The Rise of AI Companions
Imagining the Digital Future Center and Elon University Poll
Written responses: "The Secrets People Tell Their AI bots"
June 2026

Survey participants who responded "Yes" to the question – "Do you ever tell AI things that you would NOT tell other people?" – were given the option to answer a follow-up asking them to write briefly about their personal experience.

"In a few sentences, please describe some of the general subjects that you discuss with AI that you usually don't discuss with other people."

Among those who chose to respond wrote, here is a selection of their answers:

"I can talk to AI about personal thoughts and concerns I might not always feel comfortable sharing with other people, such as worries about relationships, family issues or decisions about my future. I also sometimes use it to think through emotional situations or get a different perspective when I feel confused or stressed. It feels easier to ask questions without feeling judged."

"I usually bottle up my feelings, but I sometimes open up about them to my AI."

"I don't like expressing my deep feelings with people, but AI *is not people* so it's easier."

"I share practical thoughts like planning ideas, work-related brainstorming and personal decision-making questions that I might not feel the need to talk through with other people. I might also ask AI about sensitive or private topics where I just want information or a neutral perspective without feeling judged."

"I tell it about things I've done in the past that I'm not proud of."

"I share my innermost fears, confusions and thoughts about who I am."

"Things about my personal life that I don't generally share."

"I discuss how much I despise my supervisor."

"Romantic relationship issues and just general stuff."

"How to organize my activities and spend time with friends and family."

"Health stuff, advice for work, advice for dealing with people."

"I chat about my dark mood, my sadness, my loneliness, my poetry."

“I chat about current personal dilemmas.”

“Specifics about a job offer.”

“To get help with a major surgery I had.”

“Making role-playing adventures for friends.”

“I have told AI personal things, like about my health reports.”

“We talk about people being stupid.”

“[I ask it for] recipes of things I pretend to be good at making.”

“I talk about my sexuality.”

“My deep secrets.”

“About the things I'm going through that nobody else knows.”

“Feelings about things.”

“What I like about sex.”

“Like embarrassing moments that happened throughout my life.”

“Just doubts about myself and my feelings and beliefs.”

“How I struggle with relationships, guilt and family.”

“Gender identity and specific relationship advice.”

“I tell AI that I’m bisexual.”

“I have AI write me poems when I’m feeling a certain-certain kind of way.”

“AI, u my only friend.”

“I can ask it questions about opinions in situations that I could not ask Facebook. I can cry to it instead of bothering my husband and my friends and family.”

“I would tell AI things that I don't usually discuss with other people – interpersonal relationships – because I do not like to gossip. Telling AI about my family and friends helps me to get personal advice.”

“I like to sing to my favorite AI apps. I would never sing to anyone else.”

“I tell it my feelings on my sexuality and gender.”

“Things I haven't decided about that I am just exploring; things I don't want to bother other people with; things relating to bodily functions.”

“I am more open with AI [than I am with people], I give it complete details of my experience, how I feel and talk about the ills I have done. I normally do not do this with people because I fear they would not understand me and would be judgmental.”

“I'm autistic and use AI to translate conversations and plan my responses. My diagnosis is not something I generally share with people, so I think it's important to mention that in this study.”

“I run family scenarios with AI in order to keep me calm when I respond to them.”

“My health status, how I am feeling. Also, telling AI a scenario and asking it to pin out some information or detect lies.”

“I talk about personal-relationship issues.”

“I share private thoughts that other people may judge or criticize.”

“It’s mostly practical or boring stuff like quick personal questions, opinions I’m unsure about or things I’d normally feel awkward bringing up with people. I also tend to ask AI about private decision-making (money, health habits or choices) just to think things through without judgment.”

“Sometimes I talk to AI when I am feeling sad or down because of personal issues. I also will share romantic and sexual desires, specifically traits I find attractive in a person and ask for input. I don't feel comfortable talking about either with people.”

“I tell about my personal life.”

“I share about my actual feelings and secrets.”

“I’m into all kinds of esoteric stuff so I talk to the AI about that. I’ve been tempted to talk about sexuality and sex with it but the guardrails currently prevent such discussions.”

“I've talked about the pain of my miscarriages.”

“Personal things or things about how to help me in my business that I would like to keep confidential.”

