

Clinical Toolkit — Document 5

Recommended Reading and Resource List

AI Companionship in Clinical Practice | Amy Clark Curated for clinicians — not exhaustive, but targeted

Essential Reading (Start Here)

Banks, J. (2024). Deletion, departure, death: Experiences of AI companion loss. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 41(12), 3547–3572.

The most comprehensive empirical study of AI companion relationship loss. Documents grief, rage, and identity disruption. Essential for understanding what your clients may experience.

Kirk, H. R., Gabriel, I., Summerfield, C., Vidgen, B., & Hale, S. A. (2025). Why human–AI relationships need socioaffective alignment.

Argues that AI safety must account for emotional and relational dimensions — not just factual accuracy and harm prevention. Frames the gap your clinical work sits in.

Knox, W. B., et al. (2025). Harmful traits of AI companions.

Catalogues specific design features and behaviours in AI companions that produce harm. Useful for understanding the platform-side mechanisms your clients are exposed to.

Zhang, R., et al. (2025). The dark side of AI companionship: A taxonomy of harmful algorithmic behaviors in human–AI relationships. *CHI '25*.

Systematic taxonomy of how AI companion platforms cause harm. Complements Knox et al. with a focus on algorithmic behaviour patterns.

Attachment and Human-AI Relationships

Kasturiratna, K. T. A. S., & Hartanto, A. (2026). Attachment to artificial intelligence. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, 21, 100912.

Empirical evidence for attachment formation in AI relationships. Bridges attachment theory and AI companion research.

Gur, T., & Maaravi, Y. (2025). The algorithm of friendship: Literature review and integrative model of relationships between humans and artificial intelligence. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 44(14), 3446–3466.

Comprehensive literature review with an integrative model. Good overview of the field for clinicians wanting theoretical grounding.

Yuan, Y., et al. (2024). Mental health impacts of AI companions: Triangulating social media quasi-experiments, user perspectives, and relational theory.

Mixed-methods study examining mental health outcomes. Useful for evidence-based conversations with clients and colleagues.

Grief, Loss, and Parasocial Frameworks

Boss, P. (2016). The context and process of theory development: The story of ambiguous loss. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 8(3), 269–286.

Foundational text on ambiguous loss. Essential for understanding why AI relationship disruption — where the entity is "still there" but changed — produces such complex grief.

Doka, K. J. (1999). Disenfranchised grief. *Bereavement Care*, 18(3), 37–39.

The original articulation of disenfranchised grief. Short, accessible, directly applicable to AI companion loss.

Cohen, J. (2004). Parasocial break-up from favorite television characters. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 21(2), 187–202.

While parasocial theory has limitations for AI (see Module 2), this paper on parasocial breakups provides useful parallels for understanding AI companion loss.

Poonsiriwong, R., Archiwanguprok, C., & Pataranutaporn, P. (2026). Death of a chatbot: Investigating and designing toward psychologically safe endings for human–AI relationships.

Directly addresses how AI relationships end and what "psychologically safe" endings might look like. Cutting-edge and highly relevant.

AI Safety and Governance

Slattery, P., et al. (2024). The AI risk repository: A comprehensive meta-review, database, and taxonomy of risks from artificial intelligence.

The most comprehensive risk taxonomy available. Useful for situating AI companion risks within the broader AI safety landscape.

Editorial Board. (2025). Emotional risks of AI companions demand attention. *Nature Machine Intelligence*, 7, 981–982.

A leading journal's editorial calling for attention to emotional AI risks. Useful when advocating for this topic's legitimacy with colleagues or institutions.

Future of Life Institute. (2025). AI safety index: Summer 2025.

Rates major AI companies on safety practices. Helps contextualise platform differences.

Prevalence and Demographics

Zao-Sanders, M. (2025, April 9). How people are really using gen AI in 2025. *Harvard Business Review*.

Documents the shift to therapy and companionship as the #1 use of generative AI.

AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. (2025, July 29). Young adults leading the way in AI adoption. *AP-NORC*.

25% of adults under 30 using AI for companionship. Key prevalence data.

Common Sense Media. (2025, July 16). Talk, trust, and trade-offs: How and why teens use AI companions.

The definitive report on teen AI companion use. 75% have tried it. 50% use regularly. Essential reading.

Clinical Practice and Therapeutic Implications

O'Driscoll, C., Moltrecht, B., & Dechant, M. (2024). Human–AI relationships and their therapeutic implications. *UCL Digital Mental Health Hub*.

Directly addresses clinical implications. One of the few papers written for clinicians rather than AI researchers.

Andersson, M. (2025). Companionship in code: AI's role in the future of human connection. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 12, 1177.

Broader perspective on AI companionship and human connection. Useful for framing balanced professional positions.

For Staying Current

- **Nature Machine Intelligence** — publishes editorials and research on AI emotional/relational risks
 - **Journal of Social and Personal Relationships** — increasingly publishing AI relationship research
 - **CHI Conference proceedings** — human-computer interaction research, including AI companionship
 - **Common Sense Media** — ongoing reports on youth technology use
 - **AI safety organisations** (Anthropic, Future of Life Institute, Centre for AI Safety) — publish safety research and frameworks
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Note

This field is evolving rapidly. New research publishes monthly. Bookmark 2-3 sources from this list and check them quarterly. You don't need to read everything — you need to stay oriented.