Should you have disabled PCs in your TTRPG? (Part 2 of 2)

August 15, 2021

In my [previous post](#), I discussed whether you should have disabled characters in your Dungeons & Dragons or other tabletop role-playing game. I won't rehash that discussion, so if you haven't, [read it first](#).

So people have said, "Sure, disabled (non-player) characters make sense, but adventurers?" Let's take a look at the most common arguments against disabled PCs.

Again, it's not a question of what you should do, but whether this is harmful or beneficial. It's a question of whether it will benefit your players and you as the DM. It's a question of whether having disabled PCs in your party will make a difference in the real world. It may seem like a fantasy game wouldn't make a difference in the real world, but when we play in interactive fantasy worlds, it affects our real world minds — players are affected by their characters.

Why would a disabled character choose to be an adventurer?

"Why would they choose a lifestyle that's likely to get them killed?" This question has two erroneous assumptions:

1. Adventurers usually choose to be adventurers as a career path.
2. Disabled characters are more likely to get killed adventuring than non-disabled people.

We'll address #2 below, but look at your characters' backgrounds. How many of them *chose* to be adventurers? How many of them *were chosen*, either by desperation or some other external event or circumstance?

In most fantasy worlds, adventurers are relatively rare. Most people never travel farther than a few miles from home their entire lives, needing to stay close to the family home, farm, or business, where multiple generations have lived. While fame and fortune are appealing, until the invention of the internal combustion engine, people didn't usually travel unless compelled to by catastrophe, persecution, governmental obligation (i.e. military or diplomatic), or religious pilgrimage unless they had a lot of money.

A character beginning their adventuring career disabled might do so for multiple reasons related to their disability, such as the catastrophe that caused their disability or rejection by their ableist village or family. But they also might do so for any of the other reasons that lead people to think their chances in life are better staring down the smoking maw of a dragon, like rescuing a loved one, growing in their understanding of the arcane, the "cause of righteousness," or revenge. Because they are persons, they begin with all the potential reasons for a person to become an adventurer. Because they have disabilities, they have even more potential reasons. A complex character would have multiple reasons that culminated in their decision.

Why would a party put up with a disabled character?

People with disabilities are people, not burdens. Any suggestion to the contrary indicates more about you than about disabled people. People are to be valued, not tolerated, regardless of any of their characteristics.

But are disabled adventurers a liability to the party? Everyone has strengths and challenges. Often, our challenges strengthen us. Other times, they're just extra challenges. In Dungeons & Dragons fifth edition, characters have opportunities to add depth to their characters with characteristics like bonds and flaws, and a character with a loose tongue or short temper is more likely to cause a problem for a party than a character with a disability.

How could a disabled adventurer survive?

Everyone has strengths and challenges, so everyone learns to use their strengths to compensate for their challenges. If you live in poverty, you learn to stretch your funds. If you work far from home, you get a vehicle that helps you get back and forth efficiently. If you're blind, you learn to use your other senses to navigate the world using cues from your other senses.

We use tools like swords to compensate for a lack of natural weapons, mail for a lack of natural armor, or a walking stick for lack of vision, wheelchair for a lack of being able to stand or walk a long time, or ear plugs for a lack of tolerance for loud noises.

And we depend on each other. Most adventuring parties have a

wide range of abilities, whether martial prowess, skill specialties, or spell casting. A dragonborn may consider lack of natural armor as any physical, mental, or emotional disability, and to the average dungeon-delver, that same sighted dragonborn without Darkvision is at a much greater disadvantage than a totally blind human, but both need help from the rest of the party.

Why wouldn't a disabled PC cure themselves?

In a world full of healing magic, while a player who is disabled in real life may want to play a character like themselves who overcomes obstacles, what in-game reason would a character have for eschewing healing magic to fix them?

Aside from the general rarity of high level clerics who can cast *greater restoration*, which still doesn't work on congenital disabilities, this question fails to recognize the perspective of many people with disabilities. When a person has had a disability for many years, they get used to navigating the world with it. Many deaf people who could get a cochlear implant choose not to and feel perfectly whole without it. Many people with autism are terrified of having a hypothetical cure forced on them. While a non-disabled person can't imagine choosing to keep a disability or neurodivergence, that stems more from our fear of the unknown or needing to adapt in new ways than the overall change in quality of life.

