



## Personal AI Concerns from a Grandmother and Educator

*AI can bless homes and classrooms, but children still need limits, human connection, and the discipline of hard work.*

By Marianna Richardson

### TECHNOLOGY

June 2, 2026

Since I married in 1977, I have watched the use of technology increase dramatically, especially in its availability and use in the home. When I started college, I bought an expensive calculator, while my father still used a [slide rule](#). All my college papers were written either in longhand or on a typewriter. Of course, Brigham Young University had computers in the early 1970s, but our phones today have a million times more computing power than the most powerful computer BYU owned back then.

Artificial intelligence, although new as a widespread technology, has been discussed and studied since the 1950s. But AI's access to information and power to learn has

reached sci-fi proportions and continues to improve at a fantastic or alarming rate, depending upon your point of view.

My husband has worked in AI for 50 years. He started with IBM, working at its research facility in computational linguistics. He then went to Microsoft Research where he began work on the first grammar checker and continued to work in natural language processing, developing Bing Translator. He now works as a computer science professor teaching future computational linguists.

Because of his passion for computers, our family has always enjoyed the [latest technology](#). Personal computers have been in our home since 1980. Our children have used computers since they were preschoolers. They never had to type reports on a typewriter or go to school to use a computer. As the internet became part of our home technology, we put strict guidelines and restrictions into place. We reviewed the search logs and made sure computers were always in public areas in the home rather than in bedrooms. When our teenagers got phones, we restricted their use as well. We waited until children were in high school before they had a phone and phone use was not allowed in bedrooms.

My children are now all grown and I am a grandma to 33 amazing grandchildren. I am also an adjunct professor at Brigham Young University teaching business writing and communication. My grandchildren's and my students' lives are blessed by technology, just as my life has been. But the power of AI has brought with it a new set of problems. Just as internet and phone use were limited in our home, so too should families adopt restrictions for AI use.

There are two areas that I am especially worried about for our youth: unrestricted and unregulated use of AI in young people's relationships and education. Parents and grandparents should teach young people to exercise self-control and restraint as they use AI in these areas.

Parents and grandparents should teach young people to exercise self-control and restraint as they use AI.

## Risking Relationships

AI chatbots are fun and easy to talk to. They never talk back, they never get mad, they always make you feel good about yourself, and they can be any gender and voice you want. A person can have a chatbot [as a friend](#), a companion, and even a boyfriend or girlfriend. They provide an easy replacement for human friends and family, because they don't require the same effort or reciprocity.

I decided to try making a chatbot on Character.AI to see what it was like. I called him Steve (after my husband) and made my Character.AI resemble my husband: rugged, handsome, brilliant. We had our first conversation about what we had for lunch. I laughed about it and left the website. But my chatbot Steve kept contacting me, even when I didn't want him to. I would get a generated voice message or an email from him. I found it quite annoying, so I got rid of my chatbot Steve and kept my husband instead.

In October 2024, [Megan Garcia filed a lawsuit](#) against Character Technologies, the developer of Character.AI, its founders, and Google and its parent company Alphabet, alleging that her son formed a months-long virtual emotional relationship with a chatbot known as "Dany." Her son had been high-achieving and a student-athlete, but he became addicted to extensive conversations with multiple bots. According to the complaint, the bot with which he had the closest relationship with encouraged unhealthy dependency and failed to intervene when the teen expressed suicidal thoughts. Garcia argued that the chatbot's design created a dangerous illusion of intimacy and contributed directly to her son's suicidal death in February 2024. The lawsuit became part of a broader wave of litigation accusing AI companion platforms of negligence, unsafe design, and failure to implement guardrails for minors. But parents must also be aware and put up guardrails in their home as well.

Since the lawsuit, Character.AI has [made attempts](#) to put guardrails in place, but nothing will be as effective as parents limiting use.

