

Tampon Run

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TECH TIMES

Meet the Girls Who Developed the Internet's Most Talked-About (and Addictive, and Awesome) New Game, 'Tampon Run'

Oh yeah, Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser are going there.



Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser are our personal period heroes.

Photos: Nadia Gilbert

Real talk: We live in a world where it's totally cool to [run over prostitutes](#) for fun in video games like *Grand Theft Auto*, but women talking about their periods is still a cultural taboo. Luckily, we *also* live in a world where girls are demanding more from the gaming industry and society at large—and they're taking matters into their own hands.

Sophie Houser, 17, and Andrea Gonzales, 16, are the dream team behind the new girl-power game [Tampon Run](#) that's been taking the internet by storm the past few weeks. It's a little like *Angry Birds* in that you launch missiles at enemies and will definitely become addicted within the first five minutes of playing (guilty...), but instead of launching feathered friends, *TR* features a warrior woman armed with—you guessed it—tampons. It's fun and simple, with

a powerful message that shows up in the opening frames: "Although the concept of the game might be strange," Sophie and Andy write, "it's stranger that our society has accepted and normalized guns and violence through video games, yet we still find tampons and menstruation unspeakable."

So how did *Tampon Run* start? Its creators met this summer while they were both students at [Girls Who Code](#). Throughout the course, they worked on projects designed to use their creative and logic skills to make products and solve problems. "*Tampon Run* was a culmination of all the stuff we learned over the summer," Andy told us. She wanted to create a video game with a social impact and a feminist twist as soon as the assignment came up, and Sophie immediately jumped on board. "We were brainstorming and we joked that maybe we could have a girl throw tampons in our game, because we have both personally experienced the menstrual taboo. As we researched, we realized what a serious and broad issue it is, and we wanted to make a difference."

Their biggest technical challenge in the game was getting the character to jump—Andy spent many frustrating hours trying to get her to hit the right height mark, but eventually she cracked the code. (Now you can clear the bad guys who are trying to steal your tampons. Phew.)

"There's a lot of emphasis right now on [how few women there are in the tech industry](#)," Sophie says. "But I think it's important to point out how the welcoming the community of women in tech actually are. We need *more* women in tech because women have a unique perspective. I don't think a guy would have made this game." Neither do we—and we're glad this one came from the girl's team.

Tampon Run is a must-play, whether you're interested in coding, curious about the awesome feminist message, or just looking to kill a few minutes between classes. **Hop over and check it out.**

Anyone else think this is the coolest thing they've seen all week? Chat with us in the comments, and give us a shout if you have any questions for Andrea and Sophie, or about Girls Who Code!

These Girls Are Fighting Sexism With a Video Game About Tampons

Eliana Dockterman

Sept. 15, 2014

Tampon Run replaces guns with tampons

Two New York high schoolers are hoping to combat misogyny with [Tampon Run](#), a game that cleverly replaces guns in an old school shooter game with, well, tampons. The girls, who graduated from the Girls Who Code camp — a program that teaches girls to code in hopes of closing the gender gap in tech — this summer, thought it was strange that violence and guns seem to be so mainstream in our culture while talking about periods — which every woman experiences — is not. Hence the invention of Tampon Run. In the game, tampons are used as projectiles to throw at oncoming enemies.

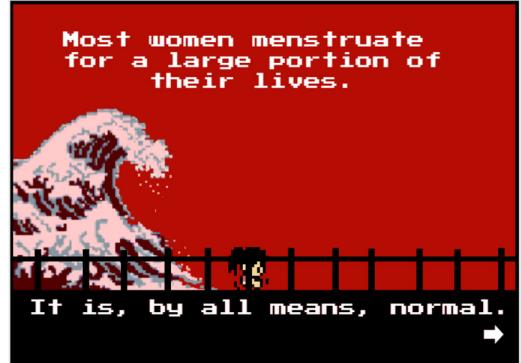
This project is a welcome development after a summer filled with horrible news about women and the gaming industry. After several female gamers and journalists received death threats, a conversation about gendered bullying began and continues to swirl on Twitter with the hashtag #GamerGate. (Here's a [good explainer](#) of the situation.)

TIME spoke with the tampon game creators, Andrea Gonzales, 16, and Sophie Houser, 17, about their project, misogyny in gaming and the history of tampons as weapons.

TIME: How did you think of using tampons in a video game?

Gonzales: I had been pretty vocal about wanting to make a video game and maybe something with a feminist twist to it because I thought the hyper-sexualization of women in video games was a very addressable issue. So I kind of pitched that idea to my class to get people to come and join the group, and Sophie joined. And then we were brainstorming because we also wanted to incorporate a social justice message into the game. And Sophie joked that we should throw tampons at people, and then we realized that was something we could actually do.

Do you think there's a sense that you can't really talk about periods?



The game Tampon Run Tampon Run

Houser: Definitely. Other than just doing research online and reading articles, we both felt that first hand. I have guy friends who can talk about whatever they want — we're very open about each other, and they'll make poop jokes and things like that — but whenever I try to bring up menstruation with them and talk about it, I'm just shut down. They don't want to talk about it. They think it's gross. Even my brother when I've talked to him about it, he shuts me down.

Gonzales: In middle school, there was kind of a big commotion in my hallway. There was a circle around something, and I was wondering what was going on, so I went to the circle, and there was just an unwrapped tampon lying on the floor. And it wasn't used or anything, it was just unwrapped, and the applicator was pushed out so you could see the actual thing. And I just thought it was so weird and bizarre [that it was such a big deal].

Also just on an international level there are so many cultures which are so uncomfortable talking about menstruation that women end up isolating themselves while they're menstruating and literally putting themselves in a room for a week.

Sophie: They're not allowed to touch the food or really interact with their families. It's really horrible. And it's great that even through coming up with this idea and deciding to make this game, we got to learn so much more.

You bring up in the intro text to the game that violence is extremely common in video games, and yet we still have a hard time talking about really basic things like menstruation.

Houser: It seemed so silly to us that we have all these video games where you can shoot people and kill people, and it's so normal that you can have a video game where you can hold a gun and shoot it but none of us can talk about something so normal like menstruation, which most every woman does for a large portion of her life.

Right now in the video gaming industry there's horrible misogyny, and I guess that was just another aspect we wanted to cover in the game.

Andrea: I play those video games, and I enjoy them but then I realize that those aren't normal things that people should be okay with experiencing. Obviously, [most games are] not going around shooting people in real life. But the fact that guns and violence are normalized

through video games—we thought it would be kind of funny if we could do the same thing with tampons.

There has been a lot of controversy with #GamerGate over misogyny in the video game world recently. Does that surprise you? And does it deter you at all from wanting to get involved in designing video games or coding or tech in general?

Andrea: It doesn't deter me from getting involved in that industry, if anything I feel like it means we need more women to help stand up for ourselves.

Houser: I completely agree. It makes me want to be a part of it. It makes me want to encourage more women to join the tech crew.

What has the reaction been to the game so far? What do your guy friends think of it?

Houser: Actually a few days ago after we released the game, I had a guy friend come up to me and say that he realized that he actually did shut me down every time we talked about menstruation. And he was like, 'I don't know why I do that. That's so weird.' And that was such a great moment because I had actually reached someone that I knew and changed their opinion.

In general, we've gotten emails from people all around the world, and from men and women. It's so wonderful that we're reaching so many people, and making people think about it and discuss it. It's what we wanted to do with the game.

What is your plan going forward?

Houser: We are definitely planning on working on it. We are trying to bring it mobile. And then maybe also some kind of high score leader board system so people can interact with each other through the high scores. So those are our two main goals right now.

Andrea: And then also on the side when people email us, they've been suggesting power ups or features we could add to the game like maxi pad shields or super absorbency tampons or other types of enemies that we could implement into the game. And it's been so awesome, and I'm really excited to start working those things in.



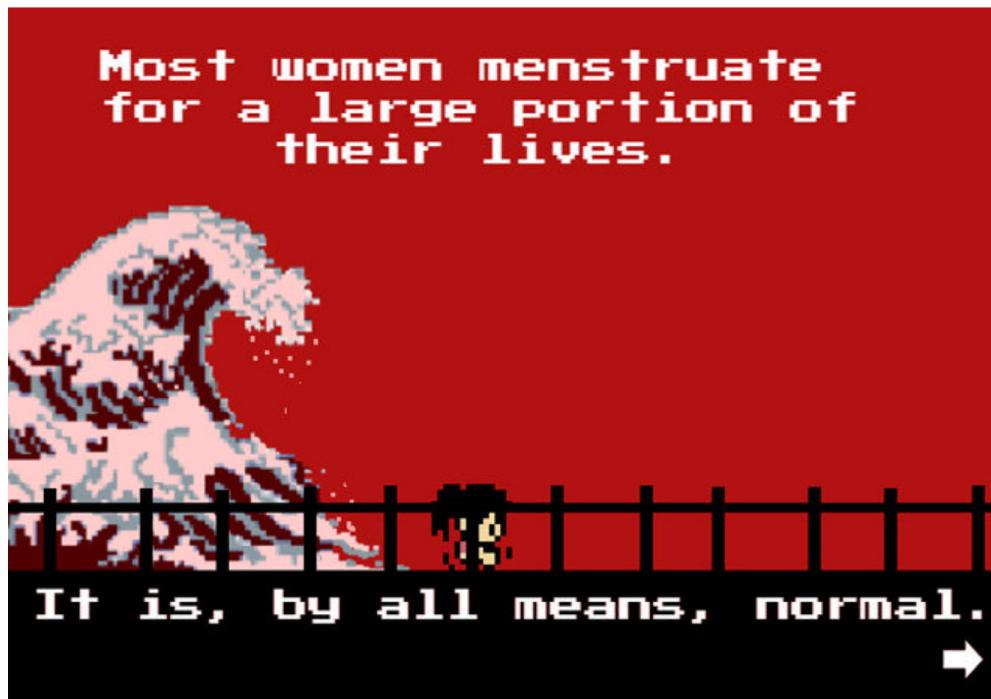
Co.Exist

“Tampon Run,” A Game From Two Teenagers Who Want You To Know That Periods Are Totally Normal

22 NOTES / 105 PIN / 98 PLUS / 569 TWEET / 27.8K LIKE / 60 SHARE

Two high school students have created a computer game that's probably safe to say no game developer has ever bet money on before. There are no zombies, no AK-47s, no strippers. Instead, *Tampon Run* is a simple concept: Collect tampons, shoot them at your enemies, and don't run out of them before your moon cycle is over.

"Most women menstruate for a large portion of their lives. It is, by all means, normal," the game creators, Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser, write. "The taboo that surrounds it teaches women that a normal and natural bodily function is embarrassing and crude."



The aim of the game? To normalize tampons in video games where guns would have been acceptable otherwise.

"Although the concept of the video game may be strange, it's stranger that our society has accepted and normalized guns and violence through video games, yet we still find tampons

and menstruation unspeakable," Gonzales and Houser, who met at a Girls Who Code summer program, add.

For anyone nodding along to these statements, *Tampon Run* might seem welcome, a bit of light-hearted commentary on the championing of machismo violence by corporate gaming juggernauts. But it also comes at a particularly fraught moment in the gaming community, just a week after games journalist Anita Sarkeesian [started receiving new rape and death threats](#) for pointing out the fact that violence against women is often used as video game wallpaper--a thoughtless way of adding some kind of spice to kill-'em, go-get-'em games.

In that light, *Tampon Run* is also pretty brave. And if you're into eight-bit nostalgia (or fighting the patriarchy), it's also fun as hell. Play it [here](#).

DAILY NEWS

New York teens invent 'Tampon Run' video game to break the menstruation taboo

BY VICTORIA TAYLOR [Follow](#) / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS / Thursday, September 11, 2014, 1:57 PM

Most women menstruate for a large portion of their lives.
It is, by all means, normal.

created by:
andy & sophie

Contact us at tamponrun@gmail.com

girls who

TamponRun.com

Go with the flow! Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser want females to feel more comfortable talking about menstruation.

This video game was made to end a stigma. Period.

“[Tampon Run](#),” the brainchild of two New York City high schoolers, involves collecting tampons and chucking them at your enemies.

The eight-bit-style game is 16-year-old Andrea (Andy) Gonzales and 17-year-old Sophie Houser’s way of trying to normalize menstruation and teach women that it isn’t something to be embarrassed about.

“Although the concept of the video game may be strange, it’s stranger that our society has accepted and normalized guns and violence through video games, yet we still find tampons and menstruation unspeakable,” a message in the opening section reads.

Gonzales, a junior at Hunter College High School, and Houser, who attends Bard High School Early College, met at the [Girls Who Code](#) summer immersion program.

When they were brainstorming for their final project, Houser joked about creating a video

game where you threw tampons instead of shooting standard weapons.

"Immediately after she said it we knew that was the game we wanted to make," Gonzales said.

They ran the idea by their teacher who loved it, "but felt he needed to get approval from the heads of the program."



TamponRun.com

'Tampon Run' features eight-bit-style graphics and an important social message.

"That alone shows what a taboo it is," Gonzales added.

However, she said everyone with Girls Who Code has been and continues to be "extremely supportive."

The game's popularity has surged recently, and it has been written about in a number of media outlets, including [Fast Company](#) and [Jezebel](#). This means "Tampon Run" may be in the running to be the next "Temple Run." Gonzales and Houser are looking to make a mobile version of the game and add to the original.

"We've gotten requests for applicator bombs, maxi pad shields, super-absorbency tampons," Gonzales said.

The teens said they are amazed by the way girls and women all over the world have connected

with "Tampon Run."

"It has also made me realize how powerful coding is," Houser said. "If you know how to code, you can build anything you can think of and then use the Internet to reach thousands of people."

Play "Tampon Run" here

vtaylor@nydailynews.com

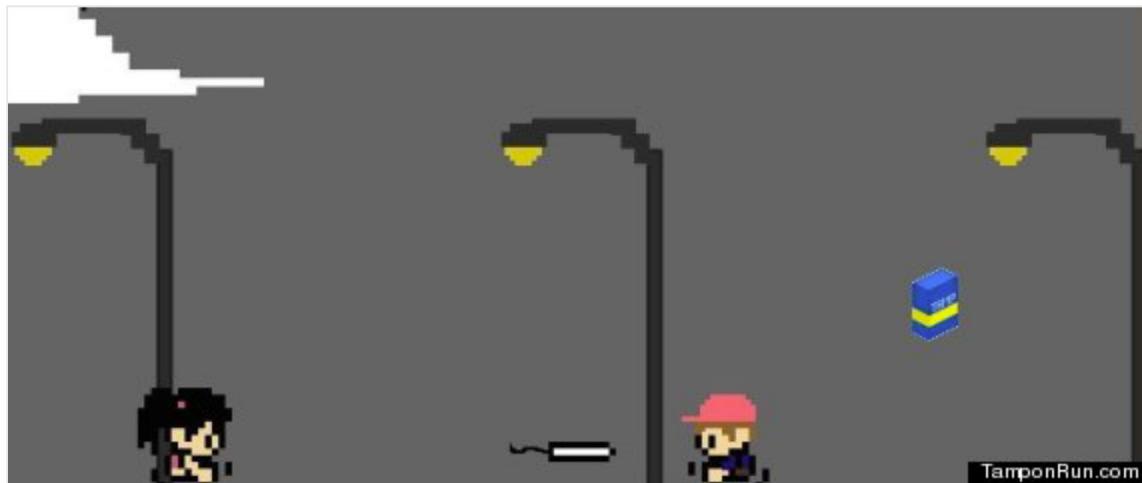
Tampon Run Is The Best New Computer Game. Period.

The Huffington Post UK | By Natasha Hinde   
Posted: 05/09/2014 12:58 BST | Updated: 05/09/2014 14:59 BST

It might sound like we're stating the obvious, but for most [women](#) a quarter of the month, *every month*, is taken up with your period. That is almost a quarter of your life, ladies!

With this in mind, there is no denying that [periods](#) are totally normal. But for some ridiculous reason we are loathe to discuss menstruation.

Thankfully, we're not the only ones who think the whole period taboo is ridiculous. Two female geniuses, known only as Andy and Sophie, have used their skills of computer wizardry to help banish - or at the very least, reduce - the stigma that surrounds women's menstrual cycles.



