



Huna Article

This Thing Called Life

By Graeme Kapon Urlich

Solitaire – More lessons from games

Some time ago I suffered a concussion and it was taking a while to recover from it so I started to play solitaire as a way to exercise my brain in pattern recognition. Recently I moved house and rediscovered my deck of cards and this prompted me to start playing again. Before long I started to pick up on some behaviours.

Sometimes I would start to get frustrated and feel a futility in playing the game if I wasn't solving it frequently enough for my liking. Then I remembered that I wasn't playing it to "solve" it, I was playing it to exercise my brain and that was happening whether I solved it or not. The frustration went away. Sometimes we quit on useful activities because we lose sight of why we are doing them in the first place.

Another thing I noticed as I played was that, with each round, the cards would develop sequences that were sometimes helpful but mostly made it harder to solve the games. I was able to solve the games more often when I made sure I shuffled the deck really well. Sometimes in life we get into "sequences of behavior" and that can stop us from achieving goals that we may have. A good "shuffle" of built up habits is often very useful if we want to make major changes in life but we feel stuck with little progress.

Very often when playing the game, I would notice myself getting into an automatic mode and going quite quickly. When I reached a point where I thought it was at an end and was packing up the deck to start again I would notice a move that I had missed. Sometimes in life it is useful to take a step back, be more present, and really look at what is happening on a personal level. Usually ideas and opportunities that we hadn't noticed before will pop out of the background.

I notice this in working with HTML pages as well. When I read through the code it looks fine but when I view the page in a browser there is an obvious fault. Sometimes it takes trying various things to find the fault but, because the page doesn't look right, I know I have to keep looking. If I get annoyed with it the bug tends to stay hidden but if I can relax and just look quietly, the fault shows itself to me and I can make the necessary change to fix it.

One day as I was playing a few rounds, I noticed that I hadn't succeeded in solving the games at all and I began to wonder what was going on. Then it occurred to me that maybe a card was missing so I counted them and sure enough, I had dropped three of them and hadn't noticed. They had fallen out of sight. The next game was solved after that. Sometime in life we may find we are not playing with a full deck and maybe need some extra information or inspiration to achieve our goals.

Quite often it seems like the game is reaching a dead end and there are no more moves to be made but then a single move opens up a chain reaction of moves that lead to resolution of the game. This is particularly satisfying because I have stuck with it and succeeded when the instinct was to pack up the cards and start again. In my case it would not have mattered because I am playing the game for the mental exercise but in life, if something is important enough, achievement of a goal usually depends on perseverance and flexibility.

There were occasions where there were two or more possible moves to make. I started to test my intuition about which was more likely to lead to resolution of the game and made some rules about the priority I gave to each possible one. This avoided confusion and second guessing my choices. Sometimes as I turned over a card I would see what it was in my mind while other times I sometimes saw what card I wanted it to be but usually I just waited to see what card it was. In life we are often presented with multiple options and we can get uncertain about which one is “best.” Practicing the skill of awareness and intuition is very valuable.

Many times while playing a round I’ve had the thought that there was something I needed to go do. Then, at the conclusion of the round I would find myself shuffling and laying out the cards again to start a new game. I would think to myself “Oh well, I’ll play this round and then go do what needed to be done.” This might happen two or three times before I realized and I decided “Oh well, the games is laid out for me when I have done what I need to” and I leave the game where it is for later. Sometimes we do this kind of thing in life, keep watching a movie or doing something else and in doing so, forget the thing that we really needed to do.

Now that I have written all this down I am wondering if there is a point to be found in it. One is that we can learn from anything at all if we pay attention to the experience. The trick then is to apply it to life in a constructive way, as I did with a game in my article “[From Small Beginnings](#)”. It may take some help and guidance sometimes but we have tools all around us to help improve this thing we call life.

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