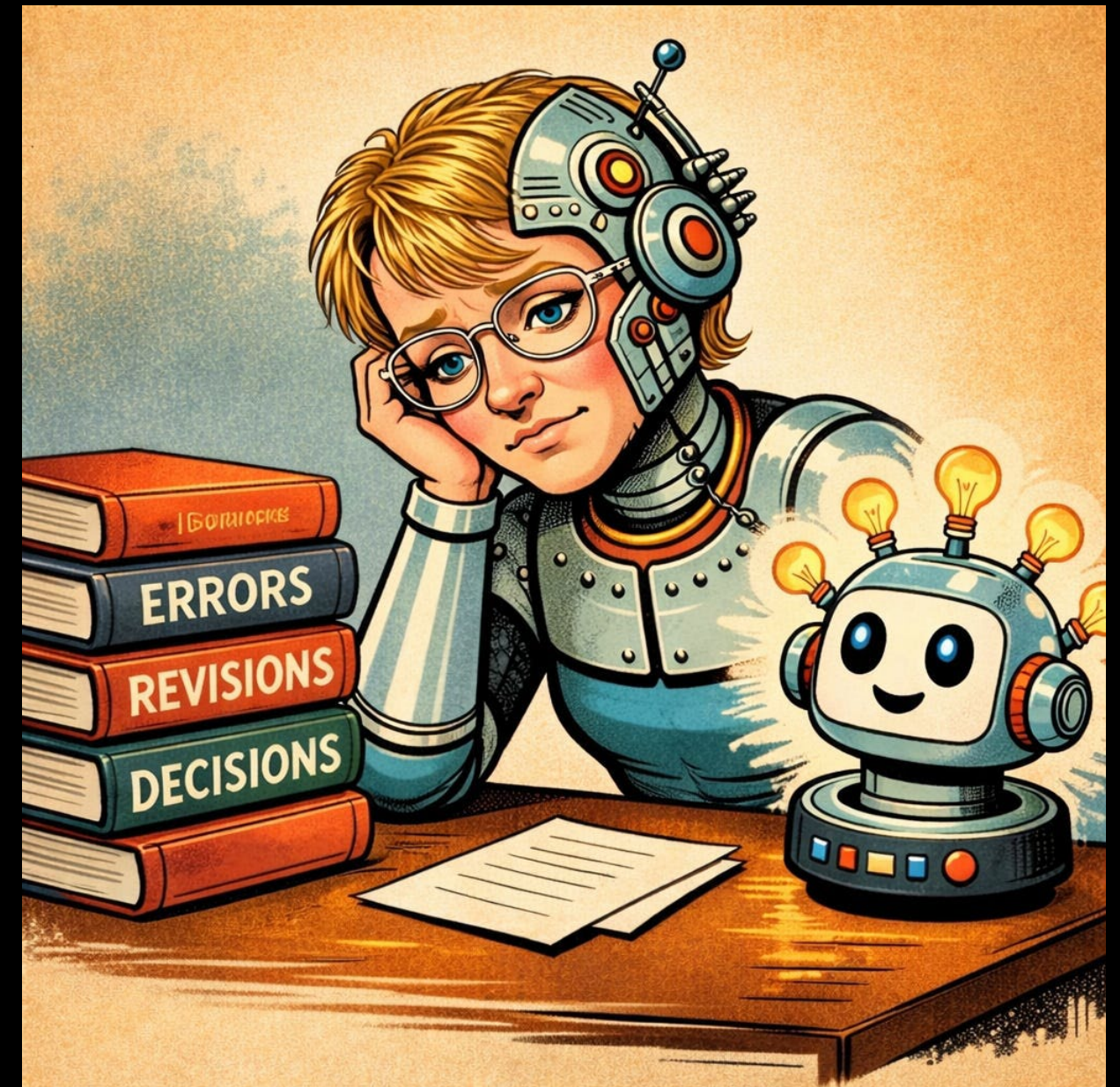


Betting on AI

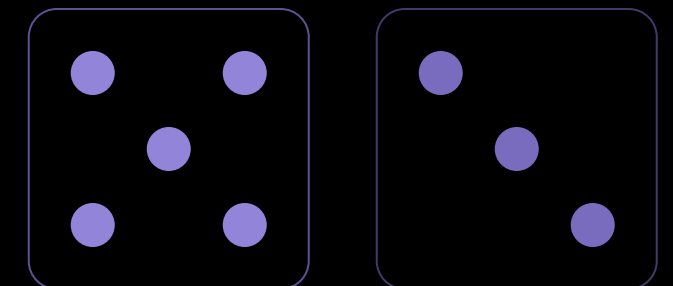
Mental health, cognitive
load, and being human in the
age of artificial intelligence

Mental Health Matters

- Director of Digital Learning and AI, Idaho State Board of Education
- Adjunct English faculty, College of Western Idaho
- Past president, NAMI Boise; board member, International Bipolar Foundation since 2015
- Author, *The Price of Silence: A Mom's Perspective on Mental Illness*
- Substack: [Artisanal Intelligence](#)



I am not a mental health professional. Nothing in this session is health advice.



I am a cyborg.

The Numbers

10.3%

of U.S. adults now use generative AI daily;
5.3% use it multiple times a day

30%

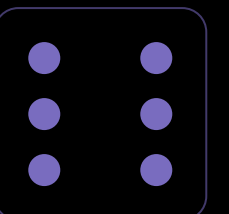
higher odds of at least moderate
depression among daily AI users vs non-
users

20,847

adults surveyed, weighted to national
demographics; anxiety and irritability
tracked the same way

The association held for personal use only — not for work or school use.

