

Pokémon Gross

Peta Culverhouse

Sally stood on the hill overlooking her small country town. She turned her smart phone on and flipped through the screens to her latest free game, Pokémon Go. Sally started to walk. She would not have had the time to play this latest gaming craze, but the recent loss of her job still felt heavy on her heart and her brain was adjusting to the drudgery and boredom that sudden unemployment brings. A friend recommended that she play, and at least to get out of the house even for a short while. She hoped it would be a good Pokémon catching day.

Sally knew she wasn't coping well. Her friends and family tried to coax her out of the depressive funk that enveloped her. Her agoraphobic leanings had gotten the better of her. They tried to convince her to at least get some exercise by walking. It would make her feel better. Getting another job would too was her argument, as she sat on the couch watching drivel on the television after a fruitless search for something to apply for that matched her skill set. She saw the news, and read articles and IT blogs relating to this latest craze and with much coercion and a hint of curiosity, decided to give this game a chance. Sally decided to pick playing in the afternoon to avoid the perceived embarrassment she felt at being unemployed.

Situational Awareness. Sally thought to herself as she walked through the streets and the parks. She didn't want to end up falling into the fetid creek or being run over by cars as they sped through the town. She had her phone on vibrate, and if a Pokémon was around, it would buzz alerting her to its presence. That way Sally didn't have to look at the phone constantly. It was a pleasant walking afternoon. After a week of her daily stroll, Sally had begun to notice the amount of human detritus that was along her daily route. It was a worrying trend but so was Donald Trump, the terrorist attacks, and increase in crime across Australia. Sally had a lot of time to think about things she couldn't solve.

Her phone vibrated. She looked around to make sure that the Pokémon was safe to catch. It was a Pidgey. She sighed. She already had three of those. She put her phone back into her top pocket with the camera facing outwards. Pokémon Go is a geo-location game, so allowing the game access to your camera on your smart phone was very important. Sally began to muse to herself about how many criminals would be caught if they had the geo-location permanently on in their smart phones when breaking and entering and the ethics behind such tracking. She imagined herself as a spy running from another agency playing Pokémon Go and they were tracking her through the game itself. She felt silly thinking those things but they amused her and kept her busy mind active. Walking was not exactly the most exciting of sports to do.

The phone vibrated again. It was a Ghostly. A Pokémon she hadn't collected yet. She checked her surroundings and noticed how disgusting it was with all the garbage laying on the ground. Her town was supposed to be beautiful and historical, not an environmental disaster area. She readied the pokéball and flicked up towards the Ghostly. Caught! She gave a little fist pump in the air. Then saw the garbage. She had a plastic bag with her but was hesitant to touch it in case of anything nasty. Right. She thought. Next time I am bringing gardening gloves. Sally knew that the rubbish would be there the next time and it was rather appropriate that a Ghostly was hovering above it. It saddened her that the Keep Australia Beautiful lessons drummed into her at school hadn't been passed on to the next generations of school children.

She went to the Pokémon Go places of interest after catching the Ghostly, as all the other Pokémon encountered on her walk were ones she already had. The local stables were a place of interest so she flicked the location coin and won an egg and a few pokéballs. A letter box was another point of interest, but the person who owned the letter box always abused her by telling her to go to the pub around the corner and have a few drinks and ponder her existence instead of playing a stupid smart phone game. The Pokémon centre, where you battled another team's Pokémon was not her colour today. The blue team, Mystic, had taken it over from her own team Valor. Well, from a Pokémon Go perspective, it wasn't a completely wasted day, Sally thought to herself. She walked home despondent. Sally couldn't fix her issue of being unemployed except to apply for anything that could use her unique administrative acumen. The employment side of life just took time, a bit of luck and self-marketing, but maybe she could reduce the amount of the rubbish along her walking track.

The next day, Sally grabbed a garbage bag, some gardening gloves and her smart phone and went for her walk. Along the way, her phone buzzed, she caught some new Pokémon and she picked up rubbish and other detritus from human habitation. It made the walk longer and the garbage bag steadily heavier, but it gave Sally something that she hadn't felt since losing her job. It made her feel important and empowered, even if it was only to herself. Once the bag was full, she put it in a local bin for pick up. Sally's day was quite successful. She had caught a couple of more Pokémon and a bag of rubbish. A pretty good day overall. Sally couldn't help the world, but she could, in her own small way, help her community.