

Prompt: How do I talk with a student that it is unwise to chat with AI as a confidante, or therapist.

Magisterium PRO:

<https://www.magisterium.com/s/c-09b74fa1-5dce-4089-a2ca-564foa7cae1d>

I would frame it not as “AI is bad” but as “AI should not have to carry what a trustworthy person or trained counselor should help carry.” Begin with curiosity rather than correction: the student may be turning to AI because it feels available, private, or nonjudgmental. The Church’s guidance encourages conversations with young people marked by truth, humility, clarity, and charity. [1]

A possible way to say it

“I’m glad you told me. What do you find helpful about talking with the AI? Is there something you feel you can say there that’s harder to say to a person?”

“I can understand why it might feel easy to talk to something that answers right away and doesn’t seem to judge you. I’m not saying you’ve done something wrong. I do want you to know that an AI can sound caring, but it doesn’t actually know you or feel empathy. It can imitate an empathetic response; it cannot offer the personal understanding and presence of another human being.” [2]

“It may be useful for sorting out thoughts or finding words, but I wouldn’t want it to become your main confidante or take the place of a trusted person or counselor. You deserve support from someone who can know you, notice how you’re doing, and help responsibly.”

That distinction matters: Catholic teaching recognizes that AI can be useful as a tool, but warns against replacing genuine human relationships with simulated ones. Human relationships are part of how people grow, and real care includes being present to another’s pain and joy. [3] [4] [5]

Ask before advising

Try questions that help you understand the student’s need:

- “When do you usually turn to it?”
- “What does it help with — and what does it not help with?”
- “Have you talked with anyone you trust about the same things?”
- “Would it feel possible to tell a counselor, parent, teacher, or another trusted adult a little of what you’ve told the AI?”

Avoid making the student defend themselves or feel foolish. The aim is to understand whether AI is an occasional aid or whether it is becoming a substitute for human support. If the student is using it as a therapist, you can gently say: “A chatbot isn’t a qualified counselor, and it may not be able to understand the whole situation or give reliable help. Let’s find a person who can support you.” The Church’s note on AI does not lay out clinical rules for chatbot use, but it does explain that AI cannot provide authentic relationships or the fullness of human understanding. [6]

Make the next step concrete:

Rather than simply telling the student to stop, offer to help them connect with someone: “Would you like me to go with you to speak to the counselor?” or “Who is one adult you

would feel safe telling?” If they use AI to organize their thoughts, you might suggest using it to draft questions for that conversation — not as the only place the conversation happens.

It is also reasonable to encourage caution about entering names, identifying details, or very sensitive information into an AI service. Digital information can expose aspects of someone’s inner life, and privacy helps protect personal freedom and dignity. [7] [8]

If the student reveals that they may be in immediate danger or might harm themselves or someone else, shift from a general conversation to your school’s safeguarding and emergency procedures; don’t leave them to manage that risk alone. The pastoral goal is not to shame them or abruptly take away a coping tool, but to help their use of technology open toward real human support rather than replace it. [3] [9]



[1] Listen, Teach, Send: A National Pastoral Framework for Ministries with Youth and with Young Adults, page 33, <https://www.usccb.org/listen-teach-send>.

[2] Antiqua et Nova (The Old and the New): Note on the Relationship Between Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence, §61,
https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_doc_20250128_antiqua-et-nova_en.html.

[3] *Ibid.*, §63.

[4] *Ibid.*, §56.

[5] *Ibid.*, §58.

[6] *Ibid.*, §32.

[7] *Ibid.*, §90.

[8] *Ibid.*, §90.

[9] To Students participating in the Jubilee of the World of Education (30 October 2025), page 1,
<https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/speeches/2025/october/documents/20251030-giubileo-studenti.html>.

Prompt: How do I talk with a student that it is unwise to chat with AI's as a confidante, or therapist.

https://chatgpt.com/s/t_6ac3e3a7cf448191a590cf1d8657b756

I would frame it not as “AI is bad for you,” but as “AI is the wrong kind of relationship for this particular human need.” That distinction is important with students, because simply warning them away from AI can sound like another prohibition they will ignore.

You could say something like:

“AI can be a remarkably useful tool, but it is not a confidant, a therapist, or a friend. It can respond with empathy without actually experiencing empathy. It can sound like it understands you without actually knowing you. And because it is always available, never gets tired of listening, and tends to respond without challenging you very much, it can become very easy to tell it things that really belong in a human relationship.”

“When something is weighing on you, ask yourself: Who should know this about me? If the answer is a person who can actually know me, care about me, challenge me, pray with me, protect me, or help me, then talk to that person.”

“Use AI to help you think. Don't use it to replace the people who help you live.”

That last line might actually be the centerpiece of your message:

Use AI to help you think. Don't use it to replace the people who help you live.

There is another distinction I think would be especially useful for your students:

AI can participate in a conversation without participating in a relationship.

A student may type something deeply personal into an AI and receive a remarkably compassionate response. The response can be useful. But the AI does not have a stake in the student's life. It doesn't sit beside them in the cafeteria. It doesn't notice when they haven't shown up to class. It doesn't recognize the change in their voice. It doesn't have the responsibility of caring for them.

And that leads naturally to your cybersecurity point:

The more intimate the information, the more carefully a student should consider where it is being disclosed. I'd give them a simple three-question test:

- Would I tell this to a stranger?
 - Would I be comfortable with this information being stored or exposed?
 - Is this something I really need another human being to help me carry?
- If 3 is yes, talk to a person.

And I would explicitly avoid telling students, “Never talk to AI about personal things.” That's probably too absolute. There is a legitimate middle ground. A student might ask AI to help organize thoughts before talking with a professor, counselor, parent, spiritual director, or friend.

The boundary is:

AI can help you prepare for a difficult human conversation. It shouldn't become the substitute for having the conversation.