# Sarah Stodder: Finding Purpose, Creativity, and Innovation in Tech

## Achievements

- Built a personal finance tracker and coding games

- Volunteered to revamp the Childhood Cancer Society website

- Boosted Coding Temple's student retention by 25% as an instructor

- Created a custom Slack bot for peer recognition

Sarah Stodder's journey into the world of technology wasn't a straight path—it was one of discovery, resilience, and an unwavering desire to pursue something greater.

Growing up in Cañon City, Colorado, Sarah always had an innate curiosity for computers. This spark was first ignited at Madison Exploratory Elementary School, a choice school where she had the privilege of learning from Ms. Davis, an exceptional computer teacher. Unlike traditional classes that focused solely on research, Ms. Davis introduced Sarah and her classmates to hands-on projects that made technology exciting and accessible.

Through early exposure to coding fundamentals like HTML and formatting, Sarah discovered an interest in problem-solving that would later shape her career. However, after high school, the options for a long-term career felt limited. Many in her community pursued jobs in either the prison system or healthcare, but Sarah yearned for something different.

## Career Path

- Found her way into tech through self-discovery, volunteer work, and mentorship

- Moved from being a bootcamp graduate to an instructor, then into student success management

- Now focusing on developing innovative projects like a National Suicide Hotline chatbot and a chronic illness health-tracking app.

## Key Experience

- Early exposure to coding fundamentals (HTML, formatting)

- Completed a 13-week immersive bootcamp at Coding Temple, mastering Python, Flask, HTML/CSS, and full-stack development.

# The Breaking Point: Turning Struggle into Strength

For years, Sarah explored various jobs—waitressing, bartending on a train, even working in healthcare—but nothing felt like the right fit. The turning point came when she joined the team opening a Natural Grocers store in Cañon City. The physically demanding work exacerbated her undiagnosed chronic illnesses, which include Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS), Mast Cell Activation Syndrome (MCAS), and hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (hEDS). These conditions caused chronic pain, frequent dislocations, extreme fatigue, and difficulty standing for long periods.

Breaks became moments of quiet suffering, where she would cry in her car, knowing she couldn't keep going this way. Her body was telling her she needed a change—something sustainable, something that wouldn't break her down.

That change came unexpectedly while bartending at her second job. She met a software engineer who had taught himself to code, sparking a revelation: there were other paths available. That night, she researched high-paying jobs in tech and stumbled upon full-stack development. Intrigued, she took a free introductory coding course, reconnecting with the love of problem-solving she first experienced in Ms. Davis' classroom. It was a path that could provide her not only financial stability but also the flexibility to accommodate her health needs, work remotely, and be present for her children without the toll of physical labor.

# Immersing Herself in Tech

Determined to fully commit to this career field, Sarah enrolled in Coding Temple's software engineering bootcamp. The 13-week immersive course was grueling—she spent long nights completing assignments, pulling all-nighters during particularly challenging weeks, and pouring every ounce of her energy into mastering new coding languages. When she built her first website using HTML and CSS, she was hooked. Diving deeper into Python, Flask, and full-stack development, she created a finance tracking application that she continues to refine and use to this day.

She also built a series of small projects, including a Hangman game for her children and a Pokémon-inspired command-line game that tested her growing knowledge of scripting and databases.

*The challenges of learning to code were immense, but they were nothing compared to what she had already endured. Tech gave her something she had never experienced in the workforce before—control over her own future.*

# Giving Back and Making an Impact

Despite her technical achievements, breaking into the industry proved challenging. Facing job search fatigue, she turned to volunteer work, contributing to the Childhood Cancer Society's Adventure Ted website overhaul. Her innovative mindset led her to improve the site's navigation and user experience, demonstrating her ability to create real-world solutions. Her efforts didn't go unnoticed—Coding Temple reached out, offering her a role as an associate instructor.

Sarah thrived in this role, mentoring students with no prior technical experience and guiding them into tech careers. She later became the lead instructor for the Data Analytics course and eventually transitioned into student success management, where she played a key role in increasing student retention rates by 25%.

**Her leadership and passion for accessibility in education transformed the student experience, making tech careers more attainable for people from diverse backgrounds.**

# Leading and Inspiring Others

Sarah's impact goes beyond education and coding—she became a fierce advocate for those with disabilities in tech. She pushed for workplace accommodations, encouraged students to advocate for themselves, and built a culture where no one felt they had to choose between their health and their career.

Alongside her instructional work, Sarah continued creating projects aimed at improving workplace culture. One of her most notable projects was designing a custom Slack bot that allowed team members to give each other peer recognition in a fun and engaging way. This tool helped create a more positive work environment, reinforcing her belief that tech could be used to build more inclusive and supportive spaces.

# A New Chapter of Innovation & Advocacy

After an incredible tenure at Coding Temple, Sarah found herself at a crossroads. While her time there had been transformative, it was time for her next big adventure—one that would allow her to continue advocating for inclusivity while building solutions that truly mattered.

Now, she is channeling her passion into projects that align with her values and creativity. She is currently developing a chatbot for the National Suicide Hotline, aiming to ensure that no one in crisis is left waiting for support. She also envisions creating an affordable, accessible health-tracking app tailored to individuals with chronic illnesses, providing insights that empower them to manage their conditions more effectively.

# Looking Ahead with Purpose

"Never be so afraid of what's ahead of you that you hold yourself back. Fear can either stop you or push you forward—choose to be pushed forward."

Sarah's journey exemplifies the power of resilience, self-advocacy, creativity, and innovation. From discovering her love of coding to uplifting an entire community of learners, she has proven that career paths are rarely linear—but with curiosity and determination, they can lead to extraordinary places.

Sarah remains committed to making the tech world more inclusive—one innovation, one piece of advocacy, and one life-changing project at a time.

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