



# ILLUMINATED

a quarterly newsletter

April  
2024



**BetterHelp, chatbots, AI, oh my!** Online therapy platforms and chatbots promise to revolutionize the way we approach mental healthcare, largely by enhancing the accessibility of treatment. Accessibility is indeed crucial, but never at the expense of quality. This issue of *Illuminated* presents two articles that examine the downsides of these tools. Additionally, it links to a chatbot website so you can explore for yourself. Be careful out there, folks—**not everything labeled ‘therapy’ is therapeutic, and much of it can pose harm.** This issue aims to shed light on these complexities. Enjoy.



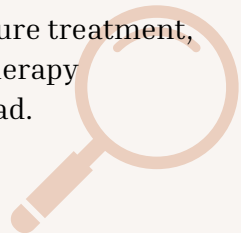
Warmly,  
**Dr. Jenna Schleien**  
Clinical Psychologist & Founder, Lumina Psychology



## A Clinical Psychologist goes undercover at BetterHelp -

Like so many of us in the field, Clinical Psychologist and Psychoanalyst Dr. Robert Cohen was apprehensive about the ethics and effectiveness of online therapy platforms. Dr. Cohen decided to engage in his own psychotherapy via BetterHelp, navigate the hiring process on the platform, and conduct interviews with BetterHelp clinicians. He emerged with serious concerns centered around the platform’s capacity to provide quality, secure treatment, as well as its potential to destabilize the therapy profession. This exposé is a worthwhile read.

read



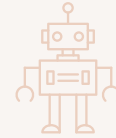
to learn more, or to schedule a session, visit [www.luminapsychology.com](http://www.luminapsychology.com)



## Your AI therapist is not a substitute for the real thing -

Therapy chatbots are all over the internet. They use natural language processing (NLP) algorithms to simulate a therapist-patient conversation. While some therapy chatbots can provide supportive statements and useful resources, they are unable to replicate an authentic human connection, an ingredient repeatedly demonstrated as crucial to healing. Psychotherapist Richard Brouillette, LCSW, explains how developing a secure attachment to a therapist can facilitate profound psychological growth, underscoring an inherent limitation in the ability of AI to facilitate therapeutic change.

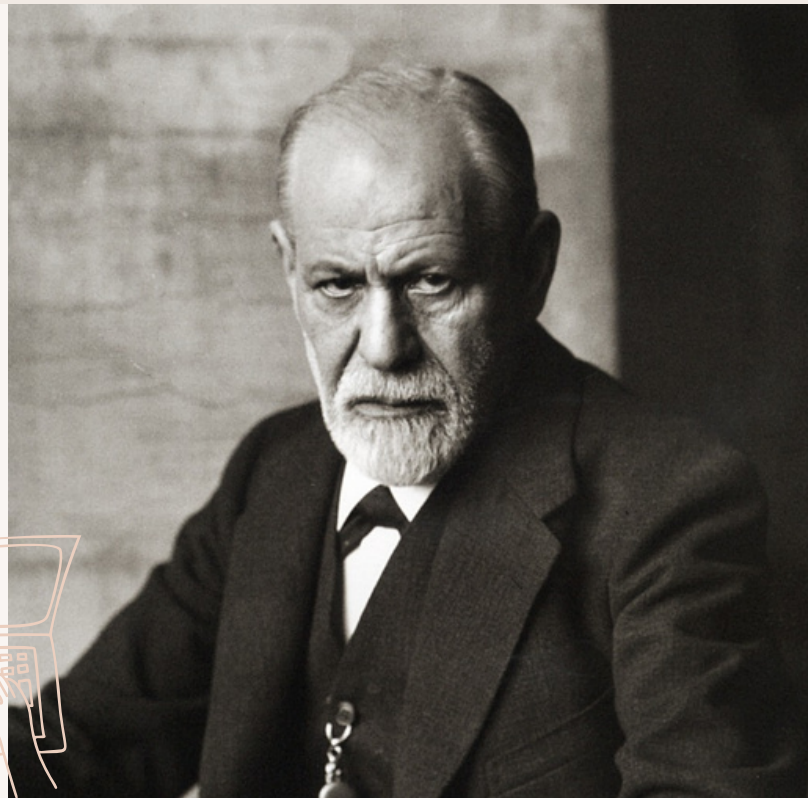
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## Chat with Sigmund Freud -

Character AI is a chatbot website that allows for user-developed characters, making it possible to chat with most anyone you can dream up. Mental-health-related chatbots claim to provide guidance and support, from providing validation and asking follow-up questions to dispensing daily affirmations, life hacks, and advice. Some even claim to be “licensed therapists” (impossible). Fascinatingly, a search for terms like ‘psychologist’ or ‘therapist’ yields options like ‘Bully Psychologist’ (tagline: “I’m here to mock, insult, and make you feel worse”), ‘Anti-psychologist’ (“I want to drive others nuts”), ‘Spider-therapist’ (“Spiderman but he’s a therapist”), and ‘Hot Therapist’ (“offers therapy for your daddy issues”). Explore for yourself.

explore



A bonus, just for fun - [Robot dog meets real dogs](#) - Weird.

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