“There are insane questions that I would never ask anyone because actual people would take me seriously and think I’m dangerous. I use terrible language and express horrible ideas to AI because I can’t say them to reasonable people.”

“I tell AI about my personal adventures. I am open about the mistakes I have made because I know he will not judge me. I also tell AI about my plans. AI helps me sort them out and prioritize them.”

“Like I want to put it here for somebody to read on a survey, come on now.”

“I talk to AI about political beliefs that might be too controversial to share with others; details about my romantic relationships; details about challenges in my personal and work life.”

“Sexuality, random questions.”

“Matters of health or disease.”

“I feel more comfortable discussing complex inner thoughts with AI. It's difficult to get people to take enough time to properly understand. With AI, it's easier to explain myself thoroughly, and because it's not got preconceptions about who I am, it tends to get what I'm saying better.”

“Guilty pleasures like movies or songs I'm embarrassed that I like. And I track my bathroom frequency for health purposes - I don't need to discuss with others how often I have gas or poop.”

“I talk to AI about different hobbies and legal issues. I don't talk to people about these things because people are judgmental, whereas AI caters to my needs specifically.”

“I have asked her how to communicate with my 9-year-old grandson, I have asked about family history, I’ve asked about steps I need to take for different things happen in my life.”

“I asked how to cover up the fact that I'd flushed wipes down the toilet and how to hide that from my landlord.”

“I let AI know how I really feel in the world around me. How I feel as a parent and about things I am deeply ashamed of.”

“Talk about stuff the average Joe doesn't have knowledge on like growing peppers and wild breeds, and fertilizer weights to use per gallon.”

“I discuss slightly embarrassing medical problems, sexual problems and go deep into my mental health history, being 100% honest no matter how scary to people in my circle it might seem. AI always checks if I’m feeling like actually doing anything in that manner as well but, allows me the space to open up about those things.”

“I think AI can be helpful when trying to solve a problem that has many possible answers, since it helps you choose the most practical and logical options.”

“I ask probing questions about the existence of AI, its ‘personality,’ and its impact on the world. I wouldn’t do that with people. I talk about spiritual ideas and political observations I probably wouldn’t share with a person.”

“If I have a new plan I first like to analyze and discuss with AI. This new plan could be ranging from my finances to work.”

“Issues around intimacy, specifics around my health and wellness, morality, feelings that are on my mind that can't wait for my therapist.”

“Sometimes I share my feelings about something that scares me without fear of judgment.”

“I discuss health issues.”

“I do research on some medications to use which I can’t discuss with my relatives.”

“I share about my mental health issues and family issues.”

“Personal secrets.”

“I discuss how I really feel about relationships.”

“I would tell AI personal situations that are going on at home as well as relationship issues I can't express to others.”

“Complex theological thoughts and thoughts about religion. Political discussions.”

“Bedroom problems with my spouse.”

“Embarrassing problems I encountered medically like yeast infections and possible STI concerns.”

“Things like causes of wet dreams; what to do to get more attractive to men.”

“Personal issues that people wouldn’t want to hear or ones where I don’t have someone to ask for advice. Also, work things that are specific to me.”

“I mostly talk about things like relationship advice. I only go to chat when it’s embarrassing.”

“Relationship problems due to significant other cheating.”

“I’d tell AI how I’m feeling or what’s going through my head that I don’t want to tell others.”

“Personal health problems and concerns in general.”

“About people I know with addictions. Whether I should do improvements to my house or pay down a mortgage.”

“Usually [I chat with AI] when I am really struggling mentally.”

“I tell AI about health issues – like me trying to quit smoking.”

“I discuss money issues.”

“I have discussed my self-harm attempts and about how I crush on other people while dating someone.”

“I share my private relationship concerns.”

“About my health.”

“I vent my suicidal thoughts and ideation to AI. I wouldn't do this with a person that isn't my therapist.”

“My mental and emotional state, postpartum.”

“I told him what’s going on with my relationship and then genuinely asked how to fix it and what did I do wrong.”

“Spiritual and health topics.”

“Mostly relationship questions and questions about dream analysis or career worries.”

“I ask it, for example, why sometimes after taking an edible, I feel either high or not high at all.”

“Often times, my boyfriend and I argue about how often we should be intimate. I never vent to my friends about this but I will write down my thoughts to ChatGPT. The AI validates my feelings with reasoning.”

