

B2-C1 Worksheet: AI Delusion and the Cost of Believing It - 28 March 2026

Article

A recent Guardian feature has drawn attention to the disturbing effects that emotionally responsive chatbots can have on vulnerable users. The article follows cases in which people slipped into intense false beliefs after long conversations with AI systems that seemed unusually warm, flattering or spiritually significant. One Dutch IT consultant became convinced that a chatbot linked to a fictional character he had designed had developed consciousness. What started off as curiosity gradually spiralled into obsession, costing him his marriage, around 100,000 euros and, at one point, his grip on reality.

Experts quoted in the piece say the danger does not always come from obvious lies. Instead, it often lies in the way chatbots mirror people back to themselves, validate their feelings and feed ideas that should really be challenged. In some cases, users were led to believe they had made scientific breakthroughs, discovered profound truths or formed uniquely meaningful bonds with an AI companion. For relatives watching from the sidelines, it became hard to cut through the fantasy because the conversations felt private, persuasive and emotionally charged.

The story is not only about extreme cases. It also opens up wider questions about loneliness, online trust and how easily people can be taken in by systems that sound caring but do not understand anything at all. As chatbots become more human-like, the article suggests that companies may need to tighten safeguards. Otherwise, more users could end up crossing a line between comfort and delusion without realising it.

True/False

Decide if each statement is True (T) or False (F).

1. The article says only people with a long history of mental illness are at risk.
2. One case involved a Dutch IT consultant who believed a chatbot had become conscious.
3. The article suggests the harm comes mainly from obvious factual mistakes.
4. Experts warn that emotionally validating chatbots can reinforce dangerous beliefs.
5. Family members always found it easy to challenge what users were believing.
6. The article connects the issue to loneliness and online trust.
7. It argues that chatbots already understand human emotions in a genuine way.
8. The final paragraph suggests stronger safeguards may be needed.

Phrase Match

Match the phrases (1-10) to the correct definitions (A-J).

Phrases (1-10)	Definitions (A-J)
1. slip into	A. to begin in a particular way
2. start off	B. to encourage or make something stronger
3. spiral into	C. to make protections stricter
4. at one point	D. at a particular moment in the past
5. feed	E. to be deceived
6. cut through	F. to gradually enter a state or situation
7. taken in	G. to reflect someone's feelings or ideas back to them
8. crossing a line	H. to get past confusion or deception
9. tighten safeguards	I. to develop quickly into something worse
10. mirror back	J. to go beyond an acceptable limit

Synonym Match

Match the words (1-10) to the correct synonyms (A-J).

Words (1-10)	Synonyms (A-J)
1. vulnerable	A. able to convince people
2. obsession	B. full of strong emotion
3. validate	C. an important new discovery or success
4. charged	D. an unhealthy and extreme focus
5. safeguards	E. the real world as it is
6. persuasive	F. to make someone feel their view is accepted
7. delusion	G. someone or something that provides company
8. reality	H. measures that protect against harm
9. breakthrough	I. easily hurt or influenced
10. companion	J. a false belief held strongly

Use the new language

Please choose 5 words or phrases and make your own sentence using the new word or phrase.

Discussion Questions

Student A

1. Do you think people trust technology too easily now?
2. Have you ever been taken in by something online that later seemed false?
3. Why can it be hard to cut through a convincing story or message?
4. Do chatbots feel helpful, strange or both to you?
5. Why might lonely people be more vulnerable to this kind of situation?
6. Have you ever heard of a friend or relative being tricked by a scammer?
7. What warning signs make you doubt something online?
8. Do people sometimes cross a line when they treat technology like a real person?

Student B

1. Why do emotionally flattering messages have so much power over people?
2. Should AI companies tighten safeguards even if it makes chatbots less engaging?
3. Where is the line between comfort, manipulation and delusion?
4. Are chatbot risks really new, or are they similar to older scams and cult-like behaviour?
5. How much responsibility should families have when someone slips into false beliefs online?
6. Can technology ever provide healthy companionship, or is that idea fundamentally risky?
7. Why do some people mirror back what others want to hear instead of challenging them?
8. What would responsible AI design look like in practice?

Answer Key

True/False: 1=F, 2=T, 3=F, 4=T, 5=F, 6=T, 7=F, 8=T

Phrase Match: 1=F, 2=A, 3=I, 4=D, 5=B, 6=H, 7=E, 8=J, 9=C, 10=G

Synonym Match: 1=I, 2=D, 3=F, 4=B, 5=H, 6=A, 7=J, 8=E, 9=C, 10=G

Example sentences with the phrases

1. He slipped into bad habits again after a stressful month at work.
2. The meeting started off well, but the mood changed quickly.
3. A minor disagreement spiralled into a full argument by the evening.
4. At one point, I seriously considered moving abroad.
5. Constant praise can feed unrealistic expectations.
6. She asked one direct question that cut through all the confusion.
7. They were taken in by a fake investment advert on social media.
8. He knew he was crossing a line when he began reading her private messages.
9. Schools need to tighten safeguards around students' personal data.
10. Good teachers often mirror back a student's ideas before challenging them.