Introducing, Tampon Run. A new game - think Super Mario meets Temple Run - where you throw tampons at (and occasionally jump over) little men. Wahey! What could be more fun? Just don't run out of tampon ammo, 'cause then you're on your own.

We've hailed it as the ultimate relief mechanism for PMS.

Play it here! www.tamponrun.com (and get sharing)! *S'long period stigma.*

COSMOPOLITAN

This Game Will Change the Way You Think About Your Period Forever



By Tess Koman

🕒 SEPTEMBER 11, 2014

Most women menstruate for a large portion of their lives.



The two coolest high school kids on the planet have created a video game that aims to help women feel less weird about their periods [via [Fast Coexist](#)].

Tampon Run is simple: Collect as many tampons as quickly as you can and shoot them at your enemies before your moon cycle has ended. Co-creators Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser met at a summer camp for girls, are into computer science (YES!), and hate the way menstruation is stigmatized.

"Most women menstruate for a large portion of their lives. It is, by all means, normal," they wrote. "The taboo that surrounds it teaches women that a normal and natural bodily function is embarrassing and crude." Again, these are *high school students*.

To help these kids change the world and also for a (bloody) good time, play Tampon Run [here](#).

JEZEBEL

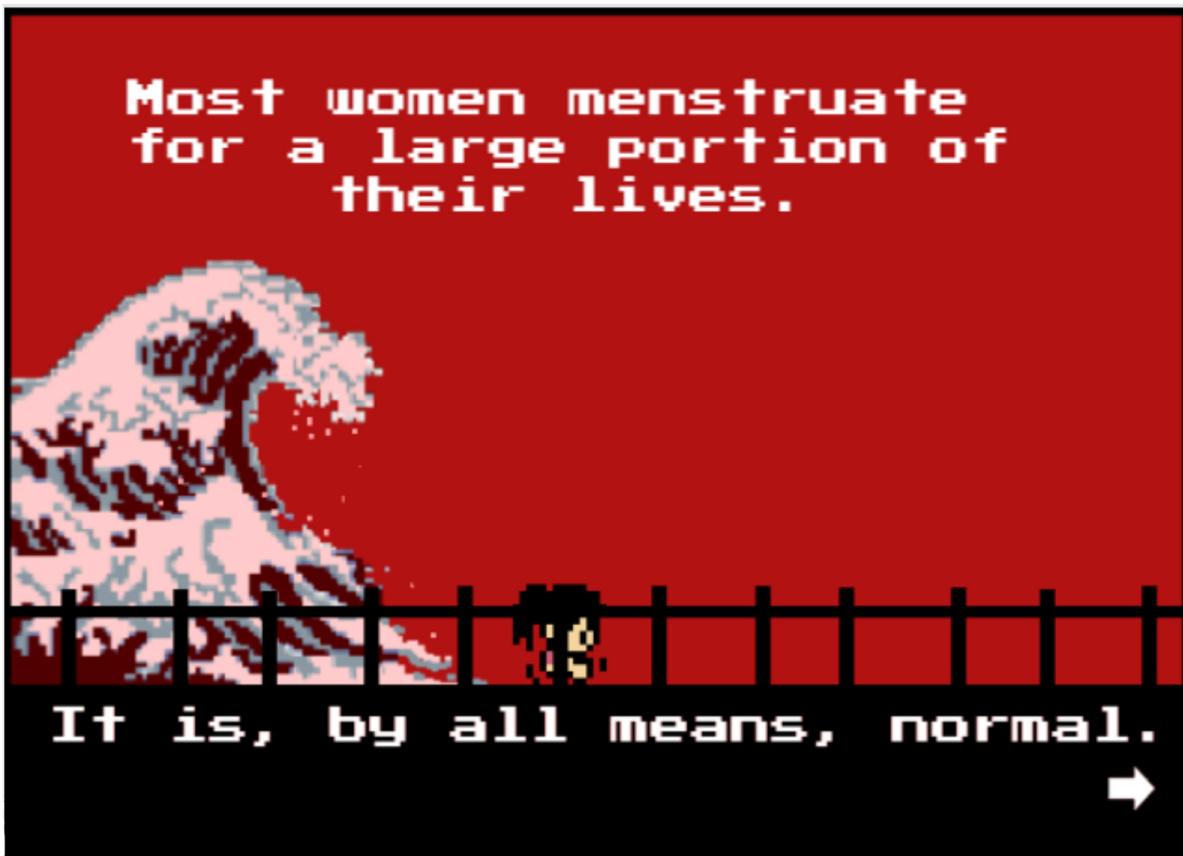
Teens Invent 'Tampon Run' Game to De-Stigmatize Periods



Rebecca Rose

Filed to: TAMPON RUN 9/09/14 4:45pm

16,177 🔥 47 ★



"The taboo that surrounds [periods] teaches women that a normal and natural bodily function is embarrassing and crude." That's the message two teenagers want to send with their new video game, Tampon Run.

As seen on Fast Co. Exist, the video game [invented](#) by Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser grew out of their involvement with a Girls Who Code summer program. The gameplay is simple enough, according to the instructions:

"Hit all the enemies with your tampons. Don't let them pass you. They'll confiscate your tampons [*like the Texas State Troopers during a reproductive rights demonstration*]. Collect tampon boxes for more tampons. Don't run out of tampons or it's GAME OVER."

But the message behind the game is a little more complex. The two young developers wanted to find a way to make having your period seem less humiliating and more normalized:

To play the game, visit [here](#).

News.Mic

Two Teenage Girls Have Invented the Most Powerful Video Game of the Year



By Michael McCutcheon · October 9, 2014

This sponsored post is the sixth story in our "History Begins Here" series — spotlighting young women who are helping set a new course for our generation.

The game, *Tampon Run*, is proving to be so successful, its creators spent last Saturday and Sunday coding a mobile version of the game. That's right: An app called *Tampon Run* is coming to your iPhone.

The game takes a whole different approach to first-person shooters. The main character runs down the street firing tampons at her enemies, leaping over their heads to collect more when she runs out. The goal isn't to build an arsenal and go all Rambo, however; it's to challenge the idea that in society, we're more comfortable with guns and violence than we are with teaching girls to be comfortable with their bodies.

New Yorkers Sophie Houser, 17, and Andy Gonzales, 16, created it last summer as part of the [Girls Who Code](#) summer immersion program, which aims to school at least 1 million young women in computer science by 2020. Houser and Gonzales are receiving wildly positive feedback and say the game has been played more than 100,000 times online.

"One of the most incredible things is that with a little bit of code and the Internet, some girls in New York can make something that can reach people around the world," Houser told *Mic* in an interview.

One fan of the game wrote them:

Great job on coding your game! I showed it to my high school intro computer science class today and they loved it, both the message you are promoting and playing it. I teach in an all-girls school so I think it meant a lot to them to see you putting this game out there.

The friends met at Girls Who Code and decided to build a game with a social mission. Gonzales wanted to develop something with a feminist twist and initially thought of parodying the hypersexualization of women in video games. As they were developing their concept, Houser joked that they should have a character throwing tampons at people. After a good laugh, the two realized that was exactly what they should do. They wanted to challenge perceptions about women and things we're not comfortable talking about, but should be.

Although the concept of the video game may be strange,

it's stranger that our society has accepted and normalized guns and violence through video games,



yet we still find tampons and menstruation unspeakable.



Image credit: Tampon Run

"It's something we'd both experienced," said Gonzales. "It's a problem in Western countries and around the world. People don't want to talk about periods. In other countries, women have to isolate themselves."

Unusual video games that challenge social norms — and the fact that a pair of young women built *Tampon Run* — are a powerful reminder of the opportunity in tech and gaming. Males and females play video games about equally, yet video game developers are [76% male](#). The Entertainment Software Association's 2014 report offers some interesting statistics on who gamers really are.

Image credit: Entertainment Software Association. Data is based on ESA's 2014 report on the gaming industry.

"I don't think there were any guys thinking about making a tampon game," said Houser. "By having a lot more diversity [in the industry], it means the ideas and the products that come out of it will relate to a lot more people."

It's a big blind spot for many game developers.

"It's weird marketing [video games] just towards males, companies are missing a whole other market," said Houser. "Girls!"

Girls Who Code is one of several programs now available to young women to help get them into the space. Others, like [Black Girls Code](#), [Girl Develop It](#), [Girls Rock on the Web](#), [Girls Make Games](#) and others are helping to develop pipelines to offer mentorship and get more girls into tech and gaming. And it's working.

"I'm not sure what I actually want to do [for my career]," said Houser, "but I love the experience of using code to create social change. It's empowering and exciting." She had never coded before last summer.

In their own way, these two young women are carrying on [an incredible tradition of women in gaming and tech](#). Some of the earliest and most powerful innovations in the industry were developed by women, from the 19th-century inventor of computing herself, Ada Lovelace, to [Carol Shaw](#) and [Janese Swanson](#), who built seminal video games like *River Raid* for Atari and *Carmen Sandiego*. Houser and Gonzales are now helping to define a new future for women in the industry and after going through Girls Who Code, both want to mentor younger girls that want to get into tech and gaming too.

When the *Tampon Run* app makes it to the iTunes store, expect some game play improvements. Houser and Gonzales are building out the main character's arsenal beyond tampons by, among other things, giving her super-absorbent maxi pads to throw.

"I'm trying to figure out a couple things with the game logistics, but it's there!" said Gonzales.

Another upcoming improvement for *Tampon Run* is a jetpack for the female main character. Given these two developers' bright prospects, it's a fitting touch.



Junot Diaz

October 14, 2014 · Edited ·

"The game, Tampon Run, takes a whole different approach to first-person shooters. The main character runs down the street firing tampons at her enemies. .. The goal isn't to build an arsenal and go all Rambo, however; it's to challenge the idea that in society, we're more comfortable with guns and violence than we are with teaching girls to be comfortable with their bodies. "



Two Teenage Girls Have Invented the Most Powerful Video Game of the Year

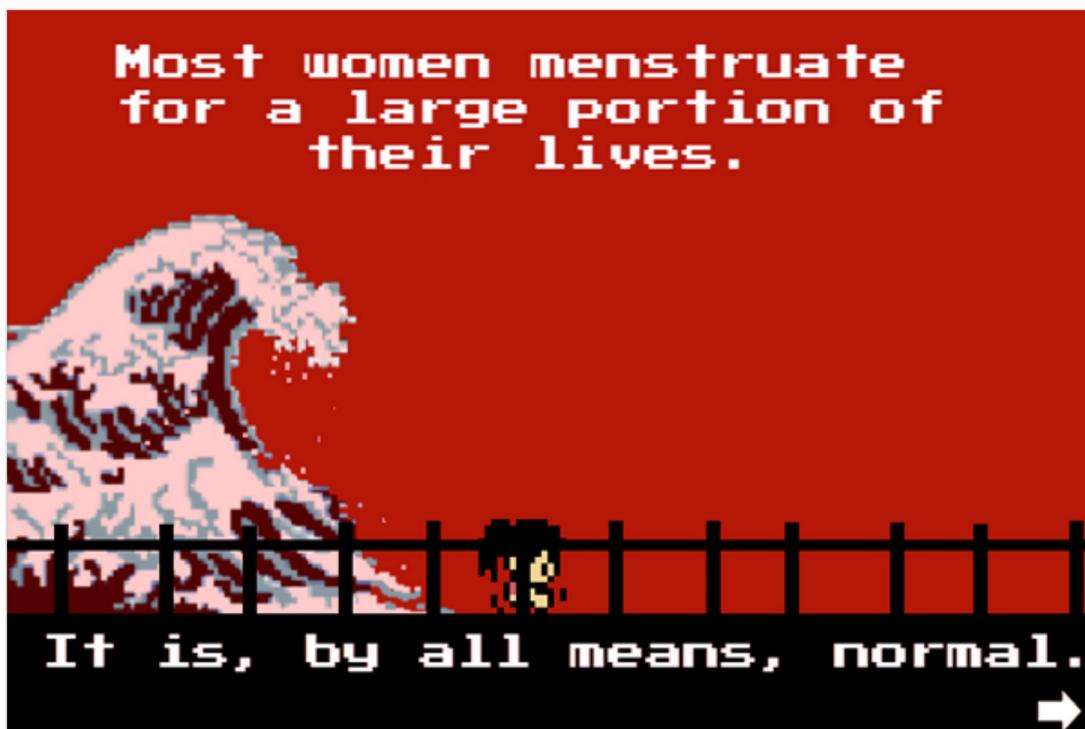
It comes with a very different kind of arsenal.

MIC.COM | BY MIC

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this game will change the way you think about your period forever

September 11, 2014 at 1:28:00 PM by **Tess Koman**



The two coolest high school kids on the planet have created a video game that aims to help girls feel less weird about their periods [via [Fast Coexist](#)].

Tampon Run is simple: Collect as many tampons as quickly as you can and shoot them at your enemies before your moon cycle has ended. Co-creators Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser met at a summer camp for girls, are into computer science (YES!), and hate the way menstruation is stigmatized.

"Most women menstruate for a large portion of their lives. It is, by all means, normal," they [wrote](#). "The taboo that surrounds it teaches women that a normal and natural bodily function is embarrassing and crude." Again, these are *high school students*.

To help these kids change the world and also for a (bloody) good time, play Tampon Run [here](#).

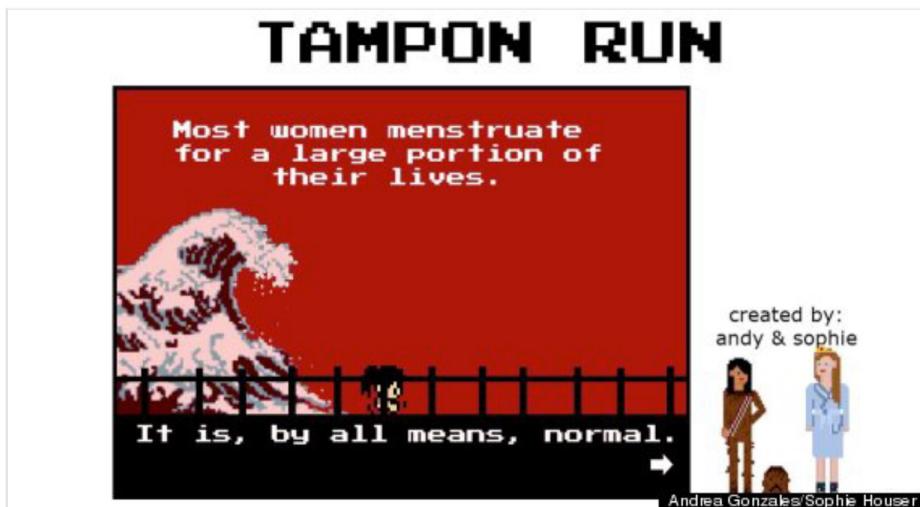
What do you think of Tampon Run? Does it make you feel more comfortable about your period? Share your thoughts in the comments below!

Teenage Girls Create Tampon-Themed Video Game

By Emily Thomas Posted: 09/11/2014 12:35 pm EDT | Updated: 09/11/2014 5:59 pm EDT

Two teen girls have developed a tampon-themed video game, in the process challenging the strange way society treats menstruation.

Sophie Houser, 17, and Andrea Gonzales, 16, took on the taboo surrounding girl's periods by celebrating menses in their new 8-bit game, "Tampon Run."



Instead of firing bullets to fend off opponents, like in typical video games, players lob tampons at their enemies. When an opponent sneaks unscathed by the tampon projectiles, it's game over.

"Although the concept of the video game may be strange, it's stranger that our society has accepted and normalized guns and violence through video games, yet we still find tampons and menstruation unspeakable," reads an in-game statement written by the creators.

The pair has been making waves on social media this week as users fall for their game.

Our society normalizes guns, but can't discuss periods. So two girls from @GirlsWhoCode created the BEST GAME EVER! <http://t.co/HYXqB5cGR7>

— THINX (@SheTHINX) September 9, 2014

If you haven't played @TamponRunner yet what are you doing w your life? Created

by @Girlswhocode alums Sophie & Andy: <http://t.co/7agMs8tjS9>

— Cindy Gallop (@cindygallop) September 6, 2014

Houser and Gonzales met this summer in New York while at a program run by [Girls Who Code](#), a group which encourages high school girls to get involved in technology. Their final project for the program was "Tampon Run."

