



Central East Regional Group of the Unitarian Universalist Association

[www.cerguaa.org](http://www.cerguaa.org)

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## All the world's a game....

and we are just players...

This paraphrase of the line from Shakespeare's [As You Like It](#) came to mind as I am read Jane McGonigal's book [Reality is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World](#).

She points out the fact that people will voluntarily spend hours and hours overcoming arbitrary obstacles to achieve unnecessary goals, whether it be knocking a golf ball around, playing [World of Warcraft](#) or coming up with a perfectly spiced [Palak Paneer](#). What do games have that real life doesn't have?

She mentions several qualities, but one stands out for me. Games offer a feedback system that is intrinsically enjoyable and helps to focus our energy on our goal. How close to par was that last hole? How many dexterity points does your avatar have? Was that version as tasty as the one at the Bombay Café or did it need more Fenugreek?

I'm probably predisposed to her message-not because I'm a gamer-but because I'm someone who looks for those kinds of feedback loops and finds them rewarding.

I also recently read the book [How We Decide](#) by Jonah Lehrer. In it he describes how our brains release dopamine as an internal reward mechanism, but that our brains also release the pleasurable chemical in anticipation of a pleasurable experience. I'm guessing that the reward system in a good game elicits the same process.

I remember being in 4th grade where our teacher created a bookworm game to encourage us to read. We each had a construction paper bookworm head with our name on it. With every book we read that year, we could add a segment to our worm. It was fun watching our worms grow throughout the year.

I am imagining a leadership development program with some sort of feedback system where participants have a visceral expression of their work and accomplishments. Many professions look to Continuing Education programs that offer nice paper "certificates of completion," but I'm imagining something with a little more flexibility. I'm intrigued by the [Open Badge system](#) from Mozilla.

I'd love to hear what kinds of feedback loops you might find rewarding....

In faith and service,  
Rev. Renee Ruchotzke  
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