

The Geek to Geek Media Network Presents:

PRESS START

January 2021

GeekToGeekMedia.com



Wellness & Gaming

January 2021 - Issue 5

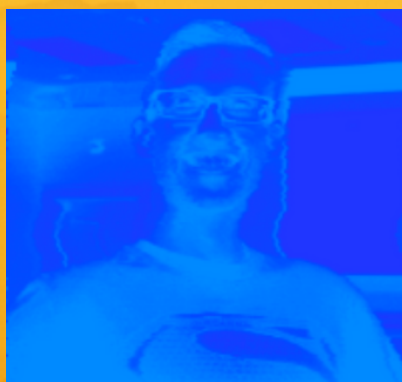
EDITOR'S NOTE

• ISSUE •

05

WELLNESS 2020

HIIYA!



HOMDY!

Nearly every January is the same. People make resolutions and fail to keep them and end up being a bit sad and disappointed in themselves. We don't want you to think that way. We want you to see that wellness and health isn't just a January thing, but an all-the-time lifestyle.

Even though we're geeks, we all have different ways that we stay active and fit and healthy. That's not just physically, either. Mental health is still health, and depression and anxiety run rampant in the geek community. So we want to talk about that. We want to talk about our methods of keeping our heads above water while still being true to teh geeks inside us.

So whether you're a runner, a cyclist, or a Ring Fitter, we have stories we think you can relate to. Or maybe you have anxiety and depression and feel alone. Well, friendo, you're not. We're here and understand. We can't say that we know how you feel, but we do feel similar things. You're not alone. And we love you.

--Beej

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE WELLNESS & GAMING ISSUE

04

**A GEEK IN MOTION
STAYS IN MOTION**

Steve Wittkamp

14

**THERE'S AN APP
FOR THAT**

Elinzia

27

**GOING FOR
ACCOUNTABILITY**

Data Error

29

**GADGET HOVEL
COMICS**

Todd Sullivan

30

**CULTIVATING
MENTAL WELLBEING**

Todd Sullivan

37

**MAKING GAMING AN
ACTIVE ACTIVITY**

TroytlePower

41

**PRESS START
STAFF**

42

**PATRON THANKS
AND NEXT ISSUE**

**COVER DESIGN BY TROYTLEPOWER
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A GEEK IN MOTION STAYS IN MOTION

by Steve Wittkamp

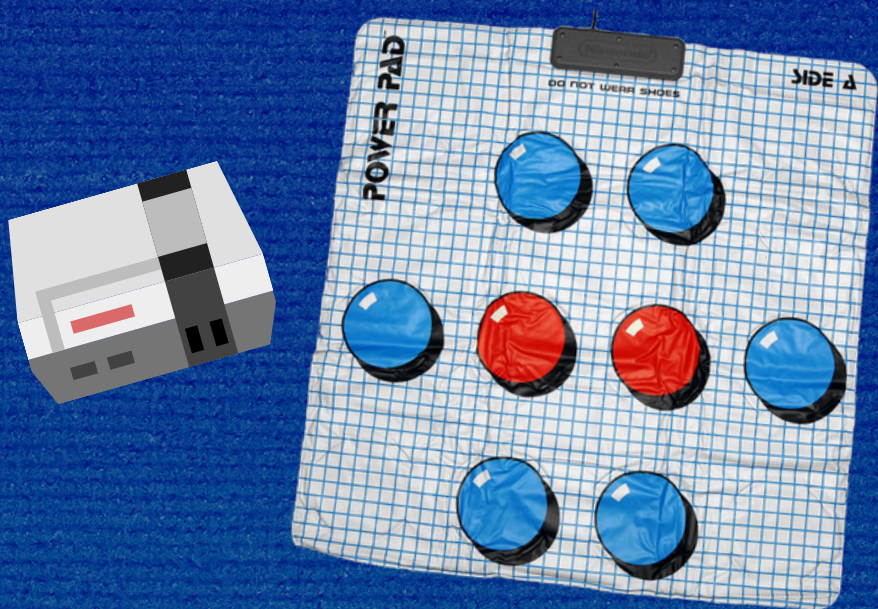
"I love the Power Glove. It's so bad."

That infamous line from the 1989 film *The Wizard* changed the way I looked at video games forever. The sequence preceding that ridiculous dialogue showed the film's villain demonstrating his skill with Mattel's Power Glove peripheral. He played Squaresoft's *Rad Racer* so well with motion controls that he broke the spirit of the protagonists.

