

## **Man Used ai to Talk to Late Fiance Experts Warn Tech Could be Misused**

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Analysis - Michelle Best

Heartbreak and grief can take on many forms, seven in fact: shock and denial, pain and guilt, anger and bargaining, depression, the upward turn, reconstruction, acceptance and hope. The love of Joshua Barbeau's life passed away. During his bereavement period, he had most likely gone through a variety of expressions of grief. Dealing with heartbreak, Joshua "found" a way to move forward - heal: using augmented intelligence to create a robot, chatbox, coded to sound just like her.

While this can seem like a method of healing or moving on in life "with" his fiance, the questions to ask circle around two major viewpoints: emotional and ethical. Is this romantic? Is this crossing a line of ethics? Does this stunt his growth to correctly heal?

To accomplish programming a robot to emulate his late fiance's voice with great accuracy, Barbeau simply provided text messages, and personal information. Since his creation, peers have questioned if this practice is ethical. Major concerns have been raised: will social media accounts be made to falsify information with great persuasion because the robot is made to sound and write like a human? Groups have stated concerns that these robots can be used in malicious ways mainly because it will impersonate another person in voice and text - leading to the difficult task of determining what is real and authentic.

From my viewpoint, creating a robot to emulate a loved one's voice can help bring a form of healing, however this healing is only temporary. It does not take away from the reality of the loss. Ethically, the concern -a violation of misuse- is no different from other technology concerns. Since there will always be people who misuse technology, it is our job as computer scientists to create policies, ethics for users and steps to block unethical uses.

Emotionally, this chatbox has brought a form of healing but is this temporary healing set to do more damage? I believe the challenge is that while this can bring a form of healing - are you able to grow emotionally and process through the seven forms of grief that can lead one to the final stage: acceptance and hope.

Barbeau was able to use his knowledge of coding to program a robot to do fascinating things. It is my hope that we find an ethical balance to this new technological discovery and that Joshua Barbeau finds hope and complete healing.