The greatest barrier that I have faced was in grade 9, when I reached Java in my Computer Science syllabus. At the time, my school had no teacher for the course and the curriculum was not well-developed. Instead of being proactive, I spent no effort trying to learn it myself. Before I knew it, I was in grade 10 and a new teacher finally came. He was not well-versed in Java, and more a specialist in C++. Although the unstructured nature of the class required us to self-study, I did not keep up with the curriculum pace. I failed the mid-semester test and realized that it was a wake-up-call. I asked my friends for help but they, too, were struggling. So, I read the textbook over and over, until I knew how Java worked as a compiler and the theory behind it. I also found a Youtube channel Thenewboston, where I learned how to code. I practiced on my computer after installing a Java IDE called BlueJ.

Months of intense self-learning led me to do programs that most of my classmates could not, and the few who could, were my close friends. These friends and I constantly studied together outside of class, and we kept pushing the boundaries of our abilities, and ameliorated our algorithms. We became adept at coding and could solve virtually any problem that our teacher threw at us. The best part of it all was that these questions involve the use of complicated logic. The exhilaration I got from solving the toughest questions from the syllabus was unearthly. My passion for coding was born there. I enjoyed coding so much that it never felt like work, and I found myself in a state of “flow”.

In summer 2017, I pursued challenging projects that went beyond what the curriculum covered. This perpetual hunger for improvement and the enjoyment I got from coding put me in a positive reinforcement loop that pushed me to learn even more. Looking back at this whole episode, I come to the conclusion that one can turn a barrier into an opportunity that thrusts him to greater heights.