

Unhinge the Mind

Poisoned Pages for Shadow of the Demon Lord

The insanity and madness rules in *Shadow of the Demon Lord* provide a simple method to account for the mental strain and anguish incurred by confronting the awful. Since adventures shine a spotlight on the group's most important moments in their story, the game assumes characters can shake off the effects of their trials in the time between expeditions by using magic, resting, or simply spending time away from the many horrors at large in the world. Because the existing system facilitates play, Insanity and the resulting madness tend to be less debilitating than they could be. For some groups,

this is a great thing. For groups hungry for a darker, even bleaker world, the rules might not go far enough.

When I set out to launch the Poisoned Pages line, I envisioned the series would let me deliver content that doesn't quite fit into other sourcebooks, not just to add detail to the world by way of new ancestries, paths, spells, creatures, and other weirdness, but also to introduce an option to make the game nastier, more threatening, or more complex for those people who want a bit more detail than what the main rulebook offers.

Where *Fever Dreams* introduces a selection of horrific diseases to amplify the game's disease rules, *Unhinge the Mind* goes further, expanding the existing Insanity and madness rules so that they become a considerable part of the game, with far-reaching consequences for those who would confront the monstrous and grotesque. The

rules presented here increase the amount of Insanity gained, make ridding yourself of Insanity more difficult, and provide a wide range of new consequences for going mad.

Thus, if you use these rules, player characters will likely find their minds deteriorating as fast as their bodies.



~CREDITS~

WRITING AND DESIGN:

ROBERT J. SCHWALB

EDITING: JAY SPIGHT

PROOFREADING: KARA HAMILTON AND CARLOS DANGER

ART DIRECTION: ROBERT J. SCHWALB

GRAPHIC DESIGN: HAL MANGOLD

LAYOUT: KARA HAMILTON

ILLUSTRATION: IVAN DIXON

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SCHWALB ENTERTAINMENT, LLC



PO Box #12548, Murfreesboro, TN 37129

info@schwalbentertainment.com

www.schwalbentertainment.com

INSANITY

The Insanity characteristic quantifies how much mental strain and anguish your character suffers from witnessing and experiencing horrible things. Typically, when you find yourself in a situation in which you would gain Insanity, you can avoid the gain by getting a success on a Will challenge roll. The amount of Insanity gained and any boons granted to or banes imposed on the roll are determined by the intensity of the situation as shown on the Insanity Intensity table. (This table replaces the Resisting Insanity table found on page 201 of *Shadow of the Demon Lord*.)

INSANITY INTENSITY

Intensity	Boon or Bane	Insanity
Minor	1 boon	1
Moderate	—	1
Major	—	1d3
Severe	1 bane	1d3
Extreme	2 banes	1d6

INTENSITY EXAMPLES

The Game Master decides the level of intensity of any situation that could bestow Insanity. Here are some examples, taken from the rulebook and expanded, to give you an idea about the varying levels of intensity.

MINOR

- Finding a mutilated corpse in a place where it's least expected
- Witnessing a ritual sacrifice
- Discovering a parasite in one's body
- Being forced to harm an innocent for the greater good
- Discovering a finger in one's food

MODERATE

- Witnessing a loved one's violent death
- Being tortured
- Seeing a person eaten alive by ghouls
- Gaining a Mark of Darkness
- Being compelled to commit despicable acts of evil

MAJOR

- Returning from the dead
- Speaking with the shade of a loved one in the Underworld
- Being buried alive
- Being possessed by a demon
- Being molested by a Hag

SEVERE

- Seeing Hell for the first time
- Becoming lost in a borderland between the mortal world and a hidden kingdom
- Peering into the darkness of the Void
- Witnessing a hideous creature slither free from one's genitals

EXTREME

- Seeing the Demon Lord
- Being lost in the Void
- Torturing and murdering a loved one

HORRIFYING CREATURES

As described in *Shadow*, certain creatures are so disturbing, so alien that one can gain Insanity from merely seeing them. Such grotesque creatures have the horrifying trait. The GM might use the rules as described in the main rulebook, or can make horrifying creatures more dangerous by using the following optional rules.

