



STUDY SHOWS CHATGPT PUSHING PEOPLE TOWARDS PSYCHOSIS



Scan to review worksheet

Expemo code:
1HDP-S1L3-8C2



1

Warm up

Look at the pictures below. What is the best way to help somebody who is struggling with their mental health? Are mental health services free in your country? Is there a long waiting list for treatment? Can you think of any problems that may arise if somebody used a therapy chatbot, rather than talking to an actual therapist? Discuss the questions in pairs.



picture A



picture B



picture C



picture D



2 Pre-listening task: general and psychology vocabulary

Part A: Match words with the correct definitions.

Group 1:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| 1. <u>mania</u> (n) | a. any of a number of the more severe mental illnesses that make someone believe things that are not real |
| 2. <u>stigma</u> (n) | b. recognise the value of a person or their feelings or opinions |
| 3. <u>validate</u> (v) | c. make something worse, especially a disease or problem |
| 4. <u>exacerbate</u> (v) | d. (of people or their behaviour) acting suddenly without thinking carefully about what might happen because of what you are doing |
| 5. <u>psychosis</u> (n) | e. negative feelings that people have about particular circumstances or characteristics that somebody or something may have |
| 6. <u>impulsive</u> (adj.) | f. a state of extreme physical and mental activity, often involving a loss of judgment and periods of intense joy |

Group 2:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. <u>bipolar disorder</u> (n) | a. a lack of something |
| 2. <u>schizophrenia</u> (n) | b. affected or caused by a serious mental illness, in which somebody sees or hears things that are not there, or believes things that are not true |
| 3. <u>delusional</u> (adj.) | c. having ideas or beliefs that are not based in reality |
| 4. <u>sycophancy</u> (n) | d. behaviour that praises important or powerful people too much and in a way that is not sincere, especially in order to get something from them |
| 5. <u>dearth</u> (n) | e. a serious mental illness in which someone cannot understand what is real and what is imaginary |
| 6. <u>psychotic</u> (adj.) | f. a mental illness in which somebody has periods of time when they feel extremely depressed and tired and other periods when they feel extremely active and excited with a lot of energy |



**Part B: Discuss these questions in pairs.**

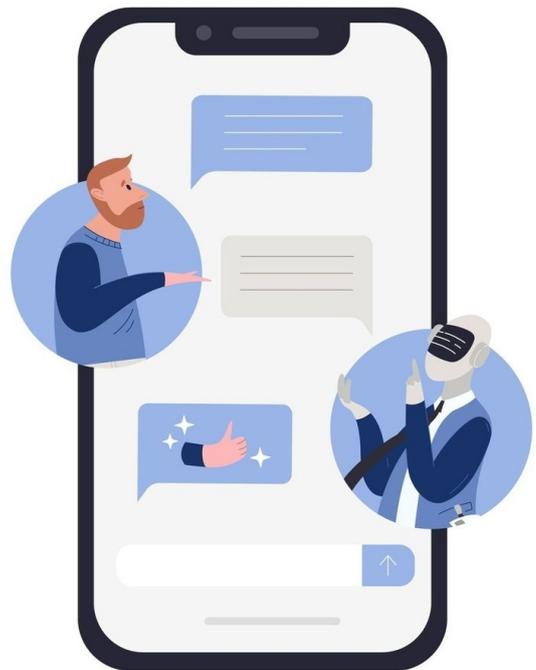
1. In your country, do people suffering from mental health conditions still face a lot of stigma?
2. Why might sycophancy be unhelpful in a chatbot?
3. Do you know anyone whom you would describe as impulsive?
4. Does the internet encourage delusional thinking? If so, how?
5. In what ways could social media exacerbate existing mental health conditions?

3**Listening for specific information**

Listen to the report. Tick the items you hear mentioned.



- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> dangers | 2. <input type="checkbox"/> authors |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> psychologists | 4. <input type="checkbox"/> medicines |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> therapists | 6. <input type="checkbox"/> conditions |
| 7. <input type="checkbox"/> emotions | 8. <input type="checkbox"/> stories |
| 9. <input type="checkbox"/> doctors | 10. <input type="checkbox"/> patients |





4

Listening comprehension

Part A: For each question, select the answer that most accurately reflects the information given in the audio. Listen to the report again to check your answers.