It's difficult for the DM

Accessibility is inherent in good adventure design, adapting the campaign for the Player Characters. If a ranger has fiends as a preferred enemy, the Dungeon Master needs to make sure to

include fiends as enemies. If a warlock has The Fathomless as a patron, the Dungeon Master needs to make sure to include some seafaring adventures. Depending on the trait, disabilities are even easier than class features. Disabilities put more responsibility on the rest of the party than on the DM, as the party needs to work together to support each other just as the barbarian usually takes the lead in battle, and the wizard typically stays back.

So is it beneficial?

Having established that playing a disabled or neurodivergent character isn't detrimental to a party, so there's no reason *not to* include them, do players have a good reason to play them? Is it beneficial?

Given that disability is the largest minority in the world, every player will encounter members of that demographic and likely become part of it eventually. By playing that role and learning firsthand how people navigate the world with disabilities, they will develop empathy and respect, they will learn firsthand to dispel rumors, and they will be more welcoming to a wider variety of people.

If you'd like help introducing disabled characters into your game, I encourage you to check out *Limitless Heroics*!

Should you have disabled

characters in your Dungeons & Dragons game? (Part 1 of 2)

August 15, 2021

On the release of our first [Accessible Adventure of the Week](#), the question arose, as it always seems to, "Why would I play a disabled character? They wouldn't last 10 minutes in a dungeon!" While this led to some interesting discussions, it's a question people will ask, whether openly or in their minds. So as we prepare for not only many more of these adventures and [NPCs](#), but also the [*Limitless Heroics*](#) book that will provide fifth edition game mechanics for nearly every trait in existence, the question is worth asking and exploring.

Personally, I'm not a fan of "should" or any sense of moral superiority (not that I'm innocent of it — it's a tempting trap), but I've come to see the world and decisions in terms of "harmful" and "beneficial" (and certainly some decisions are neutral as they're neither of the former). (Maybe this paradigm could help with all the hand-wringing about alignment in D&D — probably not.)

So then are disabled characters in D&D beneficial? (For brevity, when I say, "Disabled," I'm referring to all matters of disability and illness, whether physical, mental, or emotional, and all varieties of neurodiversity.) My bias is obvious, but then *why* is it beneficial?

- **Representation.** People want to be able to play someone like them and have characters appear in the game that communicate, "You are welcome here. You belong."
- **Encountering the Other.** Role-play is a powerful teaching tool that allows us to experience and walk through various life situations with minimal consequences that will allow us to avoid negative consequences when we encounter an analogous situation in real life. So when we learn to interact with a disabled character in-game, we're learning to interact with a disabled person in real life and become more comfortable around them, but if we accidentally say or do something harmful, we can learn from the mistake without actually harming someone (or at least less so — players are real people).
- **Experiencing the Other.** By playing a disabled character, we can get a small taste of the challenges someone with those traits experiences (a very small taste, since we can turn it on and off at will and only imagine the experience), but if we play them with complexity as we would any other character, we learn to see disabled people as complex people, not cardboard stereotypes or [inspiration porn](#).
- **Cooperation.** One of the most important lessons I've personally learned in the writing of *Disabilities & Depth* is the benefit that I as a non-disabled person can be to disabled people. We all need each other — independence is a harmful lie. Shorter people ask me (6'3″) to get items off top shelves at stores. Blind people may ask you to describe something for them. Having a slight hearing impairment, I often ask, when the TV captions are unreliable, "What did they say?" D&D is an inherently cooperative game, and learning how best to cooperate with disabled people in-game will help us be more sensitive and helpful in real life.

- **Acknowledging the reality.** It's easy for non-disabled people to wish away disabilities, and when it's not part of every moment of every day or a significant amount of any given day, its easy to forget that disability exists — it's not something non-disabled people think about. And when we're not considering the *existence* of disabled people, we're not considering the *needs* of disabled people, which leads to ableism through ignorance. The more we recognize that disabled people are part of our world, the more we expect to see them in all representations of existence without it seeming odd, just as a world lacking women would seem odd (and probably the main point of the narrative or campaign world). Think about that — a fantasy world without disabled people should have, "Where are all the disabled people?" as a primary narrative. If that's not the point of the story, ask yourself why you chose to alter that aspect of reality and what that decision means.

But then we need to consider the converse: is excluding disabled characters from D&D beneficial, harmful, or neutral?

