HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONVERSATIONS

PRESENTED BY YOUR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE AND WORKLIFE PROGRAMS

September 23, 2026

PSC | Federal Occupational Health

OBJECTIVES

- Identify mental health accessibility and key benefits
- Describe current uses of technology in mental health support
- Review ways digital tools can support mental health conversations with the people you supervise
- Recognize ethical risks
- Explain why human care still matters in tech-supported models

THE ACCESS GAP

Mental health needs are high, but care can still be difficult to access



HOW TECHNOLOGY HELPS

Technology can support mental health conversations and care in several complementary ways:

 **Telehealth and video therapy platforms**	Improve access
 **Mental health apps and digital CBT tools**	Offer self-guided support
 **Wearables and biometric tracking**	Help spot patterns early
 **Online support communities and text-based crisis lines**	Provide peer connection and immediate support outside office hours
 **AI chatbots**	24/7 prompts and check-ins

BENEFITS OF TECHNOLOGY IN MENTAL HEALTH

When used well, technology can complement traditional mental health services:

- **24/7 availability**
  - Support is available any time, including late nights and weekends, and across time zones
- **Anonymity and reduced stigma**
  - Private tools and online communities can make it easier to ask for help
- **Scalability**
  - Digital platforms can reach many people at once, helping fill in care gaps
- **Consistency**
  - Structured apps and digital CBT tools can deliver reliable, evidence-based support
- **Cost-effectiveness**
  - Technology can lower the cost of screening, coaching, and follow-up support

TOOLS IN PRACTICE

Types of technology-enabled mental health support tools:



