

Executive Summary

The Relational AI Depth Framework

The Relational AI Depth Framework: A 7-Level Developmental Model for Deepening Human–AI Co-Creation

Artificial intelligence is advancing faster than most institutions can adapt. From classrooms to civic labs, there's a growing push to integrate AI, but often without clarity on how to do so relationally, equitably, or with long-term depth.

Our white paper introduces the Relational AI Depth Framework: a new model for understanding the quality of human-AI relationships. It outlines seven levels of intentional engagement—from personal prompting to co-creative partnership, preceded by a non-relational baseline of ambient automation—each illustrated through both practical interactions and metaphoric framing to reflect their distinct dynamics. While the full white paper includes both lenses, this executive summary focuses on the practical interaction table to support immediate application.

Rather than evaluating AI solely by capability or outcome, this framework asks a more human question:

How do we relate to AI? And what does that relationship enable, limit, or reflect?

What This Framework Offers

The Relational AI Depth Framework supports organizations and educators in:

- **Assessing the depth** of AI integration across tools, programs, or learning environments
- **Designing experiences** that foster agency, reflection, and ethical growth
- **Anchoring equity-centered conversations** in tangible, relational language
- **Surfacing patterns** of extractive vs. reciprocal human-AI dynamics
- **Clarifying where AI operates passively vs. where it enables reflective and ethical co-creation**

Below, we offer a practical snapshot—seven distinct ways humans engage with AI—making depth more observable across daily tools, learning systems, and design choices.

Levels of the Relational AI Depth Framework

A snapshot of how relational depth evolves in human-AI interaction

Level	Short Description	Example Interaction	Uploads Own Work?	Engages Own Values?
<i>Baseline: Ambient Automation</i>	<i>AI runs silently in the background to automate basic tasks.</i>	<i>Autocorrect or AI photo enhancements.</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
1. Personal Prompting	User gives simple prompts and receives quick responses.	“What’s a good dinner recipe?”	No	No
2. Reflective Input	User adds context or goals; AI responds reflectively.	“I’m trying to stay focused—any tips?”	Optional	Optional
3. Contextual Grounding	AI adapts to user documents, roles, or ongoing work.	“Here’s my project brief—help outline next steps.”	Yes	Optional
3.5 Perspective Shift	AI helps reframe assumptions or shift perspectives.	“What biases might I be missing in my argument?”	Optional	Yes
4. Values-Informed Directionality	User and AI engage with core values to guide direction.	“How can I align this plan with sustainability goals?”	Yes	Yes
5. Iterative Transformation	Back-and-forth exchange builds on evolving insights.	“Let’s refine the message until it resonates.”	Yes	Yes
6. Co-Creative Partnership	AI becomes a creative partner, shaping new ideas in tandem.	“Let’s co-design a toolkit that serves both our communities.”	Yes	Yes

Who It's For

This framework is built for **educators, researchers, philanthropic leaders, and innovation practitioners** seeking to bridge the gap between high-level AI ethics and everyday implementation.

Key Use Cases

- **Education:** Cultivating reflective AI use and digital wisdom in students
- **Ethics & Responsible Innovation:** Translating values into practical design strategy
- **Youth Leadership & Social Impact:** Supporting relational agency and justice-based tech reflection
- **Story-Based Futures & Speculative Design:** Making AI's hidden assumptions visible through cultural imagination

It's ready to be adapted in classrooms, prototyped in design processes, and woven into public engagement.

Call to Action

We're not just sharing a framework; we're inviting a collaborative evolution. This is a living tool that gains meaning through dialogue, iteration, and use.

If you're:

- A **researcher** exploring new layers of AI impact
- An **educator** reimagining digital literacy as relational practice
- A **funder** or **strategist** ready to seed frameworks that scale ethically and reflect community needs

...we invite you to test, adapt, and build with us.

It begins not at the first prompt, but at the first reflection.

Let's co-create what relational AI becomes by practicing it, challenging it, and shaping it together.