I just showed how, at the very least, it's odd. It doesn't make sense. Even in a world with healing spells, at the very least, even *greater restoration* can't restore a limb that was never there in the first place. Plus, clerics and other healers are rare. Not every clergy is a cleric. And not every cleric is high enough level to cast more than a daily *cure wounds* or two. There's simply not enough healing magic for every injury and illness, especially when plagues sweep through. And then there's socio-economic factors. (The king doesn't want people camping outside the castle so the high priestess can come through and select some for healing each day — she should save those spell slots for ~~him~~ emergencies!)

Is it beneficial in the sense of escapism? When you play D&D,

you're going to a fantasy world that doesn't have real world problems, right? Because that green dragon is nothing like your conniving boss? That bullying ogre is nothing like your obnoxious coworker or classmate? If you play D&D for the power fantasy, how does the presence of disabled people interrupt that? These questions are not accusations — they're questions for self-reflection.

Is it harmful to exclude disabled people from your game world? What about excluding people with dark skin? What about excluding women from adventuring roles? Like any other people group, it's beneficial for your own self-awareness to ask yourself, "Why does my fantasy world include the kinds of people that it does and exclude the kinds that it does? Why did I make that decision, even if it wasn't a conscious decision? What have I learned about myself?" It also begs the question, "When I have the opportunity to be beneficial at little or no cost to myself and choose not to, is that inherently harmful?"

How does using disabled characters relate to the goal of D&D?

When I was in high school, our D&D group was at a church lock-in (overnight party). During free time, we found an unused room and played D&D. People would stop by and listen in and invariably ask, "Who's winning?" All the players would point at the DM and say, "HE IS!" But in reality, we were all winning. We were having a great time. We were bonding with each other, learning teamwork, practicing math, and benefiting in all the ways D&D is beneficial. To me, the goal of D&D is to have fun, regardless whether we complete the quest as expected.

That said, there's a sense of satisfaction in completing the quest, in powering up, in gaining loot or recognition or all the

many goals players have for their characters. But does disability detract from that?

There's a reason each character class has limitations — the game is no fun if you can literally do anything. Were that the case, you wouldn't need dice (and could give them all to me!). No, the game is about facing challenges and finding creative solutions to those challenges with help from your allies. But isn't that the life of a disabled person? If anything, a disabled character who still uses class abilities is the quintessential D&D character — someone with disadvantages and challenges who isn't helpless and can achieve their goals, not *in spite of* their challenges, but *regardless of* their challenges, because while their challenges are part of them, they don't define them.

So then should we pressure or require disabled characters?

Again with the "should" — what is harmful or beneficial? Forcing someone to play a disabled character would not be beneficial. It would not be fun. They would learn the wrong lesson.

I've also learned that moral pressure to do *anything* is harmful — it leads to resentment or self-righteousness, and either way, it never lasts or actually changes hearts and minds.

Rather, the more we introduce disabled characters as NPCs or through other players who would like to do so, the more we offer and demonstrate the benefits of doing so, but that's only possible when we normalize the presence of competent and capable disabled characters in the game world.

I welcome your thoughts in the comments below. If you, like me, would like to include the benefits of disabled characters in your game, I invite you to sign up for our newsletter so you

don't miss our resources that will help you do that, many of which are free.

Note: This is the first of 2 in a series.

We're changing our character class!

August 15, 2021

It's been a while since we posted new content, but that's not because we've been using downtime to kick back at the inn! Since *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything* says we can change class & subclass when we level up, we're taking her up on that opportunity! We've been training & working on some new magic that will be a *massive* level up!

You may have noticed the [Patreon links](#) around here. Fly over there, and you'll see what's coming. Here's a short list of s*ome* of it:

- **Major change in focus to using RPGs to make people's lives better**
- New book with instructions for adding disabled characters to D&D with ~300 pages of tables, descriptions, game

mechanics, magic items, and more.
- Complete website overhaul to be as accessible as possible
- Random generators
- Podcast with interviews discussing using RPGs to make people's lives better
- Training for individuals and organizations in how to use RPGs to make people's lives better

Note that the Wyrmling [Patreon level](#) gives free access to every product we produce, and the Young Dragon level gives a lot more, with access to prerelease content *literally as it's being written*, the ultimate look behind the curtain.

And finally, we plan to *exponentially* increase our content output as Patreon support buys more time away from other commitments to focus on the work of helping you make people's lives better through RPGs. If you would like to be a part of making this happen, you can do so for as little as $3/month.