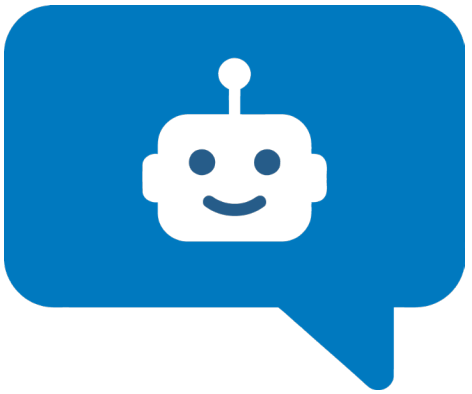
Telehealth and video therapy

Secure video visits improve access, flexibility, and continuity of care



Mental health apps and digital CBT tools

Support mood tracking, journaling, mindfulness, and CBT skills

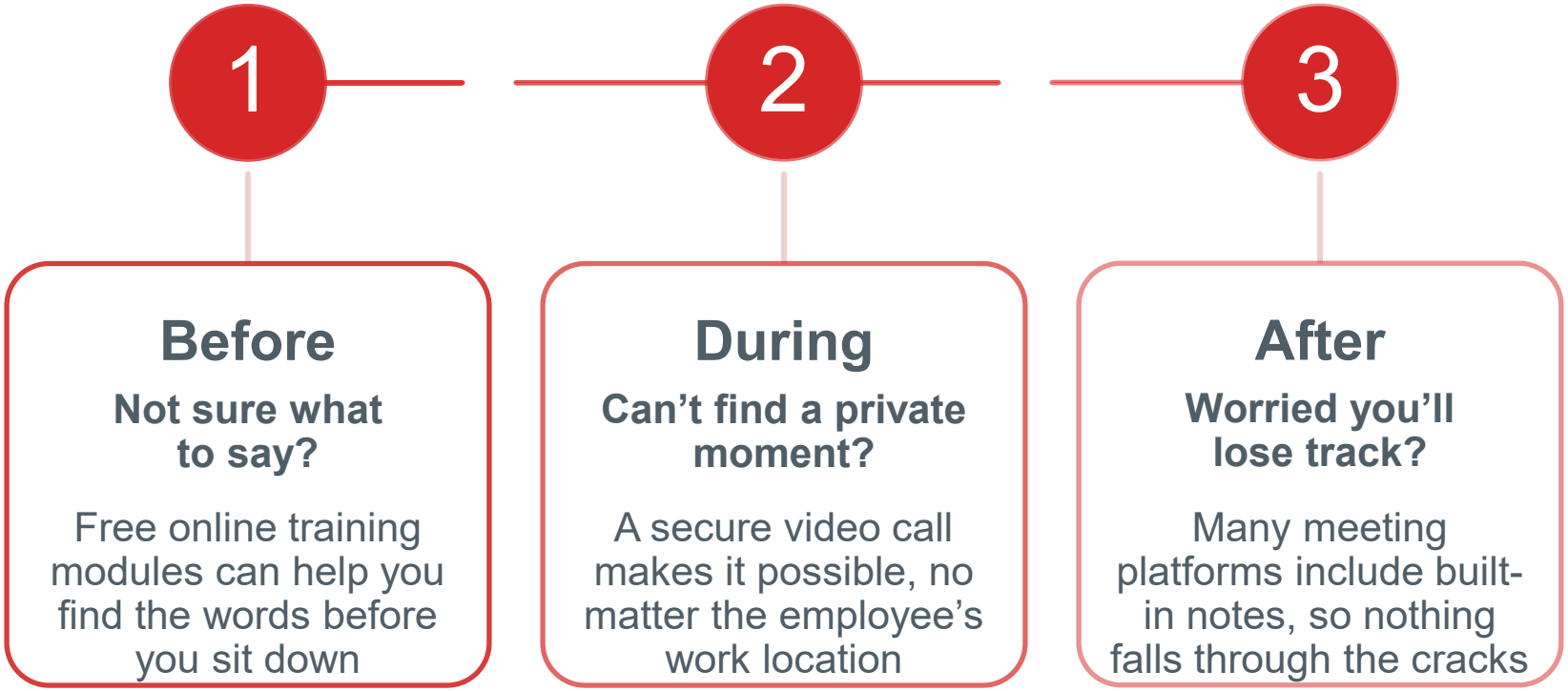


AI chatbots

Can provide 24/7 prompts and check-ins as a complement to human care

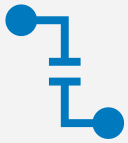
MAKING IT EASIER FOR SUPERVISORS

Ways technology can make a mental health conversation with an employee easier:



CHALLENGES AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Despite their promise, digital mental health tools carry important risks that require ongoing scrutiny



Lack of human empathy

- Tools can guide, but they can't truly replace human connection in a crisis



Data privacy and security concerns

- Mental health data is highly sensitive
- Most consumer apps are NOT covered by HIPAA



