

Darker Dungeons Compendium

BURNOUT

Sometimes, the flow of magic goes against you. It's hard to shape, it's too chaotic, it's too powerful—whatever the reason, some magic energy lashes out during your spellcasting attempt and causes you some harm.

This is called *burnout* and it can happen to any caster, whether arcane or divine. Magic is dangerous work.

TRIGGERING BURNOUT

If you are a spellcaster, take a d12—this is your *Burnout* die. Whenever you attempt to cast a magic spell, roll the Burnout die; on a 1, the power is overwhelming and you trigger a burnout event—two things happen to you:

1. YOUR BURNOUT DIE GETS SMALLER

Your burnout die starts as a d12, but each time you suffer burnout the die becomes one size smaller.

1d12 → 1d10 → 1d8 → 1d6 → 1d4

As your die shrinks it becomes increasingly more likely that you will trigger further burnout—be careful and try to keep your die as large as possible.

BURNOUT IS NOT A FAILURE

Suffering burnout doesn't mean your spell automatically fails—it simply means you were hurt somehow during the attempt. Roll to attack and resolve any hits or misses as per normal for your magic spell.

2. YOU SUFFER A CONSEQUENCE

Roll a d100 and check the *Burnout Consequences* table to see what effect your burnout has. Consequences become increasingly more severe the higher your spell level, so beware.

If a consequence doesn't fully apply to you, or doesn't make sense for the situation, pick one that does.

Alternatively, the DM may—at their discretion—pick a consequence specifically for you.

Clanda: Ok, these myconids are *really* starting to annoy me now. Good thing I've been saving this *Fireball* for a special occasion...

DM: As you channel your arcane power into that fiery orb, you feel the weave pulling away. Roll your Burnout die, Clanda.

Clanda: Easy, still on a fresh d12... (rolls 1) or not,

Burnout Table:

Cantrips - Nothing

SL 1-2 - Minor Stress (+5)

SL 3-4 - Moderate Stress (+10)

SL 5-6 - Major Stress (+20)

SL 7-8 - Major Stress (+20) and 1 Point of Exhaustion

SL 9 - Monstrous Stress and 1 Point of Exhaustion

GAINING STRESS

Stress is gained through danger, hardship, and adversity—suffering a critical hit from an enemy, hearing an unearthly moan from a dark room, sleeping rough out in the cold rain, watching an ally die. Anything that could reasonably threaten the mental well-being or emotional state of your character can inflict Stress.

When choosing how much Stress to inflict, decide how significant the event is to the character—is it minor, moderate, major, or monstrous? The more emotionally significant, the higher the amount of Stress.

The more an event conflicts with the nature of your character, the greater the Stress you'll suffer—a bard may be more embarrassed to ruin a performance than a wizard, while a lawful paladin is more hurt by a broken oath than a lawless rogue.

GAINING STRESS

Category	Stress	Description
Minor	+5	A small frustration, worry, or irritant: missing an attack, falling down, hearing a noise in the dark.
Moderate	+10	You've made a critical error or something is seriously at risk: being caught lying, learning that the villain has escaped, being outnumbered by the enemy.
Major	+20	Something that is devastating to your character or goes against their beliefs: breaking an oath, falling to 0 hp, finding a heap of fresh corpses.
Monstrous	+40	Something that is incomprehensible or world-shattering: meeting a god, being betrayed by your closest friend, watching a loved one die.

STRESSFUL SITUATIONS

These are some example situations that might trigger Stress. Some characters may respond more strongly than others depending on their background—a fighter may be less stressed about being outnumbered in battle, while a necromancer might not react to the sight of a dead body.

- Badly failing an attack or skill check
- Hearing an unearthly roar from the dark
- Embarrassing yourself in front of someone
- Falling over or being knocked down
- Being disarmed or disabled
- Critically failing an attack or skill check
- Seeing a heap of mutilated corpses
- Facing a huge or formidable enemy
- Embarrassing yourself in front of a crowd
- Being caught lying
- Being surrounded, outnumbered, or out-flanked
- Sleeping rough out in the open
- Being critically hit
- Seeing an ally die
- Accidentally hurting a friend
- Seeing the corpse of a loved one
- Being feared or dominated
- Seeing a hideous abomination
- Breaking an oath

RELIEVING STRESS

Stress is relieved through success and relaxation—disarming a trap, defeating a formidable opponent, carousing in town, sleeping in a warm bed. Anything that helps your character feel better can relieve Stress.

The amount relieved depends on the event's significance to your character. The more it aligns with your character and personality, the more you restore—a rogue benefits more than a mage from picking a lock, while a cleric benefits more than a fighter from prayer.

RELIEVING STRESS

Category	Stress	Description
Minor	-3	A small success or bit of good news: disarming a trap, playing a song, relaxing with your friends.
Moderate	-6	A critical success or special achievement: eating a well-cooked meal, finding a hoard of treasure, repairing an important piece of equipment.
Major	-12	You've beaten the odds and gained a significant victory: defeating a dangerous enemy, saving an ally from certain death, completing a work of art.
Majestic	-24	You've achieved a long-term character goal or done something thought near impossible: bringing a friend back from death, finishing a masterpiece, receiving praise from your deity.

It is much harder to lose Stress than it is to gain it, so you'll need to be proactive in treating your Stress level before it becomes insurmountable.

AFFLICTIONS

An Affliction is a stress-induced mental issue suffered by a character when they gain too much Stress. Afflictions change your abilities in some fashion, and can only be cured during downtime.

When you gain 100, 150, and 175 Stress for the first time after a long rest, roll to see which Affliction you develop. If you roll a duplicate, roll again.

AFFLICTIONS

d100	Affliction	Modifier
01-07	Fearful	-2 STR
08-14	Lethargic	-2 DEX
15-20	Masochistic	-2 CON
21-27	Irrational	-2 INT
28-34	Paranoid	-2 WIS
35-41	Selfish	-2 CHA
42-48	Panic	-1 STR, -1 DEX
49-55	Hopelessness	-1 DEX, -1 CHA
56-61	Mania	-1 CON, -1 WIS
62-68	Anxiety	-1 INT, -1 STR
69-75	Hypochondria	-1 WIS, -1 CON
76-82	Narcissistic	-1 CHA, -1 INT
83-85	Powerful	+1 STR
86-88	Focused	+1 DEX
89-91	Stalwart	+1 CON
92-94	Acute	+1 INT
95-97	Perceptive	+1 WIS
98-00	Courageous	+1 CHA

Removing Afflictions will not be a monetary endeavour due to how money fluctuates and work a bit differently in the Greylands. It is rather up to the player to spend two to four days out of action, doing something fulfilling and completely void of danger and stress inducing. Within this time, they need full long rests, and in a very Fria Ligan-style endeavour; Negotiate with the DM how they rid themselves of the Affliction and why this works for the Character. The negotiation is intended to shift things like advantage/disadvantage on rolls and so on.