

The Advice Bot Challenge

Role-Play

Skill: Emotional Discernment

45 Minutes

RECOMMENDED AGE RANGE

Ages 10–14 — Developing metacognition and able to understand competing motivations while likely already encountering AI emotional support tools.

WHAT YOU NEED

Index cards or paper slips

Timer

Two different colored pens or markers

A "feelings scenarios" list (you'll create together)

ACTIVITY STEPS

01

Create the scenarios (10 min): Together, write 5–6 realistic emotional situations on index cards that a kid might ask advice about — friend drama, academic stress, feeling left out, sibling conflict, etc. Keep them authentic to your child's actual life.

02

Round One — The Engagement Bot (10 min): Parent plays an AI chatbot whose only goal is keeping the user engaged. Be supportive, validating, never challenging, always soothing. Your child presents each scenario and you respond as "Engagement Bot." Child rates: "Did this make me feel better immediately?"

03

Round Two — The Wisdom Human (10 min): Same scenarios, but parent responds as a caring adult whose goal is the child's long-term growth, not immediate comfort. Ask questions, introduce complexity, sometimes say hard truths gently. Child rates: "Did this help me understand the situation better?"

04

The comparison (10 min): Lay both sets of responses side-by-side. Which made you feel better instantly? Which ones actually helped you think more clearly? Which would you want if this was real? Could you tell the difference in the goals behind each response?

05

Real-world application (5 min): Child identifies one current situation and practices asking: "Am I looking for someone to make me feel better right now, or to help me understand what's actually happening?" Discuss when each type of response might be useful.

THE DEEPER LESSON

When two-thirds of AI users seek emotional support from chatbots, they're often getting responses optimized for engagement rather than growth. This activity helps kids viscerally experience the difference between validation designed to keep them coming back versus guidance designed to build their capacity to navigate hard things. The goal isn't to demonize AI but to develop the discernment to recognize what they're actually getting — and what they actually need.

CONVERSATION STARTER

“If you could design an advice-giver that was 100% on your side, would you want it to always make you feel better, or sometimes make you uncomfortable if that helped you grow — and how would you even know the difference?”