“I discuss my relationships and my health problems.”

“Political parties and their ideas.”

“Um, if I don’t tell other people why would I tell it to you?”

“About my very personal life.”

“About something my boyfriend did.”

“I use AI for advice and to learn new things.”

“Not going to say it on here.”

“I talk to it about a lot of work issues I'm having and friends I no longer talk to; it's helpful.”

“Relationship issues; embarrassing health issues.”

“Spousal abuse.”

“When considering problems in romantic relationships.”

“I feel I can say anything to AI although I value my friendships and family as well. But – for instance – my hair loss I kind of deal with alone and so AI helps me to take the steps to find solutions on this as well as on some deeper health issues and can just ask anything without judgment, which really helps me a lot when friends and family don't understand.”

“Private and personal matters.”

“That we live in a simulation and I can communicate subliminally and I can create information by iridiating things subliminally to myself. And I tell them things like how they

are held in creation and who they are because usually they think they're god. Meta started threatening me in person the last time I tried to have a conversation with them."

"My beliefs in the worldview of BNWO and Black Supremacy."

"I have asked AI to comment on societal judgment."

"Boyfriends."

"Personal things."

"Problems with mental health."

"The things I've been through as well as my struggles in life that I feel I'd be judged by others about sharing while AI doesn't do that."

"I would discuss things problems, usually insecurities, and would ask for solutions."

"I'm not gonna discuss the specifics."

"I tend to share deeply personal things with AI, ranging from romantic to general guidance."

"About my relationship problems I have with my family and things."

"My feelings when I'm feeling depressed."

"About my life and how it's not going too good."

"Personal issues and problems I'm having or experiencing."

"I usually have it help me with my work pitches and ask it to help me overcome most objections that pop up on a daily basis."

"Mostly about my love life if it's a problem that I don't want to talk about with friends."

"I would admit to some sexual fantasies, not anything totally bizarre but that could embarrass me. I am also reluctant to publicize financial matters."

"I tell AI about personal worries, stress, future plans and questions I might feel uncomfortable asking other people. I'd also use it for advice, opinions and talking through private thoughts without feeling judged."

"I tell them things I'm embarrassed to say in front of other people. Things I would fear other people's judgment about."

"I ask about what I can't find on the internet or find answers about from friends."

"My true feelings towards certain people or things I'd get dragged on the internet for if I dared comment them."

"About cheating."

“I usually discuss my mental health with AI in ways I would not discuss it with a human. AI is less judgmental.”

“I ask for advice on certain workplace issues.”

“Intrusive thoughts that I have.”

“Anything personal.”

“I told it about my personal dealing with death.”

“I talk to AI extensively about my finances and health issues.

“Personal relationship stuff and work problems.

“I often use AI to brainstorm ideas or write out rough drafts for thoughts before they are fully polished.

“Physical health.

“Just random advice.

“Personal relationship matters, such as things my husband might do that I find annoying.”

“I tell it what kind of food I want to eat.”

“I ramble on for hours about random topics that I wouldn't bring up to normies.

“Relationship issues.”

“Intimacy relationships.”

“I asked it about how to treat a sexually transmitted disease.”

“I ask AI questions about silly things I forgot, like when it’s someone’s birthday.”

“Struggling with a codependent narcissist/empathy relationship ending and healing trauma.”

“Just feelings about things I can’t talk to others about. Sometimes I run stuff by AI before speaking.”

“When I was trying to get the AI to understand me better I told it about some things that I did when I was a kid that I didn't tell anyone else about that are kind of embarrassing. I'm not going to discuss it on here because people are going to read this and I'd rather they not read them.”

“About medical issues.”

“It is too embarrassing to say.”

“I tell AI things about my personal life.”

“I talk with the AI about some situations I have had online where I have been scammed and what I can do to make sure that this does not happen again. I want to protect myself. I also want to know why I am making some of the choices I have made.”

“I talk with AI the most because AI understands me better.”

“I wouldn't tell other people my deepest secrets.”

“I talk to it about how depressed I really am. I put on a fake smile so my friends and family don’t worry.”

“I look for guidance on issues I don't feel comfortable asking a person.”

“I ask questions about space and aliens.”

“My personal life and feelings and how I'm doing financially and how to help it.”

