

Talking to AI: How Technology Can(not) Support Mental Health

Objectives	1. Experience a guided interaction with an AI chatbot for emotional support 2. Understand the difference between simulated empathy and human empathy 3. Develop critical thinking about the role and limits of AI in mental health 4. Reflect on emotional safety, privacy, and ethical use of digital tools 5. Strengthen awareness of when human support is necessary and irreplaceable
Duration (in minutes)	90 min.
Number of participants	10-20
Resources/materials/ equipment needed	1. Smartphones or tablets (1 per group) with Wysa AI chatbot app installed 2. Internet connection 3. Flipchart or whiteboard 4. Markers 5. Printed reflection sheets or notebook
Rules and description step-by-step (content elements, methods)	1. Narrative introduction and safe space framing (5 min) The facilitator explains that the session is not about judging AI as good or bad, but about experiencing, analysing, and understanding its role in emotional support. Ground rules: respect, confidentiality, no sharing of personal or identifying data. 2. Introduction: AI and mental health (10 min) A guided group discussion led by the facilitator. Key guiding questions: - What comes to mind when you hear “AI and mental health”? - Have you ever talked to a chatbot? In what context? The facilitator clarifies: What AI is: a language-based algorithm; What AI is not: a person, therapist, or friend 3. Guided AI interaction – Wysa (20 min) Participants interact individually with the AI chatbot, while working in small groups (3–4 people) for later discussion. Rules before starting: -No personal, sensitive, or identifying information -Use only the given prompt

-The interaction is short and experimental

Prompt (one for each group):

- “I find it hard to focus lately.”
- “I feel overwhelmed with tasks.”
- “I feel tired without a clear reason.”

Groups interact for 5–7 minutes.

Facilitator reminds them: “We are not solving problems – we are observing how AI communicates.”

4. Analysis of AI responses (20 min)

Participants remain in the same groups.

Guiding questions:

- What was the tone of the response?
- How did the AI talk to you?
- How did you feel during the interaction?

5. Live interaction: human support (15 min)

Participants work in the same groups.

- Person A says the same sentence used in the AI prompt
- Person B listens and responds with 1–2 supportive sentences only
- No advice, no solutions
- Person C is an active observer, focusing on tone, presence, and emotional impact.

Short reflection in pairs:

- What was the tone?
- How did the response feel?

6. AI vs Human interaction – comparative analysis (15 min)

Plenary discussion facilitated through structured questions:

Similarities and differences: What felt similar? What felt different or unexpected?

Experience of communication: Where did you feel safer to express yourself? Where did you feel more “seen”?

Role of the interlocutor: Did you feel presence? Did you feel responsibility from the other side?

7. Ethics, safety & dramatized scenarios (10 min)

Facilitator introduces privacy, data protection, and limits of AI support through live dramatized scenarios:

- *The Message That Remains* – privacy and data
- *A Nice Answer, Then Silence* – absence of human presence
- *The Same Problem, Third Time* – when AI stops helping
- *A Living Response* – strength of human interaction

	Each scenario includes: short dramatization, pause, group reflection, clear takeaway message, core ethical message 8. Final reflection & closing (15 min) Written individual reflection: One situation where I would use AI / One situation where I would not Closing circle: One sentence - <i>“One thing I take with me from today.”</i> Final facilitator statement: <i>“Technology is a tool. Relationships are support.”</i>
Questions for Debriefing	1. What happened during this session? What did you experience? 2. How did you feel during the AI interaction and during the human interaction? 3. What differences did you notice between the two? 4. What did you learn about yourself? 5. How can you apply this understanding in your daily life?
Tips for trainers/facilitators (if any)	Keep the space emotionally safe and non-judgmental Constantly separate digital support from human care Do not allow sharing of deeply personal experiences Use dramatization carefully and adapt intensity to the group If strong emotions appear, pause the activity and re-ground the group