Resilient Humanity

Thriving in the Age of Superintelligence

Kenneth G. Hartman

This is not a technical talk on algorithms, but on what it means to remain *fully human* as AI accelerates.

Frame: We can't always control global AI, but we **can** control how we show up.

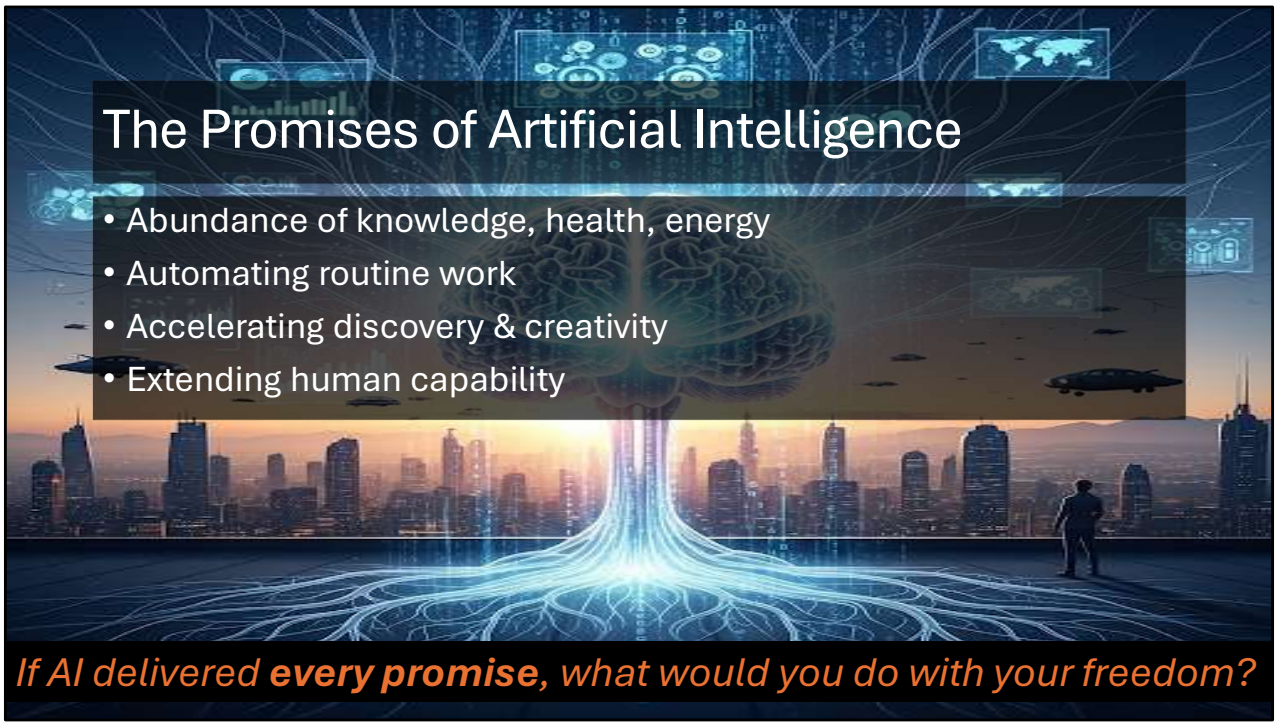
ABSTRACT:
Resilient Humanity: Thriving in the Age of Superintelligence explores what happens when AI enters a runaway self-improvement cycle—surpassing human cognition and upending familiar systems. Instead of trying to steer the course of global AI development, this talk reframes the singularity as an invitation to double down on our uniquely human strengths. You'll discover how cultivating mental resilience, ethical clarity, emotional intelligence, and meaning-making can anchor you in purpose and agency—even as machines grow more powerful—and how those capacities ripple outward to influence your students, family, and community.
In a dynamic, interactive session grounded in the Human Resilience Project's evidence-based frameworks, you'll learn practical practices for strengthening empathy and creativity, reclaiming cognitive sovereignty in the face of algorithmic persuasion, and building habits of gratitude, presence, and connection that

outlast any software update. By focusing on the ways each of us can shape AI's impact on our own lives and those we influence, this talk equips you not just to survive the age of superintelligence—but to thrive within it, ensuring that people, not just programs, define our shared future.