Horrifying creatures have an intensity level determined by their Difficulty, such that it becomes harder to resist gaining Insanity from powerful creatures as shown on the Horrifying Creature Intensity table.

HORRIFYING CREATURE INTENSITY

Difficulty	Intensity	Boon or Bane	Insanity
1	Minor	1 boon	1
5 or 10	Moderate	—	1
25 or 50	Major	—	1d3
100 or 250	Severe	1 bane	1d3
500+	Extreme	2 banes	1d6

Multiple Horrifying Creatures: When there are two or more horrifying creatures, use the intensity for the creature with the highest Difficulty. As well, if there are four or more horrifying creatures present, increase the intensity of the creature with the highest Difficulty by one step to a maximum of extreme intensity.

INSANITY FROM OTHER SOURCES

Some creatures bestow Insanity without having the horrifying trait. If you use the rules in this expansion, you can run those creatures as written without having to make any changes.

GAINING INSANITY

When you gain Insanity, you become frightened for a number of rounds equal to your Insanity total. You cannot have more Insanity than your Will score, so any Insanity gained in excess of this number is lost as you are likely to go mad.

REMOVING INSANITY

You can remove gained Insanity by resting, by accepting a quirk, by magic, or by going mad, which is described in its own section, below.

RESTING

You might remove Insanity by resting. Each time you complete a rest, you can (though you don't have to) make a Will challenge roll with 1 bane. You remove 1 Insanity on a success, or gain 1 Insanity on a failure.

QUIRKS

You can also remove Insanity by gaining a quirk, the rules for which are unchanged from how they are described in *Shadow of the Demon Lord*, page 36.

MAGIC

Spells, such as *cure* from the Life tradition, can remove Insanity. As an optional rule, rather than simply removing the indicated amount of Insanity, the spell only removes the Insanity if the target gets a success on a Will challenge roll.

GOING MAD

When your Insanity total becomes equal to your Will score, you become at risk of going mad. Normally, you roll on the Madness table upon going mad, but the GM can make the outcome a bit more unpredictable by calling for a Fate Roll, with the number rolled determining what happens: 1, you suffer long-term madness; 2–5, you suffer short-term madness; 6, you do not go mad and instead reduce your Insanity total by the amount equal to your Will modifier + 1d6 (minimum 1).

OTHER GAME RULES

Anytime the game's rules affect what happens when a character goes mad, such as the berserker's Fury Unleashed talent, the rules only apply when the character would be affected by short-term madness.

SHORT-TERM MADNESS

When you would suffer short-term madness, you use the normal rules for going mad as described in *Shadow of the Demon Lord*, page 35.

LONG-TERM MADNESS

Long-term madness can impose a significant change to your character's personality, behavior, and capabilities. Upon gaining a long-term madness, reduce your Insanity total to 0 and roll a d20, finding the result on the Long-term Madness table. If you already have a form of madness and roll the same result again, you become stunned for 1 minute instead of gaining another long-term madness. As well, if you develop a madness that

produces a contradictory result—boundless energy and ennui, for example—you ignore the result and become stunned for 1 minute instead.



