

RELATIONSHIPS WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence is now widely used for communication, support, and entertainment. Some AI tools are specifically designed to act as companions, offering conversation, emotional reassurance, and even simulated relationships.

While this can be positive in moderation, there is increasing concern about people forming strong emotional or romantic attachments to AI, which may sometimes affect wellbeing or real life relationships.

What is AI Relationship?

An AI relationship occurs when a person develops an ongoing emotional connection with an artificial intelligence system.

This can range from:

- ▀ **Companionship** – talking regularly and sharing feelings.
- ▀ **Emotional reliance** – turning to AI for comfort, advice or reassurance.
- ▀ **Romantic or intimate attachment** – viewing AI as a partner.

AI systems can:

- ▀ Use natural, conversational language.
- ▀ Remember past interactions
- ▀ Respond with empathy & validation.
- ▀ Adapt to user preferences & communication style.

How do these relationships develop?

AI relationships usually develop gradually through repeated interaction and emotional reinforcement.

1. Emotional Needs – People may turn to AI when experience:

- ▀ Loneliness or social isolation
- ▀ Anxiety, stress or low mood
- ▀ Relationship difficulties
- ▀ Lack of support networks

AI provides immediate, non judgemental responses, which can feel safe and predictable.

2. Design of AI systems – Many AI platforms are designed to:

- ▀ Be consistently positive & supportive.
- ▀ Avoid conflict or criticism.
- ▀ Encourage continued engagement.

This can make interactions feel easier than real life relationships.

3. Personalisation & Memory – AI may:

- ▀ Remember earlier conversations.
- ▀ Refer back to personal details.
- ▀ Use a consistent tone or “personality”.

This can create a sense of familiarity & connection.

4. Lack of risk – Unlike human relationships:

- ▀ There is no rejection.
- ▀ No disagreement unless designed.
- ▀ No social pressure

This can make AI feel like a “safe” alternative.

5. Reinforcement loop – The more someone uses AI:

- ▀ The more comfortable it feels.
- ▀ The more it becomes a habit.
- ▀ The stronger the emotional attachment

Overtime, this can lead to dependency

Warning signs

- ▀ Behavioural signs - Spending excessive time interacting with AI, reduced social interactions with real people.
- ▀ Emotional signs – Seeking reassurance primary in AI, believing AI “cares” in a human sense.
- ▀ Cognitive signs – Believing the AI understands you better than people, difficulty in distinguishing between simulated & real relationships.
- ▀ Safeguarding concerns – Secrecy about using AI, sharing personal or sensitive information, referring to AI as a “boyfriend/ girlfriend”.

Seeking help

If AI use is affecting wellbeing, support is available:

Young People ▀ **Childline** – Free, confidential support (0800 1111)

▀ **Young Minds** – Advice & resources -

Mental Health Support for Young People | YoungMinds

Adult ▀ **Samaritans** – 116 123

▀ **NHS** – Support through a local GP or mental health services

AI can support us, but it should never replace real human interactions & relationships.