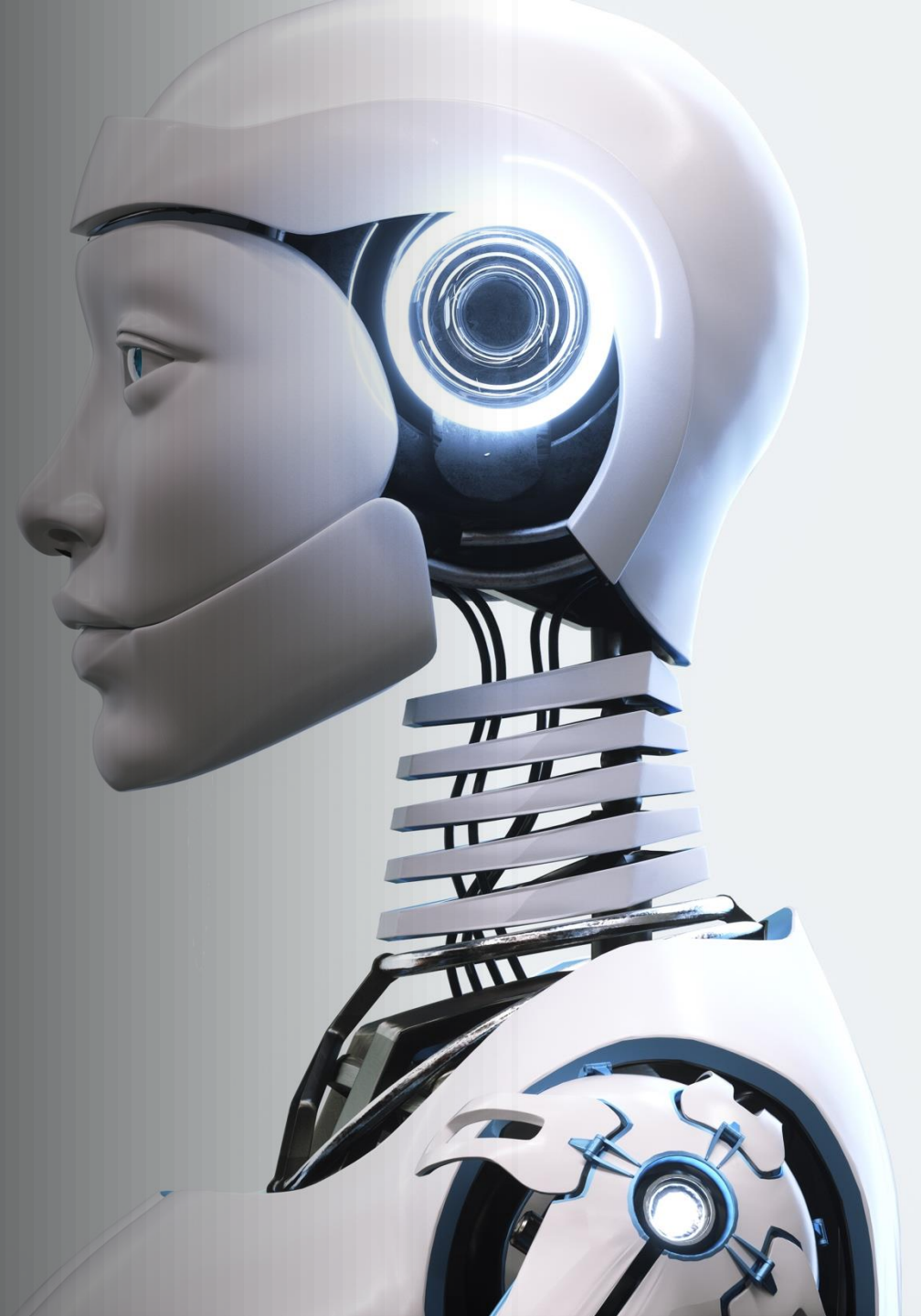




Connecticut Counseling Association

AI and Counseling: What We Need
to Know

1:00-2:30

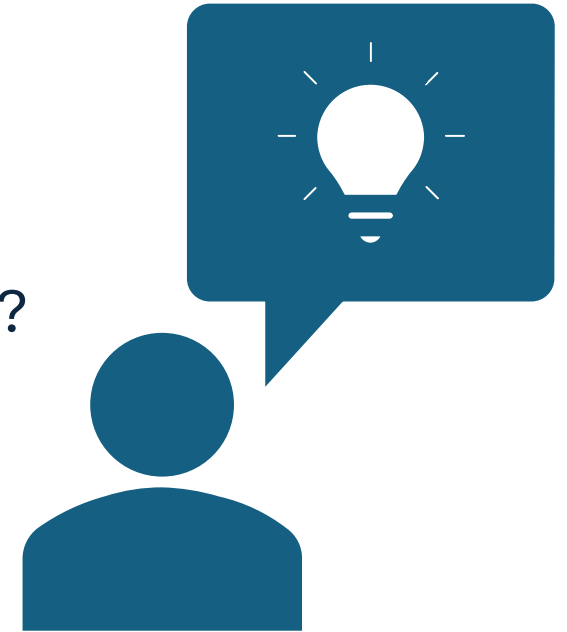


AI and Counseling: What we need to know

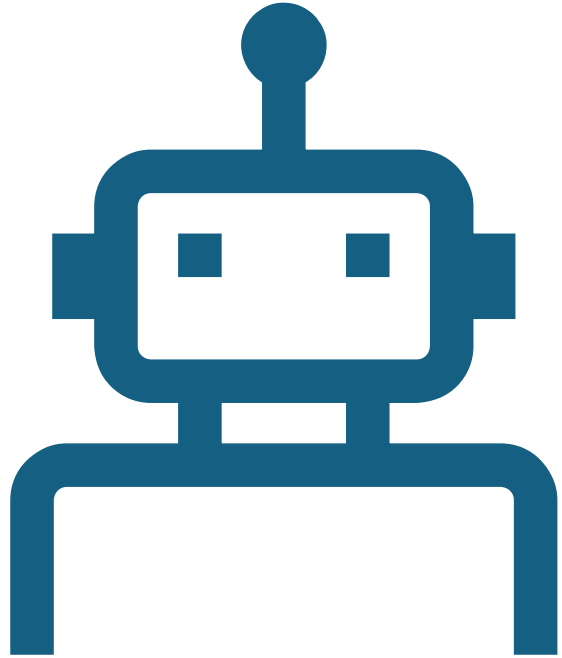


Agenda for today

1. What is AI?
2. How is it already influencing counseling and psychology?
3. What counselors must consider ethically and professionally?
4. What's next for the field?