But at the same time, he wowed audiences. The Power Glove (and motion control in particular) was clearly the future of video games.



Over three decades later, I think it's safe to say that all that did not end up being as big as we thought they would be (Nintendo Wii excluded). Still, the excitement over the potential of motion controls in games that I experienced while watching *The Wizard* stayed in my mind, and it made me seek out existing technology that could allow me to control a game with my own movements.



My first experience with such a peripheral was with the Power Pad, which was a grey mat with eight large circular pressure-sensors on one side, and twelve on the other. At first glance, it looks like a *Twister* pad, but when plugged into an NES, it allows the player to use their feet or hands to activate the pressure-sensors like buttons. As soon as I saw a Power Pad at a friend's house (shortly after watching *The Wizard*), I knew I had to try it.

My friend and I plugged in the Power Pad and popped *World Class Track Meet* into the NES.

The game allowed two players to simultaneously run on the Power Pad to compete in events such as the 100 meter dash and long jump, and we played to the point of exhaustion. We went back to some more traditional NES games while cooling off, but it wasn't long before we were back to trying to top each other's score in the 100 meter dash.

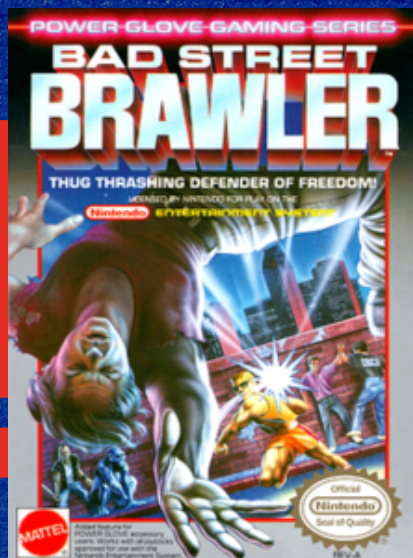
Nintendo's "Trojan horse" idea of using an NES peripheral to encourage children to be more physically active seemed to be successful.

We got other friends involved in our competitive indoor running as well, and *World Class Track Meet* conveniently allowed up to six players to compete in an event while taking turns. It was the most fun I had being physically active at that point, not counting activities that could (and often would) result in injury. My friends and I were happy because we were still playing video games, and our parents were happy because we were being active and wearing ourselves out in a safe manner.



But as great as the Power Pad was...it was no Power Glove. I very much still wanted to get my hands on it. Or well, get it on my hands.

Then, one day, my dad came home from a weekend of browsing local garage sales with an unexpected surprise: a used Power Glove in mint condition and *Bad Street Brawler*.



If you're not aware (and most people aren't), *Bad Street Brawler* is one of only two games made specifically with the Power Glove in mind. I was so excited. I hooked it up to my NES and TV (which took longer than you would expect thanks to the strange multi-piece sensor), put the glove on my hand, and clenched my fist triumphantly, just like Lucas had in *The Wizard*.

Things went downhill quickly after that. Even before I started playing the game.

A poor man's pixelized Arnold Schwarzenegger appeared on the title screen accompanied by a shameless chiptune version of Little Richard's Tutti Frutti. Concerned by the game's quality, I pressed the start button on the glove and began the first stage. I used the d-pad to move my character until I encountered an enemy, at which point I made a punching motion with my gloved hand.

Nothing happened.

Nothing ever happened. I tried again and again, but just sat there getting pummeled by the enemy. Disappointed, I turned the power off.

My Power Glove did not come with instructions, so I didn't realize that the A and B buttons were activated by bending specific fingers. Punching motions would do nothing on their own to activate the buttons, so the dream of playing *Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!* with exaggerated punching motions was dead.

Using the glove to move an in-game icon around the screen in *Super Glove Ball* was admittedly kind of cool, but even then, the glove needed to be recentered so much, that the novelty wore out quickly.

Burned out by the Power Pad and disappointed by the Power Glove, I went back to playing games the old fashioned way for years. I was a nerdy kid in elementary school who didn't have many friends and wasn't into sports, so my typical daily routine was to get home from school and zone out with video games for hours at a time.

By the time I reached junior high, I was out of shape and *completely* unmotivated to do any physical activity.

