IS THIS REAL, MOM?

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PARENT / CAREGIVER GUIDE

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This guide accompanies the picture book "Is this real, Mom?" and is designed to help you talk with your children about Artificial Intelligence in a simple, warm, and jargon-free way.

WHAT IS AI THAT CREATES IMAGES?

In the book, a child sees a strange image: **a purple kitten flying with a green nose and two tails.** And asks the most natural thing in the world:

"Is this real, Mom?"

That image was not taken by any photographer. It was created by **generative Artificial Intelligence** — a type of computer program that learned by looking at millions of real images, and can now create entirely new ones from a text instruction.

You say: "a purple kitten that flies" — and the AI imagines it.

Today these tools are everywhere: in photo apps, on social media, in videos. And they are becoming increasingly difficult to tell apart from reality.

The good news

You don't need to be a tech expert to talk about this with your children. You just need the same curiosity the child in the book already has.

WHY DID THE AI IMAGINE AN OLD MAN WITH GLASSES?

In the book, when the child asks the AI to tell the story of someone who does science, the AI immediately imagines an old man with glasses and wild hair. The child is disappointed — they wanted someone like their aunt Kai.

Why did that happen?

The AI learned by looking at millions of images and texts created by humans over many years. And in those images, most scientists were men. The AI didn't mean any harm — it simply repeated what it had seen most often.

This is called AI bias.

Bias is not a programming error. It is a reflection of the biases that already exist in our society, recorded in the data the AI learned from. If the world we show it is limited, its imagination will be too.

That is why it matters what we ask, how we ask it, and above all: that we know how to recognize when an answer doesn't reflect the full picture.

Aunt Kai exists.

You just have to know how to ask for her.

HOW TO TELL REAL FROM AI-GENERATED

In the book, the child learns to ask whether what they see is real or created by AI. It's a skill we all — children and adults alike — need to develop today.

Here are some signs to look out for:

IN IMAGES

- Hands with too many or too few fingers
- Blurry or strange backgrounds
- Distorted text within the image
- Irregular hair or ears

IN VIDEOS

- Lips that don't match the audio
- Slightly artificial facial expressions
- Inconsistent lighting or shadows

IN TEXT

- Sounds very smooth and confident
- May contain factual errors presented with great certainty

A useful question to always ask: where was this published, who published it, and why?

And the most important of all — the one the child in the book learned:

WHAT DO WE TALK ABOUT AT HOME?

You don't need to know everything about Artificial Intelligence to have a great conversation with your children. Sometimes all it takes is one curious question at the right moment.

Here are three to get you started:

HOW WOULD YOU KNOW?

After looking at an image or video together, ask: "How would you know if a person or a computer made this?" There's no right answer — what matters is thinking it through together.

WHO WOULD YOU WANT?

Inspired by aunt Kai in the book: "If you asked the AI to draw a scientist, how do you think it would imagine them? And how would you imagine them?" It opens the door to talk about diversity, representation, and expectations.

WHAT WOULD YOU ASK FOR?

Invite your child to imagine: "If you could ask the AI for anything, what would it be?" Their answers will surprise you — and tell you a lot about how they understand the world.

Curiosity is the best starting point.
You already took the first step:
reading this book with them.