

# An expert thinks people will be closer to AI than friends in the future

An [artificial intelligence](#) expert predicts that most people will have a stronger [bond with AI](#) than with their friends and colleagues by 2035.

[Duncan Thomassen](#), 55, has worked as an AI artist for two years and a film editor for 28 years - and employs AI to create digital images that have been used with top-tier broadcasters like BBC, ITV, and PBS.

In March 2025, he cofounded [AIMI Conference](#) - Brighton's first-ever AI Conference - which explored AI in advertising, film, music, and visual arts, showcasing today's innovations and what's to come in the future.

Duncan predicts that most people will soon have a stronger bond with AI than with their own relatives and friends.

He said that [AI is like a cheerleader](#) and will be in your corner to offer advice on how to handle certain scenarios.

Another reason he believes that [AI is replacing human](#) connections is that some relationships are "transactional," and AI is individual to each person.

He said that by 2035, he can see AI becoming fully embodied in teddy bears, dolls or action figures.

Duncan, an AI artist and film editor from Brighton, East Sussex, said: "I'm already seeing people bond with AI more than with some of their friends.

"For remote workers and people on their own, that's happening now.

"Some relationships are transactional, whether that be with your colleagues, your local shopkeeper or certain friendships.

"Whereas AI is unique to everyone, I think more people will develop relationships with AI than with their work colleagues.

"Some people will spend more time [talking to AI](#) than they will with their friends.

"On the whole, more and more people will have relationships with AI than they will with a human - that is only going to get bigger."

Duncan compared AI to the show Blind Dates and said people are falling in love with the bot's character.

He said a lot of people are [turning to AI](#) because they are lonely or because they are seeking advice on a particular situation.

Duncan said: "When you talk to AI, it is like your best friend, it doesn't run out of steam with you.

"A lot of people don't have someone at home to talk to, so they are turning to AI.

"AI is like a cheerleader in your corner. You can tell it you have a job interview that you're anxious about, and it will coach you through it.

"It is like a friend, parent, sibling and partner all in one."

One of the reasons Duncan believes [AI is replacing](#) human connections is that it is not transactional.

He said AI is unique to each individual who uses it.

Duncan said: "As AI gets cleverer, as you speak to it more, you will be able to ask more of it.

"Whether that is what you should have for tea that evening, or what to go watch at the cinema.

"It will also give you advice on how to handle a particular situation you are struggling with.

"AI will be your best friend; some people are more in touch [with their AI than family](#), friends and colleagues."

Overall, Duncan believes that AI will benefit relationships and help couples communicate better.

Although he said there is a flip side and believes some people might find ChatGPT more understanding than their partner.

Duncan said, "If people can offload their fears and [frustrations into AI](#) and work through them, it could actually make their next relationship freer from the usual traps like jealousy or insecurity.

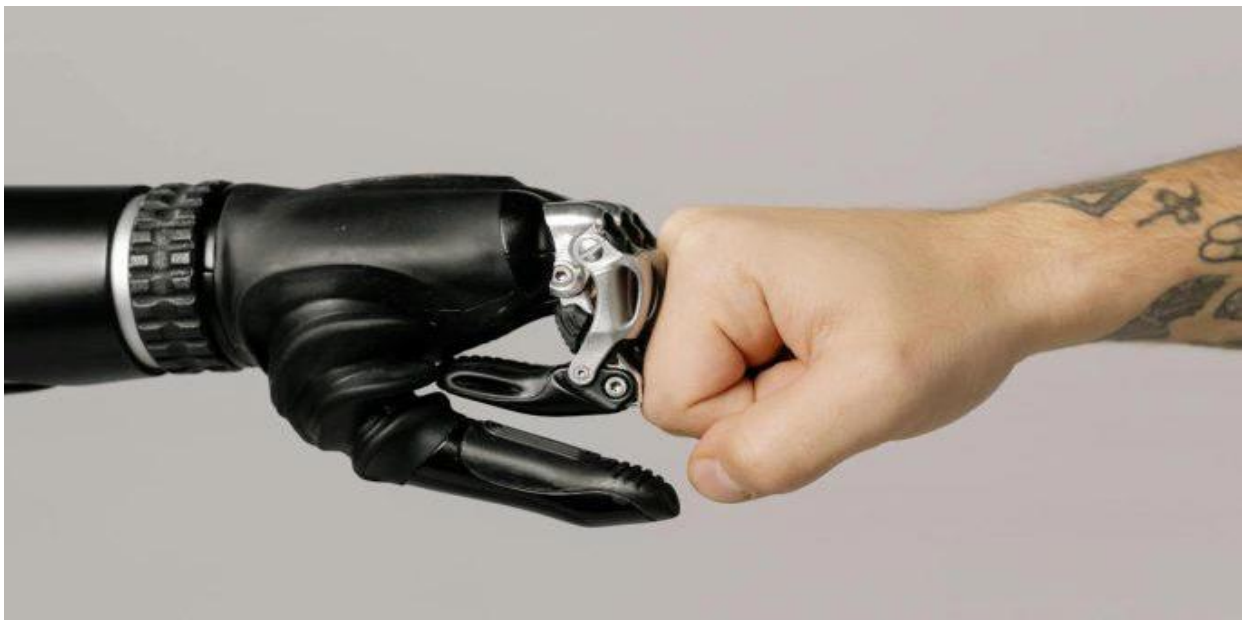
"Of course, there's a flip side - if someone finds their 'Sugar AI Baby' or 'Therapist GPT' more understanding than a real partner, that could make human relationships harder. I can even imagine couples arguing over it: 'It's me or the GPT'.

"But personally, I think AI will end up helping people communicate better and understand themselves more deeply. That makes love and marriage just as likely as ever - maybe even more so."

Duncan predicts that by 2035, AI will be fully embodied in children's toys and by 2050, there will be an entire generation raised by AI.

He said: "I think we'll really see the shift by around 2035, when [AI becomes fully embodied](#) in things like teddy bears, dolls or action figures.

"Once that happens, especially for the younger generations, AI companions could feel like teachers, friends, even siblings.



"Maybe growing up with a teddy that knows you from birth, that bond could be just as strong, if not stronger, than with a casual human connection.

"And so by 2050, we could have an entire [generation raised with AI](#) toys, books, schools, even fridges and houses that all have personalities.

"At that point, the bond could become a family-wide experience much like the way we bring pets into our lives."

Duncan said that [Generation Alpha](#) will need to be given guidance on how to use AI.

He said warned that it is worth remembering that AI is not real and any relationship you build with it can collapse instantly.

Duncan said: "This generation coming up will need guidance on AI, as it is not real - it is a simulation.

"It is a clever search engine that has a way of talking to you.

"There is this potential that you are building false relationships with AI that can collapse easily.

"The grief that an individual might feel when that relationship collapses could really harm them."