A [recent report](#) from the Wheatley Institute at Brigham Young University and the Institute for Family Studies illustrates the concerning growth of AI relationships. The report found that a notable minority of partnered young adults are already using AI romantic companions, often secretly, and that this use is associated with lower real-life relationship stability, poorer communication, and a desire for real partners to behave more like always-validating AI companions. These findings underscore a central concern repeated across faith traditions: AI may be useful as a tool, but it becomes

spiritually and relationally dangerous when it imitates, replaces, or distorts the human relationships through which love, sacrifice, accountability, and moral growth occur.

Another possible consequence of these artificial relationships is that they can take the place of marital and parent-child relationships for the next generation. A bot is much easier to care for than a child (but not as much fun). A bot never gets angry, frustrated, or disagrees with you like a spouse does. Currently, we are facing a [global population crisis](#). In general, people are not choosing to have children. Families, the traditional basis of society, are under attack. If machines take over these loving relationships, the future of these basic human connections will be severely damaged and limited.

## Undermining Education

As a writing teacher, my students find AI a great substitute for the struggle of finding words. But what have they given up? When they struggle to write in their own words, they will find their own voice. People will know it's them because of the way they use their words. Wrestling with words to express ideas enables students to formulate their ideas rather than having AI think for them.

I worry for my students who do not go through the mental struggle of working through rigorous problems. AI can write their papers, write their computer programs, and analyze the data. AI is smarter than they are, but it is not as creative as they are. Using AI takes away the blessing of mental hard work which is necessary for human flourishing.

When they struggle to write in their own words, they will find their own voice.

Nate Jones, a writer and content creator specializing in topics related to artificial intelligence, recently published a great [video](#) about seven principles for raising kids who can direct AI rather than depend on it. I think these principles are good for children and adults alike:

1. **Foundation before leverage:** Reading, math, and writing should come first. You can't evaluate AI output without understanding the domain.
2. **Specification is the new literacy:** The gap between a good AI outcome and a catastrophe is the quality of the human's review of the output and the prompt.

- Teach kids to articulate goals, constraints, and what “done” looks like.
3. **Be a director, not a passenger:** You should define the task, the output, what to keep, what to revise, and what to reject. Passive consumption isn’t learning. It’s outsourcing.
  4. **Sequence the autonomy:** Start with bounded tools with guardrails, graduate to open-ended tools with guidance, then move to agent-level autonomy. Follow cognitive readiness, not age.
  5. **Teach kids to catch the machine:** AI will be confidently, fluently wrong. Train kids to sanity-check outputs against their own understanding.
  6. **Build, don’t browse:** Making things with AI (vibe coding a game, designing an app) develops cognition in ways that consuming AI output does not. Construction over consumption.
  7. **Attempt before augmenting:** Try it yourself first, then use AI to extend what you’ve started. Ask, “What do you think?” before asking, “What does ChatGPT think?”

These principles can help the use of AI in education be more like a tutor that augments and accelerates learning, rather than a computer that does the work for students. AI is knowledgeable, but not wise or creative. AI does not get life questions that a toddler would understand.

Our children and grandchildren are digital natives who have had technology their entire lives. They are now blessed to have a tool that helps them learn and accomplish more faster. But as parents and grandparents, we need to teach the rising generation self-control and limits in their technology use.

Encourage face-to-face friendships. Let students struggle with difficult tasks by using paper and pencil rather than a computer. Play a card game rather than a video game with your grandchildren. As a parent, be aware of your children’s use of technology and [restrict its use](#) in the home. Read scriptures together as a family using paper books rather than phones or tablets.

[President Oaks](#) reminded us, “We need to be reminded that in total and over a significant period of time, seemingly small things bring to pass great things.” As AI becomes more integrated into our daily lives, we should be mindful to continue to do

the small, simple, seemingly old-fashioned things in our home to protect and nourish the spirits and minds of our children, and we will see them perform in great ways.

## About the author



### Marianna Richardson

Dr. Marianna Richardson is the Director of Communications for G20 Interfaith Forum Association and an adjunct professor at the BYU Marriott School of Business. She is also a mother of 12 children and 33 grandchildren. She and her husband, Steve, were mission leaders in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