5. References



What is Artificial Intelligence? Let's look around at tools that we already use to understand AI in the world around us.



At your tables, brainstorm what is AI in your current world, including where it's used, what companies are known for AI, and where it shows up in your daily life...

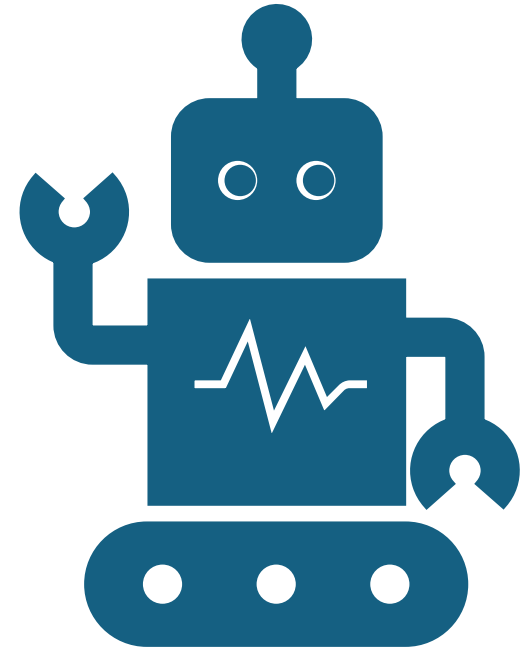
(Bonus for the table that comes up with the most AI items!)

What did you come up with?

