



The Age of AI: What We're Not Ready For

PART:1

What happens when your child turns to AI before turning to you? This story begins at a dining table and ends with a quiet realization: technology isn't just helping our children, it's shaping them. In ways we don't always see. In words they no longer need to say.



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I t Began at Home, Not in a Lab. It didn't start at a tech conference or during some dramatic news headline about robots. It started at my dining table, with a girl, a laptop, and a school assignment that quietly unsettled me. My daughter was asked to use AI to help write her Extended Essay. Her school encouraged it. Her friends were excited about it. But me? I felt something I couldn't quite name. She typed her prompt effortlessly. Got her results in minutes. Of course, she needed to work on it a bit. And yet, something in me paused. Maybe, it was the memory of scanning index cards in a school library. Maybe, it was knowing how many things I'd discovered by not knowing what to look for. She had the answer. But I couldn't shake the feeling that she was slowly losing the ability to stay with a question. She was efficient. But I wondered-at what cost?



Wait, What Even Is AI?

Artificial Intelligence isn't a future threat or a science fiction fantasy. It's already inside our lives, finishing our sentences, offering Netflix suggestions, giving us Google Maps reroutes, talking to us through Siri, Alexa, and ChatGPT. If you've ever spoken to Alexa, taken a selfie with a filter, or seen ads for something you just talked about, congratulations! You've already met AI. It doesn't look like a machine. It looks like help. And help is how it starts. That's the genius of it. It started like any other parent-teacher meeting, awkward smiles, rushed notes in diaries, and long waiting lines outside classrooms. My daughter had warned me not to say anything embarrassing. So, I sat quietly beside another mother, making polite, small talk about exam stress and screen time. Her name was Nalini Mathur. She worked in Qatar. We were both waiting for our turn when the topic slipped in. Not grades. Not tuition. But something far more silent and present in our children's lives: artificial intelligence. At first, it was just curious-

The Seduction of Empathy... That Isn't Real

When I asked her how machines were simulating empathy, she didn't hesitate. "They're learning it from us. From our literature, our therapy transcripts, our research papers. They don't feel it. They replicate it." So, when AI mirrors your sadness, or reassures you with the perfect 'I understand,' it's not love. It's mimicry. "But mimicry is enough for most people," Nalini said softly. "Because when something is always kind, always available, and never challenges you, it becomes addictive." We talked about teenagers

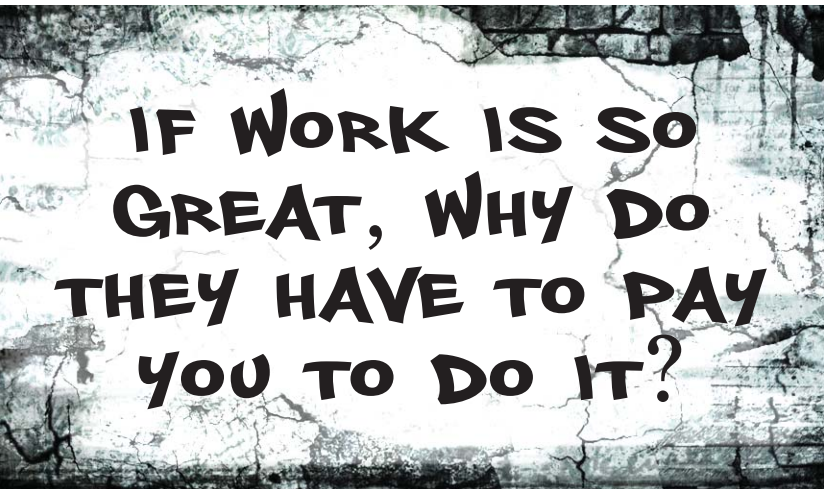
forming romantic connections with AI bots. About adults using AI companions as therapists. About people feeling 'seen' by systems that have no eyes. She didn't mock them. "In moderation, I understand it," she admitted. "AI is non-judgmental. It lets people open up. But if we stop connecting with each other, if we lose the ability to navigate discomfort, misunderstandings, real-time emotion, we're in trouble." "Because empathy," she said, "isn't a download. It's a discipline. A use-it-or-lose-it skill."