Perlis et al., 2026, *JAMA Network Open*. Association, not causation.



The social media precedent

Social media

- 2006 Mass adoption begins
- 2023 Surgeon General advisory on social media and youth mental health
- 2024 Haidt, *The Anxious Generation*

Roughly seventeen years from adoption to advisory.

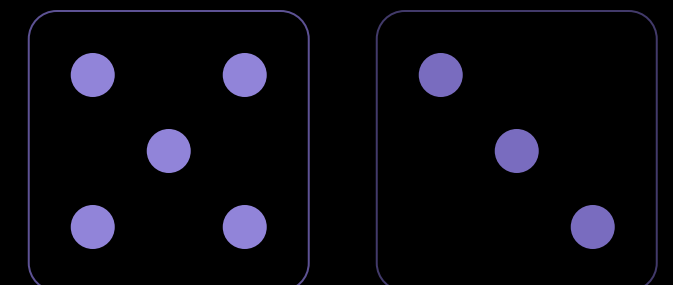
Generative AI

- 2022 ChatGPT opens to the public
- 2025 First clinical and press reports of chatbot-linked delusion
- 2026 First population-scale study of AI use and depressive symptoms

Three years.

"This emerging picture is consistent with previous observations regarding social media use."

Perlis et al., 2026, *JAMA Network Open*



A new classroom concern

"You won't be able to understand what I am saying unless I use ChatGPT to translate my thoughts into human form."

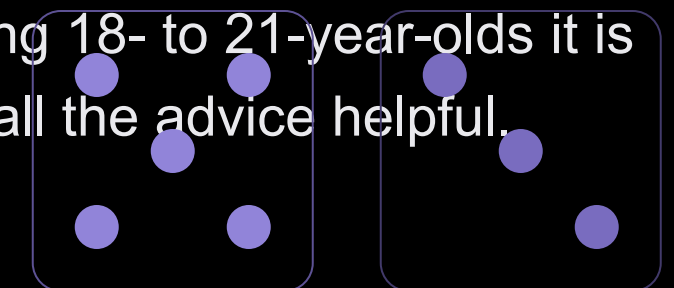
Student, first day of class, August 2025



"AI psychosis" describes paranoia or delusions that develop or worsen in connection with chatbot use.

