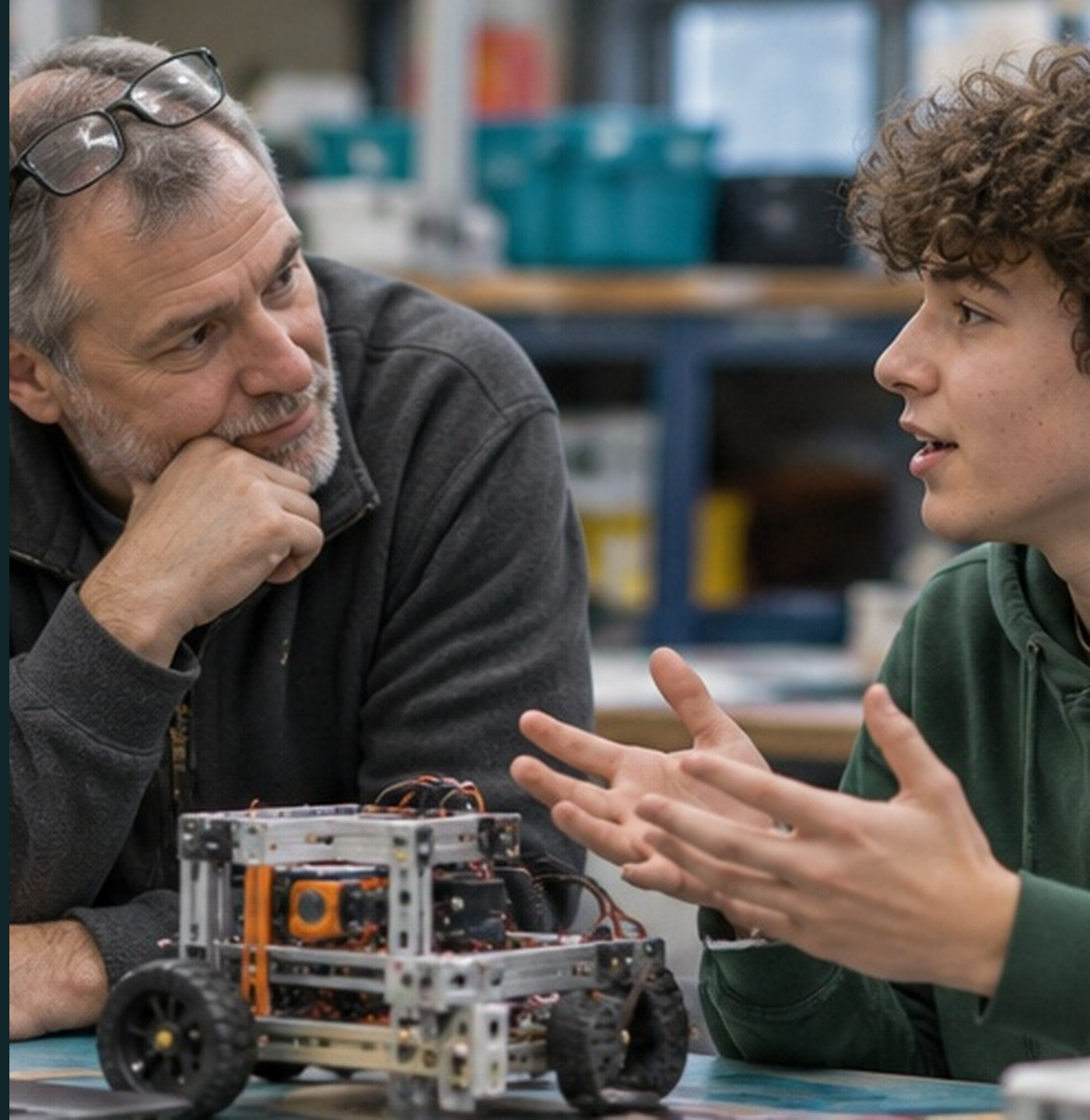
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Mentoring for Innovation

Building trust, growth, and ownership

Andrew Spiece



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A mentor helps someone grow.

The goal is not simply to finish the task.

What did a great mentor do that helped you become more capable?

Think • Pair • Share

1. **Trusted guide**
   Makes questions and mistakes safe.
2. **Supportive listener**
   Understands goals and invites reflection.
3. **Role model**
   Shows good judgment without taking over.