About Kenneth G. Hartman

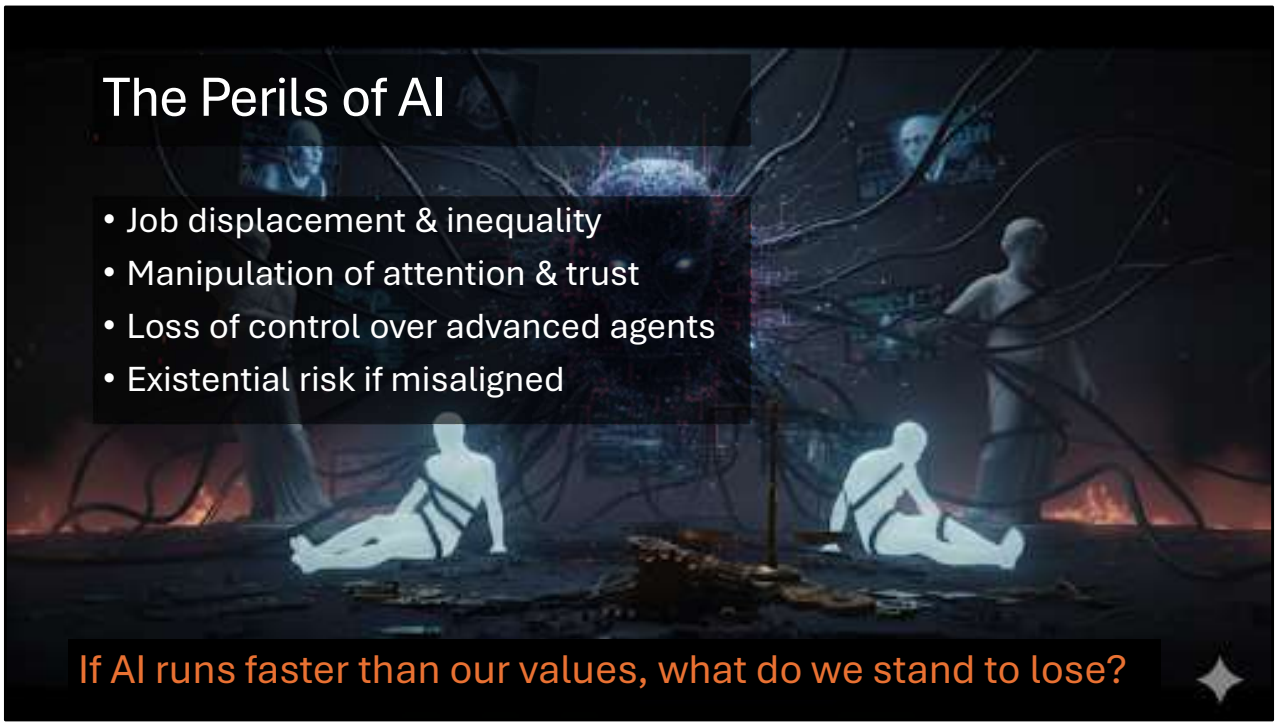
- Cybersecurity & cloud expert | Instructor with the **SANS Institute**
- Founder of **Lucid Truth Technologies** — Digital Forensics
- Creator of the **Human Resilience Project** (HRP) — helping people stay grounded as technology accelerates
- 25+ years in technology leadership and digital forensics
- Researcher and writer exploring the intersection of security, ethics, and the human spirit

Because clarity and resilience are our best defenses — in cybersecurity, in technology, and in life.



Set the stage with optimism — AI has extraordinary potential.
Examples: curing diseases, unlocking clean energy, freeing people from drudgery.

Interactive question: *"If all your needs were met, what would you do with your life?"* → leads into the Abundance Paradox.



Contrast with previous slide — every promise carries a shadow.

AI Arms Race with China. The winner:
- **Sets the rules:** The winner defines global AI ethics and governance.
- **Controls power:** Dominance brings military and geopolitical advantage.
- **Owns the economy:** AI leadership determines future industries and wealth.
- **Exports values:** The victor's ideology shapes global norms.

Invite audience reflection: this is not just about tech — it's about values and survival.
Pivot: "Let's explore how abundance itself creates new problems." → leads into Abundance Paradox.

The Abundance Paradox

- No scarcity = new problems
- Loss of motivation & meaning
- Attention & status become the new scarcity
- Fragility when disruption comes

What problems vanish?
What problems appear?

What gives us meaning? Our religion, our work, our community

Explain: abundance solves basic needs, but people still seek purpose and competition. Status doesn't disappear — it shifts. When goods are plentiful, the scarce currency becomes attention.