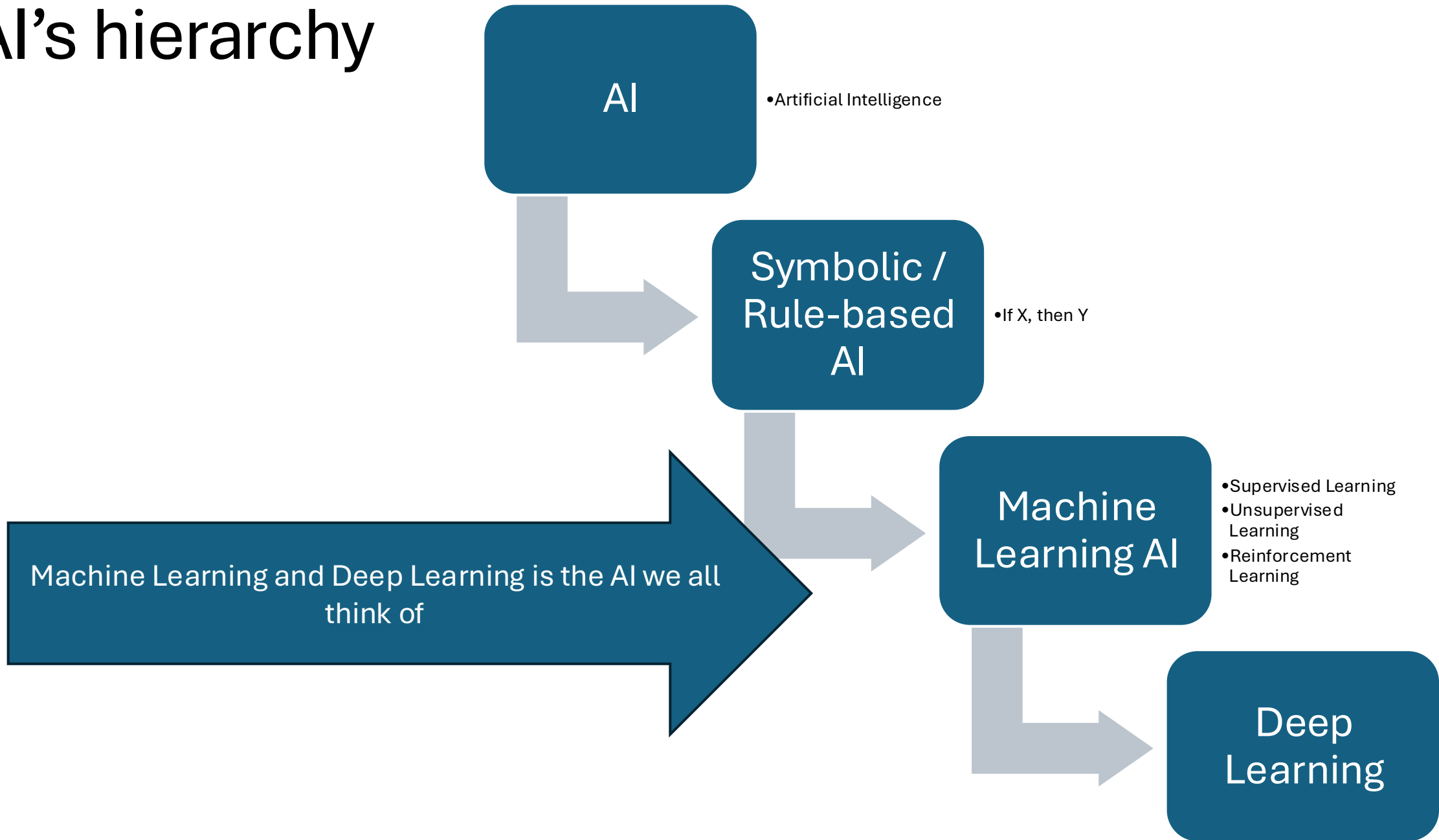
What is AI?

AI refers to computer systems that perform tasks that typically require some kind of intelligence in language understanding, pattern recognition, prediction, and decision-making.