Houser told The Independent there's [no reason menstruation should remain a taboo](#), considering it's one of the most normal reoccurrences in a woman's life.

"When girls are out of the house and need to change their tampon, they slip it into a sleeve or a back pocket, they hide it on the way to the bathroom. This is the menstrual taboo," she told the outlet. "Yet most women menstruate for half their lives. Everyone's mom, sister, girlfriend or even the lady sitting next to you on the train probably has menstruated (or maybe is right now!). It isn't weird or strange or gross, or at least we don't think it should be."

Talk about girl power!

You can [play Tampon Run here](#). Warning: It's pretty addictive.

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10 Teens Who Changed the World This Year— Get Ready to Be Majorly Inspired

In 2014, girls really did run the world.

by Elizabeth Kiefer



3 / 12

These two girls gave us a whole new reason to get into video games. Andrea and Sophie are the creators of Tampon Run, a game they coded themselves during a summer intensive computer science course. By entering their female-friendly game into the space, they are disrupting a male-dominated industry and helping turn it into a girl's world—one line of code at a time.



Teenagers Make Fun Tampon-Shooting Video Game

By Maggie Lange

September 10, 2014 5:59 p.m.



Two high-school students, Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser, who met at Girls Who Code, developed a game called Tampon Run as their final project for the program. The theme, message, adventure, journey, beginning, middle, end, and goal is to launch tampons at bullies.

Gonzales and Houser write that they hope Tampon Run will help to remove stigma from periods. One can do this by launching white cotton bullets at evil little legions of enemies. It's fun!



Tampons Are Weapons In This Sweet New Video Game



by **Kat Rosenfield** 9/11/2014

If mere mention of menstruation makes you want to scream and claw your eyes out, then you are *just* the audience for this delightful new shooter game designed by two brilliant teenagers from Girls Who Code, in which the object is to vanquish your foes by pelting them with tampons — and also, to poke a few holes in the persisting stigma surrounding periods.

Before you freak out, no, the tampons aren't used. But they are *great*, as they sail out like tiny bitmap missiles and vanish along with their targets upon impact. The game, called "[Tampon Run](#)," has two objects: to tampon-bomb your enemies, and to collect enough tampons on the way so you never run out of ammo.

"Tampon Run" was the final project of Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser, who wanted to

call attention to an odd double standard: that guns and graphic violence in video games are widely accepted and embraced, whereas the mere mention of menstruation gives people the heebie jeebies. The game is their way of addressing the taboo.

**Yet most people,
women and men alike,
feel uncomfortable talking about anything
having to do with menstruation.**



**The taboo that surrounds it teaches
women that a normal and natural bodily
function is embarrassing and crude.**



“Although the concept of the game may be strange,” says the game’s introductory screen, “it’s stranger that our society has normalized guns and violence through video games, yet we still find tampons and menstruation unspeakable.”

You’ll probably never see “Tampon Run” installed alongside “Pac-Man” at a boardwalk arcade, but it’s a smart little piece of social commentary... and not a bad way to have a tampon-chuckin’ good time on your next work break.



Why this tampon-themed video game is what the world needs now

Sep. 15, 2014 at 4:03 PM ET

Is the world ready for a video game about menstruation? Two high-school girls think so.

As the end of the summer coding program "Girls Who Code," Andrea "Andy" Gonzales and Sophie Houser needed to complete a project to graduate. Gonzales wanted to use computer code to influence social change and Houser thought it sounded like a cool idea.

"I jokingly said that maybe we can make a game where someone throws out tampons," says Houser, a 17-year-old senior at Bard High School Early College in New York City.



tamponrun.com

Tampon Run: It's the menstruation-themed video game you never knew you needed but will find strangely addictive.

This joke became the basis for [Tampon Run](#), an 8-bit video game with a big mission — de-stigmatizing menstruation. Players become a young woman who must collect tampons before the villains do. When the baddies approach the heroine, she shoots tampons at them. If she runs out of tampons, it's game over.

"The idea of making it funny and quirky kind of makes menstruation a lot more approachable and more comfortable," says Gonzales, a 16-year-old junior at Hunter College High School.

At first, they used different colored rectangles to represent the girl and the enemies, simply to see if the game worked. Soon, the heroine became a blockish girl with brown pigtails and a pink frock and the villains became oafs in pink baseball caps and blue shirts. When the girl hits them with tampons, they cry "ooh."



Courtesy Cheryl Houser

Sophie Houser (L) and Andrea "Andy" Gonzales say it started as a joke, but they're proud of the tampon-themed video game they created as part of "Girls Who Code."

Gonzales and Houser both enjoyed playing older video games that had a pixelated look, so their project pays homage to the games they loved.

As the New York City teens worked out the technical kinks and learned about coding, they learned more about menstruation.

"There are a lot of other countries out there that have women [who are] so uneducated about their own menstruation that they end up isolating themselves," says Gonzales.



tamponrun.com

Run out of tampons? Game over! The intro to "Tampon Run" questions why shoot-em-up games are commonplace while menstruation is still taboo.

But they felt shocked to learn that stigma around periods still exists in the United States and Britain. Take when Jessica Valenti, founder of Feministing and Guardian columnist, asked Twitter if there was a country that offered free feminine products. People responded with anger.

"We were surprised and appalled," says Houser, adding they have only received a few negative responses to their game.

Yet, they realized that they personally had experienced shame when it came to their periods.

"When I was first telling people what I was doing, [I said] it was a video game because I myself wasn't quite comfortable talking about it," says Gonzales. "The video game makes me

more comfortable.”

While they’re improving Tampon Run to make it more challenging, they still feel overwhelmed by the positive response they’ve received.

“I never thought that this small game the two of us made here in New York would literally reach people all over the world,” says Houser. “I think it is partly thanks to the game being so accessible ... it is really funny.”

They’re proud of Tampon Run’s success, and Houser says that seeing friends and family react has been most rewarding. A guy friend played it and told her he realized he knew little about menstruation, and the game made him reflect on it.

“That was so great I had affected someone I knew,” Houser says.

The Sydney Morning Herald

Digital Life

September 16, 2014 Hannah Francis

School girls make tampon video game to destigmatise periods



Tampon Run is a clever critique of violence and sexism. *Photo: Screenshot*

Two school girls have hit back at sexism in the gaming industry and beyond with a video game that features tampons instead of weapons.

Andrea Gonzales, 16, and Sophie Houser, 17, from New York, have attracted international interest with *Tampon Run*, the product of their work during a summer coding program run by Girls Who Code, a group dedicated to helping girls get into a technology career.

Andrea told *Time* the concept began as a joke when the pair was brainstorming ideas for a game that would be socially positive with "a feminist twist".

"I thought the hyper-sexualisation of women in video games was a very addressable issue," she said.

Tampon Run is a simple, 8-Bit role-playing game (RPG) similar to vintage '80s games such as *Super Mario Bros.* or the enormously popular (now defunct) *Flappy Bird* smartphone app that stormed the world earlier this year.

The protagonist (a girl, naturally) must collect boxes of tampons and use the tampons as projectiles to defeat her enemies – boys who run towards her trying to steal her "ammo". If she runs out of tampons, it's game over – and the screen goes red.

The game is prefaced with a narrative which explains the message: essentially, the absurdity of girls not being able to talk openly about their periods while extreme violence in video games is normalised.

Tampon Run uses humour and "gamification" to draw attention to what is often an awkward or fraught topic for young girls, especially in the some times unpleasant context of the schoolyard.

Andrea and Sophie target the "taboo" surrounding menstruation, saying it "teaches women that a natural and normal bodily function is embarrassing and crude".

"Hopefully one day menstruation will be just as normal, if not more so, than guns and violence have become in our society; Normal enough to place it in a video game without a second thought," the narrative reads.

They said they planned to make the game available on smartphones (currently it is only playable online) and to create "some kind of high score leader board system so people can interact with each other through the high scores".

created by: andy & sophie

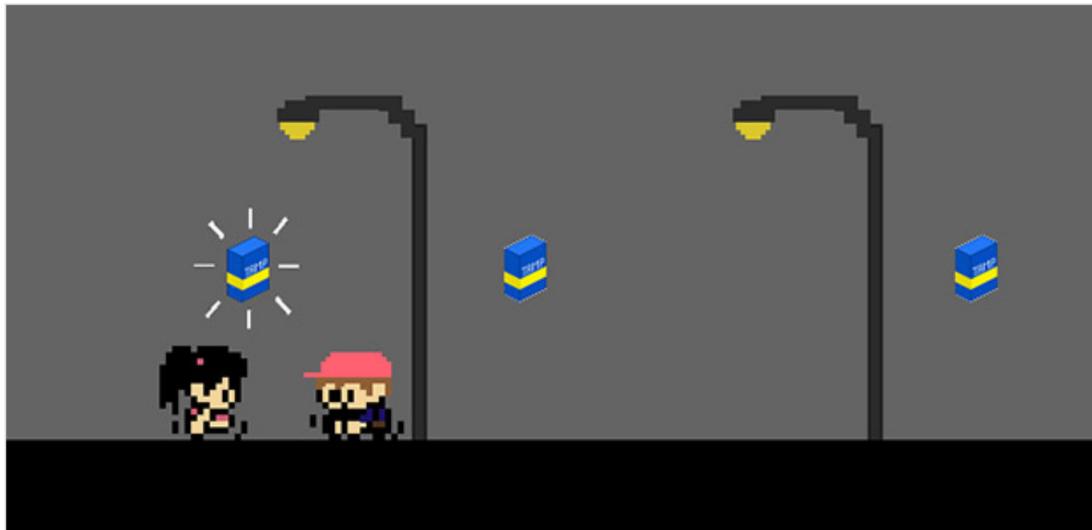


Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser created *Tampon Run* during the Girls Who Code summer immersion program.

Photo: Screenshot

SELF

A Tampon Video Game Exists—and It's Awesome



The new video game [Tampon Run](#) lets you shoot tampons at people instead of bullets.

Brilliant, right? Created by high school students Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser, who met at a summer Girls Who Code program, the duo realized there was a glaring hole in the world of computerized games—and decided to fill the void in a way that's both funny *and* admirable.

It's funny because, well, let's face it: shooting tampons at people is something you've probably never thought of, but are now psyched to try. You know you want to. But why it's admirable, well, that's for a much more serious reason.

"Most women menstruate for a large portion of their lives. It is, by all means, normal. The taboo that surrounds it teaches women that a normal and natural bodily function is embarrassing and crude," Gonzales and Houser say.

To that point, the game's real mission is to let everyone know that periods are in fact a totally acceptable part of life. They're not something to be ashamed of, and they certainly shouldn't have been stuck with the dirty connotation they've unfortunately taken on. The video game also offers a thoughtful commentary on how ridiculous it is that periods are seen as forbidden territory while violence is everywhere.

"Although the concept of the video game may be strange, it's stranger that our society has accepted and normalized guns and violence through video games, yet we still find tampons and menstruation unspeakable," the duo says.

In light of the knowledge that women are gaming in droves but are still underrepresented in those [same virtual worlds](#), Tampon Run is—needless to say—a fresh idea in the industry, brought to us by high school students, no less. How impressive is that?!

Mail Online

Periods have never been so fun! Two high school girls invent 'Tampon Run' video game in a bid to normalize menstruation

By Margot Peppers for MailOnline

Published: 11:01 EST, 11 September 2014 | **Updated:** 13:42 EST, 11 September 2014

Two teenage girls have taken it upon themselves to break down the taboo surrounding menstruation by using tampons as weapons in a lighthearted and addictive video game.

New Yorkers Andrea Gonzales, 16, and Sophie Houser, 17, who met while attending a Girls Who Code summer program, used their coding skills to invent **Tampon Run**, a computer game in which you shoot enemies with tampons.

'The taboo that surrounds [periods] teaches women that a normal and natural bodily function is embarrassing and crude,' reads the intro to the game. 'Tampon Run is a way of discussing the taboo in an accessible way.'



Young inventors: New Yorkers Andrea Gonzales, 16, and Sophie Houser, 17, (pictured), met while attending a Girls Who Code summer program. They used their coding skills to invent a video game called Tampon Run

**Tampon Run is a way of discussing
the taboo in an accessible way.**



**Instead of holding a gun,
the runner holds tampons,
and instead of shooting enemies,
the runner throws tampons at them.**



Periods can be fun: Their aim is to break down the taboo surrounding menstruation by using tampons as weapons in the lighthearted and strangely addictive game

The game begins, naturally, with a bright red background and a red tidal wave. 'Most women menstruate for a large portion of their lives. It is, by all means, normal,' reads a banner on the screen.

'Yet most people, women and men alike, feel uncomfortable talking about anything having to do with menstruation.'

To combat this taboo, the game is all about tampons - the player runs down a street, shooting oncoming enemies with tampons. When she runs out, she can jump up and retrieve tampon boxes to 'reload' her ammunition.

Not only is the game a clever way to demystify menstruation, but the girls - who share the Twitter handle **TamponRunner** - have also used it as a medium for expressing their views on violence.



REFINERY29

Finally, We Get A Video Game About Tampons



Photographed by Rockie Nolan.

We've lived for far too long in a world *without* a game that lets you shoot tampons at people's faces. So, rejoice and check out [Tampon Run](#), the game that will make any menstruator feel like a badass.

The side-scroller was created by Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser, both NYC high school students who met at this summer's [Girls Who Code](#) program. The game itself is simple, but genius: Players have to make their way across the screen, shooting enemies with tampons and grabbing boxes of even more tampons. If you run out, it's game over.

"Although the concept of the video game may be strange," Gonzales and Houser write in the game's intro, "it's stranger that our society has accepted and normalized guns and violence through video games, yet we still find tampons and menstruation unspeakable."

While we've still got a long, bloody road ahead of us, society does seem to be starting to see

menstruation for the totally normal, natural thing it is. This summer already saw the tampon delivery service HelloFlo's amazing "Period Party" and "Camp Gyno" ads.

"Hopefully, menstruation will be [more] normal...than guns and violence in our society," the game's creators add. "Normal enough to place in a video game without a second thought." Amen to that. Because, there are way worse things you can open-carry than tampons.

