



By: Elise Quevedo

# Tech is not good or bad—it's what we put into it



Although I always celebrate technology and innovation, today, I want to talk about the moments where tech doesn't uplift, and instead, it isolates, damages, and, in some cases, destroys lives.

Over the past years, we've seen a rise in conversations about the dark side of AI. We've also explored the need to raise our voices, to speak out, and to use platforms for good. This piece is a continuation of that journey.

Because while AI has transformed how we communicate and even care for one another, it has also been weaponised in subtle and devastating ways. One unfortunate fact we need to accept is that our connected world isn't always a safe one, especially for the most vulnerable among us.

## Behind the Headlines

Earlier this year, a tragic story, unfortunately, one of too many on this topic, **made** headlines. A young girl was harassed online. The bullying spread across several platforms, amplified by AI-generated messages that mocked her. She didn't tell anyone and felt ashamed, overwhelmed, and alone. And technology, something meant to connect us, was the tool that broke her. She ended her life.

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident. I've **read** stories of children as young as 12 and 13 ending their lives because of bullying.

This type of news always breaks me, because I know how it feels to be bullied online and offline, which is why I'm an advocate of anti-bullying and ethical tech and innovation usage.

When I was younger and shared what had happened to those I thought were friends, they brushed it off with a simple "just ignore it, don't worry about it, or you need a thicker skin," which made me feel ashamed it happened to me and not want to talk to anyone.

## Over 720,000 people die due to suicide every year - World Health Organization

I learned to be very resilient from a young age, and I feel blessed and lucky that I learned how to react (or better, not respond) to those attempting to bully me even as an adult, but when I read the stories, I can relate, because I think, "That could have been me."

According to the World Health Organization, over 720,000 people die due to **suicide** every year, one of the leading causes of death among 15- to 29-year-olds. And today, a growing percentage of that is directly or indirectly linked to online activity, including bullying, harassment, and the pressure of comparison culture.

## The Role of Technology, Both the Problem and the Lifeline

A few years ago, I provided behind-the-scenes advice on a new "global holistic wellbeing organisation" that was launching a new website and app. They wanted to use tech for good, and I will always be a supporter, because tech is not good or bad. It reflects what we put into it. And while AI has been and continues to be used to spread harm, it can also be part of the solution. Today, I will share three mental health apps worth checking out.

### Wysa

Wysa is an AI-powered mental health support app that **uses** evidence-based cognitive behavioural techniques. It helps users manage stress, anxiety, and depression in real time.

The chatbot is intuitive, non-judgemental, and available around the clock. It acts as a safe space to express how you are feeling, which is helpful when speaking to a person feels too daunting. For those who need more support, professional human coaching is available directly through the app.

## Calm

More than a meditation app and one of the most well-known in the market, Calm has **evolved** into a full toolkit for emotional resilience.

It offers guided meditations for a range of needs, such as stress, focus, anxiety, and self-compassion, along with sleep stories narrated by calming voices (including celebrity voices such as Matthew McConaughey), breathing exercises, and daily gratitude check-ins.

Calm can be your moment of peace during a chaotic day or a reliable way to unwind at night.

## BetterHelp

BetterHelp has been **making** its rounds on social media lately, and it prioritises privacy, flexibility, and accessibility. The app matches you to a therapist based on your needs and preferences, which makes it feel more personal.

Sessions are secure and confidential, and the ongoing messaging feature lets you stay connected between appointments. For people who might hesitate to walk into a clinic or wait on long public health lists, BetterHelp can be a lifeline.

And please note, these tools, of course, are not replacements for real human connection, but they can serve as a bridge, especially when shame, fear, or stigma hold someone back from speaking to friends or family.

## What Needs to Change

We need to talk about mental health with the same urgency and openness we apply to physical health. That means teaching digital resilience in schools, just as we teach reading and writing.

Equipping parents and educators to spot early signs of digital distress and demanding ethical standards from platforms when it comes to

abuse and AI-generated content.

Can we finally encourage leaders in tech to consider impact over innovation?

## Mental health struggles don't disappear with age

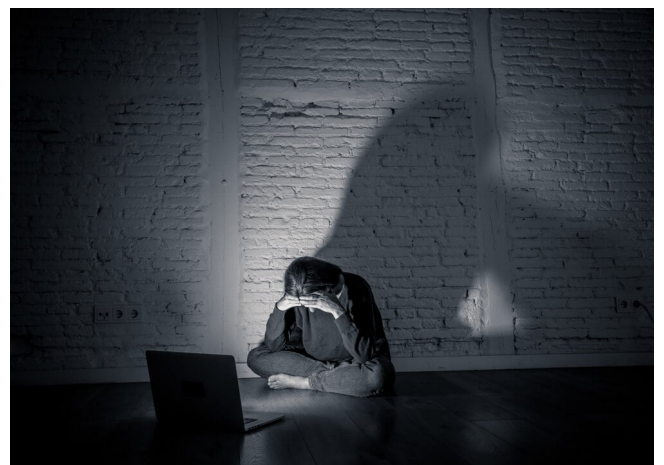
We need to talk about mental health like lives depend on it, because they do. Read that again!

As adults, we often assume we're supposed to have it all figured out. But mental health struggles don't **disappear** with age. If anything, the silence gets louder. And that's why this message matters at every stage of life.

## Is There Hope for Change?

Every time I see a mental health campaign in a subway, a support hotline pinned in a classroom, or an influencer opening up about therapy, I smile, because we are raising awareness among people.

Technology will keep advancing. AI will become more human-like. But if we want to create a future worth living in, we need to make sure the human spirit stays at the centre.



*This topic is still taboo in many families or cultures, and the thought of asking for help is a sign of weakness in their minds*

If you're reading this and you've ever felt like your voice doesn't matter, I want you to know that it does. If someone close to you is

struggling, please check in. If you don't know how, simply ask, "How can I support you today?" Sometimes that's all it takes.

I will never blame the friends who didn't know how to support me. To this day, this topic is still taboo in many families or cultures, and the thought of asking for help is a sign of weakness in their minds. I am glad that is changing, and we can see a lot more people talking about it now.

## Be Kind to One Another

We can't undo the harm already done, but we can choose to move forward in a different way. We can build safer digital spaces, we can hold tech accountable, and we can lead with empathy.

What if the next message you send to a friend, whether it's a comment, a DM, or a post, becomes the reason someone decides to stay?

Be kind to one another. Kindness should be a viral movement. Period.

Note: If you or someone you know is struggling with suicidal thoughts or mental health matters, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (US) at 800-273-8255 or Samaritans (UK) at 116 123 to connect with a trained counsellor.