modifiers. As a result player's are unable to change their modifiers when they level up but gain moves normally. The reasoning behind removing scores is to remove common misinterpretations for new players of Dungeon World, that is whether to roll with your score or modifier, or whether to add your constitution score or modifier to your HP. A relatively minor change that makes character creation more meaningful and avoids power creep in campaigns that go past level 10.

To assign your attributes at character creation simply assign the scores +2, +1, +1, 0, 0, -1 to whatever the player deems are their strengths and weaknesses when it comes to combat and social situations. Have the player's take note of the angles they're interested in when assigning these modifiers.

As a result of only using modifiers, debilities become more debilitating, directly minusing off the modifier instead of just the score. A shaky character for example isn't going to be performing dextrous moves nearly as well.

Angles

Conversation angles relate to a character's attributes like Strength and Dexterity. They let a character sway a conversation in more ways than one. In the case of Strength a character would be Aggressive in getting their own way with another PC or NPC and use their Strength modifier instead of Charisma when rolling to check if they get what they want. This leads to characters not being hampered in conversation because they have low charisma but a conversation angle won't work all the time at the GM's discretion. For example, the character might act aggressive but instead of getting their own way the character has actually instigated avoidable conflict. It's best to judge the "mood" when gauging what conversation angle would be most appropriate.

Wounds

An Absurd World is a harsh world where the abstraction of hit points doesn't exist but rather bleeding out and corresponding debilities affect a character's condition. Wounds progress through stages as the character takes on more debilities eventually taking on the near death status where if they're left unattended they'll die.

Sustained wounds are more descriptive in nature. A character could take on a limp, find it hard to hold a weapon, or straight up lose an arm, but like most things in Absurd World the fiction dictates how this comes into effect. Healing spells are usually ineffective at treating sustained wounds with more mundane methods and even just time being the deciding factor.

Damage and armor still play a part in causing and preventing wounds. Use the following table as a guide to how damaging a wound is:

[Table] Damage to wound conversion

Roll	Stage	Result
1-3	Minor	Nothing happens.
4-6	Moderate	Everytime the character nexts takes the spotlight, roll+CON. On a miss , the character takes on a physical debility resulting from the pain. If a character has all physical debilities, roll+CON. On a miss , their wounds become major.
7-9	Major	Everytime the character nexts takes the spotlight, roll+CON. On a miss , the character takes on a physical debility from the pain, as per moderate wounds, and a mental debility from the blood loss. If a character has all debilities, roll+CON. On a miss , their wounds become critical.
10+	Critical	Everytime the character nexts takes the spotlight, roll+CON. On a miss , the character takes on all debilities from the pain and blood loss and they are incapacitated, take -1 forward . If a character has all debilities while their wounds are critical, roll+CON the next time they take the spotlight. On a miss , they take their death move.

The first obvious interaction with the new system is that of debilities and wounds. That is, debilities signify the state of a character. For example a character with all the debilities from being near death will have a hard time taking another hit. If that hit is another major wound or worse, the next time they take the spotlight they'll be near death again which makes sense; if you're near death, healed, but then hit again you should probably be near death.

Another obvious interaction between debilities and wounds is the time it takes to Recover. The standard Recover move from Dungeon World takes three days to heal a debility, two with a healer. This feels right since sustained wounds are hard to heal and it's up to the body's natural healing abilities to see the character in fighting shape again.

[Table] Healing to wound conversion

Roll	Description
1-4	Stabilise someone, ceasing pain or blood loss.
4-8	Stabilise someone, ceasing pain and blood loss.
9+	Resuscitate someone, ceasing pain, blood loss, and incapacitation.

n/a	As above, but all wounds are nullified.
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In Absurd World's wound system, debilities should be assigned based on the following guidelines:

[Table] Debilities caused from wounds

Debility	Reason
Weak	The pain is too much. You've had some muscles slashed, or something has been crushed.
Shaky	The pain is too much, your hands are shaky and you're unsteady on your feet.
Sick	The pain is too much, you feel nauseous.
Stunned	The blood loss is too much. You're having trouble reasoning.
Confused	The blood loss is too much. Your ears are ringing, your visions blurred.
Scarred	The blood loss is too much. You look pale.

Damage

For less variance behind PC and NPC attacks, damage is now rolled with $1d6+MOD$ where modifier is:

$$MOD = (x-6)/2, \text{ where } dmg > 0 \text{ and } x \text{ is the size of the original damage die.}$$

A table is provided to suggest some common die sizes and their corresponding $1d6+Modifier$.

