“Calen! do not swallow the watermelon’s seed with its flesh! Didn’t I tell you a watermelon tree will grow inside your stomach if you swallow it?”

This warning from my mom has constantly surrounded me with fear when I was a kid. After hearing it so many times and seeing my grandpa swallowing pain killers, I got an idea of inventing a ‘pill’ to prevent that from happening. I asked my mom for one bean to make my pill, drawing a net on it and whispering magical words… Although I didn’t eventually invent that pill, my curiosity never stopped, and my life was far from boring. This curiosity has moved toward technology once I played Pokémon at the age of seven. A virtual world on the tiny computer screen allows me to fly over mountains on the back of a dragon or fight against poisonous butterflies by commanding a group of gophers. Like a mouse falling into the rice bowl, I was strongly fascinated by this virtual dream machine.

In the game, the Pokémon trainers always have their Pokémons helping them to win competitions and respects from the others. Like all the other daydreaming boys, I really wanted to have my own Pokémon too. Although I cannot have a real Pokémon as the game does, but I realized that they could be created through technology, apps that could help me to solve various tasks. At grade seven, I learned a programming language called Python from the internet and decided to make an app with it. Confused by not getting GPAs conveniently in my school, I started to make a GPA calculator for both me and my classmates who have also been complaining about this for a long time. After the release of this app, I have received praises and approvals from my schoolmates and my homeroom teacher. I felt like I have my first “Pokémon” in my life.

With this success, I continued to improve my computer science skills, hoping that one day I could be strong enough to become the “Pokémon Master” in the real world, an omnipotent computer geek.

One day when I was playing video games, I received a message from Sharon, the girl who I had a crush on, inviting me to participate in a group competition with her. I accepted her offer without any hesitations. The goal of the competition was to solve a problem facing our world. Next school day, Sharon proposed Sex-Education as our main topic. I immediately agreed.

Then began to brainstorm which media do we want to use to promote sex education in China. As a fanatic gamer, I always believed that you can do anything in the video games. If you can ride a dragon in the game, then why can’t you learn sex-education in the game? I proposed this idea to my team members.

After a brief discussion between the other members, this idea got approved. I was responsible for the technical parts, such as using game engines and programming the necessary game codes.

As I started to develop the game, I realized that it was different from all the other projects I did previously. Bringing this idea into reality was not only hard on the technical parts. The public ideological bias to the sex-education and the hardness to find relevant references became significant challenges for us. Even some of my classmates thought that we were doing something inappropriate.

After continuously bumping into obstacles for days, Sharon texted me and wanted me to stop working and change a topic because she couldn’t see bright future in this game. Like a spark falling into the ocean, Sharon’s words have dragged me into the abyss. I lifted my head and pondered, thinking about the “gyms” in Pokémon. You must defeat all the “gyms” before you can challenge the current Pokémon Master.

I can’t give up; these obstacles are just like the “gyms”. I need to defeat all of them and become the “Pokémon Master”.

With this idea in my mind, I rejected Sharon for the first time in my life and told her that we should continue to work on this topic.

“But why?” She asked.

Like John F. Kennedy said, “Not because they are easy, but because they are hard.” I knew that there are numerous risks if we continue to work on this project such as not winning a place from the competition or not being recognized by the society. But I have to continue making this game, not only because I wanted to impress Sharon and winning a competition, but because I wanted to contribute to this society on sex-education as the risks and obstacles we were facing have showed us how urgent China needs sex-education. Like a perseverant Pokémon trainer, I should keep standing up and challenge the “gyms” again after each time I failed.

Four months later, we finally finished the game after overcoming countless obstacles and submitted it to Chinese software distributors. However, breaking the unconscious bias was not that easy. Our game was rejected because of “sensitive content” issue. I realized that this has become my final challenge, the fight with the current “Pokémon Master”. Since I have already came this far, I wouldn’t retreat just because the obstacle this time is a lot more complicated than the previous ones I have resolved. I personally discussed with the group of people in charge of reviewing my game from the Chinese software distributors and tried to convince them. After days of argues, I finally got their approval to release the game inside Mainland China in return of a few changes due to certain regulations. Despite that, I also uploaded this game onto Steam, a global software distributor to let the world see its original look.

On Feb 7, 2018, the game was released online.

Then, I started my 10-day adventure in Norway’s Arctic as a reward for my hard work. No matter how the world reacts to the game, I would be proud of ourselves because we have made a game from scratch, and that is already worth cheering. Fortunately, the intermittent calls from various media telling me that the game we made has become a trending on the Internet broke our concern, and I have become the “Pokémon Master”.

Now we have updated the 4th version with over 150,000 downloads. These surprising progresses have not only made us excited, but it has made us more than sure that our work have been accepted by the public. We didn’t waste our time, in fact, we succeeded to change the ideological norms of the society we live in by using technology. This time, the happiness to me did not only came from making an abstract idea into reality, nor become stronger on technology. It has also come from the chance for teenagers to learn sex-education easier, and the gradual recognition on Sex-Education from the public. I realized that becoming the Pokémon Master is never about having the strongest Pokémon in the world, it is about the persistence to stand up and try again after failures; it is about using the powers you hold for the common good; it is about the bravery to step into the unknown and facing the risks to achieve your dreams.

*I’m Calen from the city of Shanghai. I’m destined to be the world's number one Pokémon master!*