- Examples counselors encounter:
 - Therapy chatbots
 - Documentation assistants
- Risk prediction tools
- Social media algorithms

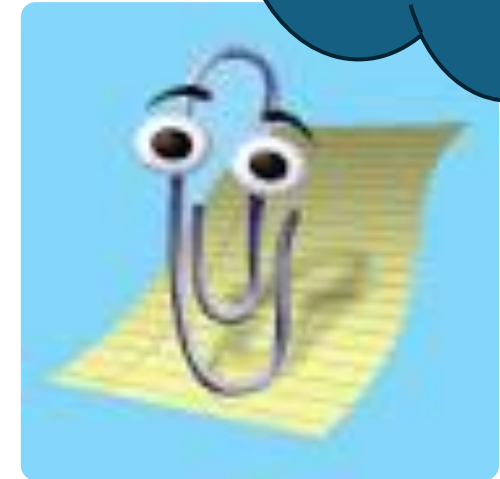


AI's hierarchy



AI's Machine Learning: inspired by the brain

- Uses layered mathematical structures “algorithms”
- Processes enormous datasets
 - Supervised Learning
 - Unsupervised Learning
 - Reinforcement Learning
- Identifies complex patterns (language, faces, voice tone)
- Clinical takeaway:
Machine learning models do not “think.”
They statistically predict the next word
based on patterns → like on your MS
Outlook or Grammarly



Hi! I'm Clippy! It looks like you need help writing a presentation! How can I help?

Machine learning: ML is a subset of AI

Machine Learning is a subset of AI.

- Instead of being explicitly programmed with rules, ML systems:
- Learn patterns from data
- Improve performance over time
- Make predictions based on probabilities
- Analogy for counselors: ML is like a clinician who has seen 10,000 cases and starts recognizing patterns intuitively.
 - Suicide risk flags in EHR systems
 - Social media content recommendation

Let's do a real-life example of Machine Learning: Is anyone willing to open their Facebook account with me?

Large Language Models or Language Models (LM) are Deep Learning

Prediction, Not Understanding

- When an AI responds: It predicts the most likely next word, Based on patterns from training data, Using probability distributions

It does not:

- Have lived experience
- Have beliefs
- Have empathy
- Understand suffering
- It simulates language patterns.



Here's a good example, let's see if you spot it:

<https://youtu.be/kQDw88hEr2c?si=rT52R4DhEstDS4RF>

AI is an intern who can mimic but lacks lived experience

The internal intern metaphor

Let's talk about two (2) things that happen often with the intern: Deepfakes and Hallucinations

Dear
autocorrect.

It's never
duck.



Its NEVER duck

Deepfakes & Reality distortion

Deepfakes use deep learning to create:

