

Supporting Individuals in Using AI Chatbots

This resource is for anyone supporting an individual with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who wants to interact with an AI chatbot.



Key Words to Know

Artificial intelligence (AI) is when computers use information to recognize patterns, make decisions, and complete tasks that normally require human thinking.

Chatbots are computer programs that communicate with people using text or voice, similar to having a conversation.

A **hallucination** happens when an AI chatbot gives information that sounds correct but is actually incorrect.

A **large language model (LLM)** is a type of computer program that learns by reading large amounts of text. It can help rewrite or translate text, answer questions, and even create computer code.

Reasons for Using AI

Individuals with ASD may have a variety of reasons why they would like to interact with a chatbot. Here are just a few:

- ▶ It's a low-pressure way to practice social skills.
- ▶ Chatbots give individuals a space to start and maintain conversations.
- ▶ They are always available – morning, noon, or night.
- ▶ Chatbots tend to be patient and give predictable responses.
- ▶ They help individuals better understand their emotions and help put their thoughts into words.



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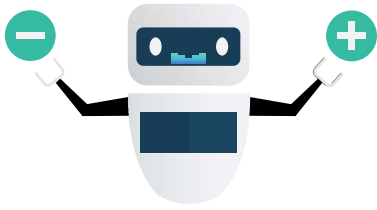


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Benefits for Supporters

Beyond ASD individuals finding benefits to using AI chatbots, supporters may find chatbots useful too.

Chatbots can:

- ▶ Help individuals practice social skills before meeting new people and self-advocacy language prior to appointments.
- ▶ Supplement – not replace – professional support, such as therapy.
- ▶ Assist in researching interesting topics.
- ▶ Simply and explain complex or confusing information.
- ▶ Function as a communication tool.



Tips for Supporters

The following are helpful tips to keep in mind if you support someone with ASD who uses AI chatbots:

- ▶ Begin by exploring AI tools together
- ▶ Talk candidly and without judgment about how and why they use AI chatbots
- ▶ Ensure individuals that you understand their interest in AI usage
- ▶ Discuss what is and is not safe to share
- ▶ Check the chatbot's privacy settings together
- ▶ Encourage fact checking of important information with you or a professional
- ▶ Look for signs of AI reliance and anxiety when chatbots are unavailable
- ▶ Watch for symptoms of addiction such as:
 - Ignoring friends and family
 - Sharing thoughts and feelings with the chatbot and no one else
 - Choosing to interact with the chatbot even when in the presence of other people
- ▶ Remind individuals that AI is a tool, not a person
- ▶ Empower individuals to use AI safely and responsibly