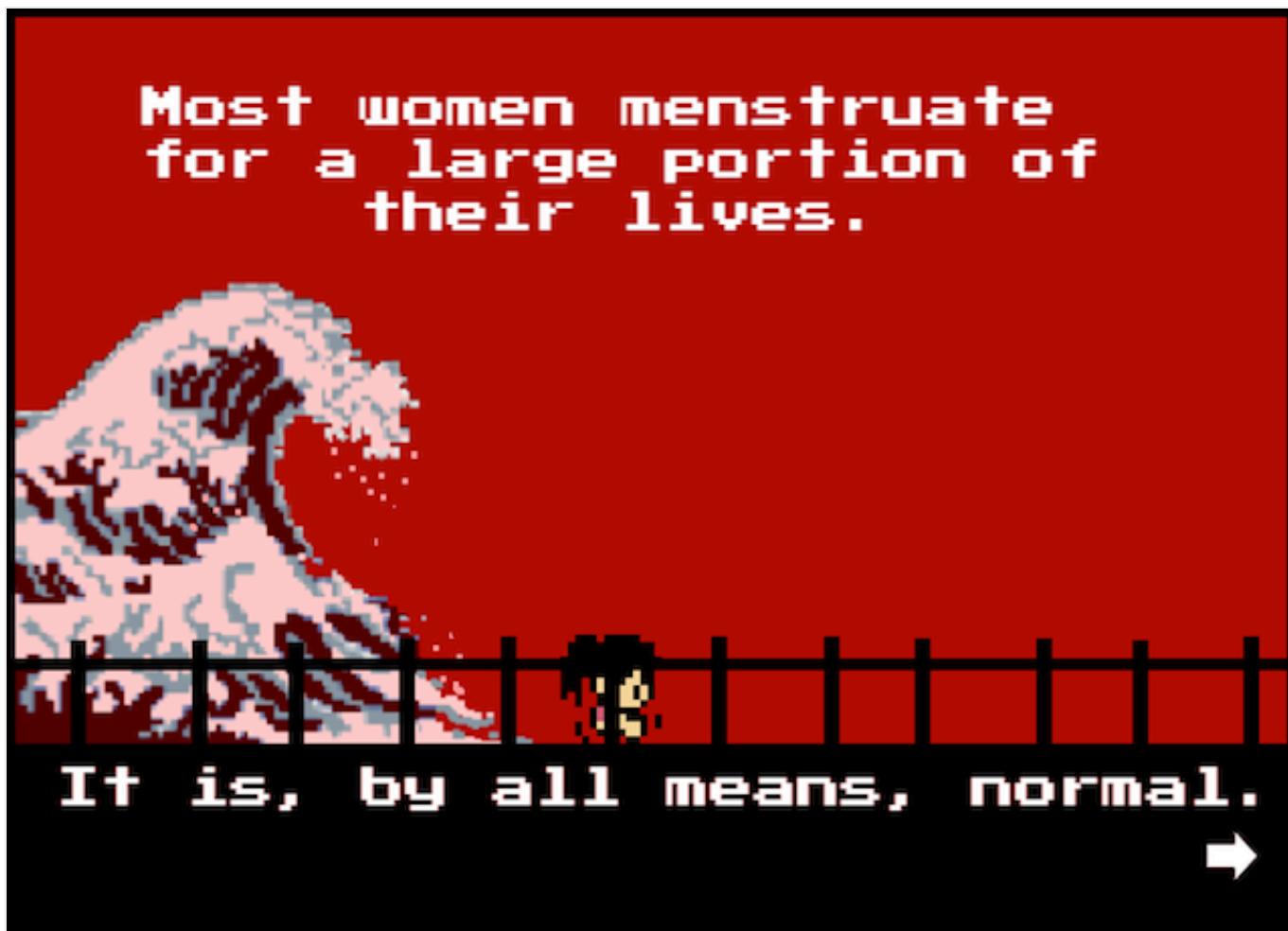


Photo: Courtesy of Tampon Run.

METRO

There's a game that lets you throw tampons at your enemies and it's really fun



Alison Lynch for Metro.co.uk

Thursday 4 Sep 2014 1:12 pm

TAMPON RUN



Beware the giant red wave (Picture: Tampon Run)

Two female coders have come up with a great way to waste a lot of time. Their online game Tampon Run lets you throw tampons at your enemies. Really.

Periods aren't really a great source of lols but this could be about to change thanks to Andy and Sophie (that's all we know). They've swapped the usual arsenal of weapons used in shoot 'em up video games for tampons, in a simple game you can play with your keyboard online. Old school, we like it.

You can play it here: www.tamponrun.com

The first page explains the thinking behind the new game, with a large cresting red wave in the background (nice). It says: 'Every woman menstruates for a large portion of her life. Yet most people, women and men alike, feel uncomfortable talking about anything to do with menstruation'.

It goes on: 'The taboo that surrounds it teaches women that a normal and natural bodily function is embarrassing and crude. Tampon Run is a way of discussing that taboo in an accessible way.'



We did eventually get a little bored (Picture: Tampon Run)

The ladies admit the concept of their video may be a little strange but say it's stranger that guns and violence are more normalised in society than tampons and menstruation.

The aim of the game is to hit your enemies – who are all wearing red baseball caps, we clearly hate baseball caps – with tampons. If you miss, they'll confiscate them. You can collect more boxes as you go and if you run out, it's GAME OVER. Pretty much like real life then (except the throwing bit, we don't do that).

We got to a top score of 138 before we got tired of the slightly limited gaming experience. We wonder if they could throw a few sanitary pads in there to mix it up a little?

Still, periods have never been so much fun.

HET BELANG VAN LIMBURG

05/09/2014 om 14:40 door mige

Tamponspel moet menstruatie bespreekbaar maken

score: 0
high score: 0
tampons: 10



Twee tieners uit New York vonden het welletjes dat iedereen zo preuts doet over menstruatie. Tijd om iedereen meer bekend te maken met tampons en de maandelijkse cyclus vonden ze. Ze ontwikkelden een game om hun boodschap kracht bij te zetten.

De 'Tampon Run' is een game waarin je in plaats van kogels je tegenstanders met tampons moet uitschakelen. Ondertussen moet je ervoor zorgen dat je tamponvoorraad aangevuld wordt, anders is het meteen game over.

'We menstrueren gedurende het merendeel van ons leven en toch durven we als vrouw amper over het onderwerp beginnen. Te belachelijk voor woorden', aldus Sophie Houser en Andrea Gonzales, de bedenksters van het spelletje.

Wil je zelf eens met tampons schieten? Via tamponrun.com kan je het spel uitproberen.



‘Tampon Run’ – igra koja ruši tabue o mjesečnici!

Kao što je moguće pročitati na *Fast Co. Exist*, video igru 'Tampon Run' osmisile su **Andrea Gonzales** i **Sophie Houser**, a nastala je kao završni projekt kampa **Girls Who Code** koji se održavao ovog ljeta.

Igra je relativno **jednostavna**, sudeći prema **uputama** kako je igrati:

“Gađaj sve svoje neprijatelje tamponima. Ne dozvoli da ti pobegnu jer će ti zaplijeniti sve tampone. Sakupljaj kutijice za više tampona. Nemoj ostati bez njih jer će to značiti da je igra završila.”

No, poruka iza čitave igre je malo **zamršenija i dublja**. Dvije su mlade programerke željele osmislitи način na koji će mjesečnicu prikazati manje ponižavajućom, a više kao normalnu prirodnu pojavu što i jest.



Kako vam se sviđa poruka ova dvije tinejdžerice? Slažete li se da je oružje i nasilje prihvaćeno kao nešto prisutno i ‘normalno’, dok je mjesečnica i dalje velika tabu tema?

L.B./izvor: Jezebel

foto: [Tampon Run](#)

LUDI SVET 15:38, 11.09.2014.

TAMPON RUN: Najluđa igrica na svetu namenjena devojkama u PMS-u



Igricu su osmisile **dve tinejdžerke**, a namenjena je iskaljivanju besa tokom "**onih dana**".

Andrea Gonzales i Sofi Houser upoznale su se u letnjem kampu i kao završni projekat osmisile igricu, koju su nazvale "**Tampon Run**".

Da, dobro si pročitala. A ako se pitaš kako ti ova igrica možeš odvući misli od bolova, stiže i odgovor. Igrica podrazumeva hodanje po ulici, bez doživljavanja ikoga ili ičega, sve **dok se na istoj ne pojave muškareci**, koje potom možeš gađati tamponima i iskaliti sav svoj bes na njima.

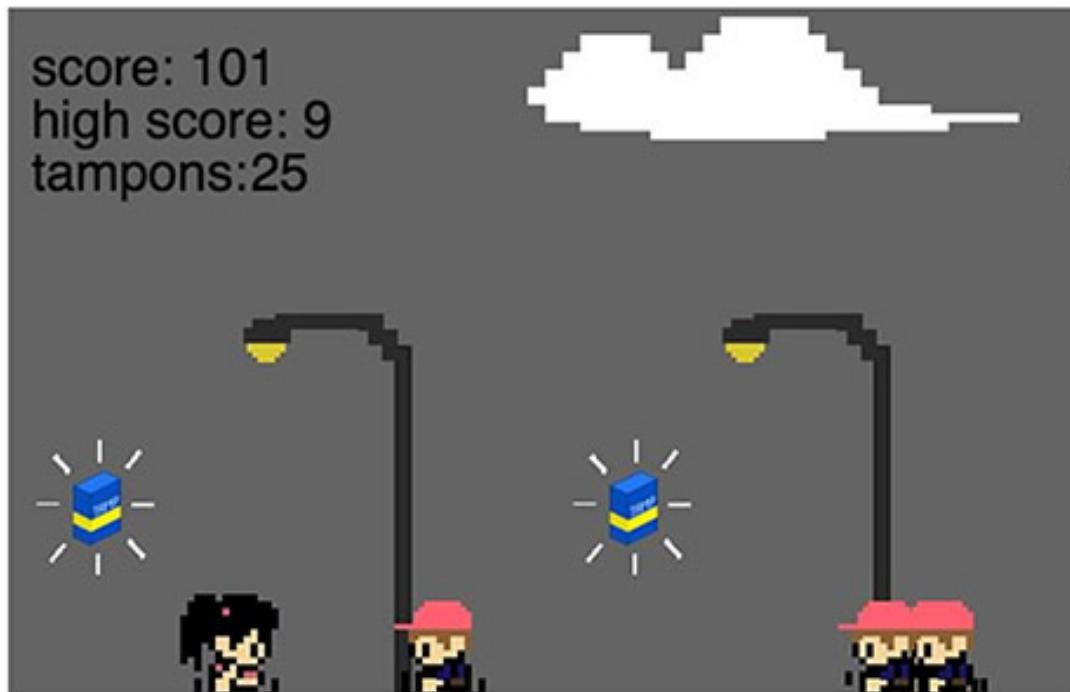
Neprijateljima ne smeš dozvoliti da pobegnu, kako ne bi ostala bez tampona, jer se tako igra završava. Takođe, sakupljanjem kutijica možeš osvojiti još više tampona.

"**Cilj nam je bio prikazati mesečnicu kao sasvim normalnu pojavu, a ne ponižavajuću. Oružje i nasilje postala je normalna svakodnevica, a menstruacija je još uvek tabu tema. Želimo da se to napokon promeni**", otkrile su devojke.

11 SEPTEMBRE 2014 PAR **SOPHIE-PIERRE PERNAUT** 9 COMMENTAIRES

Tampon Run, un jeu vidéo à base de... tampons

Andrea Gonzales et Sophie Houser sont deux lycéennes qui se sont amusées à créer un jeu vidéo pas piqué des hannetons. Dans **Tampon Run**, tu joues avec une fille qui doit neutraliser de petits bonhommes à casquette en leur lançant des tampons, et sauter pour récupérer des munitions – quand tu es à court, tu perds, *game over*.



J'ai fait cette capture d'écran pour te montrer que j'avais au moins fait 101 points.

Les deux adolescentes se sont rencontrées à *Girls Who Code*, une organisation qui lutte contre l'écart entre le nombre d'hommes et de femmes en technologie. Elles ont voulu créer *Tampon Run* pour **normaliser les protections hygiéniques en les mettant à la place d'armes à feu, et par la même occasion bien envoyer se faire voir les tabous sur les règles**.

Citées par *FastCoexist*, Sophie et Andrea ajoutent :

« Même si le concept du jeu vidéo peut paraître étrange, il est encore plus étrange de voir que notre société a accepté et normalisé des armes à feu et la violence dans les jeux vidéo, alors qu'on ne veut toujours pas parler des tampons et des règles. »

En tout cas, c'est un agréable jeu en 8-bits et une initiative plutôt très cool. Clique donc pour tester **Tampon Run !**

ELITE DAILY

The Voice of Generation-Y

Teen Girls Create ‘Tampon Run’ Game So Everyone Can Stop Freaking Out About Periods

EMILY ARATA • SEP 12, 2014 - 12:01PM

It often takes the youngest members of society to make a change.

Two teenage girls have created an '80s-style video game called [Tampon Run](#), which they hope to use as a tool for [opening up conversations](#) about the stigma of menstruation.

New York residents Andrea Gonzales, 16, and Sophie Houser, 17, first met at [Girls Who Code](#), a tech organization for girls who love computers. It was a match made in heaven, and Gonzales and Houser quickly began to share ideas.

Using their coding knowledge, Gonzales and Houser decided to address the taboo surrounding periods. Tampon Run was [their final project](#).

In the game, players have a backpack full of tampons. As enemies approach, players throw tampons in their faces rather than shooting them with guns. The game's intro says that if we've normalized violence and guns in games, we should be able to normalize tampons as well.

As Tampon Run goes on, users have to collect boxes of tampons to continue. If you run out, it's the end of the game.

Gonzales and Houser have taken their first steps in normalizing the period.

H/T: [Daily Mail](#), Photo Courtesy: [Twitter](#)

SPARKLIFE

Tampon Run is the Game of Your Period-Infused Dreams



Two cooler-than-us teen ladies recently created Tampon Run, a game about, well, tampons.

Creators Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser wanted to create a game that de-stigmatized periods. The game begins, "Most women menstruate for a large portion of their lives. It is, by all means, normal." So, the ladies created a game that attempts to "normalize" the already normal, but often hushed, topic. The concept of the game is simple: keep your tampons. And kill your enemies with tampons. And get more tampons. Mostly, tampons.

Tampons.

(We needed one more for good measure.)

The highschoolers met through the [Girls Who Code](#) program, which helps teach girls to code, in an effort to increase gender parity in the male-dominated field of computer programming. Say the *wunder* teens Gonzales and Houser, "Although the concept of the video game may be strange, it's stranger that our society has accepted and normalized guns and violence through video games, yet we still find tampons and menstruation unspeakable."

Hopefully one day menstruation will be as normal,
if not more so,
than guns and violence have become in our society;



Normal end— to place in a video game
without a second thought.



To which we say *handclapping emoji.* We admit that speeding around in cars and killing fictitious prostitutes is WAY more fun than your average visit from Aunt Flo. However, we should probably be way more horrified at the thought of speeding around in said cars and killing said fictitious prostitutes than we are. After all, mention your period to most dudes and he'll practically jump out the window, butt-first. Mention Grand Theft Auto XXI (or whatever number they're on), and they'll proceed with enthusiasm, also, strangely, butt-first. And don't even try to argue that periods are private bodily function and shouldn't be mentioned à la poop. Because we all know how much you talk about poop. And IT'S NOT POOP.

Er. We digress.

Anyway.

We tried it out, but we're terrible at video games (transcript: HOW DO I JUMP. IS THIS JUMPING. WHY AREN'T I JUMPING. OH THIS IS THE JUMP. I'M JUST BAD AT JUMPING. OK I DIED. WAIT DID I DIE. YES. I DIED. I CAN PROBABLY STOP YELLING.), so you'll have to [try it yourself](#). Our high score: a measly 7, which is hardly a period's worth o'tamperz. We'll never make it through the moon cycle at this rate.

[h/t [Jezebel](#)]

BUSTLE

Play Video Game 'Tampon Run' to Vanquish Enemies with Tampons & Make Menstruation Less of a Taboo



CAROLINE PATE • @UGH_CAROLINE
4 WEEKS AGO • ENTERTAINMENT

There are a lot of bloody video games out there, and now there's one more... it's just not violent. Two young women who call themselves Andy and Sophie created [Tampon Run](#), an old-school style shooter game where enemies are vanquished not with guns, but with tampons.

Not only does this game finally fulfill your dream of throwing your tampons at unsuspecting evil strangers (everyone has that dream, right? No? Just me?) it also has a purpose. Andy and Sophie explain at the beginning of the game that they decided to create Tampon Run to make menstruation less of a taboo. Animated slides explain:

Every woman menstruates for a large portion of her life. Yet most people, men and women alike, feel uncomfortable talking about anything having to do with menstruation. The taboo that surrounds it teaches women that a normal and natural bodily function is embarrassing and crude. Tampon Run is a way of discussing the taboo in an accessible way. Instead of holding a gun, the runner holds tampons, and instead of shooting enemies, the runner throws tampons at them. Although the concept of a video game may be strange, it's stranger that our society has accepted and normalized guns and violence through video games, yet we still find tampons and menstruation unspeakable. Hopefully one day menstruation will be as normal, if not more so, than guns and violence in our society; normal enough to place in a video game without second thought.

So Tampon Run is a game both fun and educational, like Oregon Trail, with more periods. And its message is one that everyone needs to hear: periods are not gross and weird, they're normal. What is gross and weird (as well as devastating) is human gun violence. Having menstruation remain a taboo makes women feel self-conscious about their own bodies and further confuses men about women's bodies. De-mystifying the process through gaming is helpful for men and women alike: both men and women are already bragging about their high scores on social media.

Tampon Run is a way of discussing the taboo in an accessible way.