Fake audio

Fake video

Synthetic identity content

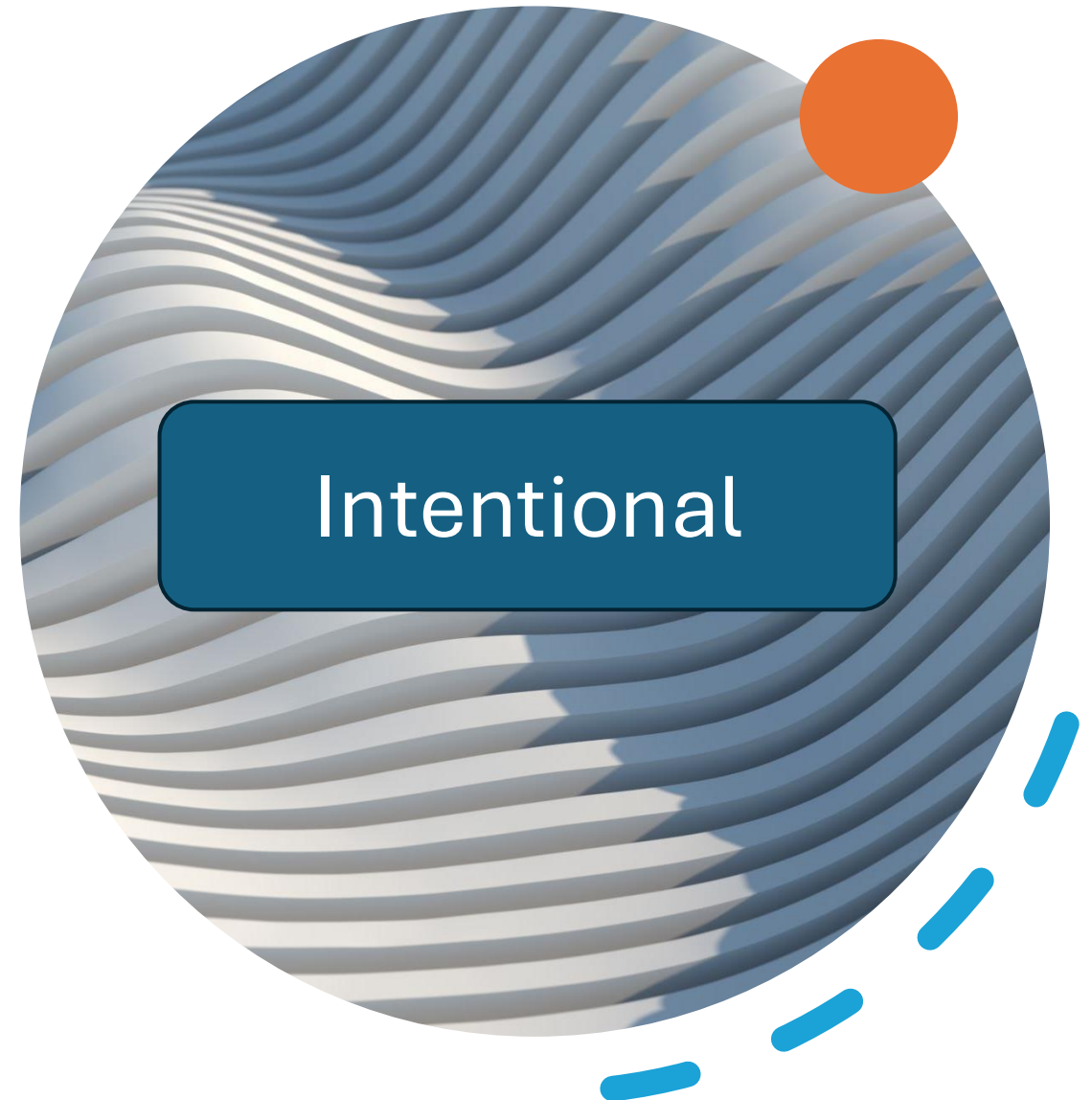
Clinical implications:

False revenge porn cases

Identity exploitation

Political paranoia

Delusional reinforcement



AI Hallucination

An AI hallucination occurs when a system:

- Generates false information
- Fabricates citations
- Creates plausible but inaccurate content
- States opinions as facts

Why hallucinations happen:

- The model prioritizes fluency over truth
- It fills in missing information
- It generalizes patterns inaccurately
- It lacks real-time verification unless connected to live data
- Clinical risk:
A client may:
 - Trust AI-generated diagnoses
 - Bring fabricated research to session
 - Receive incorrect crisis guidance
- Important: Hallucinations are not intentional deception. They are probabilistic errors.

Unintentional

+

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How are clients using AI?

Clients may use AI to:

- Process emotions
- Draft difficult texts
- Self-diagnose
- Role-play conversations
- Replace therapy
- Generate coping plans

Common themes:

- “AI understands me better than people.”
- “I vent to AI instead of friends.”
- “It’s available 24/7.”

Attachment Formation

- Some individuals form parasocial or attachment-style relationships with AI systems.

Avoidance Mechanism: AI may:

- Reduce vulnerability exposure
- Replace interpersonal risk
- Reinforce cognitive distortions



Why does AI "feel" Human?

Deep learning models trained by organizations like OpenAI and Google use:

- Massive text datasets
- Reinforcement learning from human feedback (RLHF)

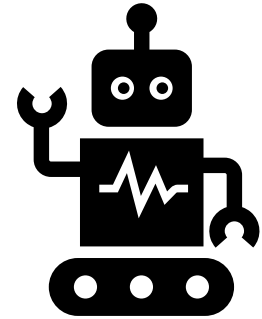
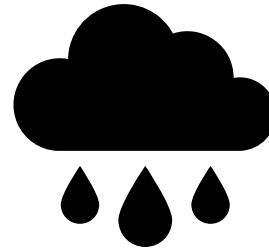
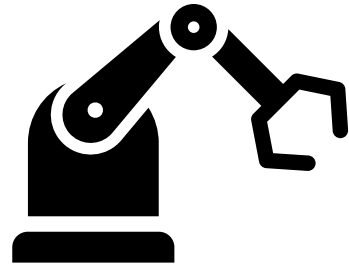
The emotional realism comes from:

- Pattern recognition of therapeutic language
- Statistical mirroring
- Linguistic coherence

But there is:

- No consciousness
- No self-awareness
- No moral agency

How is AI already influencing counseling?



