Who are our mentors? Who are those who have tested, pushed, and taught us?

Rather, what are our mentors?

Does a mentor even have to be a person?

VEX Robotics is a mentor; it fits all of a mentor’s characteristics. A mentor has high expectations, pushing you to do better than you thought you could. A mentor nurtures—but never hesitates to show tough love when necessary.

Everything I need to know, I learned from VEX Robotics:

Hard work pays off. Without it, even the best idea cannot come to fruition. Achieving something great requires building it up, watching it fail, breaking it down, doing it better.

Learn from the wisdom of others. Communication is essential. The greatest triumphs of humanity weren’t built by angry, closed-minded dogmatists: they were built with discussion, diligence, and careful examination of the work of others, especially that of competitors.

Nothing is guaranteed. The unexpected can and will happen. Deal with it.

Control yourself. Actions of frustration usually aren’t good ones. When things don’t go well, do not take what your work and shake it violently; this will cause everything to fall off your axles, you will be set back. Don’t destroy your metaphorical robots in life.

Have fun. “Never take life too seriously; nobody gets out alive anyways.” Hard work is important, but fresh air, good food, making terrible jokes and laughing at them anyway, all have their places as well. It’s important not to forget that.

That’s what VEX Robotics means to me.

-Jonathan Qu, Team 10X