**THEN THE
BULLYING BEGAN**

Junior high is tough enough as it is, but being an overweight nerd makes it exponentially worse. I took refuge with my video games, and fortunately it was a golden age of lengthy RPGs that I could immerse myself in.

What was a little bullying compared to the psychological distress suffered by Cloud Strife in *Final Fantasy VII* or the epic political drama of *Suikoden*? I paid less and less attention to my courses and homework and more to my virtual escapism. Eventually, however, I felt the need to make a change.

Unable to find a way to effectively exercise while playing video games, I decided to take video games with me while exercising. I purchased a handful of blank audio cassette tapes and loaded them into a device with a microphone. Then I recorded all of my favorite video game music tracks back-to-back.



I dug up an old portable cassette player, and took to the streets, armed with a mixtape full of video game music that would keep me motivated while running. The logistics of it all were a bit uncomfortable, but I made it work. I have been a runner ever since.

I got fit quickly thanks to my high energy mixtapes, and I kept physically active well into adulthood. All I needed were some good tunes, and I could run for as long my body would allow.

In my mid-20s, however, I began to suffer from a number of minor knee injuries, which forced me to quit running for weeks or sometimes months at a time. I put on weight quickly and couldn't find a way to exercise that interested me. A short while later, I was diagnosed with Hypothyroidism, which accounted for much of the weight game as well as some serious lethargy. I was in bad shape.



Microsoft
To The Rescue



At this point in time, Microsoft had just released their motion-sensing Kinect peripheral. I had shrugged it off as a Power Glove-like gimmick at first, but watching promotional videos for its killer app, *Dance Central*, made me wonder if I could use it as a viable means of exercise.

I decided to take the plunge and purchased a Kinect with *Dance Central* and *Kinect Adventures*. I'm not at all the dancing type, but *Dance Central* had me hooked.

The songs weren't what I typically listened to and the motion tracking could be a bit inconsistent, but I had fun matching my on-screen avatar's movements and trying to top my own scores. Most importantly, I was able to find an exercise routine again, one that left me feeling drained after even a 30-minute session.

I even convinced my wife to play with me for a while, though I think she secretly preferred laughing to herself while watching me embarrassingly flail my arms to *Hella Good* by No Doubt.



Dance Central and the Kinect helped me to get back into enough shape to transition back into running regularly. More cognizant of my proneness to injury, I alternated between running and playing games on Kinect.

Eventually, I swapped out the Kinect workout for a regular gym routine since I could easily listen to music or watch TV while using a cardio machine. I stuck with that routine for years and got into the best shape of my life. I even trained for and completed a marathon in 2018, which I never thought I would be able to do with my knee problems.

I kept my routine going strong with almost daily gym workouts, alternating between the treadmill and elliptical machines. I would have kept this routine going to this day, but COVID-19 had other plans.

Once the pandemic started, I lost my access to the gym with its wonderful workout machines. No more monitors attached to treadmills. Goodbye, iPhone jack. It was back to basics for me, running outdoors on the hard, unforgiving asphalt. It wasn't long before my knees wore down once again, leaving me miserable and inactive while stuck indoors.

This story has a happy ending, though.

Thanks to Nintendo, who silently released *Ring Fit Adventure* for the Switch in 2019, just a couple of months before the COVID-19 pandemic got into full-swing.

I was lucky enough to snag a copy of it before it became difficult to find. Using a pilates ring and leg strap, along with two Switch joycons, the game provides a fitness experience tailor-fit to the player's desired intensity. Coupled with a charming presentation and an RPG-inspired "Quest" mode, *Ring Fit Adventure* was just the shot in the arm I needed to stay active indoors. Finally, after all these years, motion controls and my genre-preferences in gaming had combined into one, fantastic title.



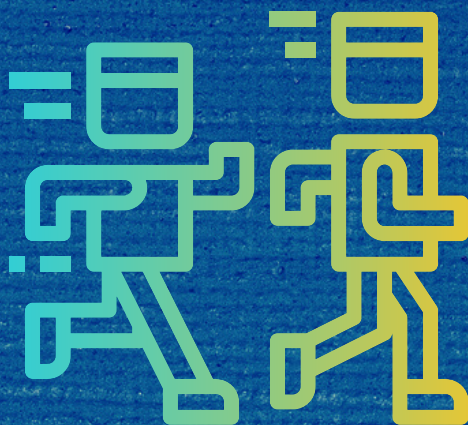


AND THAT BRINGS US TO TODAY.