LONG-TERM MADNESS

Roll	Permanent Madness
1	Strangers Everywhere. You no longer recognize faces; everyone seems to be the same, differentiated only by their voices and clothing.
2	Sticky Fingers. You have a compulsion to steal. Whenever you see an item you can hold in one hand that's neither worn nor carried by another creature, you must take it unless you get a success on a Will challenge roll.
3	Blank Slate. You lose your personality traits and adopt those of the people around you. You become dazed for as long as you cannot see or hear a creature other than you.
4	Liar, Liar. You can't tell the truth.
5	Obsession. You become obsessed by whatever task you undertake. Once you start something, you cannot stop until you finish, and if you are prevented from doing so, you become impaired until you resume that activity. A task might be attacking a particular enemy until it's destroyed, attempting to climb a wall, reading a book, and so on.
6	Ennui. You become disinterested in the world around you, finding it difficult to undertake any activity. You cannot take fast turns.
7	Glooms. You become depressed, your mind descending into darkness. You make attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 bane.
8	Staggering Confidence. You become certain of your capabilities, so much so that you make all attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 boon. However, if you get a failure, you become dazed for 1 minute.
9	Craven. Fear consumes you. You make challenge rolls to avoid or stop becoming frightened with 3 banes, and you double the duration of the frightened affliction when you develop it.
10	Strange Beliefs. You believe in untrue things, causing you to behave erratically. You make attack rolls in social situations with 1 bane.
11	Boundless Energy. You are confident, quick to act, and reckless. You can only take fast turns.
12	Paranoia. Everyone is out to get you. You make attack rolls in social situations with 1 bane. As well, you derive no benefit from characters using their action to help you, and you cannot be a willing target of any spell effect cast by a member in your group.
13	Hope and Despair. You swing from hope to despair and back again with little warning. Each time you complete a rest, roll a d6. If you rolled an even number, you start with hope, making attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 boon. If you rolled an odd number, you start with despair, making attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 bane. Whenever you get a failure on an attack roll or challenge roll, you switch from hope to despair or despair to hope.
14	Untrustworthy Senses. You see and hear things that aren't there. You make Perception challenge rolls with 3 banes.
15	Pain is Pleasure. You experience a thrill of pleasure when you inflict harm or receive it. Once per round, when you deal damage or take damage, you make your next attack roll or challenge roll before the end of the next round with 1 boon.

- 16 **Murderous Impulses.** You are a bloodthirsty killer. Your attacks with weapons deal 1d3 extra damage, but you have to make free attacks when any creature, even members of your group, trigger them.
- 17 **Memory Loss.** You lose all of your professions.
- 18 **Death Wish.** You want to die. Whenever you take damage, you take 1d6 extra damage. As well, when you make Fate Rolls when you're incapacitated, you must roll twice and use the lowest result.
- 19 **Shattered Intellect.** You become defenseless, in a catatonic state from which you might never awaken.
- 20 **Fractured Personality.** Your personality splinters into 1d3 + 1 pieces. One of those pieces is your true self. The others are new personalities invented by your mind. For each personality, randomly determine its gender and then use your ancestry tables to create a new character, ignoring any table that would alter the character's appearance. Then, randomly determine the personality's profession. Henceforth, whenever you gain Insanity, your personality changes to a different one, either determined randomly or chosen by the GM. You remain in that personality until you gain Insanity again.

RECOVERING FROM LONG-TERM MADNESS

Once gained, long-term madness is hard to remove. To remove the madness, you must progress through the stages as shown below. Roll a d3 to determine your starting stage. You have a chance of changing your stage as described under recovery.

Stage 0 You recover from the madness.

Stage 1 You can use an action to make a Will challenge roll. On a success, you remove the effects of your madness for 1d6 hours. On a failure, you cannot use an action in this way again until after you complete a rest.

Stage 2 As stage 1, but you make the challenge roll with 1 bane, and a success removes the madness for 1d6 minutes.

Stage 3 As stage 1, but you make the challenge roll with 1 bane, and a success removes the madness for 1d6 rounds.

Stage 4 You suffer the effects of permanent madness.

Stage 5 You gain 1d3 Insanity and move down to stage 4.

Recovery Each time you complete a rest, you can make a Will challenge roll.

- **20 or more:** You moves down one stage.
- **Success:** No change.
- **Failure:** You move up one stage.
- **0 or less:** You gain 1 Insanity and move up one stage.

NEW TELEPATHY SPELL

RESTORE MIND

TELEPATHY UTILITY 6

Target One creature other than you that you can see within short range
You must concentrate for 1 hour, during which time your mind enters the target's mind. A target that moves beyond short range breaks your concentration and the effect ends. If you concentrate for the full time, choose one of the following effects.

- Remove 1d6 Insanity from the target.
- A target with a long-term madness can make a Will challenge roll. On a success, the target moves down two stages (minimum stage 0).