Mentoring and coaching

Both are useful. Choose the approach that matches the need.

	Coaching	Mentoring
Purpose	Immediate performance or skills	Longer-term personal growth
Direction	Coach guides the task	Learner increasingly leads
Method	Instruction and targeted feedback	Listening, reflection and guidance

Why mentoring matters

Growth can extend beyond the learner to the whole team.



Learner

Confidence, skills, better judgment

Mentor

Reflection, leadership, new perspectives

Team

Shared knowledge, sustainable leadership

Discuss: Which benefit matters most in your team right now?

Five phases of mentoring

The relationship changes as the learner becomes more capable.



1	2	3	4	5
Build trust	**Set direction**	**Support progression**	**Wrap up**	**Move on**
Create safety	Agree on goals	Shift ownership	Review growth	Plan transition

The goal: progressively transfer ownership to the learner.

Trust makes learning possible.

Be reliable

Show up prepared and follow through.

Listen openly

Make room for uncertainty and mistakes.

Respect boundaries

Be honest about privacy and confidentiality.

Ask: What helps a learner feel safe asking for help?



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Make goals SMART.

Help learners define success without choosing the goal for them.

S	M	A	R	T
Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant	Time-bound

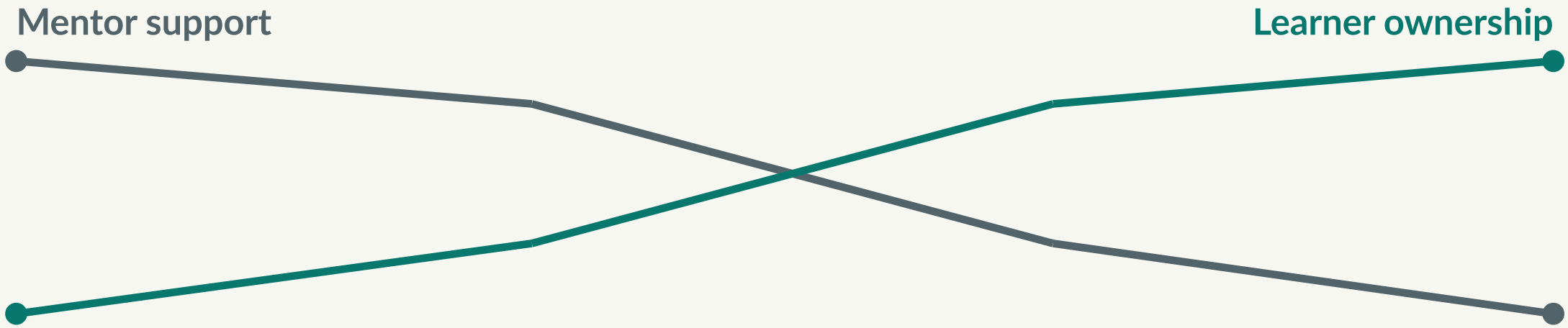
EXAMPLE / FROM “GET BETTER AT PROGRAMMING”

“By Friday, I’ll test my robot’s turning code and record three results.”

Practice: Rewrite a broad goal into one actionable next step.

Shift responsibility over time.

Guide first. Practice together. Then let the learner lead.



Guide

Model a strategy.

Practice together

Ask and give feedback.

Step back

Let the learner decide.

A three-stage conversation

Help the learner move from exploring a challenge to choosing a next action.

01

Exploration

Clarify the goal and what the learner has tried.

→

02

New understanding

Offer feedback or model a useful technique.

→

03

Action

Evaluate options and agree on a next step.