My fitness journey has been long and often frustrating, but it's eye-opening to look back and realize how almost every major step has been at least indirectly impacted by my love of video games and the culture surrounding them.

The best advice I can give to those of you who want to get into an exercise routine but can't find the motivation is to *find a way to incorporate a hobby into it*. It might take a little "outside the box" thinking, but it can turn something you dread and dislike into a lifelong, beloved hobby.

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There's an App For That

by Elinzia, The Crafting Rogue

Smart technology really is pretty amazing. We live in an age where our phones can do pretty much anything imaginable. So, when talking about health and wellness it is hard not to think about some of the technological boosts we have available to us.

As Steve mentioned in his article (see "A Geek in Motion Stays in Motion") video games with motion-sensing technology have brought fitness into the hands of gamers. Now, cell phones have expanded on that by bringing it into the hands of almost everyone. Literally.

My first dive into smart technology was when I was literally at the least active point in my life. I had surgery on both of my feet at the same time, and I do *not* recommend this. I was stuck on the couch in considerable pain and unable to do a whole lot of anything. Even just to get up to go to the bathroom required someone almost carrying me.

So I lived on that couch day and night for several weeks. Of course, I had television, books, and video games but it was still incredibly boring.

Then I got a package from my brother, Todd.



In it was a hand-me-down iPod that he didn't need anymore. I spent a lot of my recovery looking at every app available and learning everything I could about it. While I don't remember the name of it, I managed to find an app that was stretches and yoga which I was able to do some of even from a sitting position.

Less than a year later, and just before *another* foot surgery (on just one foot this time), my husband and I got our first iPhones. I again spent my recovery on the couch learning everything I could about my new iPhone and the apps available for it.

One of the first apps I found was called MyFitnessPal. A decade later, I still use it regularly.

If you are unfamiliar with *MyFitnessPal*, it is an app that was started as a website in 2005 to help people achieve their health goals. You can easily track your food intake and see what calories they have. It even breaks it down into what percentage is carbs, protein, or fat. This tracking allows you to not only see what you are putting in your body written out plainly in front of you, but also shows you if you are eating too few or (more likely in my case) too many calories in a day.

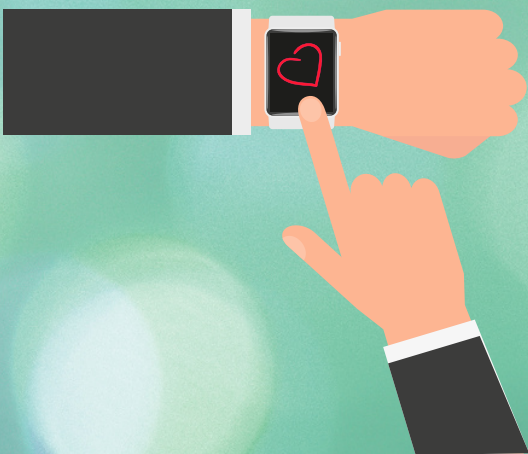


Log your weight to see a graph of how you are doing, log water intake, and even log exercise. While I am not at all consistent with my usage of this app, I will say that when I do make a

conscious effort to log my food and exercise, I am much healthier overall. ***Psychology for the win!***

Along Came Christmas 2015

The Apple Watch had debuted earlier that year, and my wonderful brother got me one for Christmas that year. I still use that original generation watch. It works well enough, although current models have many more bells and whistles. It is still amazing for tracking my activity levels.



For me, it is all too easy to become sedentary, so I love that the Apple Watch will nudge me when I've been sitting too long and shows me in brightly colored rings how active I have been.

Currently, using technology to help me with fitness and health tracking is almost second nature. When I started having more severe health problems, the first thing I did was find a symptom tracker app, like *Pain Tracker Lite* or *CareClinic*.

Depression and anxiety issues then led me to trying meditation and gratitude apps such as *Calm* and *Happify*. My therapist even prescribed an app to me called *BrainWave* which uses binaural tones targeting brainwave frequencies. I honestly don't know if that one works or not, but I try it every now and then.