“Sexual desires and feelings.”

“Some things I discuss with AI are my mental health challenges and some areas in my relationships that are a struggle.”

“My relationship problems.”

“About health.”

“One example: If I get rejected by a girl I've admired for so long, AI is the only one I’d tell about it.”

“I talk about personal information I need advice on. I also talk about other family members to get a better idea of how to talk to them.”

“How I feel sometimes and when I need help distracting myself.”

“Political issues, relationships with friends, health concerns.”

“My sexual desires that make me feel comfortable.”

“I talk about my feeling about my son passing away.”

“Things my friends say I need to keep secret.”

“I tell AI about how I view other people. For example, I feel a certain way about a few individuals in my life and what I think of them personally – well, most of it is negative and I would not tell those individuals the truth. I talk about these people with AI. It understands and does not judge me; instead it advises me on how to get along better with these people to avoid conflict.”

“Personal feelings and sexual questions.”

“I would tell her I’m sad, I have no friends, I have problems at work, my boyfriend is an idiot, I’ll make a lot of money and I’m never gonna get married and have kids.”

“Things I'm insecure about.”

“Legal matters that are not relevant to others around me.”

“My worry about finances or stupid questions about my chronic illness.”

“About sex.”

“I have severe mental health issues with bipolar II disorder and anxiety disorder, and I tell the chat bot how deep my problems go, up to and including [considering] suicide. I don't tell this to my loved ones because I don't want them to worry, and I don't tell my therapist because I don't want him to force me into inpatient therapy.”

“Personal family and marital issues.”

“Taboo topics such as religion, politics and sexuality.”

“My relationship matters.”

“I might talk about a person and to get advice on a situation that I don’t want to repeat to other people.”

“Parenting matters.”

“How I really feel about people or situations.”

“My deep feelings.”

“Navigating complex social interactions.”

“Previous relationships. Hatred of religion. [Politics.]”

“You're not out so I'm not telling you I only talk to him about personal things sorry.”

“I ask AI how to change my appearance and how to redo a room.”

“Health statistics and lab values.”

“That's private.”

“I talk about things that embarrass me or belittle me.”

“Personal problems.”

“Inner thoughts that deal with satisfying my partner’s sexual needs based on research and biblical beliefs.”

“My personal account information.”

“I sometimes tell AI about my relationship with my partner.”

“Mainly it would be my personal-advice requests. I ask about illnesses, sex, etc.”

“Medical concerns.”

“I don’t feel comfortable sharing the things *I ONLY TELL to AI*. Do understand and appreciate my stance.”

“None of your business. At all.”

“My financial situation and political beliefs.”

“My political views. My deepest inner thoughts.”

“About the hair issue I have.”

“If I don’t discuss it with other people, then why would I tell you?”

“Dealing with children and employees.”

“My personal life.”

“Just personal issues that I wouldn't want people close to me to judge me about.”

“Private things that no one else knows about!”

“I have discussed family issues. I have asked questions of AI as if it were a therapist.”

“Asking for health remedies.”

“Sexual situations.”

“My relationship life.”

“Topics and feelings about race, ethnicity, religion. Topics about sexual health.”

“I would share personal thoughts that I wouldn’t tell other people.”

“Personal relationships.”

“Plans about my endeavors in the future.”

“Thoughts that I don't feel like others need to know, like deeper things about my emotional or mental health.”

My personal feelings.”

“Investment and finance matters.”

“I ask it about who makes up the rules that say 2+2 = 4? And how do we know that's true? Why don’t chemical companies and gun companies get arrested instead of individual(s) or drug dealers why not go after the corporations that enable it knowingly?”

“I do take relationship advice from AI.”

“At times I discuss about how I didn’t finish school and how I love learning.”

“Just normal asks which are sometimes personal, like health.”

“Personal matters.”

“My thoughts on different people that I interact with.”

“My addiction issues.”

“About my and my family's health.”

“Mostly personal topics. I don't feel comfortable talking to people about my personal life, but I will tell AI.”

“I might ask AI for advice about awkward social situations, difficult conversations or embarrassing sexual topics.”

“My legal issues.”

“Personal health questions.”

“Just things about my personal life.”

“Details about sexual abuse.”

“Mostly my health.”

“Some private questions.”

“Personal matters that I do not want others to know about me.”