

Survival, Exhaustion, and Sanity

In Maelstrom, a Character's ability to survive the world is represented by two resources - **Sanity** and **Exhaustion**. Like a Character's Health Points determines how many attacks in Combat they can survive, their Sanity or Exhaustion determines how much they can exert themselves, both physically and mentally. These are vital resources that Players must manage carefully to navigate the challenges and dangers they face.

All characters begin play with 3 Sanity and 3 Exhaustion. These resources are capped at a maximum of 3 each, and cannot exceed this limit.

Participating in certain activities, such as Harvesting resource nodes or structured Encounters, will cost the Character 1 point from one of their Survival resources. These costs reflect the physical or mental exertion of engaging in adventurous activity, or facing dangerous or unsettling experiences. As players lose these Survival resources, they must actively work to recover them, ensuring their character's physical and mental well-being.

Recovering Exhaustion and Sanity

Survival resources can only be recovered through in-play means, such as resting at a campfire, meditating, or engaging in roleplayed emotional support with other characters. Certain consumable items will also allow players to regain one or both of these Survival resources.

However, recovery is limited to 1 per hour for each Exhaustion and Sanity, regardless of the recovering activity. A Character may engage in different recovery activities within that hour to regain one or both Survival resources, but never more than 1 of each.

Tracking Survival

Like other Player resources like Hit Points, Players are responsible for keeping track of their own Exhaustion and Sanity levels. Plot and Staff Marshals will clearly communicate any Survival costs to a Player prior to them engaging in encounters or actions which may incur a Survival cost.

Exhaustion Loss and Harvesting

Characters spend Exhaustion primarily through their Harvesting skills and making use of Harvesting Nodes to gain components or other in-game rewards. This represents the

Character digging, hunting, foraging, or otherwise physically exerting themselves searching for valuable resources.

The full details of the Harvesting skills and game system, and how Exhaustion is spent using them, are in the following section.

Reaching Zero Exhaustion

When a character's Exhaustion reaches 0, they enter an "Exhausted State". While the player is in this state, they are under the effects of a **Persistent Physical Slow**, as per the Combat rules for these effects. As long as the Player is at 0 Exhaustion, the effect remains active. As this effect is *Persistent*, it may not be removed by normal means.

Players are encouraged to roleplay the effects of this physical exhaustion, such as being distracted or dazed, easily irritated, or hallucinations and confusion. Exhaustion recovery remains capped at 1 per hour even while in an Exhausted State.

Sanity Loss and Encounters

Characters spend Sanity primarily through engaging in game Encounters. These game Encounters are led by an NPC played by a Plot or Staff Marshal. These Encounters may be the NPC taking a group of Characters on a short adventure, or enlisting their aid in a large battle.

Plot or Staff Marshals may also deduct Sanity as a consequence of witnessing horrific scenes, experiencing trauma, or interacting with unnatural forces. Additionally, Players who commit morally reprehensible acts may lose Sanity depending on the severity of their actions.

In some instances, to balance mental strain and maintain group dynamics during encounters, Plot or Staff Marshals may establish a Sanity Cap for specific activities. This cap defines the maximum number of participants an encounter can handle without causing additional psychological stress.

Before the encounter begins, Plot or Staff will announce the cap, typically limiting the number of players who can participate. If the number of participants exceeds the cap, additional Sanity costs may apply. These costs can take one of two forms:

- **Individual Cost Increase:** Each participant beyond the cap pays an additional Sanity cost to join.
- **Group Cost Increase:** All participants in the group pay an increased Sanity cost to reflect the heightened stress and risks of overcrowding.

These caps and any associated costs will be clearly communicated to players before they commit to participating.

Reaching Zero Sanity

When a character's Sanity reaches 0, they enter a "Fractured State." While the player is in this state, they are under the effects of a ***Persistent Mental Daze***, as per the Combat rules for these effects. As long as the Player is at 0 Sanity, the effect remains active. As this effect is *Persistent*, it may not be removed by normal means.

Players are encouraged to roleplay the effects of this mental strain, such as paranoia, impulsiveness, or detachment. Sanity recovery remains capped at 1 per hour even while in a Fractured State.

Roleplay and Immersion

The Sanity system encourages players to consider the psychological impact of their choices. Characters might hesitate to join overcrowded groups, weigh the risks of additional Sanity loss, or roleplay the stress caused by disorganization and tension. These dynamics create opportunities for rich, immersive storytelling and character development.