Studio: Confidence Building (TA Notes)

Summary

This studio is an opportunity to learn more about building confidence and discuss ways that students can do so. Self-doubt impacts many people across many disciplines, and people from non-traditional backgrounds are particularly affected.

Coding is hard to learn, and the tech industry has many high and confusing barriers to entry. Trying to navigate this new subject matter and contemplating entering a new industry is intimidating. Beyond class 8, we start talking about JavaScript in the context of a much larger system and how it is used to build whole applications. Now is a good time to discuss how to build confidence when learning new things.

Objectives

- Have an open and honest conversation about confidence and the ways that different people build confidence.
- Help students understand that they are not alone in their struggles with confidence.

Activity Notes

1) First, go over the following list of tasks. For each one, ask students to make a silent note of whether or not they feel capable of achieving that task. Remind them that even if they are unsure of how something works, at this point in the class they already know more about coding than the majority of the world's population. (5-10 min)
   a) Use code to print "Hello, World" to the screen.
   b) Define, initialize, change, and use variables.
   c) Convert the string '1234' into a number.
   d) Construct a for loop to repeat a task 100 times.
   e) Construct if/else statements to decide which of three tasks to perform.
   f) Build, modify, and access an array.
   g) Design and call a function.
   h) Call one function from within another function.
   i) Find and fix bugs in a segment of non-working code.

2) Have students think of something they enjoy and are confident in their ability to do. This can be anything from their work/personal life (hobbies, etc.) as long as it is not related to coding. Give students about 1-2 minutes to think of their topic and then have each student share with the group. Highlight to students that they didn't start out as an expert and had to learn and build confidence to become one. (10-15 min)

3) Discuss the following questions (about 5 minutes for each question). These questions are prompts. If the conversation naturally covers one, then that is great!
    a) Since joining the course, have you ever felt unsure about your future in the tech workforce?
    b) Have you ever responded to a compliment by diminishing the work that earned you the praise? If so, why did you answer in that way?
    c) How do you feel in a test/quiz/studio when someone finishes much earlier than you?
    d) What are you most proud of from your time working with LaunchCode?
    e) What are your strengths?
    f) What gives you confidence?
    g) How can you use your effort and strengths to boost your confidence?
4) Go over the helpful tips for the students. Make sure that everyone has had a chance to share (5-10 min.)
    a) Have the students bookmark the studio page or store a copy on their computers - whatever works best. That page has helpful tips!
    b) Go over the tips and an example of how those tips can help. Did something from these tips help you when you dealt with self-doubt? Once again, don't be afraid to share personal experiences!
    c) When it comes to voicing your worth (tip #6), emphasize to students that they should not sacrifice their well-being for the sake of their career. A lot of tech advice teaches junior devs that they have to give up an arm, leg, and soul for a shot in the industry. Remind students that this is NOT true!