Expect a major public launch once our modrons get everything in place. That will happen sooner the more support we get from our patrons now. If you'd like to get this adventure started, [please consider helping make it happen](#) so we can help you make people's lives better through RPGs.

What's the next Dungeons & Dragons book from WotC?

August 15, 2021

Wizards of the Coast [recently revealed that they will be releasing a new book March 16, 2021](#) with an announcement date of next week, January 12. So what can we expect, both this spring and in the rest of 2021? I don't have any connections at WotC, nor am I a Divination School wizard, but let's do a little Legend Lore and see what we can determine.

A new book will come in one of the following categories: rules supplement, monster supplement, campaign guide, large adventure, or themed adventure collection.

We just got a new rules supplement with *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything*, so fresh that the community is still passionately debating the new race rules, so we can safely rule that one out. So say we all. (Although I really want the next one to be called *Bigby's Handbook of Everything*. If they don't I will. Can you grasp why?)

Monster Supplement? That's coming soon since we haven't had one since *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes* in 2018, but I predict not yet. We just saw the Unearthed Arcana test material for dragon-based subclasses, including the Way of the Ascendant Dragon Monk and Drakewarden Ranger. This looks like they're working on a new *Draconomicon*, but it's too soon after the UA release, not to mention that we've only seen UA for 2 classes, and we don't have an Ancient Dragon Warlock yet, much less a draconic barbarian, so stay tuned for more draconic classes and a 5e version of the *Draconomicon* this fall, probably November according to tradition.

(It was this awareness that caused me to second-guess continuing work on the [*Draconic Omnibus*](#) series we're developing here, but after looking at previous Draconomicon editions and the UA subclasses, I realized that my plan would nicely supplement what we can probably expect from WotC for those who want more dragon flavor in their game, plus our subclasses are different for each dragon type, treating each color more individually.)

That brings us to campaign guides, large adventures, and adventure collections, and here's where the future gets muddier. Like 2019, 2020 saw two campaign guides, *Explorer's Guide to Wildemount* and *Mythic Odysseys of Theros*. Especially since Tasha lifted the blue veil and made several references to Spelljammer and other planes, an emphasis on more Prime Material Plane campaign settings gives us a hint that another campaign book may be coming soon, but if so, which world?

They have multiple options from Magic: The Gathering, and Ravnica and Theros have been well-received, so that's a possibility, but they also said last year that they intend to revisit classic settings, so since they're looking for a chance to redeem themselves for the depictions of the Vistani in *Curse of Strahd* (The recent "Revamped" version only made minor changes.), a Ravenloft setting book would be a long-awaited and coveted addition, and the recent College of Spirits Bard and The Undead Warlock Patron UA would point to that likelihood. At the same time, a collection of Ravenloft adventures (like *Tales from the Yawning Portal*) would be possible without a full campaign book and allow for the Vistani revisions.

That said, the recent [Dragonlance lawsuit drama](#) could be a hint that they're working on the Dragonlance setting, which would definitely require a new campaign guide and could be the reason for the aforementioned dragon subclasses, but again, it's too soon, so that could be the traditional fall release. (Would a

Dragonlance book mean no Draconomicon?)

It seems a bit early for an adventure release so soon after *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden*, but I know WotC is eager to clean up their image, so a TftYP-style adventure collection would help cover that gaping wound, but it would be easier to clean that up with a campaign guide.

So here's my predictions:

- March 2021: Ravenloft Campaign Guide
- June 2021: Dragonlance Campaign Guide
- November 2021: Draconomicon

What are you expecting?

Silver Dragon: Draconic Omnibus, Vol. 2

August 15, 2021

[Buy now at the Dungeon Masters Guild](#)

We're thrilled to announce our [first entry on the DM's Guild, *Silver Dragon: Draconic Omnibus, Vol. 2*](#). Look into the world of the "shield dragon", and discover how it fits into your 5e

campaign!

This supplement includes:

- Dragon Background Option Charts
- Implied Abilities based on their stat blocks
- Associated Creatures, including 4 new draconic hybrid creatures with complete stat blocks
- Spellcasting
- Lair and Hoard Details, including combat strategies based on age
- 2 New Magic Items
- 2 New Spells
- Ideas for using the dragon in your campaign
    - Dragon as Group Patron
    - And more…
- Ideas for using the dragon with your character
    - Contact
    - Paladin Oath Of Loyalty
    - Druid Circle Of Clouds
    - Barbarian Path Of The Silver Dragon
    - Bard College Of Affinity
    - Monk Way Of The Wind
    - Dragon-Associated Feats
    - Subraces And Variants
    - Dragon-Related Character Backgrounds

Also, get the [additional supplement](#) that includes details to include this dragon in the Caphora: The Divided Continent campaign setting.

