

I come from a family of very strong women. My mom became the first person to leave her small town in Northern Ireland when she enrolled in Cambridge University, my aunt became a professional ballerina after finishing high school early to do so, and my grandma has a master's in math and not only fled Soviet Russia to the US with \$200 to her name, but became one of the original programmers when she arrived. I grew up believing I could achieve anything I wanted. But I am one of the rare ones – most girls are scared away from computer science (CS) and never consider it a career. I want to change this.

Girls Who Code. After my freshman year in college, I joined Girls Who Code (GWC) as a TA for the GWC Summer Immersion Program. I taught 20 girls from the Bay Area the basics of CS. Many of them were the first in their families to consider going to college and came from non-CS backgrounds. My goal that summer was to show these girls that CS is *not* scary, that it is exciting to do when applied to a subject that interests them, and that you can be social *and* major in CS at the same time. This last point was especially important for me to emphasize because each of the girls had their own unique quirks and I wanted to make sure that they didn't think this was something they saw as flaws. I continued to stay in touch with them past the duration of the program and offered help in whatever way they needed.

The summer I spent as a TA with GWC is still, to this day, the most rewarding experience of my life. Each of the students came from such different families and cultures, and yet, when given the same opportunities and recourses, were able to thrive. That summer, I saw the true potential of telling someone they belong, and how powerful saying "I believe in you" was. I knew this was something I wanted to continue doing back at university.

Undergraduate Tutoring. Fall quarter of my second year of undergrad, I started tutoring the Introduction to CS class at my university. I have tutored this intro class 3 times, each time in the Fall when most of the new CS students enroll. Everyone comes into the class with varying degrees of CS knowledge, with some having multiple years of experience and some having absolutely none. I make it a focus in my office hours to never make the students feel stupid or behind, and to continue to advocate for their success.

This quarter, I am in charge of tracking students who are struggling in the course and reaching out to them to offer extra support. As if taking your first intro CS class wasn't enough, the pandemic has made the lives of many of the students that much more stressful. Because of the online nature of the class this quarter, students aren't seeing their peers and are only hearing from the loudest students in the Zoom chat. The loudest students are almost always the ones who came in with prior CS experience and therefore have the most confidence to speak up. Most of my 1-on-1 tutoring hours are spent re-iterating this and trying to give confidence to discouraged students to keep working on the material.

Too many students in CS are discouraged from continuing their CS education because no one looks like them or seems to have similar experiences to them. I know firsthand what having strong role models who are like you can do to your self-esteem and confidence. While continuing to fight for better access to CS resources outside of the university, I want to be a cheerleader for the students who make it to the CS college setting. Everyone Can Code, and I want to be the guiding spirit that continues to push this message in all classrooms that I am in.