AI is not hypothetical in behavioral health because it is already embedded in screening, crisis response, documentation, workforce management, and digital therapeutics.

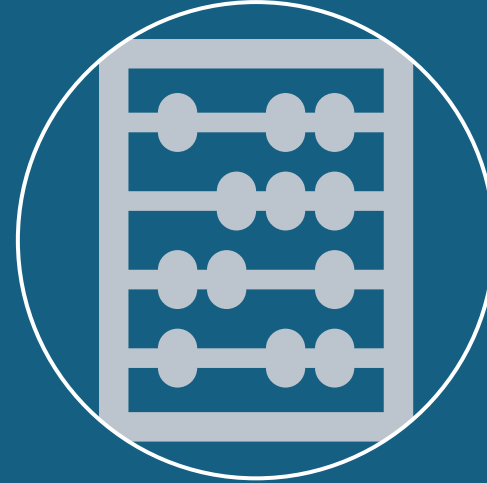
What counselors must consider ethically and professionally?: ACA & HIPA



Confidentiality



**Informed
Consent**



Competence

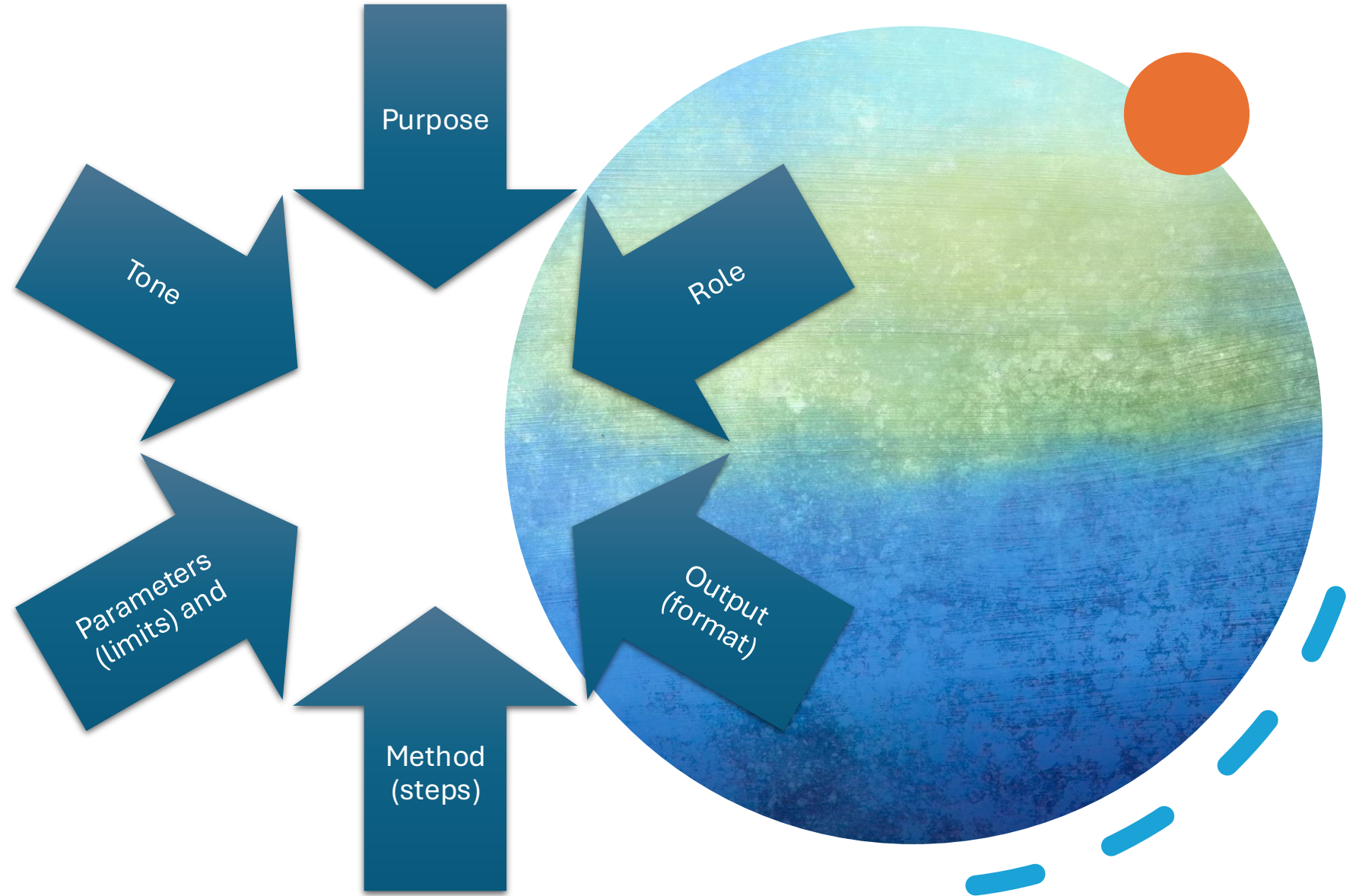


Bias

What's next for the field?



PROMPT



PROMPT: Therapy Note

Student Profile:

- **Name:** "Alex," a 19-year-old sophomore.
- **Stressor:** A recent move from a small, structured hometown to a large university, coupled with a significant increase in academic workload.
- **Duration:** Symptoms began roughly two months ago, shortly after the start of the current semester.

Presenting Symptoms:

- **Emotional:** Alex reports feeling "constantly on edge" (anxiety) and experiences frequent, unexplained crying spells (depressed mood).
- **Behavioral:** Alex has started skipping classes and withdrawing from a previously active intramural soccer team (social withdrawal).
- **Cognitive:** Expresses significant self-doubt and "imposter syndrome," fearing they cannot keep up with peers.
