DW Akademie

MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY

Heroes and Villains in the age of AI

Talking about AI with participants

ANNEX C



Annex C: Talking about AI with participants

Purpose

This annex supports facilitators in **how to talk about AI during sessions.**
It focuses on tone, framing, and practical language that keeps discussions clear, calm, and grounded in everyday media experience.

You are not expected to teach AI.
You are expected to guide understanding.

1. Start from lived experience - not technology

Do not begin with tools, definitions, or technical explanations.

Begin with questions like:

- What do you think AI is?
- Where do you already notice AI in your media use?
- When do you feel unsure, confused, or pressured online?
- What surprised you recently in your feed?

AI becomes easier to understand when it is connected to what people already experience.

2. Use simple guiding ideas, not complex explanations

A few clear sentences go much further than detailed definitions.

Examples you can use naturally in conversation:

- “AI sounds smart because it predicts well — not because it understands.”
- “Bias is not intention.”
- “AI repeats patterns from data.”
- “Content chooses you as much as you choose content.”
- “Treat AI output as draft material.”
- “Understanding begins with noticing.”

These short ideas often help participants more than long explanations.

2. Use simple guiding ideas, not complex explanations

A few clear sentences go much further than detailed definitions.

Examples you can use naturally in conversation:
- “AI sounds smart because it predicts well — not because it understands.”
- “Bias is not intention.”
- “AI repeats patterns from data.”
- “Content chooses you as much as you choose content.”
- “Treat AI output as draft material.”
- “Understanding begins with noticing.”

These short ideas often help participants more than long explanations.

3. Avoid fear, hype, and technical overload

Participants often come with strong impressions:
either AI is magical, or AI is dangerous.

Your role is to bring balance.

Avoid:
- dramatic examples that create anxiety,
- deep technical dives,
- resenting yourself as an AI expert,
- overwhelming people with terminology.

Keep the focus on everyday media habits and practical awareness.

4. You do not need perfect answers

It is fine to say:
- “I’m not sure - let’s think this through together.”
- “That’s a good question to explore.”
- “AI systems work in patterns, so the answer is often ‘it depends.’”

Modeling calm curiosity is more helpful than trying to be authoritative.

5. Focus on patterns, not on blaming people

When discussing harmful content or behavior:

Do not frame it as:
“people are the problem”

Frame it as:
“this is a pattern that systems make easier to repeat and scale”

This keeps discussion constructive and avoids defensiveness.

6. Use “Knowledge Moments” instead of mini-lectures

When something needs explaining, do it briefly and at the moment it becomes relevant.

A Knowledge Moment is:
- 20–40 seconds,
- connected to what participants just observed,
- enough to clarify what is happening,
- not a ull explanation.

Example:

What you’re seeing here is how AI predicts what keeps attention. It’s not checking if it’s balanced — only if it keeps people engaged.”

Then return to the activity.

7. Handle strong opinions and emotions with care

AI discussions can trigger fear, anger, or strong beliefs.

Helpful responses:
- slow the pace,
- acknowledge emotions without validating misinformation,
- bring the conversation back to shared observation,
- reconnect to AACRA skills and personal agency.

Avoid debates. Guide reflection.



When AI Topics Become Personal

Some AI discussions may move quickly from general media examples to deeply personal experiences.
Participants may raise issues such as:
* manipulated intimate images
* online harassment
* AI companions
* emotional dependency
* identity misuse
* harmful advice from chatbots

These conversations may affect participants differently, especially young people who have experienced online harm directly.
Stay calm and avoid pushing participants to share personal experiences.
Your role is to facilitate reflection — not to act as a counsellor, therapist, or crisis responder. If serious emotional distress, abuse, or safety concerns emerge, help participants identify trusted adults, services, or support structures where appropriate.
Bring the conversation back to patterns, safety, and agency.

Example: A participant shares concerns about fake intimate images circulating at school.
Example: A young person describes relying heavily on an AI companion during loneliness.

8. Explain AI through media, not through machines

Always connect explanations back to media use:
Instead of:
“AI is trained on datasets and models…”
Try:
“This is why your feed starts to look a certain way after a while.”

Instead of:
“This is a large language model…”
Try:
“This tool predicts what words usually come next, which is why it can write fluently.”

9. Facilitation, not educating

Your role is not to transfer knowledge.

Your role is to:
- help participants notice,
- help them name patterns,
- help them reflect,
- help them see where they have agency.

The Storyworld, the Villains, and AACRA do the heavy lifting.
You guide the journey.

10. What to avoid saying

Avoid statements like:
- “AI decided…”
- “The algorithm wants…”
- “AI is biased”
- “You should never trust AI”
- “This is how AI works” (as a final statement)

Instead, use language that keeps responsibility and nuance visible:
- “This system is designed to…”
- “This tool predicts based on…”
- “This can happen when data reflects…”
- “This is one way AI can behave…”



*AI Generated with ChatGPT

11. Keep it practical

If participants leave with these habits, the session worked:

- pause before sharing,
- question what appears,
- notice emotional triggers,
- treat AI output as draft material,
- be more aware of data and privacy,
- feel more confident navigating their media world.

That is enough.

This annex C supports your voice as a facilitator.
It helps you speak about AI in ways that are calm, balanced, and empowering — without turning sessions into technology lessons.