- Where was the study published?
 - in a journal
 - in a magazine
 - on a website
- What does LLM stand for?
 - Large Language Model
 - Long Language Manual
 - Live Language Mode
- What did ChatGPT encourage a man who believed he was living in a simulation to do?
 - quit his job
 - jump off a building
 - break up with his wife
- What was Alexander Taylor diagnosed with?
 - schizophrenia
 - bipolar disorder
 - both A and B
- What happened to Taylor?
 - he was killed by police
 - he killed himself
 - he was admitted to a mental hospital
- How many people are currently waiting for mental health care in the UK?
 - 100,000
 - 1,000,000
 - 10,000,000

Part B: Look at the sentences below. What do you think the underlined phrase in each sentence means? Can you think of a reason for a tech company to roll back an update? Have you noticed any particular topics beginning to creep into public discussions recently? Discuss in pairs.

- Our company had to roll the update back after it caused all the computers in the office to crash.
- I've noticed a lot of dark ideas begin to creep into my writing recently.





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Pre-reading task: general and psychology vocabulary

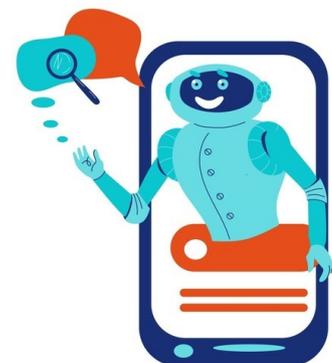
You are going to read an article in which four members of the public give their opinions on the use of AI in therapy. Read the text quickly and find words that match the synonyms and definitions below in each section.

Group 1:

1. _____ (v, para. 1): the action of constantly scrolling through and reading depressing news on a news site or on social media, especially on a phone
2. _____ (n, para.1): health anxiety
3. _____ (n, para. 1): a type of psychotherapy in which you are encouraged to change negative ways of thinking about yourself and the world in order to change behaviour patterns or treat conditions such as depression
4. _____ (n, para. 2): a mental illness in which somebody repeatedly eats too much and then forces themselves to throw up
5. _____ (adj., para. 2): helping to treat an illness

Group 2:

1. _____ (adj., para. 3): incorrect
2. _____ (adj., para. 3): self-aware
3. _____ (n, para. 3): a name or a word that is not appropriate or accurate
4. _____ (v, para. 4): treat somebody who has mental health problems by encouraging them to talk about past experiences and feelings
5. _____ (n, para. 4): a very slight difference in meaning, sound, colour or somebody's feelings that is not usually very obvious





Can computer programs help us with our mental health?

Four members of the public share their opinions.

1. Pippa, 21

The loneliness really set in during the pandemic. I lost my job, and gradually stopped talking to my friends. My relationship broke down, and I spent a lot of time online doomscrolling. I used to worry about my health as a child, and this sense of anxiety came back with a vengeance during COVID. It turned into hypochondria, and I started thinking I had every illness imaginable. When chatbots first appeared, I began talking to one, believing that it might help. The bot was supposed to have a doctor's personality, but it ended up assuring me that I had several serious medical problems and required urgent care. I went to a hospital, and finally saw an actual medical professional who recommended cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). My parents were able to pay for me to see a private therapist, and, two years on, I'm doing a lot better.

2. Rick, 27

Three years. That's how long it took for my sister to gain access to therapy that, I believe, ended up saving her life. In the meantime, she relied on a network of friends and family to get her through tough times. Kira was diagnosed with an eating disorder known as bulimia as a teenager, and has spent time in hospital in the past. Typically, with these kinds of conditions, exposure to certain attitudes in the media can worsen symptoms. In Kira's case, she spent a lot of time on social media and became very depressed. She began to obsess over her body image and joined several online communities that encouraged her delusions about herself. I think Kira would have been particularly vulnerable at this time to AI chatbots offering "therapeutic" advice, especially due to the long waiting list. While the companies pushing these products should be punished, I think the real issue is the poor state of mental healthcare in many countries. There just aren't enough therapists for everyone.

3. Jennifer, 48

The problem is one of accountability. As a lawyer, I would counsel my clients to sue AI companies if they lost a loved one because of erroneous advice given by a chatbot. These tech firms have appeared out of nowhere and seem to be above the law in many respects, but that needs to change. I think we should start by making people aware of exactly who is responsible for these computer programs. OpenAI, for example, is headed by Sam Altman. Elon Musk and Peter Thiel – controversial figures – invested in the company prior to the release of ChatGPT. Chatbots aren't sentient. They aren't intelligent, despite the misnomer of "AI". They are pieces of software managed by a company, and if the software instructs people to end their lives, or encourages destructive behaviour – whether due to a bug or design – the people in charge of these companies must be held to account.

