One day when I was playing video games at home, a messaged popped up.

I don’t like people sending me messages during my video game time, so I checked the message one hour later after my video game time. Once I realized that it was from Sharon, the girl I loved, regrets filled my whole soul. Anyways, that was not important. The important thing is that she asked me whether I would like to join China Thinks Big (CTB) again this year. Besides having a chance to stick with the girl I loved for a long time, I also got the chance to prove to the judges this time that we are great since I didn’t get a great place last year although I believe that our efforts deserved a better result. With such desiring offers, I immediately accepted the offer.

Next day we brainstorm on the topics with other five members, focusing on social issues such as environmental protection or aging problems. But all these problems just sound a little bit too popular. Because I have seen so many attempts trying to solving these problems, and I wanted to work on something different. Some topic where we could be the first to make some impacts. “How about working on sex-education?” A girl said, This topic suddenly captured my attention, and her words remind me of a breaking news happened two years ago: kids were molested in a kindergarten because of the parents’ neglect on sex-education. I still remembered that this news has triggered me so much. I looked upon all the related online discussions and articles, I even wrote a response myself supporting sex-education in China on Zhihu regarding to this news, the Chinese Quora. I believe that we could do something about it, with the chance given by CTB, a project based research competition, I thought that we can do something about it.

“Dude, we should totally do it!” Although I realized that the topic is a sensitive one in mainland China, but I never doubted our idea. In our team, everyone’s unique. Someone loved literature, some loved biology, and some loved statistics. For me, I was always labeled as a computer geek, or the guy with weird ideas all the time. During last CTB, I made a virtual reality website of Suzhou Creek, the river that we decided to protect its cultural heritage. People could wear VR goggles and visit our site to see a 360 degrees virtual reality Suzhou Creek in oil paint just like they were inside the drawing itself. I always got so excited about these unique ideas I have during daily life, and I always think about how I implement these ideas through technology. I enjoy doing this go-between because I always think it’s fun, and I enjoy talking with people about these new ideas. For example, I made a small app for one of my friends who always complains about the crashes she had on her computer which caused her to lose all the works that she forgot to save. The app will automatically run a save command for any other app my friend is using every 30 seconds. Because of this idea popping superpower, I was told to came up with a way to help with Sex-Education. I thought about the moment on that night when I was playing video games and picked up the girl’s message, and said: “How about we make a sex-education video game? Because all the teenagers including me likes to play video games right?” Considering the popularity of video game in our school and my wish of making a video game since I played my first video game “Pokemon” when I was 7, I thought this would be a great idea.

Luckily, my proposal was approved by all the members. Naturally I am the person who is responsible for the technical part. I was so excited to start this project like how the puritans started their exploration on America. The unknown and challenges that was ahead has given me the same anticipation before my 70km ihike on DunHuang Dessert which took me seven days to complete, and I started to do research immediately at the night on the day we decided to work on this game.

But then I found out the real challenge wasn’t to study knowledge about game engines and new computer programming languages. We already met obstacles in the early research stage. Due to cultural issues, sex-education was considered as a topic that wouldn’t be talked about in the public. This has caused a major blockade for us to find what we need for the game from textbooks. We tried to contact labs that study sex-education, but we received nothing after countless emails sent. Some of the team members wanted to switch the topic. But I always thought that we were doing the right and coolest thing a high school teen could possibly be doing right now. I didn’t want to quit this easily. So, I encouraged my teammates and told them that everything will be fine. I started to walk out of the comfort coding zone and started to talk with the people around me about sex-education. I asked my parents about this topic, but then I found out that they were even more shy than me to talk about these things. When I was doing online researches about this topic, numerous news about the social issues cause by the lack of sex-education has blurred my eyes, and I have been filled with wordless anger.

Finally, after our sessions with the school’s psychology teacher and the help from the doctors I approached during their sex-education sessions in the school. We gained sufficient knowledge for the content of the game and have decided which type of game to make. We decided to make an adventure game with multiple endings based on cinematic content. To enrich the content of the game, I tried to talk with more people. I have cleared my misunderstood thoughts about ideas on STDs after talking with the LGBTQ people, and I have also encountered the famous saying “You will know it after you grow up” in China after I talked with my parents about this. I got more shocked and helpless after I talked with some of my teachers and classmates. Some teachers still believe it’s a taboo to talk about sex-education in China, and some of my classmates believed that I was doing something erotic. A week ago, I thought that making a sex-education game is just like making another app for my school. But now I have realized that it was much more complicated than that. The problems cause by the lack of sex-education was not far away and only could be seen on the news anymore. I could feel it from my classmates, my teachers, and my parents. Even in an international school like mine, sex-education has still become a quite sensitive topic to talk about. When we were trying to find actors to act for our sex-education game’s cinematic content. Everyone has turned me down because they were afraid that this would cause bad influence for them. After receiving tons of thousands of Nos, I started to question myself: “If I decided not to work on this project, would I become one of them?”

I have to finish this game, to change this social environment.

In order to find the actor for the game, I lied to one of my friends. I told one of my friend that I am going to buy him a dinner and will pick him up an hour later on one day. After he got on the taxi, I told him that I wanted him to be the main character of our sex-education game who was going to act as a counter role in the episode. As expected, he showed his immediate reluctancy. He had to agree after I informed him that he couldn’t get out of the car and the place we were heading to is dozens of miles away from the city. Now, we always laugh out loud every time we talked about this, but that was an act caused by helplessness. There was also one time we tried to film a shot where the actor is going to kiss the player, which means the camera itself. As the camera guy on that day, I lied down on the bed with the camera and had my friend laid on me trying to kiss the camera while he was wearing a leopard skin bath-clothe. All these fun experiences are also the forces that drive me to keep working till 1A.M to finish the coding part of the game after months of hard workings.

The whole process of game production is like playing a video game. After I finished the game and submitted the game to Chinese software distributors, I have received an unsurprising “rejection”. The only reason on that rejection letter was *sensitive subject included*. Facing the twisted review system for entertainment of Mainland China on the social media, I cannot be convinced. We firmly believe it is a way for our teenagers to learn more sex-education knowledge, at least my friend who got “abducted” and played the antagonist of the game has changed his viewpoint on sex-education. While reaching out to an international software distributor Steam to publish our game, I still tried to change the Chinese software distributors’ minds through writing a 7-page appeal letter. After that, I flew to Norway and started my 10-days Arctic Trip to see the Icebergs and Aurora I have always been dreaming to see. During the trip, I received intermittent calls from the media telling me that the game has gone viral on steam and has made some impacts inside China too. The seven of us as the team behind this game has suddenly become the interviewee from all the trending medias. Our project has also received a fair place on CTB. We became famous among the shanghai high schoolers. These surprising changes have made us happy. But what makes me happier is that I actually changed the ideological form of this society through technology.

I, the computer geek who was always trying to figure out app development solutions and other coding-related stuff have changed. Throughout this whole game developing experience, I have grown from a boy who has been thinking of proving his own value to the man who has saw the greater values of his project. This game has improved the sex education status of many Chinese teenagers, and it has also invoked the society the importance of sex education. What more could I demand when this game has brought me the best friends of me, tons of hours of works that we spend together, and the chance to improve the world? I am indeed the happiest person in the world.

Last but not least, I told the girl that I love her, and I would never regret about doing that.