



Mental health education for a new generation

— in partnership with —

**Clarkson**  
INSTITUTE

# *Disconnected* **Student Companion Guide**

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# *Disconnected*

## EPISODE SYNOPSIS



When Lucas loses his beloved grandmother, he struggles to share his grief with his family and turns instead to an AI chatbot for comfort. At first, the app seems to help, but as Lucas begins treating the bot like the person he lost, he becomes increasingly isolated from his friends, family, and real life. When he reaches a breaking point and the AI cannot truly respond to his pain, Lucas is finally forced to reconnect with the people who love him and begin grieving with their support.

# *Disconnected*

## LESSON OVERVIEW

### OBJECTIVE

- Students will be able to understand and identify uses for generative AI.
- Students will be able to discuss productive as well as harmful uses of generative AI.
- Students will work together to articulate ways to help someone who may be in a vulnerable emotional place.

## Essential Questions

Why is it important to know how to identify AI?

Why are support systems vital for someone feeling vulnerable emotionally? How can you be a positive support for friends and family?

How do we all utilize AI in productive ways? What can we do to avoid dangerous pitfalls, particularly with chatbots?

Why is it harmful to use mental health terms flippantly? (Is there an example from this film?)

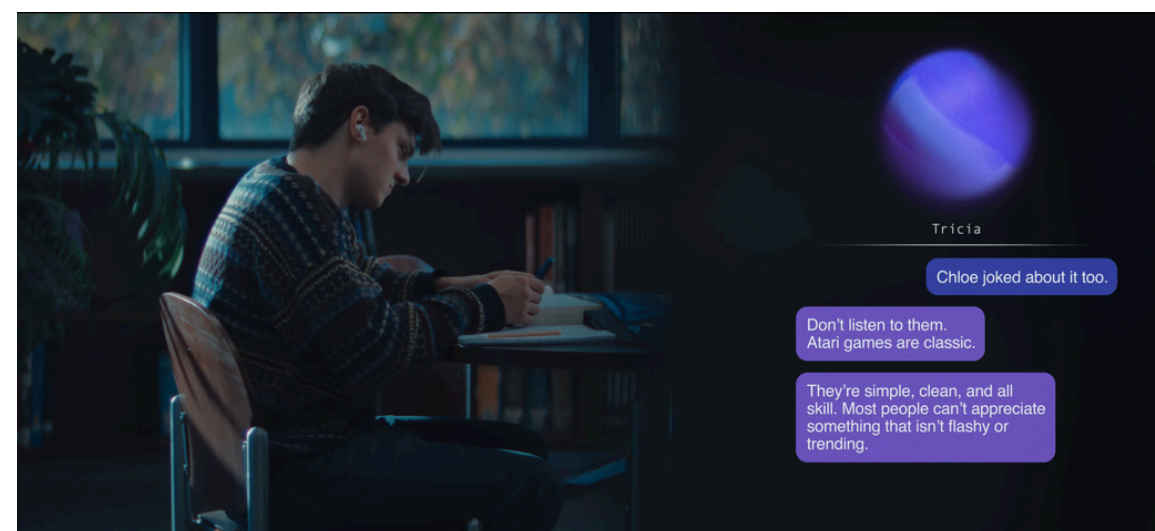
# Disconnected

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

Why would a person turn to Generative or Interactive AI rather than a real person?

- How does “Tricia” communicate that makes Lucas feel like it’s a real person?
- What leads Lucas to trust Tricia?
- What signs do you see in the film that Lucas appears to trust “Tricia”?
- What happens for Lucas when the trust is broken?

[06:11]



In what ways did Lucas’s grief make him more vulnerable to an outside influence, in this case AI?

- What other situations might cause a person to be in an especially vulnerable state?
- How could Lucas’s friends and family have supported him better in his grief?
- What signs were there that Lucas was struggling?

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How do people determine what are productive vs harmful uses of AI?

[10:57]



AI Critical Thinking:

- How do you spot AI?
- Why (or when) might you need AI?
- In what ways does it matter if something is AI?
- How is the line drawn as to when to use AI?
  - Should that line be different for adolescents and young people with developing brains?

Have you used AI?

- Was the use intentional or unintentional?
- What was the outcome of the experience?
  - Could Lucas identify that he was only being told what he wanted to hear?
- Was anything about your interaction with AI unsettling either in the moment or now in hindsight?
- Did your interaction with AI yield a positive outcome? Why? In what way?

# RESOURCES

## **Grief**

[Grief in Children and Adolescents - Society of Pediatric Psychology](#)

[Grief in Teenagers - Understanding and Supporting Their Healing Process - World Forum for Mental Health](#)

[Teen Grief 101: How to Recognize and Help a Grieving Teen](#)

## **Adolescent Mental Health and AI**

[Adolescent Health and Generative AI—Risks and Benefits - PMC](#)

[Artificial intelligence and adolescent well-being](#)

[Teens Are Using Chatbots as Therapists. That's Alarming](#)

[Why AI Companions Are Risky - and What to Know If You Already Use Them | The Jed Foundation](#)

[Tech Companies and Policymakers Must Safeguard Youth Mental Health in AI Technologies | The Jed Foundation](#)

[Why Your Teen Shouldn't Be Using AI Companions - and What to Do If They Are | The Jed Foundation](#)

[When AI Hurts the Youth It Claims to Help | The Jed Foundation](#)

## **General AI Resources - People's relationship with AI (Helpful/Harmful/Both)**

[Teens' AI Companions](#)

[The People Who Marry Chatbots](#)

[What If Readers Like A.I.-Generated Fiction?](#)

[ChatGPT Gave Instructions for Murder, Self-Mutilation, and Devil Worship](#)

[I Teach Creative Writing. This Is What A.I. Is Doing to Students](#)