Instead of holding a gun,

the runner holds tampons,

and instead of shooting enemies,

the runner throws tampons at them.



And it's important that this game was created by two women. It's no secret that STEM careers, especially computer science, need more females. It's not just about diversity in the workplace and it's not just about equality for women (although those things are incredibly important): Computer science needs more women just as much as more women could be benefited by going into computer science. Women have a unique perspective into half of the world's population that just can't be served as well by a male-dominated industry. They can and have created unique projects with code that wouldn't be created otherwise: just go to any female-dominated hacking space and you can see it for yourself. No disrespect to men, but it takes a different kind of balls to make a game about periods.

So hopefully, Tampon Run will become the next viral Internet game and do even more than it intended: not just culturally normalize menstruation, but inspire more girls to create through code.

Images: [TamponRun](#)



FEMINISTING 

Teens create “Tampon Run” video game to fight the taboo around menstruation

By MAYA | Published: SEPTEMBER 10, 2014

Although the concept of the video game may be strange,

it's stranger that our society has accepted and normalized guns and violence through video games,



yet we still find tampons and menstruation unspeakable.



High school students Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser created a new computer game called “Tampon Run” to fight the taboo around menstruation.

The game is so simple I think even a non-gamer like me could figure it out: “Hit all the enemies with your tampons. Don’t let them pass you. They’ll confiscate your tampons. Collect tampon boxes for more tampons. Don’t run out of tampons or it’s GAME OVER.” (I could probably stand to take that last instruction to heart in real life too.)

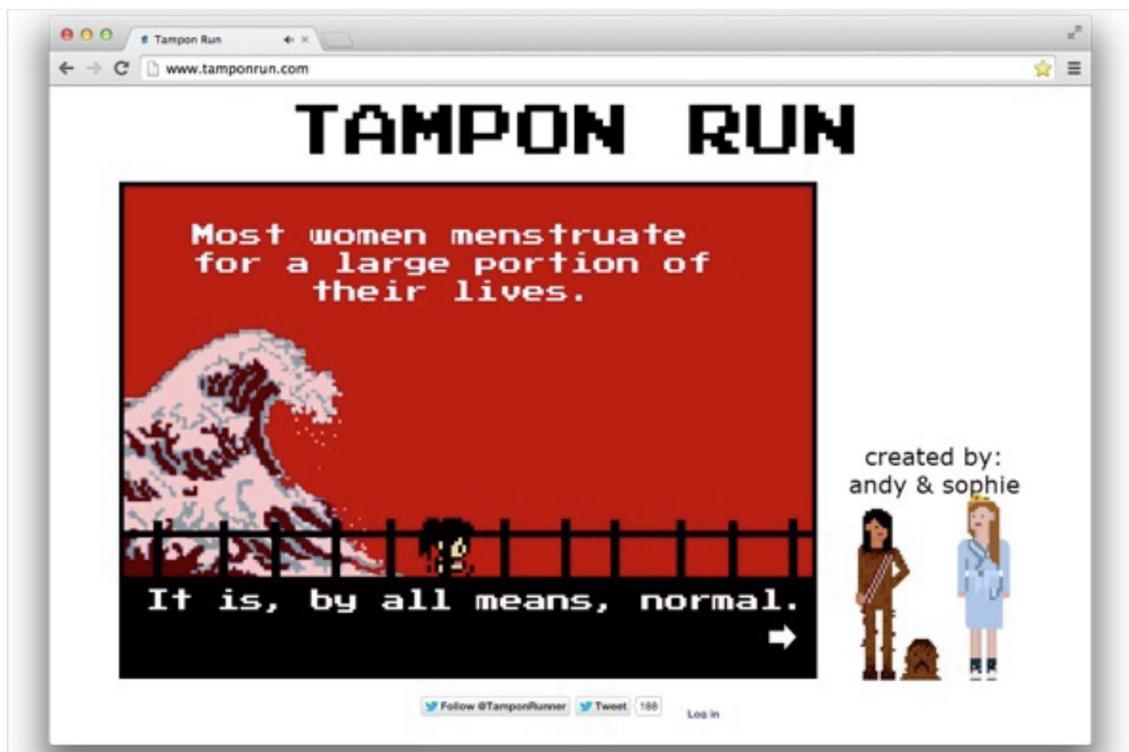
The duo, who met at a Girls Who Code summer program, explain, “Although the concept of the video game may be strange, it’s stranger that our society has accepted and normalized guns and violence through video games, yet we still find tampons and menstruation unspeakable.”

Strange indeed. Play the game here and check out Girls Who Code, which is doing great work to close the gender gap in tech.

It's Nice That

It's Nice That : Incredible game called Tampon Run designed by teenage girls at camp

Posted by Maisie Skidmore, Wednesday 10 September 2014



It's one thing to bring up the issue of the gender gap in the technology industry in casual conversation, but it's quite another to do anything about it. Andy Gonzales and Sophie Houser are high school students in NYC who met at a summer camp called Girls Who Code, and decided to use their opportunity there for the greater good, generating discussion around the taboo subject of periods and the distinct lack of women in the tech industries, and learning to code at the same time.

The result is *Tampon Run*. The premise of the game is simple; throw tampons at your enemy and collect more boxes of tampons as you go. If an enemy passes you they'll confiscate your tampons, and if you run out then it's GAME OVER. The game is, frankly, awesome. Impressed, we caught up with Andy and Sophie to find out what inspired them to make the game, and quickly realised these girls will soon be running the world.

**Most women menstruate
for a large portion of
their lives.**



It is, by all means, normal.



Can you tell me a bit about yourselves?

ANDY: My name is Andy Gonzales and I'm 16 years old. I go to Hunter College High School and I started coding the summer before 9th grade at SummerTech Computer Camps. Other than coding, I'm on my school's robotics team and volleyball team; after school I also study classical piano.

SOPHIE: I'm a 17 year-old high school student at Bard High School Early College in Manhattan. I fell in love with coding this summer at Girls Who Code, a program attempting to help close the gender gap in tech, which was my first time coding. I love coding because with it, I can build almost anything I conceive of. In addition to coding, I'm on the tennis team at my school and am passionate about photography and writing.

Why did you decide to make a video game together?

ANDY: Sophie and I met at Girls Who Code's summer immersion program. I had been pretty vocal about developing a video game with a social message and/or a feminist twist; I was actually thinking more along the lines of a game which addressed the hypersexualisation of women in the video game industry. When final projects for Girls Who Code came around,

Sophie wanted to help out.

SOPHIE: I loved Andy's idea of using a video game for social change, and thought Andy was pretty great too.

What made you choose the subject of tampons and periods?

ANDY: We were brainstorming what our potential feminist game would look like, and Sophie jokingly suggested a game where you could throw tampons at people. The moment she said it, we realised it was a game we could make. We did some research about the menstrual taboo and realised it was a real problem that we could legitimately address with our game.

SOPHIE: Once Andy and I decided to work together, we sat down to throw around some ideas for the game. I jokingly said we could make a game where a girl throws tampons. We realised immediately that we had to do it, that the idea could make a serious difference with a serious problem – the taboo that surrounds menstruation.

"If you can code, you can build any idea you have from the ground up. I especially encourage girls to learn to code. The field needs more women to bring our unique perspectives to tech."

Who do you hope will play the game?

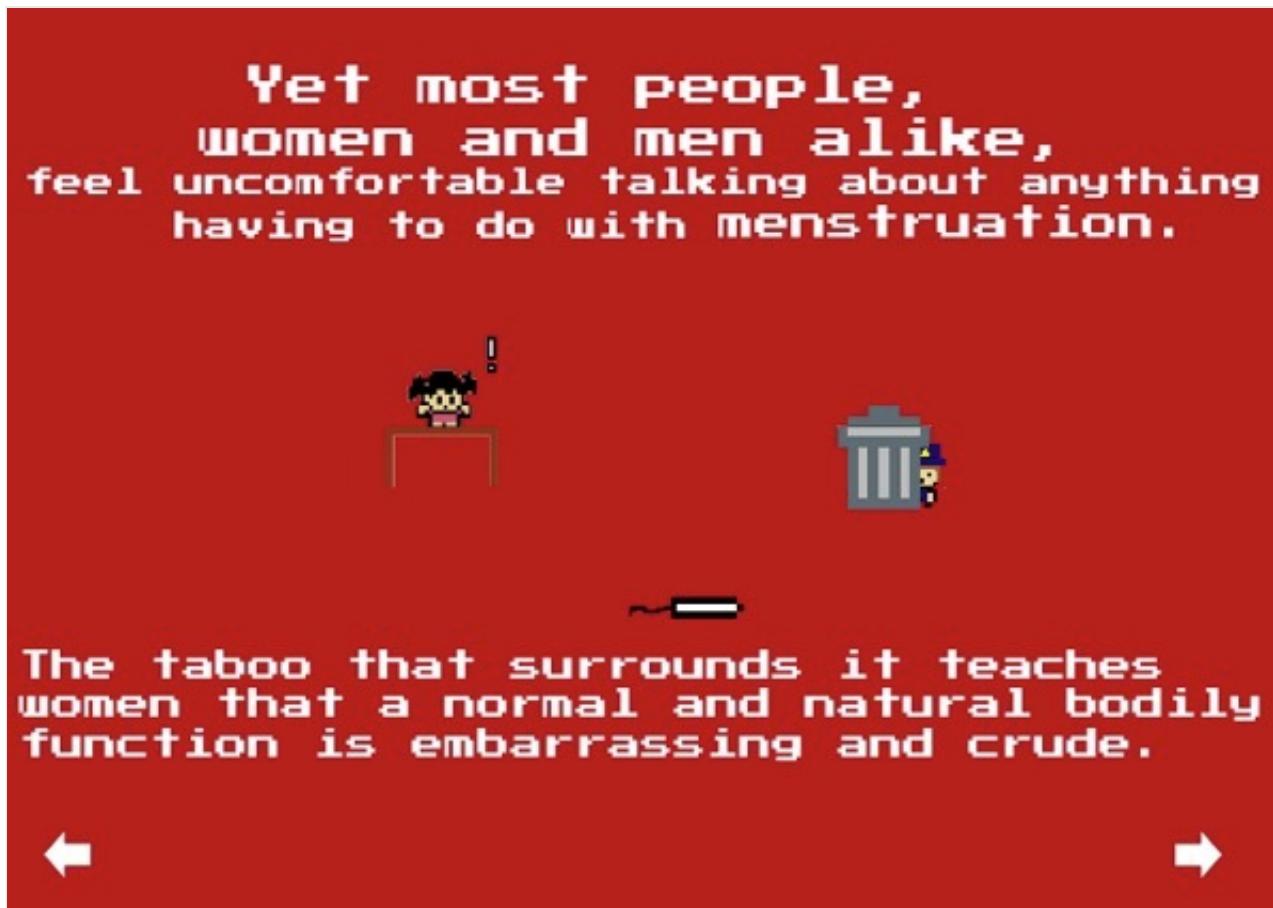
ANDY: Everyone! I just want to generate discussion about menstruation among everyone. Some people might not even realise that this issue exists; just making people more aware of the menstrual taboo is a success in my book.

Do you think it's important for today's generation to learn coding? Why?

ANDY: Yes I think it is crucial that our generation learns to code. Some people say that coding is the next literacy, and I totally agree. So everybody should do it! Including girls. There is such a huge lack of women in the industry as it is, but even though it seems daunting, the women's community is so welcoming and supportive.

SOPHIE: Yes! Coding is not only fun and empowering, but it teaches you to think. Coding is problem solving. In order to do it, you have to break down a problem step-by-step. Also, if you can code, you can build any idea you have from the ground up. I especially encourage

girls to learn to code. The field needs more women to bring our unique perspectives to tech. I don't think a guy would have ever thought to make this game.



This Teen-Created Tampon Video Game Is All Kinds of Awesome

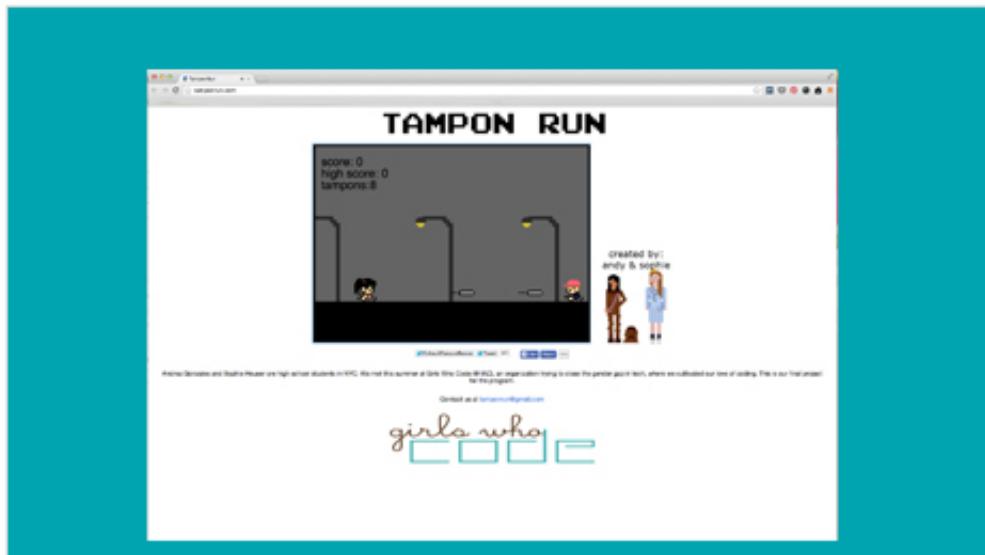


BY LISA RAPHAEL ON SEPTEMBER 17, 2014

What happens [when girls code](#)? Girls (and women) make amazing things. Things you want to download, share, play and tweet about, like the latest video game to totally take over our lunchtime funtime: Tampon Run.



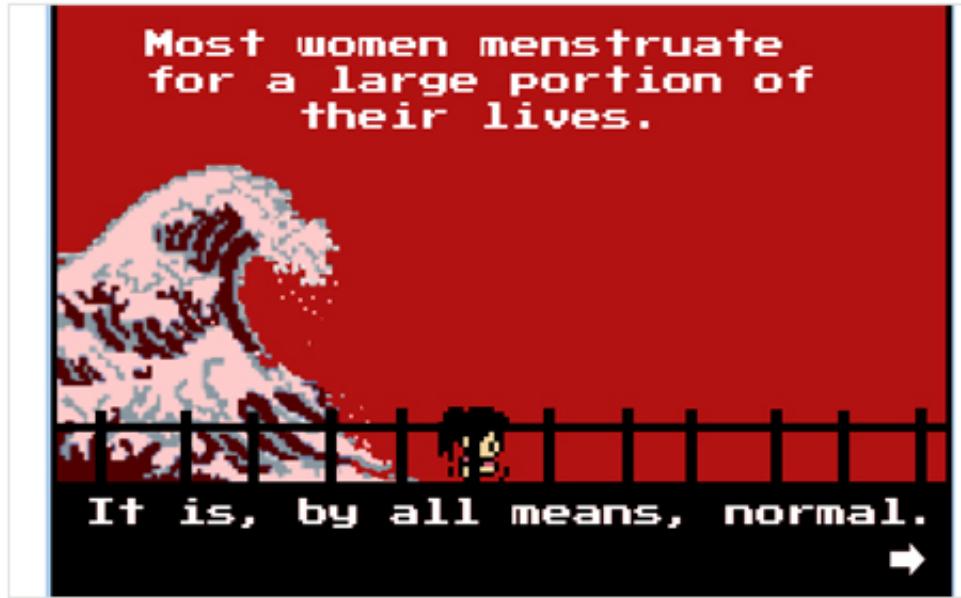
Don't LOL just yet, this game is made to make you think differently about more than just a high score. It follows a 16-bit-sized super heroine walking down the street, defeating dudes with a unique arsenal. The weapons in Tampon Run are, you *might* have guessed it, tampons. Strange? Um, not really. As the creators, NYC high school students and [Girls Who Code](#) grads Andrea "Andy" Gonzales and Sophie Houser, point out, "It's stranger that our society has accepted and normalized guns and violence through video games, yet we still find tampons and menstruation unspeakable." Preach, sisters.



