

Should you have disabled characters in your Dungeons & Dragons game? (Part 1 of 2)

August 3, 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, it's 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.

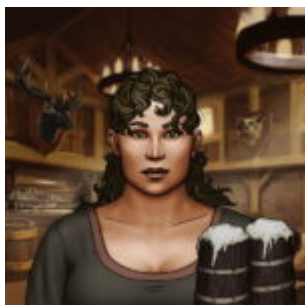
I welcome your thoughts in the comments below. If you, like me,

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. [Read Part 2 Here.](#)

Avery Penn ☐ (Disabled NPC of the Week) now at DMs Guild

August 3, 2021



Avery Penn is a 20-year-old female human innkeeper. She has very long, curled, dark hair and brown eyes. She has rugged, dirty, brown skin. She stands 172cm (5'7") tall and has a round build. She has a tattoo of a cobra on her right arm and a colorful tattoo of the word fear translated into draconic on her back. Born without a left hand, she has a wooden prosthetic with a leather strap and cam cleat that allows her to hold things with it. She is friendly and self-confident and enjoys listening to the villagers' stories, celebrating with them and being a shoulder to cry on.

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We all have disabled, neurodivergent, and mentally ill people in our lives. Maybe that's you. Doesn't it make sense to have them

in our Dungeons & Dragons game, as well? The disabled NPC of the week makes it easy for you to bring characters like that into your game to represent those you care about in real life, to help people become comfortable interacting with people that are different from them, and to normalize disability in all of our lives. Each week, we give you a free NPC with some form of disability that you can plug right into your game, complete with game mechanics taken from [Limitless Heroics – Including Characters with Disabilities, Mental Illness, and Neurodivergence in Fifth Edition](#).

Make Lives Better through Role-Playing Games

This character is one piece of a movement within the D&D community to invite, encourage, and include those who have not been, both in the RPG community and nearly everywhere in real life. Wyrnworks Publishing is dedicated to using RPGs to help you make lives better, to provide tools, training, and a community to this end. We believe that this will extend far beyond the ever-growing RPG community as more and more people learn, grow, and give and receive acceptance.

Content Trigger Warnings

This character includes topics of death and family loss.

[Go Get the Freebie!](#)

The Inevitable (Accessible Adventure of the Week)

August 3, 2021



A one-shot side-quest for characters level 4-6.

Can Peace Be Maintained Indefinitely?

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The village that makes its subsistence on spiced melon and red rye holds a dark secret, and the shoemaker and his wife will upset the perfect peace.

This adventure includes stat blocks for the following, which may be used in other adventures:

- [Avery Penn](#) (Disabled NPC of the Week)
- Deathlok (Lich Patron)
- Undead Wolves

- Artifact: Crystal of Peace

4K Maps are [free for all subscribers](#) or can be [purchased from DriveThruRPG](#)

Make Lives Better through Role-Playing Games

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To that end, this adventure includes disabled NPCs just like in real life, including a unique prosthetic arm, a character with chronic pain, and more.

This free adventure includes a simplified version for screen readers for the blind and visually impaired, stat blocks and information for two monsters, a new artifact, a village map, and multiple NPCs, plus illustrations of each NPC for your players.

Content Trigger Warnings

This adventure includes topics of violence, death of both people and animals, ableism, and undead people and animals.

This adventure was created as part of the Summer 2021 [Storytelling Collective](#).

[Get It Now Free!](#)

We're changing our character class!

August 3, 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 *some* 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 3, 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 *Icwind 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.

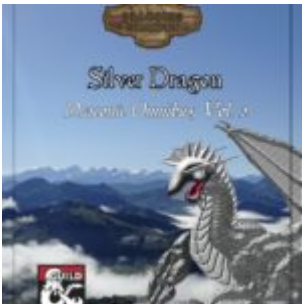
So here's my predictions:

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

What are you expecting?

Silver Dragon: Draconic Omnibus, Vol. 2

August 3, 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.

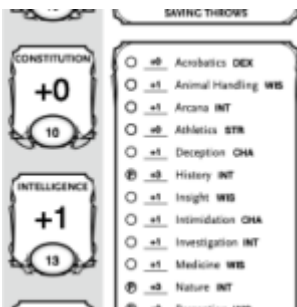
[New Monster Stats](#) also available for Lion's Den's Game Master 5



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 3, 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.

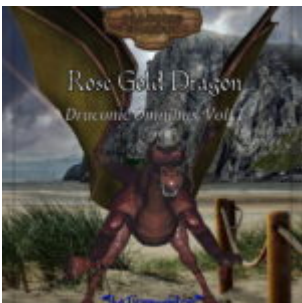
As a Christian, I take that farther. I love you, because God has declared you to be unconditionally lovable. No matter what *anyone* else chooses to determine about you, God Himself has assigned you the labels "lovable" and "Mine," so when anyone else says otherwise, regardless of their criteria, they're 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 3, 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 lair, 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 Wyrmsworks 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 3, 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.

Arcane Tradition: Biomancer (5e)

August 3, 2021



Like a little mad science in your fantasy? What if Dr. Frankenstein or Dr. Moreau could manipulate the Weave? Where do the hybrid creatures and characters come from in your game? Introducing: the Biomancer.

[Download from DriveThruRPG](#)

Biomancers have learned to use the Weave to manipulate life itself, accessing a form of magic unavailable to most wizards. While other wizards can use Biomancy spells, they lose their proficiency bonus due to the strangeness of the magic.

This supplement includes **4 subclasses**, **11 new spells**, and **3 new backgrounds**.

Some consider biomancy unnatural, but it's the biomancers of Tanmaa who are responsible for many of the hybrid and augmented creatures who fill the Western Division of Caphora, and while biomancers have been blamed for some of the plagues that have struck the continent, they're the first to be called when plague strikes to control it.

Most biomancers are found in the labs of Tanmaa, but some nobles hire them as extremely expensive personal physicians. Some biomancers are the products of their own labs who have learned, through observation and sometimes deliberate training, to use the very magic that created them.

Biomancers specialize in one of four forms of the craft: **Somaturgy**, **Neuroturgy**, **Amalgamism**, and **Miasmism**. They can use other biomancy spells but prefer their own tradition.

Other Campaign Worlds

While the Biomancer was developed specifically for the Caphora campaign setting, which you can download **free** from our website, it will work with most existing campaign worlds, especially those with a slight “mad science” or steampunk element, gnomes who like to tinker, or campaign worlds with hybrid creatures or characters.