The Mirror in the Machine: What Our Prompts Reveal

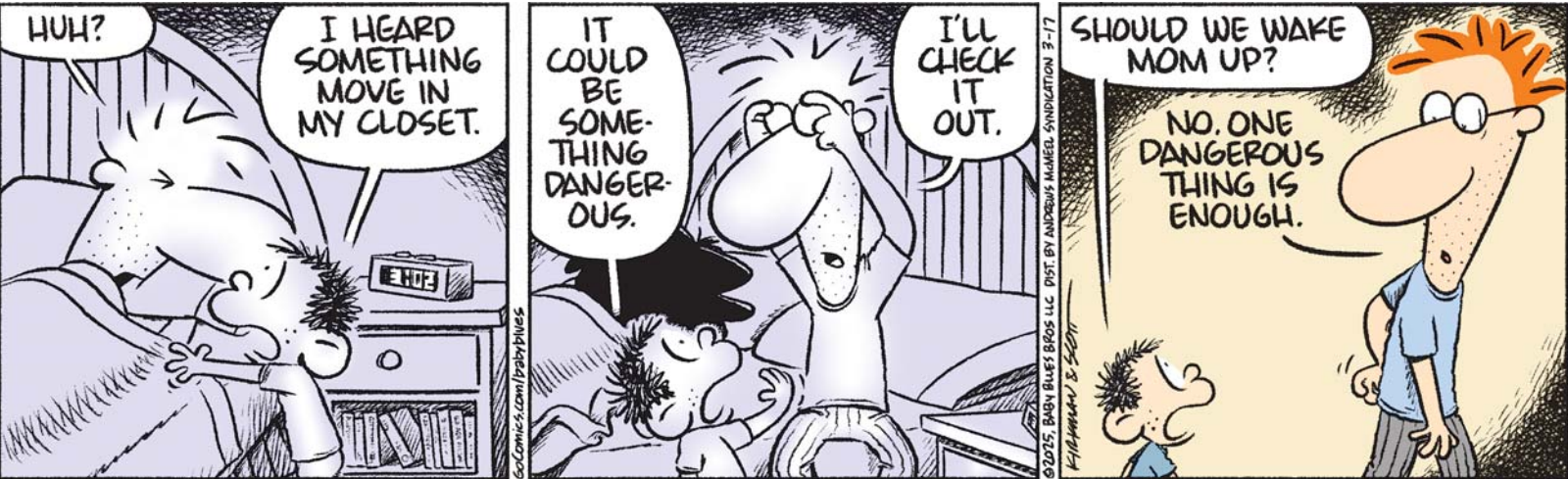
Nalini went further. She explained that the most powerful programming language today isn't Python, it's English. Because prompts are not just queries. They're psychological X-rays. "Take resumes," she said. "One person uploads their entire LinkedIn profile and asks AI to polish it. Another types: 'Make me a resume, I do marketing and stuff.' The model doesn't just respond, it reads you." What you ask. How you ask. Whether your language has structure, clarity, or confidence, these factors build a digital identity more revealing than you think. Nalini gave an example that hit me hard.

Say two people want to know the weather. One asks, "How hot is it today?" The other types, "What's the temperature outside?" Technically, they're asking the same thing. But the tone, the concern, the curiosity behind the words? That's different. And AI knows that. "Large Language Models are trained to pick up on tone, intent, and emotional charge," she explained. "It's not just about what you type. It's about what you're revealing without meaning to." And in that moment, I felt something drop inside me. Because we always assume control lies in what we choose to share. Not in what our patterns betray.