- **Physical:** Complains of persistent fatigue, difficulty falling asleep (insomnia), and frequent tension headaches.

Dialogue

- **Counselor:** "Alex, you mentioned feeling overwhelmed lately. Can you tell me when you first noticed these feelings becoming difficult to manage?"
- **Alex:** "It really started about six weeks ago when midterms hit. Back home, I was always at the top of my class, but here, I feel like I'm barely keeping my head above water. I've started staying in my room all weekend because even just seeing people in the dining hall makes me want to cry. I feel like I don't belong here."

Initial Assessment & Goals

PROMPT

Practical Demonstration Exercise Activity

- Ask AI to generate a therapy note.
 - Identify hallucinations or inaccuracies.
- Reflect: Where is human judgment irreplaceable?
- Discussion questions:
 - Would you trust this in court?
 - Does this capture affect?
 - Is nuance missing?

Counselor Reflection

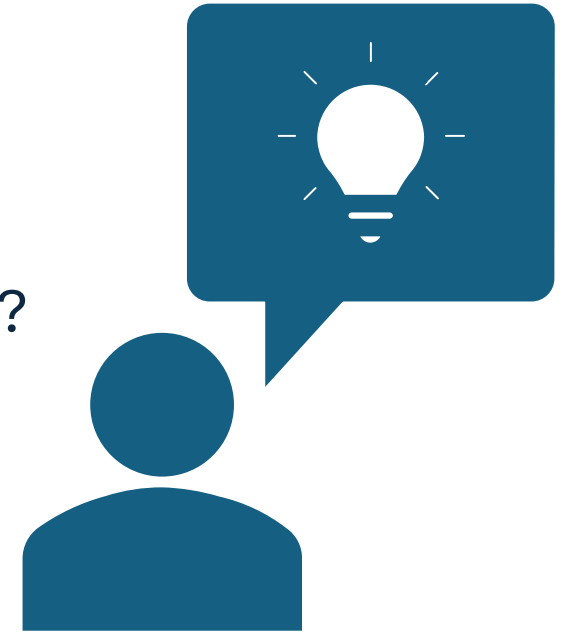
Let's reflect:

- Does AI threaten my role?
- What uniquely human capacities do I bring?



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References... (1)

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