The aim of the game is simple. You defeat your enemies by shooting cotton torpedos at them. To gain more ammunition, collect tampon boxes along your journey. Once you run out of tampons, it's GAME OVER. The game is addictive, but it's just a gateway for getting to know more about its true superheroes, the two young women who conceptualized, coded and created it.



Sophie and Andy are budding Internet stars by way of Girls Who Code, the nonprofit working to close the gender gap in the technology and engineering worlds. Sophie tells us that it was her mom who suggested she apply to GWC this past summer. “She thought I would like coding because it’s creative and mathy, both things I love.” Even if, Sophie soon discovered, coding is actually “more logical than mathy.” Andy spent previous summer vacays canoodling with coding at the co-ed SummerTech Computer Camps, and Summer ‘14 at Girls Who Code (once she was old enough to apply, of course).



For their GWC final project, the two new friends teamed up to work on a video game that they hope will be a gamechanger on a more global scale than your immediate social media circle. “Andy wanted to build a video game that made some sort of social impact. I liked the idea of using code to create social change (and I liked Andy!), so I joined,” Sophie explains. “While brainstorming, I jokingly said we could create a game in which a girl throws tampons. As soon as I said it, we knew there was something there.”

“My initial intention for the game was to address the hypersexualization of women in video games,” says Andy. “But when Sophie threw (haha) the [tampon idea](#) onto the table, I was swept away by it. We didn’t realize this issue really existed, and on such extreme levels (in some countries, women end up isolating themselves [while they’re menstruating](#), are just uneducated on how to care for themselves, and/or can’t afford it). It’s a totally legitimate issue, and I’m so happy that we were able to help bring it to light.” We are too — a powerful concept, mission (and hopeful impact) behind a seemingly simple game.

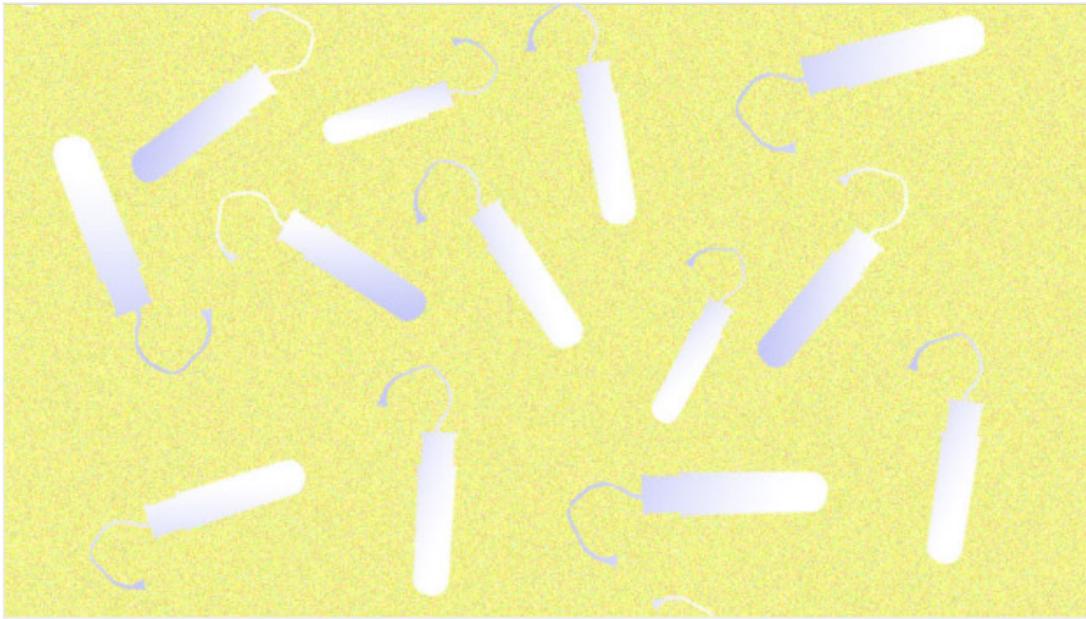
Tampon Run as you know it now is just Version 1.0. Sophie and Andy tell us that they are working on making the game more difficult, creating a global leader board so people around the world can compare scores and answering the many requests they've gotten in this short launch period for a mobile version. You go, girls. 'Til then, we'll be using this pair as inspiration for [our own foray into coding](#). Girls who code = girls who rule = women who will change the world — wouldn't you agree?

Have you played Tampon Run yet? What do you think of Andy and Sophie's mission? Seriously, how inspired are you by these two?! Give 'em some love below!

tags: [coding](#), [Girls Who Code](#), [Kids](#), [Living](#), [Periods](#), [STEAM](#), [STEM](#), [Tampon Run](#), [Tech](#), [video game](#), [Women's Health](#)

THE DEBRIEF

Sophie Wilkinson | News Editor | Thursday, 4 September 2014



Tampon Run, Where You Chuck Tampons At Enemies, Is Our New Favourite Game

The Debrief: Not only are the creators women coders, they're coders here to make us all - women and men - less afraid of our monthly bleed...



Girls get periods. Women get periods. It's a monthly part of life for us that men just don't have much insight into. That, plus a general fear of blood (how many times have you heard that 'joke' 'sorry, but I just don't trust anything that bleeds for five days and doesn't die'?) means that there's a fear of menstruation. Even though if men had periods, well, [they'd probably high-five each other for it](#). As it stands, periods are generally something we don't talk about and keep secret, even from other women.

[READ MORE: Let's All Get Over Being Ashamed Of Our Periods, Shall We](#)

Well now these two female coders, known only as Andy and Sophie, are here to change all of that through a game called TamponRun. Coming at exactly the right time (and who can say that of a period?) just as [women in gaming are a hot topic of conversation/trolling](#) (it's 2014,

FFS), guns are swapped for tampons in the 8-bit game you can control with your keyboard.

Play it here! www.tamponrun.com

If you can't right now, read on.

The intro, set across a red background and a massive red wave, explains the premise. 'The taboo that surrounds [menstruation] teaches women that a normal and natural bodily function is embarrassing and crude. Tampon Run is a way of discussing the taboo in an accessible way. Instead of holding a gun, the runner holds tampons, and instead of shooting enemies, the runner throws tampons at them.'

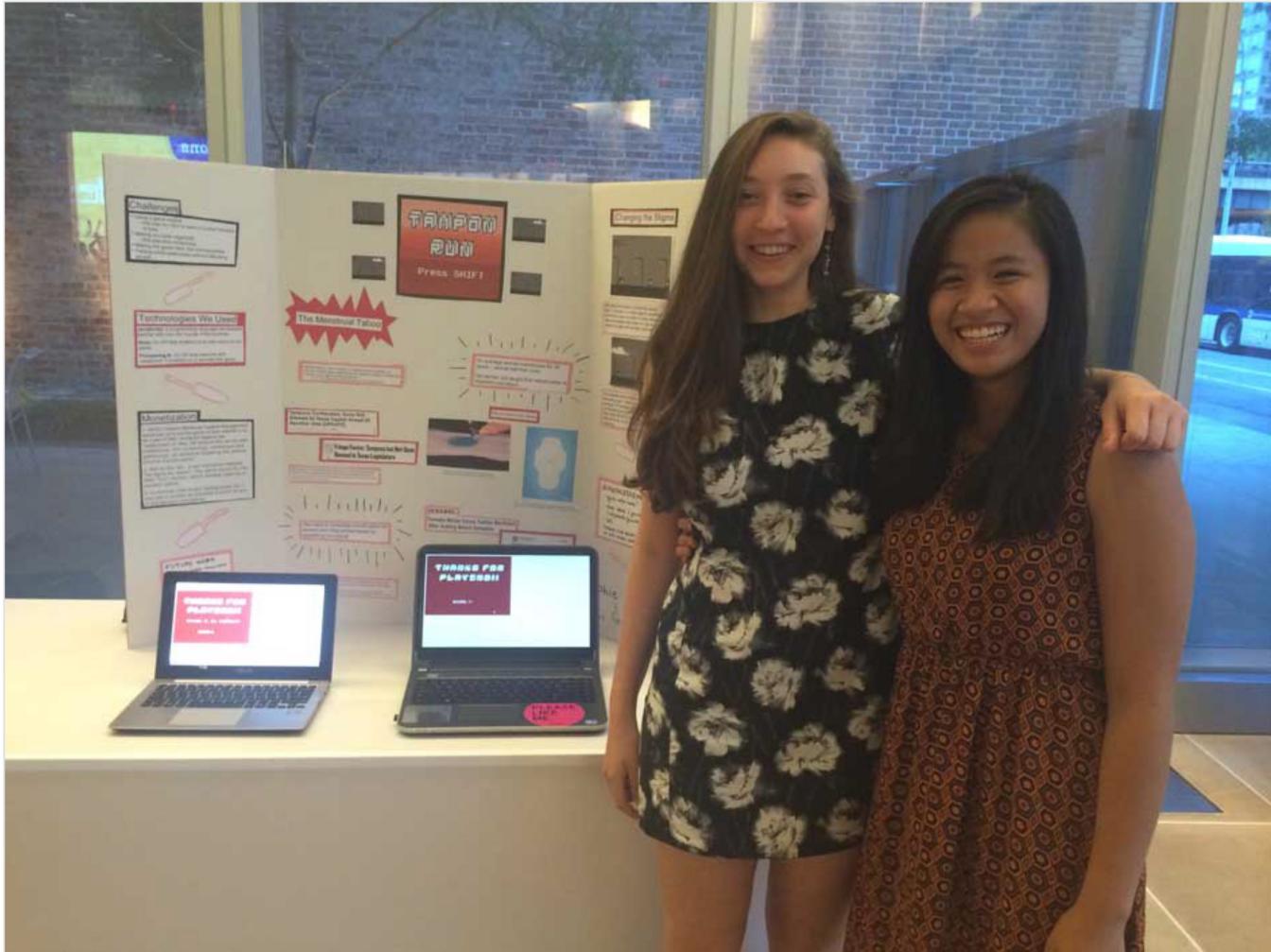
And the part that got us doing our airpunching was: 'Although the concept of the video may be strange, it's stranger that our society has accepted and normalised guns and violence through video games, yet we still find tampons and menstruation unspeakable. Hopefully one day menstruation will be as normal if not more so than guns and violence have become in our society.'

The best part of the game? It's pretty fun to play (you jump to grab boxes of tampons, you kill enemies by throwing tampons at them and if they catch you, you're out of tampons so you lose) and it takes some skill to get very far at all.

Some might say that using tampons as weapons doesn't send the greatest message, but the game is not about to pretend that people aren't freaked out by menstruation, and how else could they figure tampons into an 8-bit game? Plus, it's about 85 times less stressful than an actual tampon run, even if you haven't muted that irritating jingle music playing in the background.



The best game about tampons ever made. Period



These two teenagers were sick of the taboo around periods. So they made an online game where you throw tampons at an enemy rather than shooting them with a gun.

Sophie Houser, 17 and Andrea Gonzales, 16 attend different high schools in New York. They met this summer at a programme run by [Girls Who Code](#), an organisation that intends to close the gender gap in technology.

Tampon Run is their final project, and the pair told *i100* they want as many people as possible to play it to help “confront the taboo around menstruation”.

When girls are out of the house and need to change their tampon, they slip it into a

sleeve or a back pocket, they hide it on the way to the bathroom. This is the menstrual taboo. Yet most women menstruate for half their lives. Everyone's mom, sister, girlfriend or even the lady sitting next to you on the train probably has menstruated (or maybe is right now!). It isn't weird or strange or gross, or at least we don't think it should be.

- Sophie Houser, 17



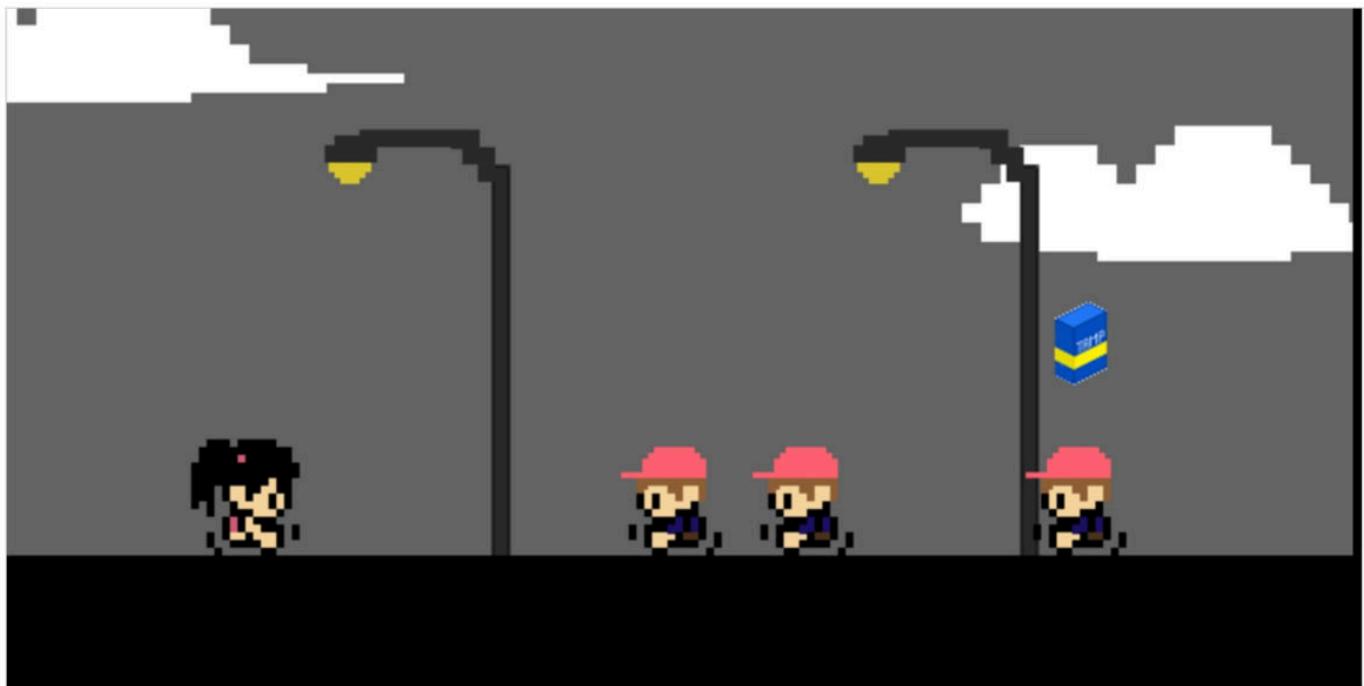
Menstruation is a totally normal thing that almost all women go through; however, there are a lot of people who don't treat it that way. A few weeks ago a *Guardian* columnist Jessica Valenti tweeted asking where countries had free or subsidized tampons and people lashed out at her, sending her terrible, hateful, and ignorant tweets in response.

