# Studio: Goal Setting & Mindset (TA Notes)

## Summary

In this activity, we ask students to consider what they want to accomplish by taking courses through LaunchCode, and then we guide them on how to make a reasonable plan for success.

Students do not sign up for a LaunchCode course without having a good reason. Each student has a goal or objective they want to achieve, but goal setting is more than just stating what they want to happen. For goals to stick, they must be carefully constructed.

Additionally, we want students to recognize the difference between a fixed vs. growth mindset. We will provide some simple examples and methods for boosting confidence and persistence. Remember, intelligence is NOT fixed.  It grows as a result of consistent effort.

## After this activity, students should:
- Recognize that proper goal setting provides a way to measure progress.
- Recognize that effort increases skill.
- Recognize that missing a goal is not a huge setback. Things happen. It is okay to make mistakes as long as students pick themselves back up.
- Understand that LaunchCode is the beginning of a long learning journey and that the concepts learned today will be essential to a long and successful career.
- Create 2 - 4 strong goals.
- Create 1 - 2 personally encouraging statements to help boost morale when things get challenging.

## Activity Notes
1) SMART goals:
- A strong goal usually follows the SMART style (2 minutes):
  - **S**pecific - It states a detailed objective.
  - **M**easurable - There is a clear way to identify if the goal has been met.
  - **A**ttainable - The goal is realistic, given the student's current skill level.
  - **R**elevant - The goal must focus on the work done in LaunchCode.
  - **T**ime Bound - The goal must have a clear duration.
- "I will learn how to code" sounds like a good goal, but there are several ways to make it better. Ask for suggestions (1 minute).
  - Possible suggestions: Add detail (e.g. code in Python) or add a timeline.
- Examples (2 min): (If possible, have the examples on the board or available to the students before the studio starts).

- ○ Show the students examples of poorly written goals, and show how these can be made better.
- ○ Share one of your own SMART goals from your learning journey.

| Poor Examples | Improved Examples |
|---|---|
| "I will become a developer." Not specific or measurable, and doesn't have a deadline. | "I will be an entry-level JavaScript developer one year from today." |
| "I will create the next blockbuster video game." No deadline, and probably not possible just by completing LC101. | "I will make a simple web-app within 3 months after completing LC101." |
| | *TA example here.* |

2) **(2 minutes)** Emphasize that missing a goal or falling behind on the assignments is NOT the end of the world. Discuss ways that TAs and LaunchCode will support students who are struggling. Note office hours, Slack community, etc.

3) **(3 - 5 minutes)** Closely aligned with writing good goals is the difference between a "fixed" and a "growth" mindset.
- Individuals with a fixed mindset assume that skill, talent, and intelligence is determined at birth, and cannot be changed.
- Individuals with a growth mindset recognize that skill, talent, and intelligence can all be increased through experience and consistent effort.
- Show the following table and ask the students (in their heads) to reflect on whether they lean more toward a fixed or growth mindset.
- No individual is all one way or the other, but recognizing where you stand helps you adjust your outlook on completing this course.
- Have the students suggest additional examples, and add these to the list.

| Fixed Mindset | Growth Mindset |
|---|---|
| Intelligence and talent are fixed at birth. | Intelligence and talent change based on effort and experience. |
| Avoid challenges because making mistakes damages their image. | Accept challenges as ways to expand skills. |
| Give up easily. | Persist despite obstacles. |

| Think that making mistakes shows poor intelligence. | Recognizes that making mistakes is a part of learning. |
| --- | --- |
| Avoid exerting effort for fear of missing the target. | Effort = outcome. Trying, again and again, leads to success. |
| NOT trying is preferable to trying something new or hard. | Problems won't get solved by ignoring them. |
| *Have students suggest other examples...* | *Have students suggest other examples...* |

4) <u>The power of YET</u>: <span style="color:red">(5 - 10 minutes)</span>
- Have the students consider the phrase, "I can't code." Does it seem positive or negative? Growth or fixed mindset?
- How about the phrase, "I can't code YET." How did adding just one word affect the vibe of the phrase?
- By adding "yet", we can change many fixed statements into opportunities to grow.  It changes a formidable obstacle into a minor speed bump on the way to success. "Sure, I'm struggling NOW, but I will eventually succeed."
- Share examples and ask the students to suggest others:
  - "I don't understand this," vs. "I don't understand this YET."
  - "My program doesn't work," vs. "My program doesn't work YET."

5) <u>Students write and share SMART goals</u>:
- Students write 1 - 2 goals for their time at LaunchCode (if not already done). <span style="color:red">(2 - 3 minutes)</span>
- Students write 1 - 2 goals for their career (if not already done). <span style="color:red">(2 - 3 minutes)</span>
- While the students are writing, circulate to each person to encourage and help them use the SMART framework.
- Group share goals: <span style="color:red">(10 - 15 minutes)</span>
  - Ask for 1 volunteer to share 1 goal.  Have them explain why they chose it.
  - The TA and other students should provide gentle, constructive feedback for making the goal stronger (if necessary).  The key should be on suggesting improvements and NOT on pointing out what's wrong.
  - Repeat for the remaining students.
    - *Warning - The moment someone refuses to share, that sets the stage for everyone else to shy away as well.  Forcing participation is not helpful, but so is 100% non-participation.*

- Ask for the 1st volunteer. Ask for the second (or have the 1st person choose the next). Ask for the third, etc. Once volunteering peters out, it is OK to move on, but try to encourage at least half of the students to share.
- Reinforce the "we are in this together" theme.

6) <u>Power poses and inspirational statements</u>: This sounds weird, but it WORKS!
- The TA MUST model this while explaining.
- Have the students stand up and strike a "power pose". This can be a superhero stance (like Wonder Woman), or anything that exudes confidence, strength or competence.
- Hold the power pose for 20 - 30 seconds, then stop. Ask if anyone felt a surge of energy, strength or confidence while holding the pose.
  - *Tip - Avoid asking, "How did holding the pose make you feel?" The goal gets destroyed if someone blurts out, "Silly!"*
  - Properly done, the power poses (especially in a group) can refresh and encourage confidence.
  - If you have the "Rocky" Gonna Fly song on hand, play that while posing.
- Similar to "power poses", inspirational statements are tools to pump you up. These are quotes, ideas or phrases that you find personally motivating. Inspirational statements fall right in line with "yet". Examples are in the table below.
- Have the students write 1 - 2 inspirational statements. (2 - 3 minutes)
- Group share inspirational statements: (10 - 15 minutes)
  - Have each student talk about why they find their statement motivating.
- Examples:

| Fixed mindset | Inspirational/Success/Growth mindset |
|---|---|
| "I don't understand this." | "I don't understand this YET." |
| "I'm not a coder." | "I'm not a coder YET." |
| "My program doesn't work." | "My program doesn't work YET." |
| "This is too hard." | "This is hard now, but it will get easier." |
| "I can't..." or "I wish..." | "I will..." |
| | "If I don't get it right, I don't stop until I do." - Serena Williams |
| | "There may be people who have more talent than you, but there's no excuse for anyone to work harder than you do." - Derek Jeter |

7) <u>Wrap up</u>: As time permits.
- Students work on making sure their goals and inspirational statements are written down in a place they regularly check.
- This is a good time to recommend "Booster Rockets" part of the online book.