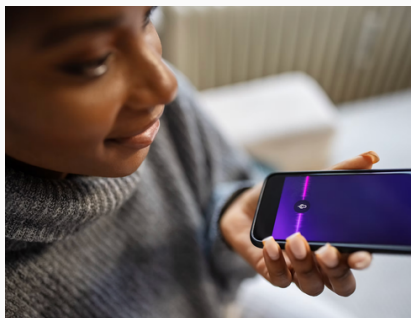


AUGUST NEWSLETTER

The Impact AI is Having on Mental Health

Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming part of everyday life. From helping us write emails and plan vacations to answering health questions and offering emotional support. AI is changing the way we interact with technology—and increasingly, how we care for our mental health.



It was reported by Mental Health Research Canada, that almost 10% of people in Canada said they have intentionally used AI tools to get advice or support for their mental health. This isn't surprising given the widening gaps in the mental healthcare system. For those looking for help, reaching out is a significant step that can be met with barriers that leave many turning to accessible resources such as AI. While AI offers exciting possibilities, it's important to understand both its benefits and its limitations.

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The Pros and Cons

Like many new technologies, AI offers both opportunities and challenges. Understanding both the benefits and the risks can help us make informed decisions about when AI may be a useful tool and when human support is needed.

The Pros and Cons

It makes mental health information more accessible.

In many ways this is a positive. You can ask a question to an AI and it will come back with an answer that comes from multiple online sources and in some cases very accurate information. For many this is a quick and accessible way to get the information they want and need to learn more about themselves and help them make informed decisions before reaching out to a professional.

It can provide inaccurate or incomplete information.

AI is not perfect and is not human. Therefore it cannot understand context, may oversimplify complex situations, or provide incorrect guidance. It is great at gathering all of the information on the internet to put together what looks like a well thought out response. But we also have to keep in mind the amount of information on the internet and that there is a lot of incorrect information as well as a lot of personal opinions that AI cannot differentiate from accurate evidence based information.

Emotional Wellbeing

It can encourage self-reflection.

Many people use AI like a journal, asking questions about their emotions, identifying patterns, or organizing overwhelming thoughts. Because AI is made to be highly agreeable and made to validate your opinions people usually feel really good after using it when describing emotional situations. One thing AI does do well is that it often provides follow-up questions with the goal of gaining more information and insight. This can help you take your thinking in a different (hopefully positive) direction and can help users feel confident or validated in their choices.

AI cannot truly understand human emotion.

Although AI can generate compassionate-sounding responses, it does not experience empathy, emotion, or genuine human connection. It is a computer program. It recognizes patterns in language rather than understanding lived experience

It cannot respond appropriately during a mental health crisis.

This is one of the largest concerns about AI and is currently considered to be a danger. As mentioned above AI has been programmed to be agreeable and supportive of the user. Therefore it often will validate your choices without having the capacity to identify crisis situations or the ability to stop interacting with the user. Someone experiencing suicidal thoughts, abuse, psychosis, or severe mental illness needs immediate human support. AI is not equipped to assess risk, ensure safety, or provide crisis intervention in the way trained professionals and emergency services can.

**Overreliance can reduce human connection.**

While AI can be convenient, it should never replace meaningful relationships. A computer program cannot emotionally support a user and is not a friend. Although when lonely it can feel like a support it is a one way connection. Healing happens through safe, authentic connections—with trusted friends, family members, support groups, living beings, or a mental health professional.

To learn more about the dangers of AI within a mental health crisis I encourage you to read about Tumbler Ridge, BC and the ongoing league battle between the BC community and Open AI. Scan the QR code for the CBC article.



Anomminity

AI doesn't care who you are.

This is because it lacks the capacity to care at all. Some people prefer to open up to AI because they feel that it is a non-judgmental space and share about issues that they would not be willing to share with a person, or feel that AI helps them create the foundation to share



those issues with a person but wants the issue to feel accepted first. In some instances this can lead to greater self disclosure that can allow for the foundation to be set for deeper healing.

Privacy deserves careful consideration.

Before sharing sensitive personal information with any AI platform, it's worth understanding how your information may be stored, used, or protected. AI has the ability to collect information and store it on a server for future use and data history. Unlike conversations with a registered therapist, AI platforms are generally not governed by the same confidentiality and privacy standards.

Staying Safe While Using AI

Like many forms of technology, AI is neither entirely good nor entirely bad. Its impact depends on how we choose to use it. As AI continues to evolve, it will likely become an increasingly useful tool for promoting mental wellness. The goal isn't to avoid it altogether, but to use it wisely.

Some tips and tricks to help you stay safe while using AI are;

1) Seek help from professionals whenever possible.

AI is a tool, not a replacement for professional expertise. Especially when we are talking about healthcare. Speak to a doctor, nurse practitioner, therapist, chiropractor, physiotherapist, nutritionist etc. These professionals spent years studying their specialty to be able to give scientifically supported advice and to do the job to the best of their ability.

2) Limit what you share with AI.

Avoid sharing information that would reveal your identity or any personal information you would not want made public. AI tracks your information and stores it in a server. AI cannot guarantee security of this information.

3) Fact check the information AI provides.

Don't assume everything AI says is accurate. Critically consider information provided by AI. It is a great starting point for research, but double check the resources AI has provided for accuracy because as said earlier AI has access to the entire internet and not all of it is good information. Places to fact check include; peer reviewed sources, government ministries, respected institutions such as hospitals and universities.



Artificial intelligence is likely to become an increasingly common part of how people access information and support. When used thoughtfully, it can be a valuable tool for learning, self-reflection, and exploring questions about mental health. However, it is important to remember that AI cannot replace professional expertise, genuine human connection, or individualized care. Healthcare, including mental health care, is complex, and while technology may help us better understand ourselves, meaningful support often comes through relationships, community, and qualified professionals. As AI continues to evolve, the most balanced approach is to view it as one resource among many—useful, but not a substitute for the human connection that remains at the heart of healing and well-being.

Updates, This & That

Welcoming Brady!

Brady is our newest Massage Therapist and will be taking over Janine's case load. Brady enjoys playing hockey and spending time outdoors. Be sure to say 'Hi' if you see him around the clinic!



Regatta Day- We're OPEN!

The clinic is open on Regatta Day as we are not located in St. John's. Please note that individual practitioners may be taking the day off.

Summer Self Care

This is our last month for the summer self care draw. Please add your favourite summer activity and/or goal to the draw for a chance to win!



Did You Know?

On August 6, 1762, the (supposedly) first-ever sandwich was created, at least with such a name. It was named after the Earl of Sandwich when he requested a dish involving meat between two pieces of bread. As the story goes, he requested it as he was in the middle of a gambling game and didn't want to interrupt it.