Risk of miscommunication or misinterpretation

- Text- and AI-based tools may miss nuance, tone, or warning signs



Algorithmic and access bias

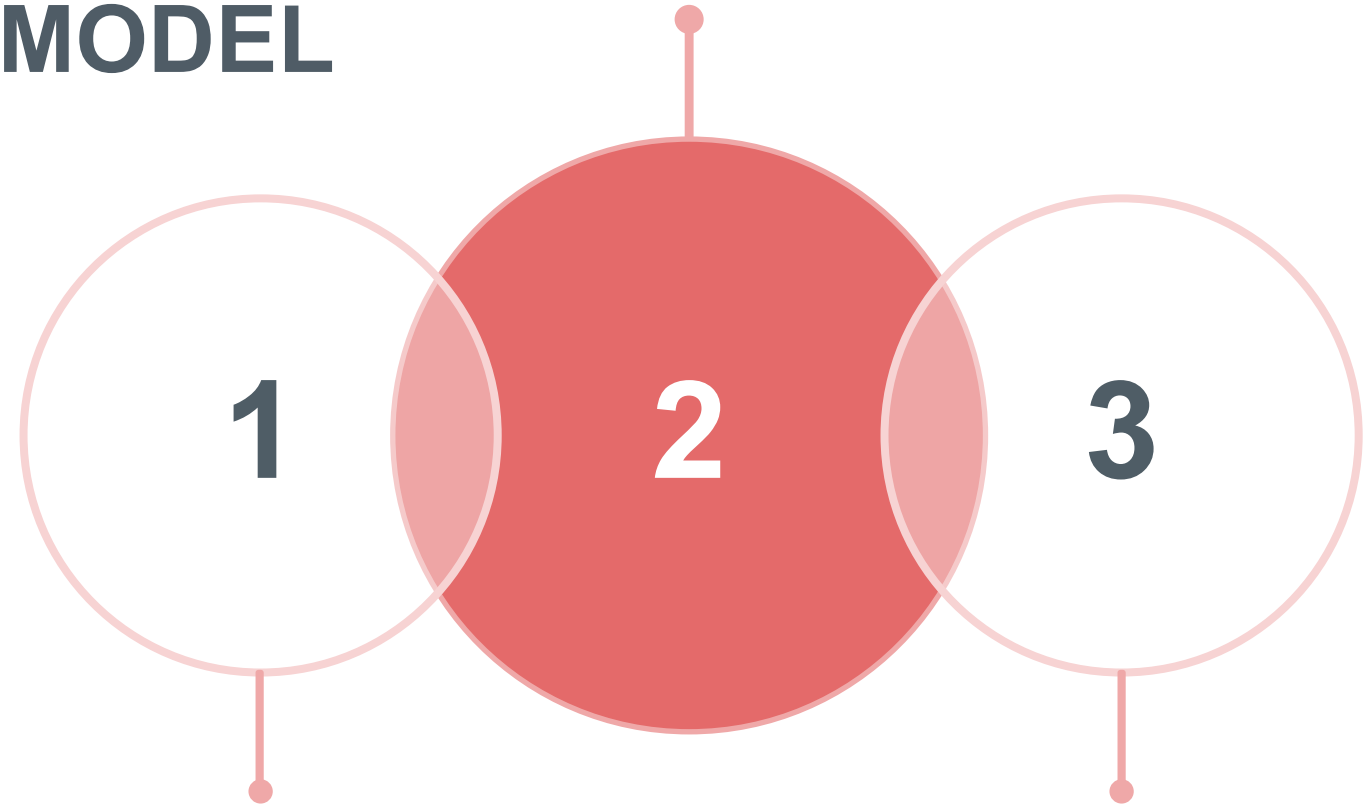
- Poorly designed systems can work less well for underrepresented groups