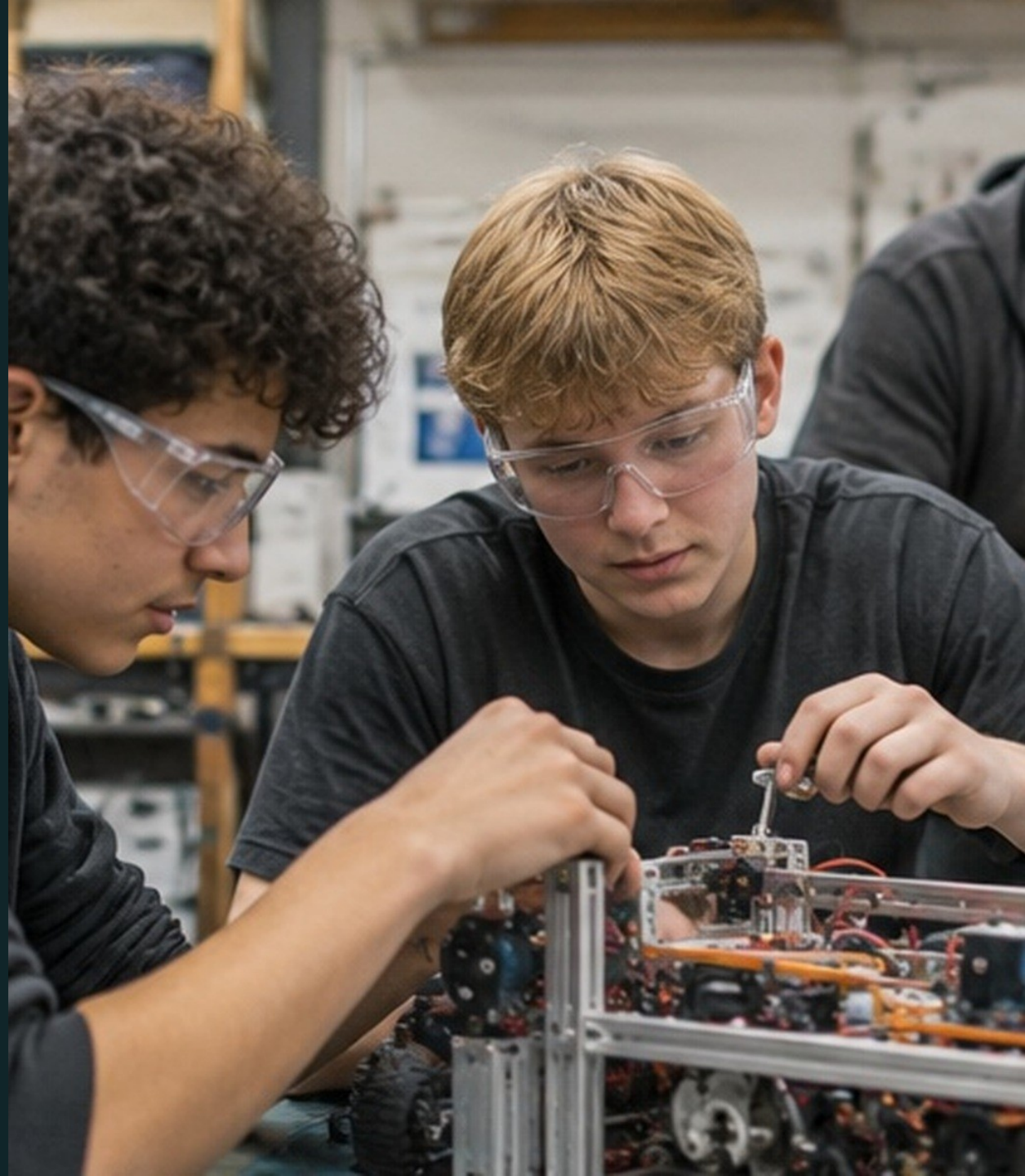
Listen first. Make meaning together. Agree on action.

SCENARIO / ROBOTICS WORKSHOP

“Can you just fix it for us?”

A student’s robot is not working. They are frustrated and ask you to take over.

How would you respond?



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Try the conversation.

One person mentors; the other plays the learner. Then switch roles.

1	**Explore**	“What have you tried so far?”
2	**Build understanding**	“What did the last test tell you?”
3	**Choose action**	“What will you try next?”

Debrief: When did the learner take ownership of the next step?

Words can open or close a conversation.

Closes learning	Opens learning
“Why did you do that?”	“What were you trying to achieve?”
“That idea won’t work.”	“What could we test to find out?”
“Here, let me fix it.”	“Which part would you like help with?”

Challenge the idea respectfully while supporting the person.

Plan a healthy transition.

The relationship can evolve without undoing independence.

04

Celebrate progress

Review the goals. Recognize accomplishments. Name what the learner can now do.