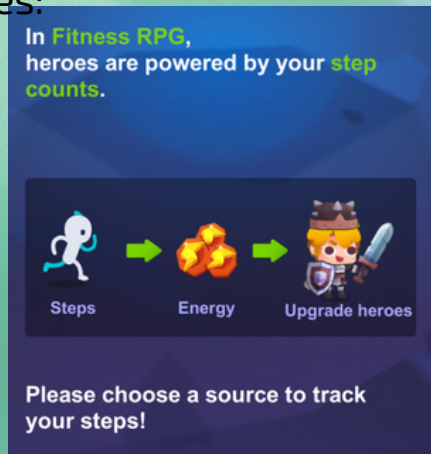
Fitness apps are my favorites though

I am always bouncing around for different types of exercise and exercise motivation. Being able to have a variety of options is important to me. Of course, I do things such as swim or attend aerobics classes (when we aren't in a pandemic) or use Ring Fit Adventure on the Nintendo Switch. Having gamified exercise apps on my phone however is the easiest way to bounce between new activities and things to keep me moving.

Here are some of my favorites:

Fitness RPG

You have to save Fitland from the Dark Force! Using your daily step counts you can level up your heroes to battle enemies.



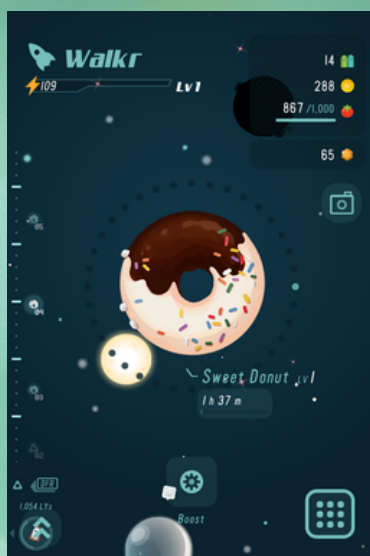
Fit for Battle



Walking, jogging, or running this app allows you to defeat orcs or outrun dragons. A fun fantasy world that motivates you to keep moving to win challenges. The app is more focused on running, which at the moment I can't do. It does provide incentive to work up to running so I can use that feature soon.

Walkr

Pilot a spaceship by using the “walking energy” you earn by using the app as fuel for your ship. Visit fun planets such as Octopus Cavern or Caramel Apple. Plus you get to aid cute space creatures who are lost as you go!



Fun and Fit Times

I am always blown away by the creativity people have. Whether they are serious apps for tracking illness symptoms so that I can send them electronically to my doctor, or allowing me to defeat goblins by going for a walk, these apps have absolutely changed the way I manage my health by being able to play video games.

Now if only my phone would slap the donut out of my hand before I put it in my mouth. Is there an app for that?



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GOing for Accountability

by Data Error

I really lucked out about when *Pokémon Go* released.

2016 was a weird summer for me in a lot of ways. One of them being that I had a roommate around. *Technically* my apartment was only meant for one, but hey, we were young enough to not care. Still, it was over the normal capacity, so we'd been looking for excuses to get out of the house.

We hadn't been hurting for options, to be fair. There's a lot to see and do in my area, so we'd been out and about every weekend. But doing tourist-y things can easily consume your whole afternoon, especially when you live pretty far from the center of town. Even if we didn't say it aloud, we were happy to have reasons to slip outside for just a little while.

Then came July. No points for guessing how we got outside at that point..



Even in a normal summer, I would've absolutely devoured any mobile Pokémon game as robust as *Go*. On top of that, I live within a block of two public parks, including a lakeside. My neighborhood was positively *teeming* with pocket-sized monsters and rewards to begin with.



Here's the Kicker

My then-roommate was really into the “raw numbers” side of games. He's the kind of guy who pores over websites to find out how to turn a 0.6% chance to get an item into just a 0.7% chance. And in that first month, people were digging *hard* to reverse-engineer the exact minute and GPS location to catch a Slowpoke.

I'd prepared for trouble, but he'd made it double.

And do you know what? That was just fine.

This was a little before I'd picked camping back up as a hobby (actual camping, not sitting in place, waiting for Pokémon). So for my part, I wasn't getting out *nearly* as much as I should have.



In theory, I was planning to go running three times each week. In practice, I usually only made two of those happen. Having Pokémon Go as a distraction every single day knocked that down to one run on a good week.



Even so, having a constant nag to go outside and catch that Nidoran down the block was *seriously* bumping up my number of trips outside.

It seemed like every day that I'd come home from work, collapse onto the couch, and not five minutes later he'd walk past with the same easy hook:

"Go hit up the park?"

