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How One Girl Who Codes Alumnae Is Using Code To Bring Awareness To Eating Disorders

A game I'd like to create is one that helps girls with eating disorders because I've struggled with eating disorders my entire life.

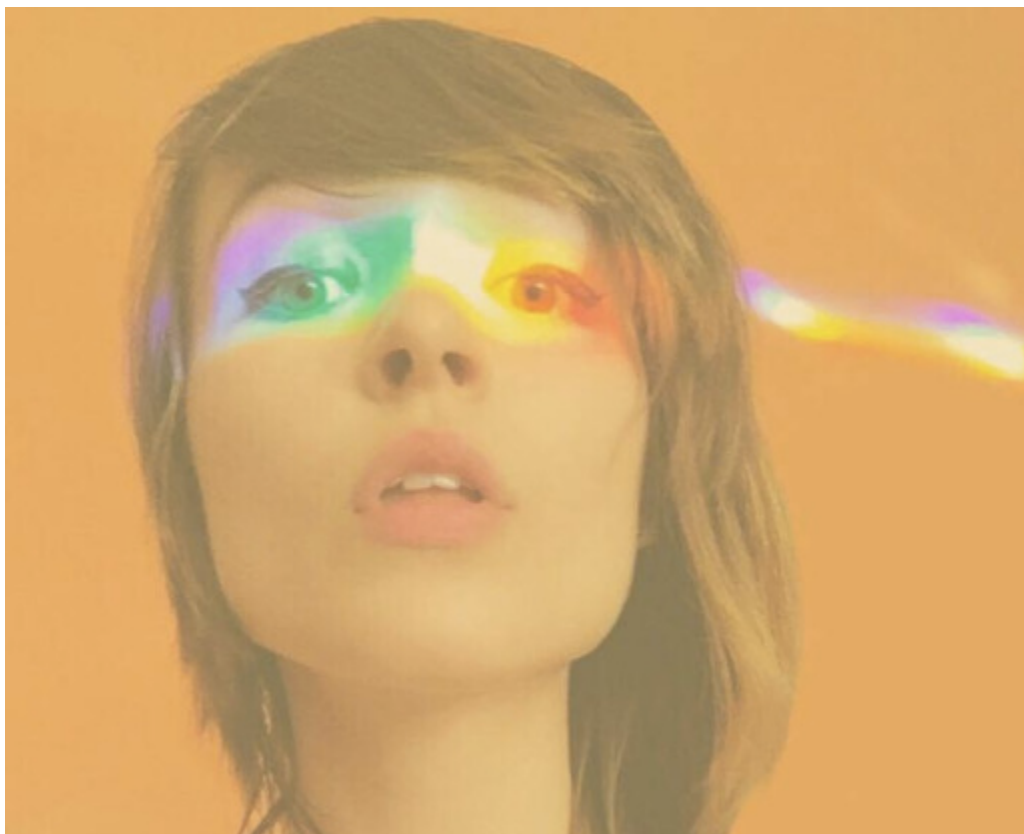
By Girls Who Code, Contributor

Debugging the gender gap in tech!

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"A game I'd like to create is one that helps girls with eating disorders because I've struggled with eating disorders my entire life. The game would simulate an eating disorder and might seem like it's taking you over or thinking for itself because that's what an eating disorder is like." - Anna Weddell

Meet Anna "Spacecowgrrrrl" Weddell, a college Freshman from the big apple. Self-described as a cool and nerdy girl who was raised in a household of technological exploration, Anna plans to study computer science in college in order to start her own gaming company.

One of the games she's making sheds light on eating disorders, something Anna says she's struggled with for her entire life. She's not alone. US News with Duke University reports that "approximately 1 out of every 200 girls between 15 to 24 years old suffers from anorexia nervosa, while about 1 in 50 is bulimic." She hopes that the game, which will "simulate an eating disorder" will shed light on and generate an understanding of these stigmatized diseases. She continues, "the game might seem like it's taking you over or thinking for itself, and that's what an eating disorder is like."

We are so inspired by Anna's bravery and her desire to educate others on eating disorders because of her ability to code.

Read more about Anna in our Q&A below.

Q&A with Anna Weddell:

Tell us about yourself.

I have always been a bit strange, when considering societal standards for normalcy. Honestly, I think I can be pretty cool, though, if cool and nerdy are adjectives that can coexist!

Were you always interested in computers?

I grew up surrounded by technology because my dad was a long-time computer programmer and made sure to bring his daughter into a world of science. With O'Reilly books scattered about the house in colorful arrays, each featuring an animal on the cover, it was not hard for my interest to be piqued in computer science and technology from a young age. It wasn't long before I was opening hard drives - even beloved video game consoles - and fiddling with circuit boards and metal scraps with my dad to understand more about how they worked. During college vacations, I'm still working with my dad on building portable consoles and controllers out of recycled, "dead" generations of video games.

What are the best parts of being a college freshman?

The independence and free time to do what I want to do is a big change. It's also been great to meet new friends that share my interests; I've ended up making friends at my school through the Girls Who Code network.

What are you studying in college?

I started college as undeclared. I had been interested in computer science, but I doubted whether or not I could do it.

I ended up realizing that computer science was what I wanted to do and the more time I spent not being involved in it, the more I missed

it and the more I wanted to be part of it. I'm taking my first college computer science class in the fall and am excited to learn more in a classroom setting.

What are the 5 pieces of technology you can't live without in college?

1. My phone
2. My computer
3. My TV (mainly because of PS3)
4. My Nintendo 3DS
5. My Wii

Clearly, I like to play games.

What's the best piece of advice for a college freshman?

Put yourself as a priority always. I know people say that a lot, but I actually started listening to that this year and it's helped me get through my freshman year.

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What do you want to do with your computer science major?

I've always wanted to make video games. I hope to be able to become involved in a gaming company one day - or maybe even start my own!

What types of video games do you want to make?

I have a bunch of notes of random video game ideas. One of the games I want to make helps girls with eating disorders because I've struggled with eating disorders my entire life. The game would simulate an eating disorder and might seem like it's taking you over or thinking for itself because that's what an eating disorder is like.

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