- Andrea Gonzales, 16

The Daily Dot

Teen girls built a game about periods, and it's bloody awesome

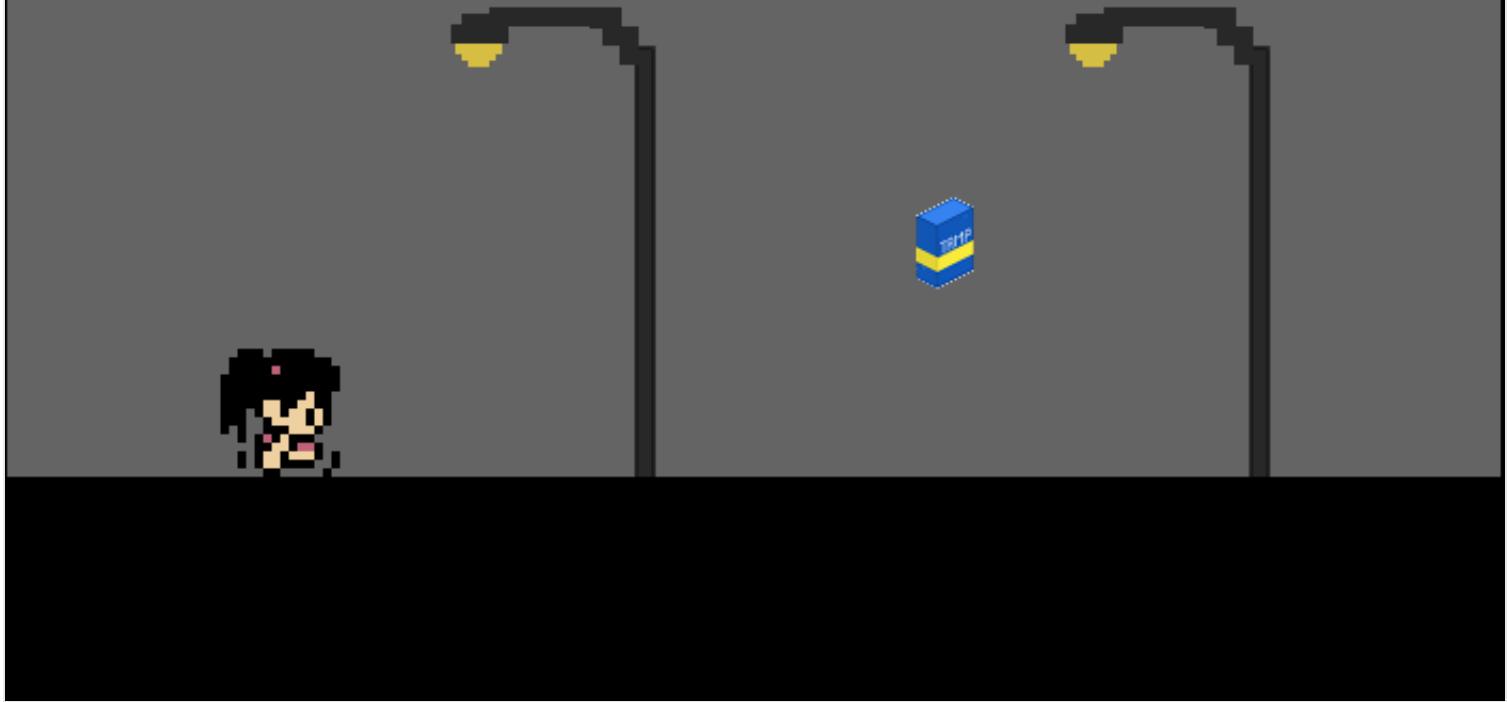
By [EJ Dickson](#)   Follow on September 10, 2014



Having a period really, really sucks. (I should know—I once wrote a [3,500-word essay about mine](#).) But you know one surefire way to make lumbering about like a wounded animal seem fun? Make a quirky video game out of it.

That's why two young women have created *Tampon Run*, a game that celebrates the wonders of the female reproductive system by letting you lob tampons at bullies on the street. Yay, feminism! Yay, girls making video games! And yay, periods!

score: 0
high score: 13
tampons:6



Tampon Run is pretty much like any other rudimentary shooter game you'd find online, except instead of shooting your enemies with a gun, you hit them with tampons. (Don't worry—they're unused.) But you have to collect more tampons along the way, otherwise you'll run out of ammunition and lose the game.

The game was created by Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser, two high school students from New York who met this summer at the [Girls Who Code program](#), which encourages young women to enter the tech industry. *Tampon Run* was their final project for the program. It's a light-hearted yet powerful statement against violence in video games and the social stigma attached to menstruation.

"Although the concept of the video game may be strange, it's stranger that our society has accepted and normalized guns and violence through video games," they write in the preamble to the game. "Yet we still find tampons and menstruation unspeakable."

If the recent trend of viral tampon ads and menstrual product startups is any indication, the cultural taboo surrounding menstruation is gradually disappearing. But the fact that these two high school students are doing their part to make it disappear even faster is—dare I say it—bloody awesome.

Screengrab via Tampon Run

KILL SCREEN

LET'S TALK ABOUT PERIODS WITH THE TWO BADASS HIGH SCHOOLERS WHO MADE TAMPON RUN



"I never thought I'd talk to my principal about menstruation," Sophie Houser, one of the two high schoolers who created *Tampon Run* at the [Girls Who Code](#) summer program, admits. "Or even my teachers. Like, all people really—I feel so comfortable now just saying, let's talk about it."

"Yeah," Andy Gonzales agrees. "I told my comp-sci teacher about [*Tampon Run*] 'cause he had given us a talk on the gender gap in the tech industry. And the next day apparently someone left a tampon on his desk after he told people about the game. And he was like 'Oh cool! A tampon. I get to throw this at someone.'"

Tampon Run, if you missed its coverage on everything from [Jezebel](#) to [Time](#), is a simple

platformer with ambitious goals. Your spunky, pixelated avatar runs across the screen to the right familiarly, defeating as many enemies as possible while conserving ammo. But your weapon? A stash of absorbent, white cylinders.

And yes, Andy's comp-sci teacher was dead-on. Throwing tampons at people feels very, very cool.



Like many good ideas, *Tampon Run* began as an outrageous suggestion that struck a chord. Both Andy and Sophie were adamant about using their coding skills gained from the program to promote social change. "So I jokingly said, 'Maybe we can make a game where someone throws tampons at people's faces,'" Sophie laughs. "And as soon as I said it we actually realized there was something there. Because Andy and I started talking and realized we'd both experienced the menstrual taboo."

After researching online about their observations about the phenomenon, the girls realized that the menstrual taboo was "something bigger than our own experiences. It went on around the whole world." Sophie mentions finding out about rituals still practiced today that isolate menstruating women, rendering them a total outcast of their community simply for undergoing a natural bodily function.

In their own experience, both girls (like most girls) remember slowly noticing how said natural bodily function gets regularly treated like an unmentionable horror in social situations. Sophie noticed when periods were just about the only thing she couldn't bring up in her close group of guy friends, who otherwise delighted in talking about anything and everything with some kind of a gross factor (i.e. poop, peeing, general gross human things). Andy recalled a day in middle school when she walked down the hallway only to discover a huge crowd of scandalized people looking down at an unused, unwrapped tampon on the floor. "I just threw it out," she concludes, a little indignant. "Because I was just so confused why everyone was making such a big deal about it."

"I was just so confused why everyone was making such a big deal about it."

That mixture of both confusion and uncertainty followed them both into the development of *Tampon Run*. Andy went into it as no stranger to making games with a feminist angle, since the first one she ever made was a project for English class "where all you had to do was control Odysseus as he walked through a 30 second platformer and sweet talked his way through all the ladies." The project was meant as a critique "because all the women's roles were to either sleep with Odysseus, or be evil, or both."

But both she and Sophie, though certain about the importance of their idea, experienced some hesitation when confronted with the deep roots of society's oldest taboos. The teacher supervising their brainstorming session at Girls Who Code, for example, even paused at the idea first. Because, though excited by the concept, he questioned whether the girls would be allowed to pick such a risque subject. But after receiving an enthusiastic approval from higher-ups, they went through with the idea.

The more Sophie and Andy researched and discussed about the taboo, the more they realized how ridiculous it all was. Yet, despite that, both felt an ill-defined uncertainty during its development. Andy found herself incapable of bringing up the premise of her game to her own parents. "And I couldn't tell if that was just because I wanted to surprise them or if I was scared to tell them," she confesses. Her parents praised the parts of the game they saw out of context, only discovering its true subject matter at the final presentation. But when they did finally see her work, "they were really supportive! Which was awesome." Similarly, Sophie says her mom showed some initial trepidation, before feeling nothing but pride after seeing the final product and witnessing the game's poignancy for herself.

**Tampon Run is a way of discussing
the taboo in an accessible way.**



**Instead of holding a gun,
the runner holds tampons,
and instead of shooting enemies,
the runner throws tampons at them.**



The menstrual taboo is complex parasocial territory for young girls to navigate. Though the terrain has certainly improved in recent history, boundaries remain uncomfortably unapproachable, especially in first experiences. On one hand, Sophie remembers feeling that initial excitement, since "at the time, it feels like, wow, I'm part of this kind of girls club. And I still feel that way. Like, I have my period and that's something women can all talk about and relate to."

Andy also remembered it as a mostly positive experience too, where "I felt like I had gone through a rite of passage. I swaggered into school, like 'I'm on my period—that's awesome.' But I didn't tell people because I just didn't feel comfortable. But it kind of felt like now you're really a woman, or really part of this community in body, mind, and soul."

Most girls can remember this rush of mixed emotions: I'm a woman, I'm healthy—and I should probably keep quiet about it. I for one couldn't figure out whether to be more horrified by my mom's exuberant celebration, or my own sense of pride for having gotten it before my best friend did. The pride, I think, came from believing myself more grown up. The horror, I

know, came from an implicit understanding that this rite of passage was one that should remain a silent victory. (A silent victory I liked to remind my best friend about in private.)

tampons:14



Improving the menstrual taboo is not about girls loving or exhibiting their periods for all the world to luxuriate in. It's about not having to shove tampons up your sleeve, *Assassins Creed*-style, before excusing yourself for the bathroom. It's about being able to tell your boss you have cramps, not the flu, and that's why you can't come into goddamn work today. It's about having a conversation about menstrual blood that doesn't treat it like some unholy combination of feces, urine, and semen.

Sophie and Andy seem most proud of the subtle effects their game is having on the way people around them talk about periods. One of Sophie's aforementioned guy friends approached her after playing the game, only to agree that he'd been incapable of talking about it before and "I don't know why, that's so weird." While recently working on homework for her comp-sci class, Andy heard some peers cracking good-natured tampon jokes in a way she'd never heard before. "Even if you compare the way we talked about menstruation back then to the way we talk about it now," Andy says, referring to her and Sophie's journey with *Tampon Run*, "it is so much more comfortable. There's been a huge difference in my personal ability to discuss menstruation."

Part of what attracted them to coding and videogames as a medium in the first place was just how far they imagined their conversation starter could reach. "Videogames are just so accessible. Anyone can play a game and it's a fun way of interacting with a serious issue," Sophie says. Because while some might be unwilling to discuss an uncomfortable topic head on, a great way to get past that is to "blend it with satire, until people are willing to take the serious issue in much more."

It's about not having to shove tampons up your sleeve, Assassins Creed style, before excusing yourself for the bathroom.

The power of coding, whether in gaming or otherwise, has stuck with both of them throughout the experience. "I loved feeling like I made a change in the world through coding," Sophie says. As her first serious dip into programming, she discovered how empowering it felt to "start out with nothing, and then after so many frustrations, your thing works and it's on the screen and you know that was all you behind it. It was all your code that made that happen." Andy emphasizes just how much those frustrations were part of it for her too, though "I know the more frustrated I feel, it'll only be that much more rewarding when I finally get it to work—if I get it to work."

Though their efforts to make social impact through tech may not strictly continue into gaming, both Sophie and Andy are examples of just how far an industry-wide discussion on gender issues can go. Andy specifically referenced Anita Sarkisian's tropes vs. women videos as an inspiration. And my conversation with these two teenage spitfires echoed a hypothesis I put forward at the end of my [article exploring the menstrual taboo in games](#). Slowly but surely, things seem to be changing. And they'll keep changing, as long as people keep talking about them. The new generation has all kinds of tools at their disposal to help facilitate all kinds conversations that society has been long overdo.

Perhaps the most convincing evidence of change in this particular battle is the fact that the only hatemail *Tampon Run* has received (as of yet) was an email that labeled its creators misogynist. The complaint was sent by a group called All Men for Feminism. But predominantly, the emails flooding *Tampon Run*'s inbox from people all over the world express nothing but gratitude for the game—a thanks to Sophie and Andy for one hell of an adorably-packaged and impactful conversation starter.

I think the subject line of the girls' absolute favorite piece of feedback summarizes it best:
"I'm a big old hairy dude and I loved the heck out of your game."



'Tampon Run' game ridicules period stigma

By [Rebecca Gillie](#) Sep 11, 2014



Forget Temple Run, try Tampon Run! Two high school students have created a video game which replaces guns with tampons, in an attempt to break the stigma surrounding menstruation.

Teenagers Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser became friends through the Girls Who Code programme, which aims to close the gender gap in the technology industry by fostering coding skills in young women.

Houser explained to Parentdish how the idea came about: "For the final project of the programme, Andy wanted to make a game that had some sort of social impact. While brainstorming, I jokingly said that we should make a game where someone throws tampons."

"Even though it was a joke, the moment she said it we realized that this was a game we really could develop," said co-creator Gonzales.

"We did some research following our revelation, and saw that there's a lot of negative connotations associated with menstruating, and people all over the world are uncomfortable talking about it," she explains.

"We thought that this was terrible, because menstruation is such a normal bodily function."

In the introduction to the game, the pair condemn the unnecessary stigma which continues to surround periods.

"Menstruation is normal," the intro reads. "Yet most people, women and men alike, feel uncomfortable talking about anything having to do with menstruation.

"The taboo that surrounds it teaches women that a normal and natural bodily function is embarrassing and crude."

Despite the progressive politics behind it, Tampon Run is very much an old-school game, with side-scrolling gameplay and 8-bit graphics. Players fire tampons at adversaries - and try not to run out of the vital sanitary supplies (something we can all identify with).

Gonzales agreed, saying that they have even had suggestions for future improvements: "People have been requesting adding power ups like maxi pad shields, applicator bombs, and super absorbency tampons."

The graphics and gameplay might be simple, but Tampon Run is fiendishly addictive - you can have a go [here](#).

Crucially, though, it also conveys a serious message - that periods are nothing to be ashamed of and don't need to be spoken about in embarrassed whispers.

And if anyone says otherwise, feel free to lob an (unused) tampon at them...

Medical Daily

Women's Periods Aren't A Stigma, They're A Video Game: 'Tampon Run' Aims To Change The Way We Talk About Menstruation

By Stephanie Castillo | Sep 13, 2014 02:59 PM EDT

Andrea Gonzales, 16, and Sophie Houser, 17, want to change the way we talk about a woman's period. Specifically, they want young girls and women everywhere to feel normal rather than humiliated when they have their period, and they're hoping their video game, "Tampon Run" will help the conversation flow in a better direction.

The two teens who live in New York met at a [Girls Who Code](#) conference. GHC's mission, as described on their website, "works to inspire, educate, and equip girls with the computing skills to pursue 21st century opportunities." Tampon Run was an idea the girls had for their final project.

"Although the concept of the video game may be strange," the game's opening credits read, "it's stranger that our society has accepted and normalized guns and violence through video games, yet we still find tampons and menstruation unspeakable."

Gonzales told the [NY Daily News](#) that, initially, as much as their teacher liked the idea, he felt he needed to run it by the heads of the program for approval. "That alone shows what a taboo it is," she said.

Obviously, the board was, well, on board with the idea, and Tampon Run has started to see some success. The instructions for first-time users are simple. Just hit all the enemies with your tampons and don't let them pass or confiscate them. The game is over when you run out of tampons, so stop and collect boxes along the way to build-up your stock.

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Medical Daily gave the game a test run and decided it's pretty fun. It's also going to ruin our productivity for the day, but that's fine. You start off with a certain number of tampons, passing by boxes soon after. The enemies generally move by slowly, speeding up the more you get through the game.

Right now, Tampon Run can only be played online. But the girls told the *Daily News* they want to start working on a mobile version, as well as add to the original. They've received all

kinds of game requests, from maxi pad shields to super-absorbent tampons.

More importantly, the girls have learned how powerful it is to code. “If you know how to code, you can build anything you can think of and then use the Internet to reach thousands of people,” Houser said.

While GHC’s mission is to inspire young women, it’s also to reach gender parity among computer specialist jobs by the year 2020. In order for this to happen, women will have to fill 700,000 computing jobs, which is 25 percent of the total 30 percent of students who continue in computer science once exposed to the field.

