

# Risks of Using Mental Health Generative Chatbots

## 1. Lack of Professional Oversight

- Chatbots are **not licensed therapists** and cannot provide clinical diagnosis or treatment.
- Risk: Users may rely on AI instead of seeking appropriate professional care.

## 2. Inaccurate or Harmful Advice

- AI models may generate **incorrect, oversimplified, or culturally inappropriate** suggestions.
- Risk: Following flawed advice could worsen mental health symptoms or delay effective treatment.

## 3. Data Privacy and Confidentiality

- Conversations may be **stored or analyzed** to improve AI systems.
- Risk: Sensitive emotional or mental health information could be **inappropriately accessed or shared** if data policies are unclear or breached.

## 4. Overreliance and Emotional Dependence

- Users may form a **false sense of companionship** or overdependence on the chatbot.
- Risk: Reduced engagement with real social support networks or professionals.

## 5. Limited Crisis Support

- AI tools typically **cannot recognize or respond adequately** to emergencies such as suicidal ideation or self-harm.
- Risk: Delayed intervention in life-threatening situations.

## 6. Bias and Cultural Limitations

- Chatbots are trained on broad datasets that may **reflect social or cultural biases**.
- Risk: Insensitive, invalidating, or discriminatory responses.

## 7. Transparency and Accountability

- Some chatbots do not clearly disclose their **limitations, data use, or AI nature**.
  - Risk: Users may assume they are interacting with a human counselor.
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# Guidelines for Safe and Informed Use

## 1. Understand the Tool's Purpose

- Use AI chatbots for **general wellness support**, mood tracking, or self-help—not as a replacement for therapy.
- Look for tools that clearly state **they are not substitutes for professional care**.

## 2. Check Privacy and Security Policies

- Read the **privacy statement** before sharing personal details.
- Prefer apps with **end-to-end encryption** and the option to delete your data.

## 3. Use Reputable, Evidence-Informed Tools

- Choose chatbots developed in collaboration with **mental health professionals** or backed by credible institutions.
- Look for **scientific validation** or peer-reviewed studies if available.

## 4. Stay Critical of the Information

- Verify advice from the chatbot with **trusted mental health resources** or professionals.
- Be cautious of any chatbot that claims to “diagnose” or “treat” mental illness.

## 5. Know the Limits in a Crisis

- Always have a **crisis plan** (e.g., local emergency numbers, suicide hotlines).
- If you are in danger or distress, contact **human support immediately** rather than relying on AI.

## 6. Maintain Human Connections

- Balance AI interactions with **friends, family, or therapists**.
- Use the chatbot as a **supplementary tool**, not a replacement for real relationships.

## 7. Report Problematic Outputs

- If the chatbot gives **harmful, misleading, or triggering responses**, report it to the developers or platform host.
  - Avoid platforms that do not provide a way to give feedback or flag issues.
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