

**What was a challenging moment during your time as a Helper? How did you overcome this challenge, and what did you learn from it?**

An exasperated sigh escaped the confines of my self-control at 6:30 P.M. on a dreadful Friday evening. In a few seconds, my buddy would be joining our session and another day of methodically stating each multiple of 3 was about to begin. Despite my reluctance to do this, I knew that I shouldn't project my misery onto others...besides, I was only feeling this way because of the hour-long CS test I had taken during 6th period.

Days like these were the greatest obstacle during my time as a helper. Having to plaster an enthusiastic smile on my face even when my exasperation was heightened to the max, negative thoughts pestering my brain when my patience ran thin, and staring at the dark circles that colored my face all became an increasing burden. I told myself that the emotion I was feeling was a rare occasion, something that could be suppressed, an irrelevant blip of my life! During all of this, no one could tell what was going through my head...especially since I had perfected my outward expressions to the last inch. That was, until, my buddy asked in a timid voice, "Could you teach me coding?". The significance of this sentence would be unnoticeable, but to me, I was shocked. How could this small third grader have such a large passion for coding? I remembered the times she excitedly showed me her projects on Scratch and suddenly I became jealous. Jealousy is often associated with negative connotations, but this wasn't that kind of jealousy...this was motivation. I had been struggling in my CS class, often staring at the nonexistent lines of code on my Java application. There were days that I had spent berating myself for my inability to comprehend an assignment, yet here I was. Face to face, miles apart, being asked by my buddy to help her learn Java. She had her full faith in me...so I agreed.

In all honesty, teaching my buddy code in the leftover minutes after we had finished all the worksheets was difficult. It was hard for a third grader to understand a complicated concept, and it was hard for me to be patient when I had to repeat things over and over again. But I

already foresaw all of this, so I never expected her to fully grasp the topic. I only wanted to expose her to a few terms that were key aspects of Java. However, this had nothing to do with the significance of her initial question. What her question had sparked in me was confidence. I was never confident in my ability to teach, but as I shared my acquired knowledge with my buddy, a girl 7 years younger than me, I felt validated in what I knew. I felt as if my struggle to get to this current moment was acknowledged. Perhaps years of school wasn't a waste of time...perhaps there was a meaning to all of this. In all those moments I taught her, I felt a sense of accomplishment when a bright look of understanding appeared in her eyes and a sense of determination when I was met with a blank stare. This...this was truly the beauty of human interaction. The ability to communicate and share with one another, doing so in a way that aided self-development.

The most challenging parts of being a helper was persevering through trying times. It wasn't about the material that I taught, it was about me being a person my buddy could depend on. I did not overcome these challenges on my own, but with the indirect action of the people around me. A gesture as small as a question helped me to open up and build my self-esteem in areas I once lacked in. I learned that teaching someone is a mutual relationship that can benefit in ways unrelated to memorizing the multiplication table and learning irregular verb endings.