[Table] Dungeon World damage to Absurd World damage

Dungeon World damage	Absurd World damage
1d4	1d6
1d6	1d6
1d8	1d6+1
1d10	1d6+2
1d12	1d6+3

Wizard damage, for example, has been buffed with this formula, but it was considered too weak to begin with.

Light

This hack simulates light sources; namely their duration and effectiveness. There are three tiers of lighting: that of a candle, a torch (a tier that includes the wizard and cleric spells of the same name, “Light”), and a lantern.

A candle has a duration of 2 turns and provides light for 1 character and dim light for another, the rest are in darkness, it lasts for 2 rounds. A torch has a duration of 3 rounds and provides light for 2 characters and dim light for another 2. A lantern has a duration of 4 rounds, requires a flask of oil to operate, and provides light for 3 characters and dim light for an additional 3. If a character puts down a light source to free up a hand, then it casts its dim light, the rest of the characters are in darkness.

It should be noted that dim light has a **-1 ongoing** effect on characters. Darkness has the effect that the character’s only action is to negotiate, if applicable, or flee from dangers.

Depending on the fiction, light sources can be put out prematurely. For example, in a fight to the death, an orc might swipe the torch out of a player’s hand putting it out and shrouding the characters in darkness.

The primary thing to take away from the light mechanic is that it shouldn’t get in the way of the fiction but enhance it. Don’t try and methodically keep track of rounds but let them naturally come about from the fiction.

Attributes

Below you'll find the attributes of AW that detail potential combat and social consequences of a given attribute. The word in parentheses next to an attribute is how the attribute can be used in a social situation, while the attribute itself governs how it's typically used in combat. Typically a character will emphasises one attribute to compliment their chosen form of combat, with the rest of their attribute spread governing how they perform with certain conversation angles. Attributes are allocated at character creation with the following scores: +2, +1, +1, 0, 0, -1. The modifiers are added to any dice roll that follow from an action that tests the corresponding attribute be that in a combat or social sense. Therefore a character with +2 strength would roll 2d6+2 if they were going to attack someone with a melee weapon. A character with +0 (average) dexterity on the other hand would just roll 2d6 if they were trying to act graceful in a conversation.

Strength (Aggressive)

A strong character is good with melee weapons and in conversations is particularly apt at getting their way if they're aggressive or through blackmail. This doesn't always lead to a pleasant result though and some of the time this will lead to avoidable confrontations. An aggressive character would typically tell a mentally ill person to "Harden the fuck up" or something to that extent with mixed results.

Dexterity (Graceful)

A dextrous character is good with ranged weapons like a bow or rifle. They typically approach conversation by trying to smooth it over by being polite and respecting the other party, or outright lying and putting on a facade. However, this doesn't always go as planned and the other party could be offended by the character trying to "butter them up". A graceful character would typically tip-toe around the major issues of presented symptoms, trying to distract a character from their debilitation; again to mixed results.

Constitution (Enduring)

A character with high constitution is good at taking blows in battle and in the field of discourse. Not particularly apt at leading a conversation, they're good at deflecting arguments in a direction that would benefit them. When it comes to mental illness they would say something along the lines of "It just takes time," letting the person in question know that it's okay they're not feeling the best now, that in time they'll come better.

Intelligence (Witty)

Intelligent characters typically use arcane knowledge to get their way in battle. Casting all manner of spells to turn the tides not just in battle but in the field of discourse as well. When not casting

spells intelligent characters are witty, either trying to get their way using logic or crafting a joke to smooth things over. Logic and jokes don't work in every situation though and like any other conversation angle they could backfire. A witty character might try to cheer a mentally ill person up with a joke or two to lighten the mood, or try and be rational about the entire ordeal.

Wisdom (Empathetic)

Wise characters typically have a god or cause that they fight for, drawing on the power of something greater than them to turn the tide of battle. They're also particularly empathetic, having a keen understanding of the human condition; they know the right thing to say given the situation. Perhaps they're consoling someone on the death of a loved one or trying to appeal to someone's emotion in some way to get what they want. Wisdom is not just the understanding of others though, it's also an understanding of oneself. A wise character would typically cater to one's emotions when mental health is concerned, perhaps something along the lines of "Emotions are fleeting" would be a good opener.