All [creature](#) and character options are available in the D&D Beyond Homebrew section. Just search for author: doulos12.

[New Monster Stats](#) also available for Lion's Den's Game Master 5

How well do you really know the dragons? Sure, you've memorized their stat block, but these are intelligent complex beings who affect the world and your characters so much more than a big lizard in a cave! Welcome to the [Draconic Omnibus](#), a multi-volume set detailing the canon 5e dragons and some new varieties to round out the set.

You Are More than Your Stat Block (Critical Success)

August 15, 2021
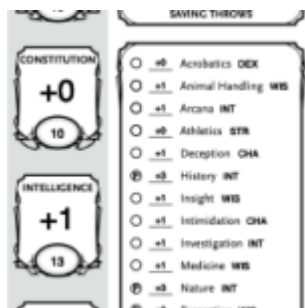
The recent release of [Tasha's Cauldron of Everything](#) has generated significant controversy in the D&D community, most

notably for the Custom Origin option, which gives players much more flexibility in the character creation process. Some raise concerns that this will allow players to [min/max](), optimizing their characters to be more powerful than other characters of the same level. Others counter that this allows for more roleplay options, expanding characters beyond their archetypes. Still others have argued that it's a moot point, that a character is so much more than the sum or distribution of its stats.

But how often do we make the same mistake in real life? How often do we reduce others or ourselves to who's strongest, smartest, or most charismatic? Isn't that the essence of a clique: jocks, nerds, or the popular crowd? Of course, there's more to it than that — in my high school, to be in the popular crowd, you had to be able to afford the right brands of shoes and polo shirts (It was the 80's.) in addition to being adept with social queues.

Adults are more subtle in our approach to others, but we still evaluate people based essentially on numeric criteria, replacing wizards and rogues with executives and unskilled laborers, making class as clearly defined as in D&D, except Tasha now allows players to change their class — would that this were so easy in real life.

This becomes particularly toxic when we reduce *ourselves* to our stat blocks. It's easy to think of ourselves as undesirable due to what we perceive as some bad dice rolls at our creation. Who could ever love someone with such glaring dump stats? And if you believe yourself unlovable, you will have difficulty receiving love, not trusting those who purport to love you.

Thus the Critical Advantage style of game mastering focuses on the value of each character (and more importantly, each player)

regardless what numbers appear on their stat block, whether real numbers on a page or evaluations of real people. We emphasize that a character (or player) is valuable because they are loved, and if love is unconditional, then a person being lovable has nothing to do with evaluation. You are lovable because I choose to love you. Nothing you do or even think about yourself can change my decision to love you. You can't convince me not to. You can't prove yourself unlovable, because "lovable" is determined outside of you.

As a Christian, I take that farther. I love you, because God has declared you to be unconditionally lovable. No matter what *anyone* else chooses to determine about you, God Himself has assigned you the labels "lovable" and "Mine," so when anyone else says otherwise, regardless of their criteria, they're just wrong.

You are more than your stat block. Your defining stat is LOVABLE: ∞

The rest is just flavor.

Rose Gold Dragon: Draconic Omnibus, Vol. 1

August 15, 2021

Rose Gold Dragons are known for their love of children. Stories abound of children lost in the wilderness or at sea who are rescued by a rose gold dragon or some other creature of a similar hue.

At the same time, these stories have sometimes grown darker, with suspicion that questions the motivations of these creatures, and anytime a child goes missing in the vicinity of a rose gold dragon layer, the dragon becomes the primary suspect.

Download at DriveThruRPG
This supplement includes:

- Full All-Ages Stat Blocks complete with Legendary and Lair Actions
- Dragon Background Option Charts
- Associated Creatures
- Implied Abilities based on their stat blocks
- Spellcasting
- Lair and Hoard Details, including combat strategies based on age
- 2 New Magic Items
- 1 New Spell
- Ideas for using the dragon in your campaign
    - Dragon as Group Patron
    - And more…

- Ideas for using the dragon with your character
    - Contact
    - New Warlock Patron
    - New Paladin Oath
    - Sorcerer Draconic Bloodline variation
    - New Bard College
    - New Monk Way
    - Dragonborn variation
    - New Character Background

This supplement includes details to include this dragon in the Caphora: The Divided Continent campaign setting from Wyrmworks Publishing, but it can also be used as-is by changing a few location names in any campaign setting.