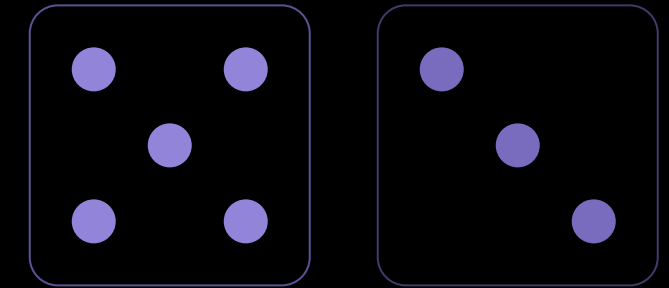
It is not a recognized clinical diagnosis. There are no diagnostic criteria and no prevalence estimate.

One in eight people aged 12 to 21 already takes mental health advice from an AI chatbot. Among 18- to 21-year-olds it is closer to one in five, and 93% call the advice helpful.



RAND, 2025 (n = 1,058)

Cognitive offloading, both directions



What offloading buys

About a third of the difference

How purposefully students used AI accounted for roughly a third of the variation in their burnout scores.

Structured use, not more use

The benefit came from specific tasks — research, adapting materials — rather than from volume of use.

Elashram & Alamri, 2026, *Frontiers in Psychology* (n = 367)

What monitoring costs

Overload rises with time

The longer people had worked with AI, the more they reported information overload, strained attention, and mental fatigue — the strongest relationship in the study.

Confidence falls

Those same long-term users reported less trust in their own judgment when deciding without the tool.

Shalu et al., 2025, *Annals of Neurosciences* (n = 500)

The primary task gets cheaper. A monitoring task takes its place, and nobody budgeted for it.

A vocabulary for cyborgs (and centaurs)

Asymmetric accountability

Both of us make the work. Only one of us can be wrong.

Calibrated trust

Knowing moment to moment when to follow, verify, or override. Earned under real stakes, not transferred from training.

Exhaustion of sustained vigilance

It does not announce itself as exhaustion. The work feels productive right up until the body sends the bill.

Asymmetry of endurance

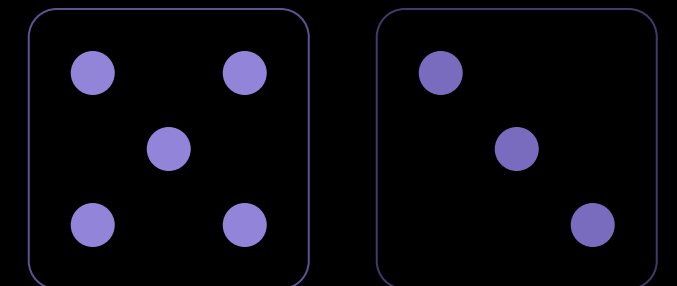
No circadian rhythm, no cortisol, no diminishing returns. Every boundary has to come from the human.

Bottleneck shift

Generating content used to be slow, and the slowness paced us. Now the bottleneck is judgment.

Aliveness

A form of intellectual pleasure that comes from co-creating with LLMs—what AI literacy feels like from the inside



What faculty are telling us

"It's the Wild West with AI at my institution."



Idaho, statewide faculty survey

Faculty want to learn these tools. They also want institutions to recognize that learning them takes time.

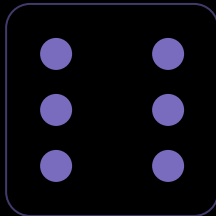
Long & Blomquist, Idaho AI Fellowship, 2024–25

And beyond Idaho

CTE teachers cite missing AI knowledge, low teaching self-efficacy, and no structured professional development. Teachers under mandated rollout report anxiety, burnout, and feeling "useless."

