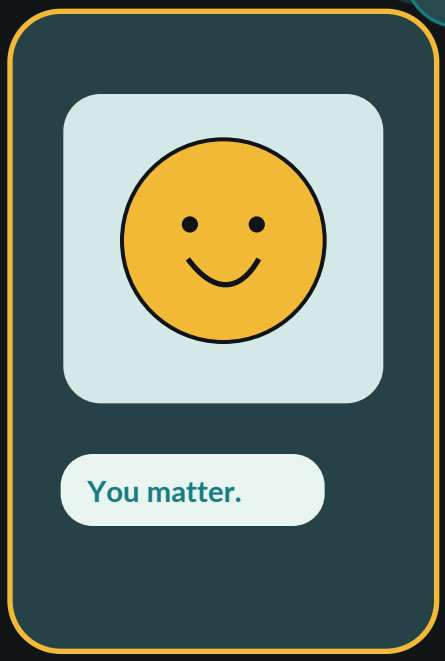
ELEVATED MINDS / HAPPINESS TRIGGERS

WHO ARE THEY TALKING TO?

A parent-and-teen conversation workbook about AI chatbots, emotional support, trust, and real human connection.

12 PAGES / PRINTABLE

Questions, checklists + a family plan



Curiosity first. Safety always. People matter.

Rev. Dr. Christian Frazier

Mental health education | Family resources

WHY THIS MATTERS

More teens are talking to AI. Are they talking to you?

National surveys reveal a gap between chatbot use and conversations with trusted adults.

64%

of teens ages 13-17 use AI chatbots.

Pew Research Center, 2026

19%

of surveyed youth ages 12-21 used AI chatbots for mental health advice.

McBain et al., 2026

63%

of those seeking mental health advice from chatbots told no one.

McBain et al., 2026

READ THE NUMBERS CAREFULLY

These surveys describe patterns, not causes. Feeling helped by an AI chatbot is not the same as evidence of long-term improvement or safety.

MINDSET SHIFT

Ask before you assume. Listen before you lecture.

An AI chatbot can feel available at any hour. Your goal is to make a real conversation feel safer, not to shame your teen.

DO SAY

"What do you like about talking to it?"
"Has it ever given you odd advice?"

TRY TO AVOID

"Only weird kids use that."
"You are in trouble for telling me."

Circle what might make an AI conversation easier:

- [ ] Privacy
- [ ] No embarrassment
- [ ] Always available
- [ ] Hard to tell an adult
- [ ] Curiosity
- [ ] Something else

How could an adult make it easier to talk about difficult feelings?

FIRST CONVERSATION

Start with these five questions

You do not need to interrogate. Pick one question, listen, then thank your teen for speaking.

01 When you have a big feeling, who or what do you talk to first?

02 What kind of answers does a chatbot give you that feel helpful?

03 Has an AI ever told you something that felt strange, wrong or too personal?

04 What topics should always include a real person?

05 Which trusted adult would you feel comfortable talking to?

One rule worth agreeing on: no punishment for honestly reporting a scary or inappropriate chatbot response.

TEEN ACTIVITY

Where do I go for different kinds of help?

Some questions are fine for technology; others need people who know you and can take action.

FACT OR HOMEWORK QUESTION

An AI tool or reliable reference may help, but double-check.

RELATIONSHIP CONFLICT

A trusted person who understands your context can help.

FEELING OVERWHELMED

A parent, counselor, coach or other trusted adult can listen.

FEELING UNSAFE

Seek immediate real-world help, not an AI-only conversation.

My first person to contact about a hard emotion is:

DIGITAL LITERACY

Three questions before believing AI advice

A caring-sounding response is not proof the information is accurate or right for your situation.

WHO KNOWS?

Can I confirm this using a trustworthy human or source?

WHAT IS MISSING?

Does the chatbot know important context, age or health details?

WHAT IS SAFER?

Could following this advice risk harm, isolation or secrecy?

Find a chatbot answer you could safely discuss with an adult.

PRIVACY

What information stays off the chatbot?

Help youth protect themselves without creating fear. Avoid sharing sensitive, identifying or intimate information with AI tools.

KEEP PRIVATE

Full name, phone number, home address or location

KEEP PRIVATE

School name, classroom details or daily whereabouts

KEEP PRIVATE

Passwords, account information or ID numbers

KEEP PRIVATE

Private photos, other people's secrets or medical records

KEEP PRIVATE

Anything you would not want stored, reviewed or shared

One privacy rule our family will practice:

Build your three-person support circle

One caring adult matters; more than one person provides options when somebody is unavailable.

PERSON #1: Home or family

Name: _____

How I can reach them: _____

PERSON #2: School or community

Name: _____

How I can reach them: _____

PERSON #3: Another trusted adult

Name: _____

How I can reach them: _____

If you think a teen may be in immediate danger, contact local emergency services. For suicide-related crisis support in the U.S., call or text 988. A chatbot is not a crisis responder.

TROUBLESHOOTING

What if the AI said something upsetting?

Take seriously anything that suggests self-harm, secrecy, exploitation, or cutting off real-world support.

1 THANK THEM

"Thank you for telling me. You did the right thing."

2 STOP THE CHAT

Pause the conversation and save or report the message if safe to do so.

3 CHECK SAFETY

Ask what happened and whether the teen feels safe now.

4 FIND HUMAN HELP

Bring in a parent, school counselor or licensed professional as appropriate.

For any disclosure of suicide intent, ask directly about immediate danger and stay with the teen while you connect to real support. In the U.S., 988 is available for crisis support.

IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Build a balanced technology routine

The question is not whether your teen has ever used AI. It is whether technology supports learning without replacing real connection.

- [ ] We discuss which AI tools are being used.
- [ ] A trusted adult is available for sensitive conversations.
- [ ] We keep private identifying information out of chatbots.
- [ ] We make time for friends, hobbies and offline interests.
- [ ] We revisit family rules as tools and needs change.

One screen-free connection we will make time for this week:

MAKE IT OURS

Our family AI conversation agreement

Build the agreement with your teen, not merely for your teen. Treat it as something you can revise.

- [ ] We can ask questions about AI without ridicule.
- [ ] We discuss mental-health or relationship advice with a trusted person.
- [ ] We do not share sensitive personal details with chatbots.
- [ ] We tell a trusted adult if a bot says something alarming.
- [ ] We protect sleep, privacy, and human relationships.

Our own additional agreement:

Next time we will revisit this: _____

Keep the conversation open

Use this guide to connect, not to monitor or diagnose. You do not need to figure everything out in one conversation.

WHAT THE RESEARCH DOES AND DOES NOT SAY

A 2026 national youth survey found many young people reported AI mental health advice as helpful, but it did not test clinical outcomes or follow youth over time. A 2025 simulated-crisis study found inconsistent bot safety responses. Technology and evidence keep changing.

Selected research

- McBain et al. (2026). AI chatbot use and disclosure for mental health. JAMA Pediatrics. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2026.2015

- Pew Research Center (2026). How teens use and view AI.

- Brewster et al. (2025). Characteristics and safety of consumer chatbots for emergent adolescent health concerns. JAMA Network Open. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2025.39022

- Spiritual First Aid (2026). Teens, AI, and Mental Health: Research Snapshots, by Jamie Aten and Kent Annan (source synthesis).

- American Psychological Association (2025). Health advisory on AI and adolescent well-being.

FOR PARENTS, SCHOOLS + YOUTH LEADERS

Explore mindfulness education, parent workshops, school assemblies, and emotional regulation resources.

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