"Yeah, sure, why not?"

That "why not?" is crucial.



Getting up to do something active by myself is hard. Having somebody ask me means I have to negotiate my way out. And I'd rather run a half-marathon than confront someone, so I was going on more walks than your average beagle.



So was everybody else, by the looks of things. I had never seen as many people out at the local park at once before July 2016, and I've never seen as many since. The crowds were mostly twenty-somethings, sure, but also children and their parents.

And most of all, people walking in groups.



These Pokémon catchers were stopping on the side of the path every twenty few seconds, sure. But everybody was *out*. For a brief moment, getting off your rumpus and taking advantage of the city's walking trails was the normal thing to do.

Unfortunately, it was also “normal” for some people to park their cars in front of a monster-spawning point and safely catch things from the passenger’s seat. The game was ultimately more pervasive and appealing than the activity it was promoting.

Of course, my roommate and I went way beyond that.

Remember how I said he would dissect games?

Well, in Pokémon Go, certain monsters only spawn in certain types of habitat. Rocky, water, forest, and so on.

That meant, at one point, our driving across town to find the right walking trail. He wanted Omanyte, which required driving twenty minutes just to mill around a gazebo after dark with a load of strangers. Not to socialize, no. Just to be in the right place at the right time to fill that particular spot in the Pokédex.



And that's how getting off the couch had become a chore again.

It turns out, prescribed walks (even with Pokémon around) aren't much more appetizing than a set running schedule.

And that's where things get tricky



Some of the impetus to get up and get active was perfectly healthy. Yes, of course I'll get up and do a lap around the lake, or make the long walk to get groceries. It's good for me, it's good for the Pokédex. Easy sell.

But no, I won't go on a ten-minute car trip so that I can pace around a playground, staring at my phone with my head down. That's putting the cart before the horse.

Sure, both are the same movement and type of exercise, but only one is actually pushing in a helpful direction. And it is all too easy to conflate the two.



And hitting the latter too hard, pacing around too many playgrounds and taking late-night gazebo trips, is what soured me on the whole *Go* experience.

I did, however, return to *Pokémon Go* later that year.

But that was in spite of having seen the other side of the game.



It took me a while to start using the game as an accessory to walking again, instead of using walking as an accessory to the game.

And what's worse is, within the next few years, I was out and camping again like I had been in high school (again, real camping, not Pokécamping). That meant a lot of extended, multi-hour hikes through beautiful state parks.

These were just teeming with wildlife. But also devoid of cell phone service and landmarks.

Ironically, the places where you'd *most* expect fantastical creatures to live were the places most absent of the critters. Turns out, there's no point in playing *Pokémon Go* in the forest.

Not in the usual way, at least.

Nowadays, I play my own form of *Pokémon Go* instead.

I take my phone with me and, instead of trying to play the game on some back-woods trail, I'm paying attention to the trail itself. My eyes are always scanning for wildlife, whether I'm quick enough to snap it up on my phone's camera or not. I try to be mindful of what's already there in nature.

You know, like we teach kids to do on nature walks.



Then when I get back, I think about what I've seen, and I try to match it up to the Pokémon I know. I didn't catch any Morelull or Murkrow on that hike, but I sure found a spot where capped mushrooms were growing underneath a log, and I absolutely heard some crows yelling at each other.



It's kind of a silly game that only I'm playing.

But it's yet another way my brain injects fun into my strolls, which was kind of the point of *Pokémon Go* in the first place. This just happens to work better for the kind of activity I already like, just like how Go works better for those who can really only tackle the walking trails in their own neighborhood.

And yeah, I've circled back to play *Pokémon Go* more than usual in 2020. Responsibly minimizing how much I go out during a pandemic also means being cooped up in the same 970 square feet (the roommate having moved out by this point).

With no other humans around, that's the cookbook recipe for cabin fever. So it isn't hard to find an excuse to go for a walk now. And recently, it's as much with *Pokémon Go* as without. Sometimes I don't even take my phone at all, because that's not the driving factor any more.

It can help, sure, but it's not the only thing. Now I'm not answering to anybody else about it any more. I'm being accountable to myself and my own mental health by going on walks now, not my roommate and the Pokédex.

Okay, that's a lie. I'm maybe 10% accountable to the fact that there's a Cyndaquil down the block.

But if that pushes me out the door, I'm all the better for it.