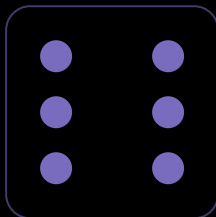
Utah SBAE teachers, 2024 (n = 70); Hong Kong secondary teachers, 2025 (n = 14)

Practical moves for CTE instructors



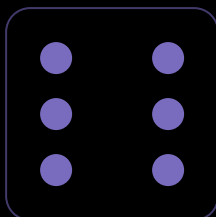
Keep a human in the loop, in writing

AI is never the final arbiter of a grade, a rubric, or a behavioral flag. The boundary protects the student and the instructor's authority at the same time.



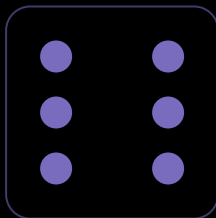
Teach calibrated trust as a shop skill

Give students graded practice at verifying and overriding output. They need to learn this vital skill with hands-on practice



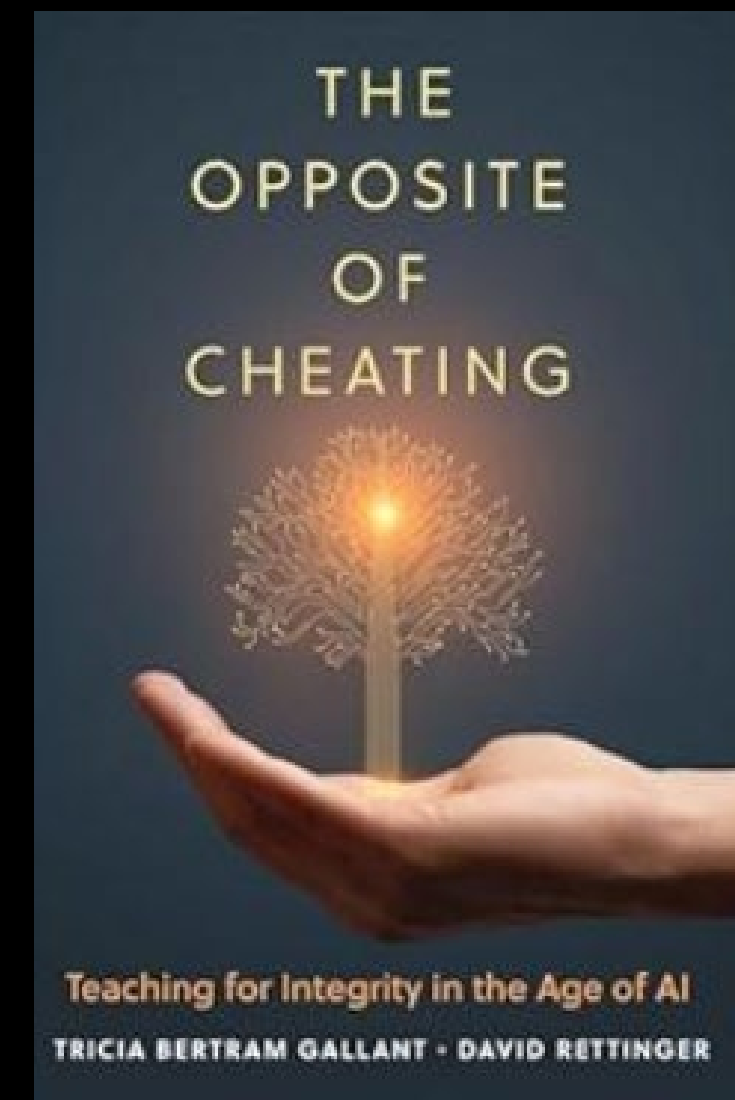
Name the vigilance cost out loud

Students will feel this exhaustion and will not know why. Say it in week one so they recognize it in week ten.



Build the off switch into the assignment

The tool is ready at 2 a.m. and will never suggest stopping. Stopping points have to be designed in, and modeled.



Teaching AI literacy is mental health work

These tools have psychological effects on the people using them. Nobody has this figured out yet — including me.

Before you need it

Take Mental Health First Aid. Know your campus referral path.
Know who covers it after hours.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call or text 988, 24/7. Free and confidential, for you or for a student.

Questions

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