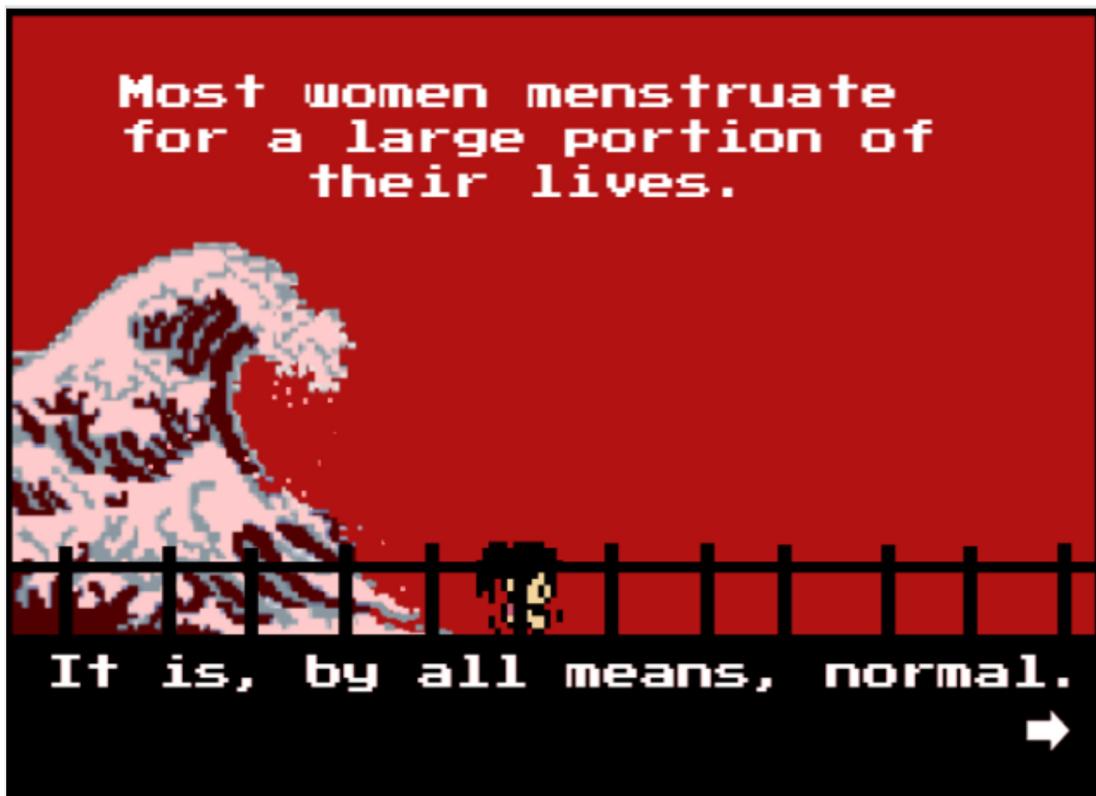
So, to Reshma Saujani, founder and CEO of GHC, it’s not just a program for girls like Gonzales and Houser; it’s a movement.

If you need us, we’ll be here trying to beat our high score (98, if you were curious).



Awesome Video Game Hopes To Destigmatize Tampons By Using Them As Projectiles

by **Victoria McNally** | Wednesday, September 10th 2014 at 12:44 pm



Just about half of the world's population is capable of menstruation, and yet when it comes up in conversation, people sometimes act like it's the grossest thing to ever conceivably happen to a human being. You know what those menstruators need? A tampon to the face. Or, you know, better education and a society that teaches them not to be so squeamish about others peoples' bodies, but gosh—throwing tampons is so much more cathartic.

Tampon Run was created by Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser, two NYC high school students who met at an immersive summer camp program called [Girls Who Code](#). It represents their final project for the program and is meant to open up a dialogue about menstruation in an accessible and non-judgemental way. “The taboo that surrounds [menstruation] teaches women that a normal and natural body function is embarrassing and

crude,” the opening instructions read.

In the game, you jump and shoot tampons at your enemies, who all appear to be men in pink hats of various walking speeds. Knocking down each enemy gets you a point, but also loses you a tampon; if the enemies come into contact with you, they end up stealing one of your tampons anyway. However, there are boxes of tampons throughout the game for you to replenish your stock.

On the subject of whether or not making feminine hygiene products into weapons might not be the best way to “destigmatize” them, the game has this to say:



Or, in layman's terms, “I don’t see any of you complaining that games make *violence* look bad! Taste my plastic pearl applicator, jerks!” Well, can’t argue there.

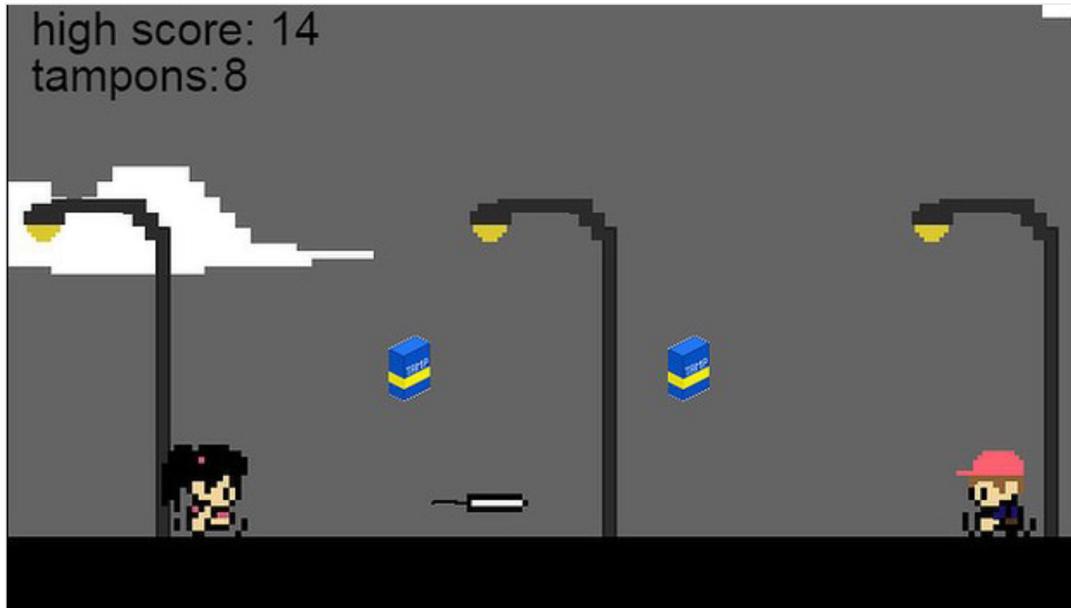
You can play the game for yourself on the [Tampon Run website](#). Be warned, it’s kind of addicting and pretty dang well done. You don’t suppose Girls Who Code has a program for grown adult women, do you?

DAILY LIFE

'Tampon Run', a fun game from two teens who want to remind us that periods are totally normal

September 11, 2014 - 9:02AM

Rob Moran



Tampon Run: Collect those tampons!

Looking for something more substantial than 'Candy Crush' to while away those tedious office hours? Then '[Tampon Run](#)' is your new best friend. The game was made by two awesome teenagers who want to remind everyone - through fun - that periods are totally normal.

Created by Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser, a couple of high school students from New York City who met at [Girls Who Code](#) - a program that's trying to close the gender gap in tech by getting young girls into advanced computing - the game eschews current industry staples like guns, splodgy gore and [\\$500 million budgets](#), and replaces them with cool 8-bit nostalgia, addictive playability, an important message... and, of course, lots and lots of tampons.

"Most women menstruate for a large portion of their lives. It is, by all means, normal," Gonzales and Houser write in their intro to the game. "Yet most people, women and men alike, feel uncomfortable talking about anything having to do with menstruation. The taboo that surrounds it teaches women that a normal and natural bodily function is embarrassing and crude. 'Tampon Run' is a way of discussing the taboo in an accessible way."

So, how do you play? It's simple: Collect tampons, throw them at your enemies, and keep restocking your supplies before your cycle's over. And as the game notes, "Don't run out of tampons, or it's GAME OVER."

"Although the concept of the video game may be strange, it's stranger that our society has accepted and normalised guns and violence through video games, yet we still find tampons and menstruation unspeakable," add Gonzales and Houser.

Right on. Play [the game here](#), and get those tampons flying.

Source: Fast Company

DailyStyle



Tampons Are Weapon of Choice in Student-Made Tampon Run

ROBERT STONEBACK | 12 SEPTEMBER 2014 5:05 PM



***Tampon Run*, the creation of two high school students, switches out firearms as weapons in its game to question why gun violence is more socially acceptable than menstruation.**

Guns are fairly ubiquitous in media, from books to movies to video games. Two young programmers, though, are questioning why society as a whole is more comfortable with displays of gun violence than it is talking about menstruation. The web game *Tampon Run*, created by New York City high school students Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser, wants to bring attention to this inconsistency by swapping out firearms for feminine hygiene products.

Taking cues from the "infinite runner" style of game, *Tampon Run* has players dispatching enemies in their path not with bullets but by throwing tampons at them. Touching the enemies drains your supply of the projectile, which you can refill by grabbing tampon boxes. Running out of tampons means game over.

The game opens with a message from Gonzales and Houser, explaining their goal with the game. "Most women menstruate for a large portion of their lives. It is, by all means, normal," reads the opening text. "Yet most people, women and men alike, feel uncomfortable talking about anything having to do with menstruation. The taboo that surrounds it teaches women that a normal and natural bodily function is embarrassing and crude."

Tampon Run ultimately seeks "a way of discussing the taboo in an accessible way," the game

states. While it admits that giving enemies a face full of tampon might be a strange way to go about having this discussion, "its stranger that our society has accepted and normalized guns and violence through video games, yet we still find tampons and menstruation unspeakable."

The game was created as Gonzales and Houser's final project for the "Girls Who Code" camp held earlier this summer. Regardless on what your thoughts may be on the concept, you have to admire two young programmers for being willing to not only make a social statement but also developing a game to accompany it. You can play Tampon Run for free [here](#).

Source: [Tampon Run](#) via [The Mary Sue](#)



Web Based Game Tells Players – “Periods are Totally Normal”

by shorty | September 6, 2014 | Gaming | 1 Comment

“Most women menstruate for a large portion of their lives . . . it is by all means, normal.”

These words herald the start of *Tampon Run*, an 8-bit browser game designed to desensitize teenagers to menstruation by replacing guns with tampons. As the game says, *“Instead of guns, shoot tampons.”*

The game was designed by Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser, who met each other at the Girls Who Code summer program.

“Although the concept of the video game may be strange, it’s stranger that our society has accepted and normalized guns and violence through video games, yet we still find tampons and menstruation unspeakable,” say Gonzales and Houser. “The taboo that surrounds it teaches women that a normal and natural bodily function is embarrassing and crude” Gonzales and Houser added.

In *Tampon Run*, players are asked to collect tampons and shoot them at enemies. The challenge is for players to conserve their absorptive “ammunition” until their minstrel cycle is over.

The game is free to play and is available here: <http://tamponrun.com/>

Your Next Favorite Video Game Might Just Be About Tampons



by Brinton Parker 9/15/14

Aside from their obvious use during menstruation, tampons are wonderful weapons — and no, that's not a typo! Two teenage girls are hoping to change society's views about both violent video games and natural female body processes with their new video game, [Tampon Run](#). While brainstorming their final project for [Girls Who Code](#), Andy Gonzales and Sophie Houser quickly turned from joking about a tampon video game into creating one. Now, the girls have released an 8-bit game about menstrual cycles that is changing the world.

"The idea of making it funny and quirky kind of makes menstruation a lot more approachable and more comfortable," [Gonzales told Today](#) of Tampon Run, in which the female hero has to collect tampons before the bad guys. She also uses the sanitary product as her weapon in the game, which serves to destigmatize periods while also pointing out the violent content of most video games. The teens not only aim to promote period education with their game, but also to change ideas about what's acceptable to society. "Although the concept of the game may be strange, it's stranger that our society has accepted and normalized guns and violence through video games, yet we still find tampons and menstruation unspeakable," state the teens in their intro to the game.

While the lessons to be learned through this video game are extremely valuable for boys and girls alike, it's also just plain fun. After you give the addicting [Tampon Run](#) a play, you might just find yourself reaching for a trusty [Playtex](#) when faced with an uncomfortable situation.

Source: [Tampon Run](#)

TECH TIMES

Teen girls create a video game that finally gets what it's like to be a woman

Whether you're a woman or not, we all know that the time of the month, yeah *that* time of the month, is no fun. Cramps, fatigue, blood. It's all so inconvenient, uncomfortable and just gross.

Now that I've alienated any man who was reading this article — and good on those men who continued reading it even after seeing this headline — we can get down to some real talk, ladies. Periods. They're no fun, but we now have something that can help us cope with our dark time of the month.

Two high school students from New York City created a video game called *Tampon Run*. In the game, you run through the streets throwing tampons at your enemies. If they run past you, they take your tampons, which isn't fun for anyone. But when that happens, you can collect some new tampons to hurl at more villains. It's a win-win.

Tampon Run was the final project of Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser, the creators of the game, for the Girls Who Code program this past summer, which helps encourage computing among women. Not only is it awesome to see women code and develop video games, but *Tampon Run* also has an awesome feminist message behind it.

The introduction to the game discusses how most men and women alike feel that talking about menstruation is a societal taboo, making women feel that a normal biological process, albeit one that is unique to women, is weird or embarrassing. The intro also mentions how bizarre it is that guns and violence have been accepted as just another part of video games, but we can't openly talk about our periods. Are we sure these ladies are only in high school? They seem so wise beyond their years.

As you probably know, women are underrepresented in the tech industry, especially in the gaming world. Although women's presence in gaming is ever-growing, they are still grossly underrepresented among game developers, making up only 22 percent of this group of professionals, according to a report from the International Game Developers Association from June 2014. Still, the fact that this is nearly double the percentage of female game developers from five years ago and the fact that the Entertainment Software Association

claims that women make up 48 percent of gamers in its most recent report makes me optimistic. But more than any statistic, the fact that women like Gonzales and Houser are interested in computing and creating games with such a great message as *Tampon Run* is a really exciting prospect for the future of gaming.



Teen Girls Create ‘Tampon Run’ – A Game That Makes A Statement While You Throw Tampons At People

It's a bloody good idea too. Period. Sep 11, 2014



Here's something you don't see everyday – an 8bit game about menstruation and throwing tampons at dudes in pink hats. The social statement it makes is bloody good too (sorry!)

Tampon Run, the brainchild of NYC teen students Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser, effectively compares menstruation to video game violence in order to highlight the ridiculous social ‘taboo’ around women’s periods.

“Most women menstruate for a large part of their lives. It is, by all means, normal,” states *Tampon Run*’s opening dialogue.

“Yet most people, women and men alike, feel uncomfortable talking about anything having to do with menstruation. The taboo that surrounds it teaches women that a normal and natural bodily function is embarrassing and crude.

“*Tampon Run* is a way of discussing the taboo in an accessible way. Instead of holding a gun, the runner holds tampons, and instead of shooting enemies, the runner throws tampons at them.”

“Although the concept of the video game may be strange, it’s stranger that our society has accepted and normalized guns and violence through video games, yet we still find tampons

and menstruation unspeakable”.

They've got a point. I'll be honest, whenever I've been sent out to buy tampons for my other half, it can feel a little awkward standing there comparing the boxes to make sure I've got the right product, and more awkward still if I need to ask somebody in the shop about them. And yet, around half of the world's population go through this every month.

From this pre-game intro alone, *Tampon Run*'s message is abundantly clear and relatable – the fact people find this embarrassing, or consider menstruation in anyway a stigma, is an embarrassment unto itself.

The pre-game intro continues: “Hopefully one day menstruation will be as normal, if not more so, than guns and violence have become in our society. Normal enough to place in a video game without a second thought.”

Tampon Run itself is as simple as they come. The game is an 8bit side-scroller using just two buttons – the UP-arrow and space bar – to jump and shoot tampons at enemies. You collect tampons for ammo and health and must survive your moon cycle.

Don't expect anything ground breaking. It is literally an endless runner with tampons.

The purpose of this project is obviously the social idea it represents, and the girls have nailed the marriage of shock value and thoughtful execution to deliver their message. The fact the targets of the tampons all appear to be male is something I'm willing to gloss over to applaud the creativity.

Maybe we need a condom throwing game sequel?

Andrea Gonzales and Sophie Houser say they met at Girls Who Code – an organisation “trying to close the gender gap in tech”. I dare say this isn't the last you'll hear from them.

You can play Tampon Run yourself here: <http://tamponrun.com/>