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Gadget Hovel Comics



Cultivating Mental Wellbeing

by Todd Sullivan

I want to warn the reader that this article is about coping with mental health and depression. It's sad. Don't read this if you're not mentally ready to deal with that.

I suffer from depression. Sometimes it's triggered by events in my life and sometimes it comes out of nowhere. But I don't want to talk about what depression is or how it affects me. I want to talk about one of the ways I cope with it.



I play a video game that simulates farming

The very straightforward name of that game is *Farming Simulator 19*. What this game has that you won't find in games like *Stardew Valley* or *Story of Seasons* is big machines. Tractors, Combines, Forklifts, Trucks, Trailers, and so many more. Everything in the game is done from behind the wheel of some big ol' vehicle that (as far as I can tell) pretty accurately simulates real world equipment.

In the version I play, you can use John Deere tractors. I chose to do so because that's what my real-life farming relatives used.

Losing Motivation

When I'm depressed I feel like I can't do anything right. I lose the motivation to do anything at all. Generally can't find any joy anywhere. Even things I usually love.

So I go to my virtual farm, and I drive my virtual tractor to one of my virtual fields.



Just driving to the field takes a while. After all, tractors don't move fast. I attach the seed spreader, and as I drive onto the empty field I turn it on. Seed sprays out the back covering a good swath as I drive up and down the field. I drive to one end of the field, turn around, line myself up, and then I drive in a straight line to the other end. Then I repeat that. Over and over again.

It's repetitive. It's slow.
It's calm. It's almost meditative.

Actually, it *is* meditative.



When I'm done with that, I drop off the seed sprayer, attach the fertilizer, and drive up and down the field exactly the same way again. Except this time, I am spreading fertilizer instead of seed. Later, I'll drive up and down the field exactly the same way again, this time weeding it.

Eventually I'll drive up and down the field in a different vehicle to harvest the crop. There's a lot of repetitive driving up and down fields in this game. The tools change, the vehicles change, the crops change, but at its heart you drive back and forth across fields almost all the time.

But Why Simulate That Driving?



After all, some people drive their cars around the real world when they're stressed, not tractors up and down digital fields. That doesn't work for me because I'm scared of driving.

I do it, because you just have to. But I never enjoy it.

Maybe what I feel when I drive my virtual tractor back and forth is something akin to what people get from driving to relax in the real world. It requires a part of my brain to keep going in a straight line, to turn when it's time to turn, to make sure I don't run out of gas or seed while I'm going. But that doesn't take very much of my brain.

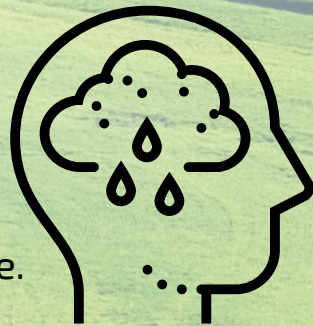
The rest can listen to music or a podcast. I hit that sweet spot of mental activity where I'm not thinking about how big a failure I am or how sad I am. I get my brain in a place where I'm not thinking about much of anything. That's when my brain can finally relax. And maybe recover.



**Depression
looks like
laziness**

I lay there on the sofa and can't bring myself to wipe the potato chip crumbs from my shirt. I am as close to motionless as an awake person can be. But inside my mind, there's a hurricane of activity.

Memories of past failures and predictions of future ones swirl around as I think about what is wrong with me.



I struggle to think about something else. To think about something happy.

But my mind always goes back to the sad thoughts. Mentally I'm racing as I try to process a million horrible thoughts at once. And at the same time, I am actively trying not to think about any of them at all. It's exhausting, even though I'm just laying there, appearing lazy and calm.

But there's something about driving that tractor back and forth and listening to something pleasant that helps. Makes my mind silent.



And that is when I can rest. Regain a little strength. Eventually, maybe feel good enough to take a shower and put on clean clothes.

Or write that (*read: this*) article I've been procrastinating on.

Because silencing my brain isn't just to make the bad thoughts stop.

It's to rest so I can get back to being functional. Eventually of course. Not over the course of one (or even two) trips around my farm.

It takes a long time. It takes days. Weeks sometimes.

But from experience I know that if I rest my brain for a good long time, eventually I will feel better.

So I drive my virtual tractor back and forth across an imaginary field for as long as I need to. And eventually, I do feel better.



If you are struggling with depression, PLEASE seek help. There are many resources available to you and people who love you.