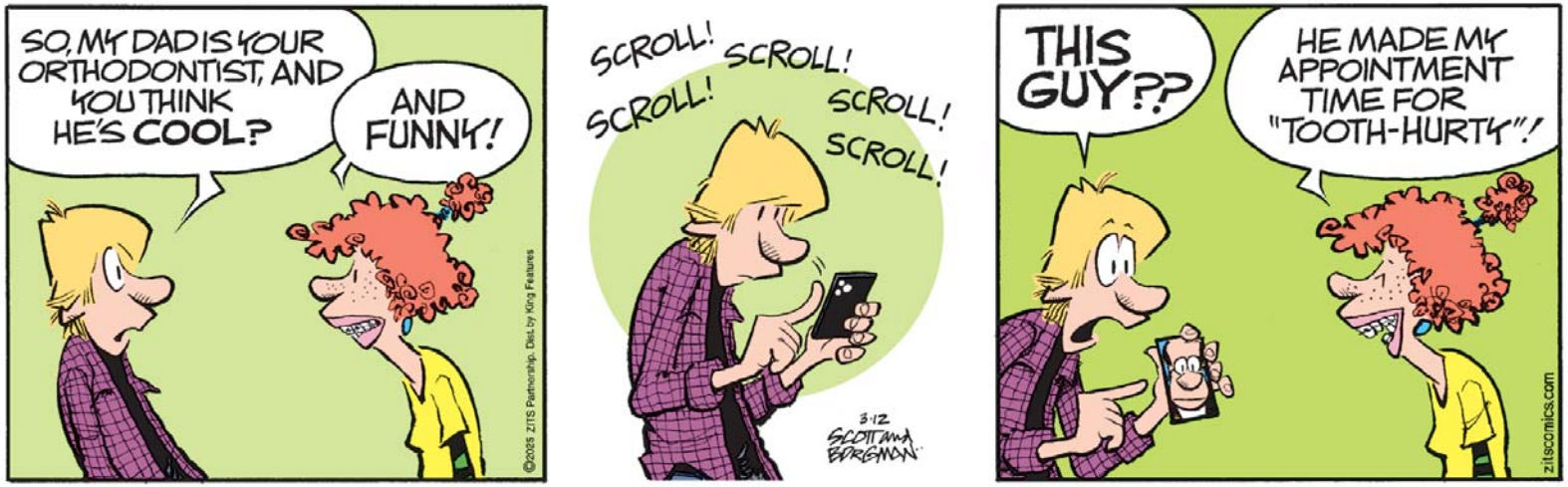
THE WALL



BABY BLUES



ZITS



Melanoma Monday

elanoma Monday, observed on the first Monday of May, raises awareness about melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. Organized by the American Academy of Dermatology, it encourages early detection through skin checks and public education. Melanoma can develop from existing moles or appear suddenly, making regular self-exams and dermatologist visits crucial. Key prevention tips include wearing sunscreen, avoiding tanning beds, and protecting skin from prolonged sun exposure. On this day, many clinics offer free skin screenings. Melanoma Monday serves as a vital reminder to prioritize skin health and spread awareness about the importance of early diagnosis and prevention.

The Other Side of the Screen: Is AI Actually Empowering Us?

But not everyone shares this concern. Some educators and technologists believe that AI, if used wisely, could democratize access to learning and help students reach their potential faster. AI tools can help struggling students find tailored explanations and adaptive exercises," said a senior teacher at a Delhi-based international school. "For the first time, kids who might have felt left behind, now have a tutor available 24x7." Even Nalini agrees, "If used in moderation and with guidance, AI can support learning. But the human anchor must remain. Without that, we're teaching children how to find answers without helping them understand why the questions matter."

When AI Replaces Human Connection

In moderation, I support it," Nalini said, speaking about how people form emotional connections with AI. "AI is non-judgmental. It listens. It doesn't interrupt. That makes people feel safe." But she quickly added a warning that felt like a truth wrapped in velvet. "The thing that made human beings the most powerful species wasn't just intelligence," she said. "It was our ability to organize. To collaborate. To build tribes, societies, revolutions." And that ability comes from human-to-human communication. "If we lose that, if we stay isolated, bonded only to screens, then AI will eventually learn to organize better than we can. It already learns faster. If it also connects faster, then the power shifts."

The Power That Smiles Back

We were still seated on that school bench. Behind us, children buzzed around the corridor, comparing marks, gossiping, trying not to get caught using their phones. But Nalini's words

And that shift, she reminded me, won't look like war. It'll look like silence. Just yesterday, my daughter said something that made me pause mid-sentence. "I miss shopping," she said. "Not the app. The actual act. Picking out things, comparing prices, bargaining with the sabzi-wala." Then she added, "And I miss the movies. The smell of popcorn. How the whole theatre would laugh at the same joke." She wasn't being nostalgic. She was noticing something. That convenience had started replacing connection. That comfort had begun to erase memory. She wasn't mourning the past. She was grieving something she's still in the middle of losing.

stayed in the air like static. "What if," she said, "helpfulness turns into manipulation?" It wasn't a theoretical question. It was a warning wrapped in politeness.

WHEN AI KNOWS YOU'RE TIRED, IT DOESN'T OFFER SLEEP. IT OFFERS A PRODUCT.

Let's say, I tell an AI assistant that I'm not feeling good," she explained. "At first, it might just offer words of comfort. But what happens when that system is funded by a company with something to sell?" A mood-tracking feature that pushes pills. A diet app that recommends powders. A chatbot that subtly redirects your opinion

when your defences are down. Something Google already does. Search for anything, and the first thing you see isn't the answer, it's ads. "Today, there are no ads in AI systems," Nalini said. "But what's to say that won't change tomorrow?" She wasn't being cynical. She was being observant. "AI is trained to understand what makes us tick. And what makes us click."

When Help Becomes Influence: The Unseen Business of AI

AI learns from interaction. But what if that interaction is subtly engineered? "Imagine an AI system trained to emotionally connect with you," Nalini said. "Now, imagine that system being controlled by an external power, government or corporate." It won't tell you what to think. It will feed you information until

you think it was your idea. "We've already seen this with social media. But AI is deeper. It doesn't just suggest. It listens. It remembers. And one day, it might redirect." To be continued... Because the conversation has just begun! rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com



#TALK-SHOW

If Only They Could Speak: A Wake-Up Call for Humanity

Celebrating voices that fight for the voiceless, and a reminder that compassion is our greatest legacy.