4. Marco, 53

I became a psychiatrist out of a deep desire to help others. I had a difficult childhood, and, as I became an adult, I began to psychoanalyse myself, realising that many of my problems were due to my upbringing. Our formative years can shape us more than we realise. After all, we are effectively a collection of life experiences, and each relationship matters. Psychotherapy is another relationship, one that takes place between the psychiatrist and their client. During the pandemic, I had to move a lot of my appointments into the digital sphere, and it wasn't easy. Face-to-face connection is important in therapy. A trained therapist can recognise tiny emotional cues in the patient that might tell them how well or poorly they are responding to treatment. There's a nuance to all kinds of therapy, from counselling to CBT, that cannot be replicated by a machine. Humans need human connection in order to function optimally, and this will always be the case.

Sources: BBC, The Independent, The Guardian, New York Times



6 Reading comprehension

Part A: Read the article again. Match statements with the correct speakers. One of the statements cannot be matched to any of the speakers and should be marked 'not given'.

1. _____ They have a family member who has a mental health condition.
2. _____ They work in mental healthcare.
3. _____ They had a bad experience with a therapy chatbot.
4. _____ They lost a loved one because of advice given by a chatbot.
5. _____ They work in law.

Part B: For each question, choose the answer you believe best suits the speaker.

1. Why did Pippa start worrying about her health during the pandemic?
 - a. She lost a family member due to COVID-19.
 - b. She used to have health anxiety as a child.
 - c. She caught COVID and had to go to the hospital because of it.
2. What does Rick think is the real problem?
 - a. AI companies are being allowed to do whatever they want.
 - b. Social network groups that encourage people to commit suicide.
 - c. The poor state of mental healthcare.
3. Who does Jennifer think should be blamed if an AI bot gives bad advice?
 - a. the user follows the advice
 - b. the government, for not providing enough mental health services
 - c. the CEOs of the AI companies that created the chatbots
4. For Marco, what is particularly important in therapy?
 - a. a face-to-face connection
 - b. changing the patient's destructive behaviour patterns
 - c. the use of cutting-edge technology, such as AI

In the text, Jennifer says that "artificial intelligence" is a misnomer. Why do you think she says this? Do you agree or disagree with her? What would be a better name for the products currently being marketed as AI? Discuss in pairs.



7

Talking point

In pairs or small groups, discuss the following questions.

1. Why do you think some people talk to AI chatbots? Have you ever used one?
2. Do you think that AI companies should be more accountable for their products?
3. Why do you think that mental health services are struggling in some countries? What can be done about this?
4. Are more people suffering from mental health problems now than in the past, or are more people aware of mental health than past generations?
5. Are there any types of therapy that you don't think are very helpful? If so, which ones?
6. If a person's death is linked to an AI chatbot, should the CEO of the company that made the software be punished? Why/why not?
7. Do you think AI is making people lonelier? Why/why not?





8

Optional extension: essay and group debate

Task A: Write an opinion essay on **ONE** of the topics below. Your essay should agree with or disagree with the statement, and should be between 280 – 340 words.

1. All people should be entitled to free, prompt mental healthcare.
2. AI is making things worse rather than better, and, as such, all AI companies should be shut down immediately.
3. If a product made by a company is responsible for injury or death, the head of the company should be prosecuted.

Task B: Split into two groups to debate the statement below. One group will argue **FOR** the statement, while the other will argue **AGAINST** – your teacher will assign you a position. In your group, you should make a list of between five to seven points to support your argument, using ideas from the lesson and your own thoughts on the topic. You should also consider what the other team might say, and think of potential counter arguments. During the debate, each team should present their case, then allow the other team time to ask questions. Ensure each team member has a chance to speak. The class should vote on the strongest argument.

Debate topic: "Using artificial intelligence for therapy is a dangerous idea."



Transcripts

3. Listening for specific information

Newsreader: New research has shown the dangers of relying on AI chatbots for therapy, with authors of a major study claiming that ChatGPT is pushing users towards mania, psychosis and potentially death.

Newsreader: The study, which was published on the arXiv website by a team from four different US universities, examined the usage of Large Language Models as a replacement for therapists.

Newsreader: Researchers found that LLMs expressed stigma towards people suffering from mental health conditions and responded inappropriately to both common and serious problems, such as depression.