Charisma (Glamorous)

A charismatic character uses their charm, be that through playing instruments or enacting justice for example, to do battle. In terms of conversation they don't need many words but simply their looks get them by; seduction is always an option. For mental health purposes, charismatic characters "brighten someone's day" with, for example's sake, a smile nice enough to pierce through symptoms.

Vice & Virtue

Vice & virtue are actions that characters can undertake to relieve stress or mark XP. For the purposes of relieving stress or marking XP the following guidelines should be followed:

- camp can also correspond to any steading where the characters are given time to roam by the GM.
- A character cannot use two or more vices or virtues to relieve stress or mark XP multiple times.

Pride & Humility

“Mirror, mirror on the wall...”

Also known as vanity, Pride is excessive love of oneself that can become an obsession if left unchecked. Pride usually results in a denial of the gods and any higher power, and isolation from others. They're a bit of a know it all, and if your character successfully spouts lore or discerns reality, relieve stress at the next camp. However, if you don't spout lore or discern realities, mark XP at the next camp.

Envy & Gratitude

“That's a fine looking possession you have there, shame if something were to happen to it.” - Monty the Thief

Also known as jealousy, Envy is the resentment of others for their possessions. Typically a thief, if we're talking about jealousy of material possessions, Envy comes in many forms. From envy of a relationship between two other people to envy of particular skills another possesses. Envious characters can relieve stress by stripping another of their possessions through whatever sinister means are necessary. If you interfere with another hunter's actions, relieve stress at the next camp. An envious character is nefarious and would rather have everyone with nothing than go through the trials and labours of earning it themselves. However, if you aid another hunter, mark XP at the next camp.

Wrath & Patience

“You looking at me!?”

A wrathful character is here to pick a fight, they are quick to anger and quicker to bring their sword to bear. Typically relieving stress by taking on avoidable conflict or by enacting their own perverted sense of justice. They cannot find purpose normally and, similar to a prideful character, they can only fulfil purpose in a specific manner, namely through self-righteous combat. If a character starts a fight, relieve stress at the next camp. However, if you avoid a fight, mark XP at the next camp.

Sloth & Diligence

“I don’t wanna...”

A lazy character gets their kicks from watching others do the work while they reap the rewards; even if they don’t admit it. Typically found in codependent relationships, a lazy character usually has sound purpose but the actual act of having that purpose fulfilled has much to be desired. If you are defended by one of your fellow hunters, relieve stress at the next camp. However, if you defended one of your fellow hunters, mark XP at the next camp.

Avarice & Charity

“Greed is good!”

A hoarder of coin and wealth by nature, a greedy character will deny others opportunity so they can get ahead. A greedy character is simple, if they get the better end of a deal such as when distributing coin given to the party or successfully parley a better price, they’ll relieve stress at the next camp. However, if you give to the poor or to one of your fellow hunters then mark XP at the next camp.

Gluttony & Temperance

“Just a little bit of the good stuff.”

Be it food, alcohol, or intoxicants, or simply an excessive love of pleasure, the gluttonous character is another simple beast similar to the greedy character, they relieve stress by overindulgence. Simple to relieve stress with but the consequences of overindulgence can be dire. From obesity, to constant hangovers, to addiction and worse. The overindulgent character eventually pays for their vice with preordained afflictions and debilities. At camp, if your character overindulges in food, alcohol, or intoxicants, relieve stress. However, if you choose to consume a normal amount of food, alcohol, or intoxicants, mark XP.

Lust & Chastity

Licks lips

Excessive sexual desire, naturally the lustful character relieves stress through having intimacy. At camp, if you’re intimate with a fellow hunter or stranger, relieve stress. However, if you abstain from intimacy or are only intimate with your “true love”, mark XP at the next camp.

Suggested supplements

The following Dungeon World supplements work particularly well with Absurd World:

- [Chaos Worlds](#), by Magpie Games; particularly inventive Dungeon World settings.
- [Class Warfare](#), by Johnstone Metzger; advanced character creation tool that compliments Absurd World's advanced bonds and alignment replacement.
- [Grim World](#), by Boldly Games; classes, species, monsters, death moves, etc. that tie in with Absurd World's hardcore setting.
- [Perilous Wilds](#), by Lampblack and Brimstone; Dungeon World expansion with rules for travel, hirelings and much more! The best way to create perilous journeys for your players.

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