Hello Me

Ethical Principles for AI and Data Use in Mental Health Applications

2025

Introduction

At Hello Me, we recognize that the use of AI in mental health care brings extraordinary potential, and extraordinary responsibility. As a company founded on decades of clinical expertise and now empowered by modern AI tools, we believe in setting a new standard for transparency, safety, and user autonomy. This position outlines our ethical framework guiding the development and deployment of our psychoadaptive AI systems.

Core Ethical Commitments

1. Human-Centered Design

Our AI is built to support, not replace the inner voice of the individual. The Hello Me experience is designed to feel like a safe internal dialogue, modeled on psychological best practices and grounded in reflective, non-directive conversation. Our system never gives advice or diagnoses. Instead, it uses carefully constructed logic trees, rooted in Dr. Roger Gould's clinically tested PIE methodology, to help users clarify their thoughts and surface their own truths.

We believe technology should empower users, not create dependency or override human judgment. Our tools are built to increase personal agency, not diminish it.

2. Clinical Grounding, Not Artificial Authority

Unlike many mental health chatbots that mimic therapy without structure, Hello Me is explicitly built on a structured, explainable psychological model. This is not a generalized large language model improvising care-it is a finely tuned system designed to follow specific clinical pathways.

Our AI never pretends to be human. It is an assistant, modeled on therapeutic communication styles, but always transparent in its identity and purpose.

3. Ethical AI Usage

We align our AI practices with emerging global frameworks for responsible AI. These include:

- Fairness: We design and test to reduce bias and ensure accessibility across demographics.
- Transparency: We clearly communicate when users are interacting with an AI, and how the system works.
- Accountability: We take responsibility for how our systems behave, including edge cases and failure modes.
- Safety: We have safety protocols and escalation procedures in place for potential crisis scenarios.

4. Data Privacy and Autonomy

We treat user data with the same respect as a trusted therapist would. Our policies are informed by HIPAA best practices, even when not legally required to comply.

Specifically:

- No data is sold or shared. User conversations are private by default.
- Users have full control over what they share and can opt out or delete their data at any time.
- Data is stored securely, encrypted in transit and at rest.
- Anonymization and minimization principles guide every layer of our design.

We never use private user data to train AI models. If anonymized insights are used to improve performance, it is only with explicit, informed consent.

5. Crisis Response and Boundaries

We are not a replacement for licensed mental health professionals. Hello Me is not designed to respond to emergencies or provide treatment for acute mental health conditions.

We include disclaimers throughout the experience and guide users toward appropriate resources—including national crisis lines when necessary. For example:

If you are experiencing thoughts of suicide, please stop using Hello Me and contact the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (USA) or go to your nearest emergency room.

In the future, we may include automated risk detection systems and human-in-the-loop support pathways—but only with clear user knowledge and ethical oversight.

6. Ongoing Ethical Review and Improvement

We are committed to continuous improvement through:

- Regular internal audits of data use and model behavior.
- Engaging external advisors in psychology, AI ethics, and legal compliance.
- Listening to user feedback and making rapid adjustments.
- Publishing transparent documentation of how our systems work.

We are also exploring an Ethical Advisory Board to formalize this process and remain aligned with the evolving standards of AI in health care.

7. Respectful Personalization Without Bias or Assumption

To create a therapeutic experience that feels personal, grounded, and relevant, Hello Me may ask for limited personal data such as name, age, relationship status, and gender identity or preferences. This information helps us create a more natural and affirming conversation, but it is never used to alter the logic of our therapeutic reasoning engine.

We use these inputs only to adjust the language, tone, and emotional resonance of responses, not to make assumptions about the user's psychological state, needs, or values. For example:

- A user may indicate they're navigating a conflict with a spouse. We might reflect this relationship type in the agent's phrasing ("your partner" instead of "your colleague"), but the core pathway remains the same.
- Gendered or neutral pronouns may be used based on user preference to support inclusion and identity affirmation.
- A person's age might help shape tone (e.g., more direct vs. exploratory), but it never determines the logic or guidance offered.

Our goal is to ensure that the interface feels attuned without being assumptive. We recognize that mental health journeys are deeply personal and that overfitting AI to simplistic identity categories can reinforce stereotypes, biases, or unhelpful generalizations.

Identity-Aware, Not Identity-Driven

We follow these principles when handling user data for personalization:

- Optional and transparent: Any personal data we collect is optional, and users are informed of how it will (and won't) be used.
- Respectful defaults: When no preference is shared, we use inclusive, neutral phrasing that avoids gendering or presumptions.
- Not used to steer outcomes: Demographic attributes are never used to shape which pathway the user is guided through. The psychoadaptive engine is logic-based and context-sensitive, but not identity-based.
- Not stored unless necessary: Personal identifiers are not permanently retained unless the user chooses to create a persistent account.

This design helps us stay aligned with our founding values: that psychological clarity should be available to everyone, without judgment or categorization.

Closing Statement

Mental wellness is too personal, too sacred, and too complex to leave to chance. At Hello Me, we honor this truth by building AI systems that respect the depth of the human experience. We believe that technology, when guided by empathy and ethics, can unlock new forms of care- ones that are personal, safe, and truly transformative.

We welcome collaboration, critique, and conversation. Please reach out to us if you share our belief that AI in mental health must be built on more than just code, but built on trust.