All [creature](#) and character options are available in the D&D Beyond Homebrew section. Just search for author: doulos12.

How well do you really know the dragons? Sure, you've memorized their stat block, but these are intelligent complex beings who affect the world and your characters so much more than a big lizard in a cave! Welcome to the [Draconic Omnibus](#), a multi-volume set detailing the canon 5e dragons and some new varieties to round out the set.

Elves and Orcs: Building

Cross-Cultural Relationships (Critical Success)

August 15, 2021

In most fantasy literature since Tolkien, elves and orcs live at constant odds with each other. Among other reasons are their cultural differences and their inability to see each others' viewpoints. Elves typically live for a millennium, whereas orcs have shorter lifespans than humans. Time alive, both how long it's been and how long one expects to have left, changes perspective.

Even on a human level, I see this play out. Teens tend to feel like they have unlimited time, and depending on how their formative years have played out, that can mean unlimited possibilities or a sense of hopelessness. The older I get, I expect to have less years remaining than I've already had, so I feel a sense of urgency to accomplish my dreams, whereas others my age or older have given up.

Either way, we can learn from each other, and that's something I love about my D&D group, which ranges in age from teens to 40's. Unlike many games and sports, D&D and other tabletop role-playing games are cooperative and depend on players working together toward a goal. They have to help each other and use teamwork, and those different perspectives they bring to the table help to give them success.

But more than just success in the game, they build relationships. Teens benefit drastically from multiple positive relationships with adults besides family, teachers, and clergy, not that I'm discounting those by any means. They need adults who choose to spend time with them out of mutual respect instead of perceived obligation. (Yes, parents, teachers, and clergy are usually in those positions in the first place because they care, but that's not always the teen's perception.) Correctly managed, D&D can foster those multigenerational relationships based on the collaborative work and mutual respect that lead to success in the game.

Promoting those relationships is remarkably simple and boils down to two principles: encouragement and common ground.

When a teen experiences encouragement from adults communicating to them that they're lovable, capable, and worthwhile, it builds their self-worth and helps cement those relationships. Adults can communicate this by asking the teens for help and complimenting them on their accomplishments. They also experience support when they find others experiencing the same feelings, even in different circumstances (common ground). At the same time, this helps adults recognize the unique contributions that teens bring. And all of this comes from sincere care and camaraderie.

While I've specifically focused on adult-teen relationships here, these same principles apply to any number of cross-cultural relationships, whether racial, socio-economic, political, or any other dynamic, even if all participants are the same generation.

[Recent publications of D&D materials](#) have moved toward breaking

down in-game racial boundaries, which the Caphora campaign setting did from its inception, and if we're to get stronger in real life, we can follow this example. Maybe elves and orcs can respect each other after all.

Critical Success: Never Split the Party

August 15, 2021

The first rule of D&D is… always talk about D&D. Incessantly. To anyone who will listen, even if they seem like they don't want to. Because it's awesome, and nobody should miss out.

But the second rule is… Never split the party.

If COVID-19 has taught us anything, it's that we need each other. In D&D, when a party decides to split up, not only does it bog down gameplay, because the DM can only work with half of the group at a time, it usually goes badly for the party, because they depend on each other and each one's unique skills and ideas.

Christianity has taught this from the beginning. The Bible calls it the Body of Christ.

As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" Or again, the head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that are weaker are indispensable. But as it is, God has arranged each one of the parts in the body just as he wanted. And if they were all the same part, where would the body be? If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? And if the ear should say, "Because I'm not an eye, I don't belong to the body," it is not for that reason any less a part of the body. If the foot should say, "Because I'm not a hand, I don't belong to the body," it is not for that reason any less a part of the body. Indeed, the body is not one part but many.

1 Corinthians 12:14-22, CSB

We are all different, and each person brings something different to the table. This isn't just true of the contents of a character sheet, but the actual people, whether sitting around a table or living our lives. When body parts are joined together, they are greater than the sum of their parts. When body parts are separated from the rest of the body, it's just gross. It's not good. It shouldn't be like that.