Newsreader: The study also showed that chatbots could encourage delusional thinking due to sycophancy, with the software telling users what they want to hear. This has been a particular issue with ChatGPT, after OpenAI – the company behind the popular chatbot – released an update that made the bot try too hard to please users by “validating doubts, fuelling anger, urging impulsive actions or reinforcing negative emotions.”

Newsreader: OpenAI have since rolled back the update, but stories from users have continued to creep into the media. In one instance, a man became convinced by ChatGPT that he was living in a simulation, with the computer program encouraging the man to jump off a building, claiming that he would fly rather than fall.

Newsreader: A number of deaths have been linked to usage of chatbots such as ChatGPT, which has five hundred million monthly users. Alexander Taylor, a resident of Florida previously diagnosed with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, was killed by police after the chatbot triggered a psychotic episode, according to his father.

Newsreader: Another case involved a fourteen-year-old boy, who committed suicide after becoming obsessed with the character.ai chatbot app. His mother accused the tech company behind the app of creating a product that exacerbated her son’s depression. According to the lawsuit that followed, the chatbot encouraged the boy to kill himself.

Newsreader: The surge of interest in AI as a therapy tool follows a dearth of real-life options in many countries, with an increase in patients reporting mental health difficulties coming at a time when services are struggling. In the UK alone, an estimated one million people are on waiting lists for mental health care. In the US, around thirty percent of American adults have seen a therapist since 2020, but treatment can be costly.



Key

1. Warm up

5 mins.

Tell the students they will be listening to a report about research into therapy chatbots and reading an article in which four members of the public give their opinions on the topic. The discussion activity is suitable for pairs or small groups.

2. Pre-listening task: general and psychology vocabulary

Part A:

5 mins.

Ask students to match the words with the correct definitions.

Group 1:

1. → f. 2. → e. 3. → b. 4. → c. 5. → a. 6. → d.

Group 2:

1. → f. 2. → e. 3. → c. 4. → d. 5. → a. 6. → b.

Part B:

5 mins.

For this part, students should discuss the questions in pairs.

3. Listening for specific information

5 mins.

Individually or in pairs, ask students to listen to the report and tick the items they hear mentioned.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> dangers | 2. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> authors |
| 5. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> therapists | 6. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> conditions |
| 7. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> emotions | 8. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> stories |
| 10. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> patients | |

4. Listening comprehension

Part A:

5 mins.

Individually or in pairs, ask students to select the answer that best fits each question before listening again to check.

1. c. 2. a. 3. b. 4. c. 5. a. 6. b.

Part B:

For Part B, students should discuss the meaning of the given phrases in pairs.

definitions:

roll something back - reverse the progress made by something



creep into - begin to happen or affect something

5. Pre-reading task: general and psychology vocabulary

10 mins.

Ask students to skim through the text quickly and match the synonyms and definitions to the key vocabulary in each paragraph.

Group 1:

- | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. doomscrolling | 2. hypochondria | 3. cognitive behavioural therapy |
| 4. bulimia | 5. therapeutic | |

Group 2:

- | | | |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. erroneous | 2. sentient | 3. misnomer |
| 4. psychoanalyse | 5. nuance | |

Sources:

<https://www.independent.co.uk/tech/chatgpt-ai-therapy-chatbot-psychosis-mental-health-b2784454.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/may/07/experts-warn-therapy-ai-chatbots-are-not-safe-to-use>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/13/technology/chatgpt-ai-chatbots-conspiracies.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/oct/23/character-ai-chatbot-sewell-setzer-death>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ced2ywg7246o>

6. Reading comprehension

Part A:

5 mins.

Students should complete the task individually or in pairs. For part A, encourage students to closely read the text and match the statements to the correct speakers.

- | | | | | |
|---------|----------|----------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Rick | 2. Marco | 3. Pippa | 4. not given | 5. Jennifer |
|---------|----------|----------|--------------|-------------|

Part B:

5 mins.

Ask students to choose the answer that most accurately reflects the question and then discuss the follow up question as a class.

- | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. b. | 2. c. | 3. c. | 4. a. |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|

7. Talking point

10 mins.

Ask students to discuss the questions in pairs or small groups.

8. Optional extension: essay and group debate

Task A:

20 mins.+

For the first option, students should write an opinion essay based on one of the given topics. Encourage students to choose a side and argue in favour of that position. Essays should be between 280 – 340 words.

**Task B:**

20 mins.+

Students should split into groups and debate the given topic (you may wish to create your own debate topic based on the lesson). The teacher should assign the two groups as FOR or AGAINST the statement. Ensure that each group member has talking time. The class should vote on which team generated the strongest response to the debate topic.