05

Plan the next chapter

Agree on future roles, appropriate contact and the learner's next opportunity.

Ask: What can the learner now do without my help?

What will you change this week?

Choose one concrete action for your next mentoring conversation.

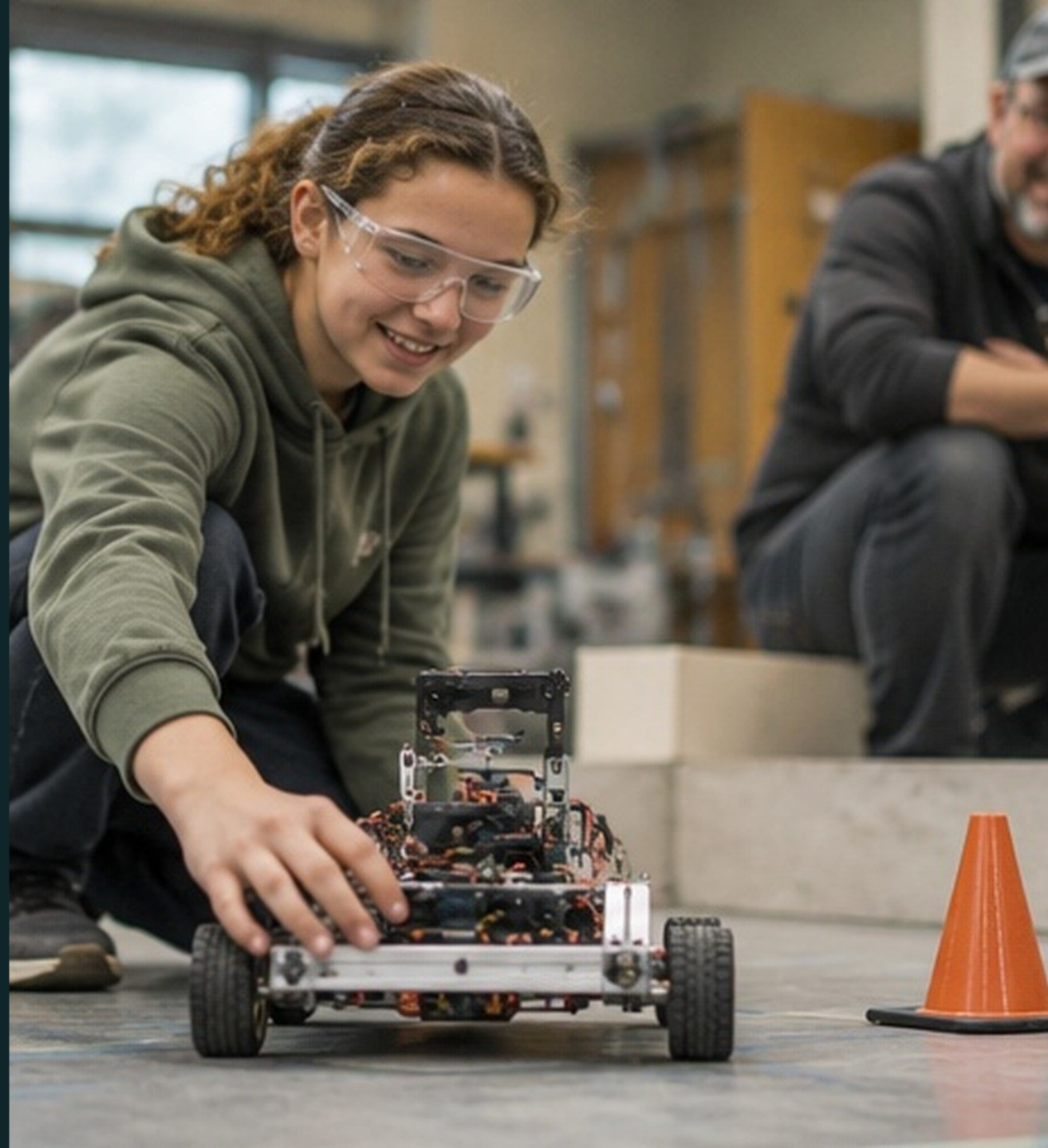
01 A question I will ask instead of giving an answer

02 A task I will let the learner own

03 A way I will recognize progress

THE TAKEAWAY

Great mentoring creates independence, not dependence.



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