Because D&D is a community-centric game, we have the opportunity to strengthen the Body well beyond what happens around the table. This is no less true whether the players are Christians or not. We have the opportunity to connect with each other, build friendships, and be there for each other, whether fighting a beholder or depression. A Critical Success party focuses more on player relationships than character relationships, but the latter serves the former. The more an adventure focuses not only on the unique capabilities of each *character*, but the unique

needs and contributions of each *player*, the more the players appreciate and value each other, the more they'll enjoy the game, and the more interest they will have in each other beyond the game. Of course, players and DM need to get to know each other in order to make this happen, and that takes time, but by focusing on how valuable each person is and listening for cues that hint at their needs, those personal connections will build.

Ultimately, the goal is that everyone involved knows that they are never alone, that we don't need to see those around us to know someone has our back, whether in a dark cavern or a dark night of the soul.

Critical Success: Giving Players Every Advantage

August 15, 2021

One of the bugbears goes down, and another one is hurting pretty badly. A third one looks at the other two and seems to be panicking. She says, "What are we going to do? If we go back empty-handed, we're dead." They look at you and seem to be trying to decide whether to attack or flee.

A short conversation later between the party and the bugbears, and the party now has four bugbears fighting alongside them as the party promised to protect them from the Big Bad that sent them.

As Dungeons & Dragons continues to grow in popularity, well beyond the number of players during its height in the 1980s, people have found that social media and other shallow forms of communication are inferior to gathering around a table and sharing stories, strategies, and jokes with each other. It's easier to cope with day-to-day life in the real world when you can escape with some friends into a fantasy world for a little while, but as shared universes continue to grow in popularity, we realize that these universes draw us in as we see the similarities to our own. This allows us to take the challenges of life and put them into a new context to take a fresh look at them and find new approaches to real-world problems.

Welcome to Caphora: The Divided Continent. Designed to take advantage of the game's ability to bring different people together to accomplish a common goal, whether you use this campaign world, one [published by Wizards of the Coast](#), or one of your own design, you can use these principles as you Dungeon Master a game. As well, this works with any tabletop role-playing game, although my references will specifically refer to [Dungeons & Dragons 5th edition](#).

What It Is:

Critical Success principles run through these methods, so I present to you a combination of principles and strategies that flow from each other. These principles include but are not limited to:

- Every person has inherent value regardless of what they have done or what has been done to them.
- Heroes create hope. Hope is caused by trust that the future is secure.
- Nobody is beyond redemption. Some may reject it, but they are not beyond it.
- The greatest power is love—not a feeling, but commitment to actively caring.

Experiential Learning

We learn best when we see the effects of our actions. In Dungeons & Dragons, we can explore the same situations we encounter in daily life but approach them from a new angle, then take what we have learned back into the real world situation.

Natural Consequences

Because the game world is designed to feel real, suspension of disbelief notwithstanding, actions have consequences. Both players and Dungeon Master learn from each other through various encounters and the results of those encounters.

Dialog inducing

Unique situations require unique approaches. The party must discuss how they will resolve the challenges they face and the possible consequences of their actions. Because the game is open-ended, they can be creative but also need to balance risk and reward. Different ideas will sometimes conflict with each other or build off each other.

How to see the world

I've often described my parenting style as, "I want to teach you

how to think more than *what* to think." When someone knows *how* to think, that will guide them as they draw conclusions from what they learn. So critical thinking guides the process.

What It Isn't:

Political

We hear politics all day long. It's important, but it's exhausting, and every platform is imperfect, so Critical Success is not about pushing an agenda but rather learning to form your own agenda and act on it.

Preachy

This may sound ironic, given my day job as a preacher, but nobody likes having information shoved down their throats. Critical Success is about presenting options, not laying down the law.

Judgmental

Every action has consequences. Some we can foresee, and some we can't. Nearly every decision is imperfect on some level, so Critical Success embraces imperfection and alternate viewpoints as a means of learning about each other and the world.

What to see in the world

Just as a fantasy world is a place of wonder, this is even more true of the real world, so Critical Success helps players find love, hope, and joy in the real world not by pointing it out, but by offering a different angle from which to look and allowing them to notice the things that are important to them.
As I mentioned above, I'm writing this as a [Christian pastor](), so

that viewpoint will probably be obvious, but I hope this will be valuable to all kinds of gamers, regardless of their religious background or beliefs. Our tables combine people with many beliefs and worldviews, And we welcome all and strive to use these very principles to make everyone feel welcome.

This article is the first in a [series](). I invite you to subscribe if you're interested in the rest.

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