If you need someone to talk to, please reach out to us at Geek to Geek Media on our Discord, email or Twitter.

We're here for you.

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Making Gaming an Active Activity

by TroytlePower

I grew up embracing the hyperactive side of my ADHD. I was a book nerd who played way too many video games, but I was fidgety and always wanted to be moving around. Case in point: I used to rollerblade in a circle in our driveway while reading Animorphs books.

I'm not quite as fidgety now as I used to be, but I still get a thrill out of finding a way to make passive hobbies active. With video games, I've found three great ways to engage my body while my brain is focused on playing.



A stylized illustration of a man with a beard, wearing a blue V-neck shirt, light blue pants, a brown belt, and a VR headset with white headphones. He has his arms outstretched. The background is a dark blue space with white stars. Surrounding him are various blue UI elements: a large circular menu with a highlighted segment in the top left; a hexagonal grid of cells on the left; a vertical bar chart with four bars of increasing height on the right; a vertical slider with a red knob on the right; and a circular menu with a highlighted segment in the bottom right. At the bottom left, there is a row of five small blue squares.

Sure, there's obvious "workouts" you can do with VR like jumping into a virtual boxing ring in *Knockout Kings*. That game is super fun to play, and I pour sweat within minutes of booting it up, but you'd expect that, right? The games I've found to be a type of active that I didn't expect were *Ultrawings*, a sort of *Pilot Wings* like game that gets my heart racing as I swoop around in prop planes, and *Blasters of the Universe*, a wave based arcade shooter that has you whipping your head around to spot enemies to shoot away while you reload by slamming your hands together. Neither of these games are explicitly "active" games, but both of them leave me feeling exhausted after I play them.

Go outside and move



We all know plenty about *Pokemon Go* (See Data Error's article "GOing for Accountability" in this issue for more), but there are a ton of other "get walking" games to make a stroll around the neighborhood

a bit more digital. *Harry Potter Wizards Unite* has you collecting stickers of characters and creatures from the wizarding world, *Minecraft Earth* lets you build a digital world all around you (though it sounds like it's already getting shut down this year), and *Catan World Explorers* is an upcoming game based on the *Settlers of Catan* board game!

Now, granted, in each of these the actual gameplay loop is a bit thin, but if you can get yourself hooked into checking off some dailies with a quick trip up the block and back, it's a great way to motivate yourself to move... but it really doesn't let you connect the games you'd already *want to be playing* with that movement.



Stay inside and move

Remember how I said that as a kid I used to rollerblade and read? The other bizarre pairing young Troytle found was treadmilling across Hyrule. For a while back when I was about 12, I hooked up my N64 in front of my parents' treadmill and would just stroll on that while wandering around *Ocarina of Time*'s (for the time) massive open world. Sadly, I don't have a treadmill anymore... but a few years ago I bought myself a recumbent stationary bike!



I bought the bike off Craigslist specifically to use while playing games, and it ended up becoming my favorite way to play. For a while, I wouldn't let myself stream on my Twitch channel unless I was peddling away on the bike, and it made that time spent playing games feel much more rewarding. Putting in a physical activity, even when it wasn't directly related to the game I was playing, made everything more exciting and engaging.

And of course, to harken back to my time on a treadmill as a kid, the first thing I did was hook up my N64 and play through *Majora's Mask* while peddling, because what is a stationary bike if not a sequel to a treadmill?



Motivate Yourself

There's a lot of ways that you can pair a physical activity with video gaming, and I've found that not only does it get me up and active, but also makes the games a lot more fun. Unfortunately, I struggled with getting this article together because, well I haven't really done any of these things in more than a year. We had our first child in November of 2019, and then, well, 2020 happened, so I just never got back in the habit. I'm still playing plenty of games, but I haven't worked that "active" aspect back into my rotation.

But now that I've had to sit down and confront that, I am going to make "active gaming" a part of my routine again, and I am encouraging you to find a way to make gaming active too! Whether that's jumping around like a maniac in VR or playing Zelda on a stationary bike or treadmill or just getting out and playing *Pokemon Go*, I bet that there is some way that you and I can both make our gaming habits a bit more active.

Now I've just got to figure out a good place to get that stationary bike set up again.

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JANUARY 2021- ISSUE 05

A GEEK TO GEEK
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LOVE IN THE TIME OF VIDEO GAMES**