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Lenovo Powers AI Avatars to Explore the Role of Technology in Mental Health

- *Groundbreaking social experiment uses AI powered by Lenovo™'s broad tech portfolio of devices and solutions to raise awareness of three Gen Z individuals' loneliness and anxiety exacerbated by big differences in their real and online lives.*
- *New Lenovo research finds 60% wish they could have difficult conversations with family in real life*
- *Almost half (48%) say talking to a trained professional would give them the confidence to talk more openly with the people they love in the real world.*
- *Lenovo partners with mental health nonprofit organizations in the US, UK, and Japan to expand access to 24/7 mental health support for young people.*

May 29, 2024 – Today, Lenovo released the latest iteration of its Work For Humankind project, titled 'Meet Your Digital Self'. Born from a recognition of the impact of digital technologies, the project highlights the role that smarter technology and AI can play in helping to advance change and supporting mental health professionals in addressing the global youth mental health crisis. This work aims to address the challenges young people face when living different lives in the real world and online as two thirds (67%) of Gen Z feel a disconnect between their online and offline selves, fueling feelings of loneliness and anxiety. While almost half (49%) of Gen Zs say it's easier to express themselves online than offline, 60% wish they could have difficult conversations with family and loved ones in real life.

In this first-of-its-kind social experiment, the company pioneered the use of AI made possible by its broad portfolio of Lenovo devices, from mobile phones to PCs, to those powering the world's infrastructure, together with software, services, solutions and cloud. The combined technology brought to life the entire online personas of three Gen Z project participants as lifelike avatars capable of having an unscripted, natural conversation.

The 3D avatars not only resembled each individual participant but were built to be able to respond to real-time conversation – adjusting their tones, movements, and facial expressions based on the discussion. To do that the avatars were trained on data that came directly from each participant's online persona.

The experiment facilitated impactful, heartfelt conversations between the three participants, their family members, and the avatars, which mirrored each participant's online persona. The family members either didn't know about their Gen Z participant's online world or didn't understand and accept it: their career choices, their gender identity, or their artistic passions. By asking the digital avatars questions and having real-time conversations, each family member gained invaluable insights into their Gen Z loved one's true self as expressed in the online world and were able to better understand and re-connect in real life. The project is a pioneering proof of concept demonstrating the positive impact technology can have in combating the youth mental health epidemic, which has been worsened by their struggle to balance two distinct online and offline identities.

According to new research from Lenovo, almost half (48%) of Gen Zs say talking to a trained professional would give them the confidence to talk more openly with the people they love in the real world.

Crisis Text Line, a nonprofit that provides free, 24/7 confidential text-based mental health support in the US and Puerto Rico, reports that more than 70% of its texters are under the age of 25. Its text-based service supports people of all ages, but was specifically created for young people allowing for on-demand support through text message.

Sarah Kendrick, Clinical Director at Mental Health Innovations, the charity running the Shout 24/7 text support service said, "One in eight people globally grapple with a mental health condition, with Gen Z experiencing the greatest impact, where that figure rises to one in five. This type of AI innovation in Lenovo's 'Meet Your Digital Self' social experiment shows promise as a way in which generations with different understandings of online personas can meet and understand each other."

The digital versions of the three Gen Z participants were created by weaving together data from across their social media, blog, and forum handles securely with their consent. The data was trained and tested, and the project designed and brought to life with Lenovo devices, software, servers, cloud solutions, and AI professional services. This is the first time ever that Lenovo solutions have come together to develop an avatar of this kind. Devices and solutions include Lenovo ThinkStation™ workstations; ThinkCentre™ desktop computers; Lenovo Legion™, ThinkBook™ and Yoga™ laptops; Lenovo tablets; ThinkVision™ monitors and accessories; motorola razr smartphones; ThinkEdge™ SE450 Edge Server; and Lenovo | Dropbox Cloud Storage.

"We recognize the importance of achieving a healthy digital balance for our overall mental wellbeing," **commented Emily Ketchen, global vice president and CMO of Intelligent Devices Group and International Markets at Lenovo.** "With huge advancements in AI and smarter technologies, now is the time to explore and pilot creative new ways to use technology like AI thoughtfully and responsibly, for the greater good. Lenovo is uniquely positioned to lead here thanks to having one of the industry's broadest portfolios of smarter technology—from AI devices to IT solutions—that can work seamlessly together to benefit our society and the next generation. Ultimately, we hope that through our 'Meet Your Digital Self' social experiment we can spark meaningful conversations that contribute to the mental wellbeing of individuals and communities worldwide."

In an effort to expand mental health support and resources for people in need on a global level, Lenovo has partnered with several organizations such as SHOUT 85258, a free, confidential, 24/7 text messaging service based in the UK; Crisis Text Line, a nonprofit organization that provides free, 24/7 confidential text-based mental health support in both English and Spanish for anyone in the US and Puerto Rico; and Anata no Ibasho in Japan. These organizations train live volunteers who are then supervised by mental health professional staff, offering resources to millions around the globe.

Anyone who sees themselves in these films, struggling to reconcile their online and offline identities and more deeply connect with their friends and family, or who simply needs advice on how to reach out to someone close to them, can get in touch with a mental health professional by messaging Shout (UK), Crisis Text Line (US), or Anata no Ibasho (Japan).

"Technology can become the bridge that shortens distances, making powerful human to human connection faster and more accessible to people in moments of need," said Dr. Shairi Turner, Chief Health Officer at Crisis Text Line. "Whether someone is in a classroom, at a family event, or lying awake at night, the power of a text conversation with another human offers solace in anonymity and compassion without judgment. It is truly brave to reach out for support."

Watch the three 'Meet Your Digital Self' videos here:

- Link #1
- Link #2
- Link #3

About Work for Humankind

'Meet Your Digital Self' is the latest evolution of Lenovo's Work For Humankind project, which aims to show how Lenovo and smarter technology can help bring awareness to and advance change in major societal issues. What began in 2021 as a bold initiative to take on some of the world's biggest challenges against the context of the pandemic has since inspired similar work in North America, India and China—all with the goal of creating positive, meaningful impact within local communities.

Lenovo has a bold vision of delivering smarter technology for all by developing world-changing innovations that create a better future for all. That means harnessing the power of technology for good. With ‘Meet Your Digital Self,’ Lenovo hopes this creates a meaningful conversation around the positive impact that technology can have on society's wellbeing, including supporting mental health professionals in the future in addressing mental health issues.

About Lenovo

Lenovo is a US$62 billion revenue global technology powerhouse, ranked #217 in the Fortune Global 500, employing 77,000 people around the world, and serving millions of customers every day in 180 markets. Focused on a bold vision to deliver Smarter Technology for All, Lenovo has built on its success as the world’s largest PC company by further expanding into growth areas that fuel the advancement of ‘New IT’ technologies (client, edge, cloud, network, and intelligence) including server, storage, mobile, software, solutions, and AI professional services. This transformation together with Lenovo’s world-changing innovation is building a more inclusive, trustworthy, and smarter future for everyone, everywhere. Lenovo is listed on the Hong Kong stock exchange under Lenovo Group Limited (HKSE: 992) (ADR: LNVGY). To find out more visit https://www.lenovo.com, and read about the latest news via our StoryHub.

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