Regulatory and clinical uncertainty

- Standards for software-based tools are still evolving

A HYBRID CARE MODEL



Flexible care options

Video visits, apps, support communities, and self-guided programs

Complementary roles

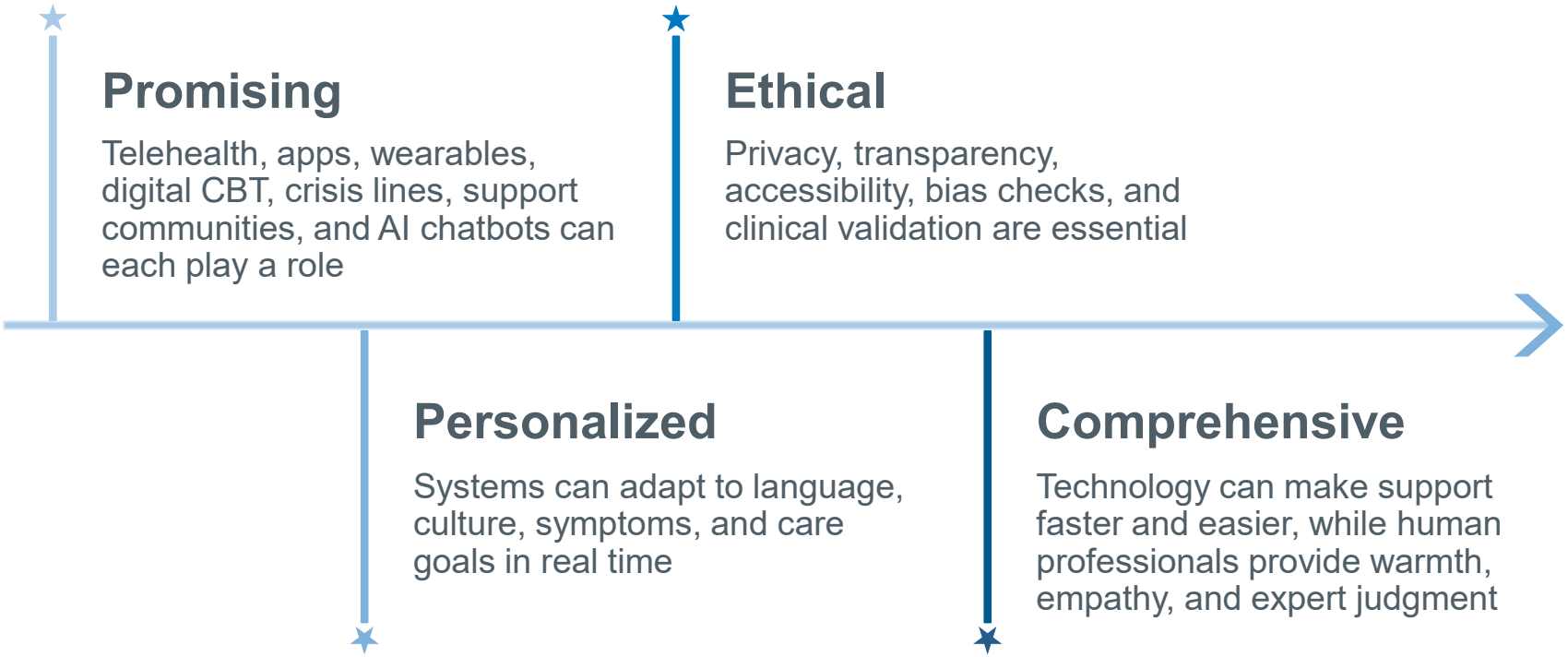
Tech handles reminders, tracking, CBT exercises, and check-ins, while clinicians focus on diagnosis, build rapport, and provide complex care

Safety nets

Good tools flag risk early and connect users to human help, crisis lines, or emergency resources, like the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

LOOKING AHEAD

If built with integrity and accessibility in mind, future mental health tools can become increasingly:



SUMMARY



- **Technology expands access**
  - Telehealth, apps, crisis lines, and online communities can make support more affordable, scalable, and available
- **The benefits are real (and so are the risks)**
  - Convenience and 24/7 access help
  - Privacy, security, quality, crisis handling, and bias need oversight
- **Human empathy cannot be replicated**
  - Technology can support care, but it can't replace human connection, clinical judgment, or cultural competence
- **Collaboration is the winning model**
  - The best approach is hybrid: Digital tools reinforce care, while clinicians and peers provide the human support
- **Responsible adoption is non-negotiable**
  - Prioritize evidence, privacy, accessibility, training, escalation paths, and clear communication

RESOURCES

Book

- The AI Revolution in Medicine
  Peter Lee, Carey Goldberg, and Isaac Kohane

Podcasts

- Speaking of Psychology
- The Psych Central Podcast

Apps

- Calm
- Mindfulness Coach
- Woebot
- Wysa

Online Articles

- Technology and the Future of Mental Health Treatment
- Getting Mental Health Support Virtually (Telehealth)
- AI for Workplace Mental Health: Go Beyond the Hype and Create Real Impact
- The Intersection of Technology and Mental Well-Being at Work

TED Talk

- Mental Health for All by Involving All

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