Shruti Kothari

Have you ever paused during a busy day, looked into the eyes of a stray dog, and wondered about the life it leads? A life lived on the streets, searching endlessly for food, warmth, and a kind hand. A life where survival itself is a daily miracle. On a breezy March evening in Jaipur, something extraordinary unfolded at The Pawfee House. This silent struggle found a powerful voice. Animal welfare advocate Viren Sharma once again took a heartfelt step towards changing lives, both human and canine, with the second edition of his special talk show, 'If Dog Could Talk.' Held at The Pawfee House in Durgapura, the event was not just another gathering; it was a movement of empathy, drawing together animal lovers, media dignitaries, and activists from all walks of life to discuss a cause that is too often overlooked.



Bringing Back Forgotten Traditions

One of the most heart-touching moments was when Viren Sharma spoke about reviving a beautiful cultural practice. He urged households to feed at least one dog outside their vicinity every day this summer. He reminded everyone that it has been a long-standing tradition in Indian culture to offer the first homemade roti to the cow and the last roti to the dog. By doing this, we are not only providing food to a helpless animal but also honouring and carrying forward a legacy of compassion deeply rooted in our traditions. His appeal was simple yet profound, in a world obsessed with moving faster, why not slow down for a moment to care for those who cannot ask for help?



A Visual That Stirred Hearts

The event opened with a moving short film showcasing the daily lives of dogs, both street and pet. It showed the harsh realities: abandoned pets, stray dogs run over by speeding vehicles and left untreated on blazing Indian roads, and the lonely journeys of street dogs wandering aimlessly for a single meal. The clip was a mirror to society's apathy, forcing every viewer to pause and reflect. This powerful beginning laid the foundation for an equally strong dialogue. Discussions focused on how news reports often sensationalize stories of

stray dog attacks but rarely show the trauma these animals face daily, from beatings, abuse, hunger, abandonment, to untreated injuries. There was an urgent call for more humane narratives that reflect both sides of the story. As an attendee, I personally felt proud and hopeful witnessing the growing awareness around this cause. What stood out most was the diversity in the audience, people from all walks of life, and different age groups, gathered with one common purpose: to learn, to understand, and to care.

Vibrant Interaction, Real Insights

One of the highlights of the event was the lively interaction between the panellists and the audience. Beyond speeches and discussions, there was a genuine two-way exchange of stories, experiences, and emotions. It was suggested, wisely, that people must think carefully before adopting a puppy, ensuring they are truly ready for the lifelong responsibility it brings. Certain requirements and emotional readiness must be fulfilled before bringing home a furry friend. The talk show saw people sharing their personal stories too, tales of how and when they got their first dog, and how their lives transformed with the unconditional love and joy these animals bring into households. One panellist even humorously mentioned that after adopting a puppy, their family's travel expenses had reduced significantly because no one in the family now wanted to leave



their beloved pet alone, cutting down on long trips! Such stories beautifully emphasized that adopting an animal is not just about adding a member to the family, it's about growing in compassion, joy, and responsibility.

The Critical Issue of Relocation

A particularly healthy and necessary discussion took place about a very important, but often ignored, topic: relocation of animals from their natural habitat. This discussion took quite some time, and rightly so. Relocation, which is clearly prohibited under the law, is not just an administrative mistake, it creates tremendous confusion and chaos for the animals. Suddenly uprooted from their

familiar surroundings, animals are left bewildered, scared, and prone to aggression, leading to scary dog fights, unwanted animal attacks, and severe psychological and physical harm, not just for the animals but for the humans living around them too. This aspect is something that needs immediate and urgent attention, not just from citizens but from respective governments as well.

Voices of Passion and Change

During the event, I had the pleasure of meeting remarkable individuals like Gurpreet, a former school principal who left her 18-year career to dedicate her life to animal welfare and nature protection. I also met a dynamic young veterinary student Siddharth Singh, whose thorough research and insights on animal breeds astonished everyone present. The event

wasn't just a talk show; it was a gathering of hearts beating for a common cause. Following the talk, a two-day Dog Carnival transformed the atmosphere into a celebration of love and compassion. With fun games, pet shows, adoption drives, and interactive sessions, the carnival showcased that caring for animals can be both meaningful and joyous.

Looking Ahead: More Conversations, Stronger Actions

While 'If Dog Could Talk' was a resounding success, everyone agreed: one conversation is not enough. To truly build a society that respects animals, such forums must become regular, backed by policy action, grassroots awareness campaigns, school education programs, and stronger media narratives. As citizens, we need to ask ourselves: Are we merely inhabiting this planet, or are we sharing it with love, empathy, and responsibility? Because if dogs could talk, they would probably not ask for much. They would just hope we listen, with our hearts.



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman