I was on my way to my fourth period class, Native Spanish, trying to process the fact that I did not yet have an algebra teacher. I slowly descended the stairs, dragging my feet in an awful attempt to assimilate to the bad news.

My mind felt like an endless carousel of pessimistic, worried filled thoughts.

Bad grades, meet Geraldine.

I was so deep into my own head, psyching myself out *on the first day of school* that I missed the soft, but commanding voice, that permutated the air as I walked into my next class.

"Buenos dias niñas, my name is Andrea." My head shot up, and my eyes clashed with Andrea's, the woman who would soon become my mentor and role model. She was so tiny, so youthful, that she easily blended in with the students. The only sign that she was indeed a teacher was her normal clothes, standing out from our uncomfortable uniform.

"GLOBALORIA." That was the heading of the papers Andrea had placed in front of us, so big and bold. It took me a few tries to just read the name and not mess up the pronunciation. "So, ladies, this class isn't going to be what you expected. You guys, in addition to perfecting your Spanish, will be learning how to code by making a video game." Silence. Absolute and utter silence filled the room.

I then proceeded to panic - now I had two things to worry about, not failing Algebra and not failing this weird, unknown and unheard of concept called "coding". Failing wasn't an option.

I am from an immigrant family. Education is the synonym of success and a happy life. My mother has always impressed upon me the importance of having an education, of being an independent and successful young woman. Unfortunately, for me, I took that to mean I could not possibly fail anything. I could not possibly get something wrong or make a mistake.

Since I wasn't going to fail, instead I dug in and month by month I wrote line by line of code, slowly learning and understanding how computers comprehended the commands we coders gave them. One of my first projects was to make a circle move to the right on the screen, doing that same move over and over and over again in order to learn looping. Easy, right? No. Not easy for a beginner. I thought, *I'll just draw a circle and change the x-axis to make it move from left to rights.* But computers don't think that way. They don't instinctively know what "circle" means. I spent long periods of time looking at a piece of code and wondering, *how can I possibly make this work?* But I did. I did make it work. I made that circle move left to right, then up and down, and

then when it reached the edges it would bounce back. Every time that I ran into an error, I fixed it.

It was in those months full of learning and failures that I learned making a mistake was not the worst thing that could happen. When each of those lines of code made my program stop and spit out an error, I had to stop and assimilate to the fact that *I* made a mistake. Not the computer, but me. And slowly, error by error, I understood that making mistakes did not mean failing, and failing did not mean disappointing my mother. I had to learn to deal with the frustration of not getting something right, of messing up, of failing.

Funny enough, those coding mistakes, those "failures", that I feared so much became one of my sources of pure pride and happiness. With every error that I fixed came the reward of feeling pride and accomplishment. Now, I know that failure just means working harder, being better at something, expanding my knowledge and gaining new perspective.