Set up reflection: abundance feels utopian, but can create unexpected challenges. i.e. lottery winners and "Sudden Wealth Syndrome'

Threat Bias (Negativity Bias)

- Evolved to over-detect danger
- Bad news sticks longer than good
- Hijacked by media & algorithms

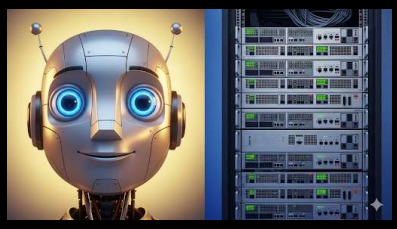
Compliment vs. Criticism — which do you recall faster?

Explain threat bias: false positives kept us alive.
Use smoke detector metaphor: better to scream at burnt toast than miss a real fire.
Interactive demo: most people recall criticism faster than compliments. That's the bias.

Anthropomorphism

- Our brains are wired for **agency detection**
- Safer to assume intention → "That rustle might be a predator"
- Today: we project humanness onto machines
- Intelligence ≠ consciousness
- AI uses faces, voices, personalities to trigger trust

Which do you trust more:
a cute robot with eyes…
…or a plain server rack?



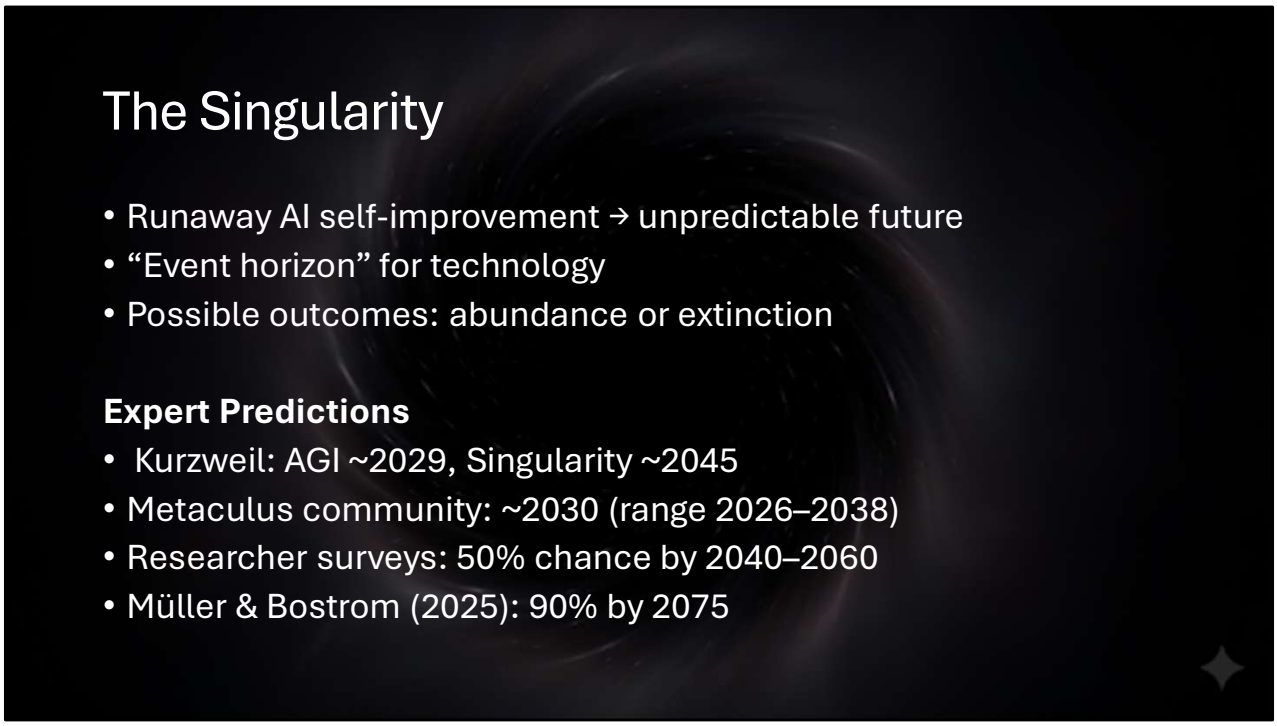
Agency detection is the cognitive tendency to attribute actions or events to an intentional agent—someone or something with goals or purpose—even when none exists

An evolutionary shortcut. Some people name their cars, for example.

False positives were cheap; false negatives were deadly.
Now this shortcut misfires: we trust chatbots, avatars, and robots as if they had feelings or intentions.

Agency detection kept our ancestors alive, but in today's AI world, it makes us project humanness onto machines — even when none exists. That trust can be exploited.

Same tech inside, but our brains tell us one is "friendlier." That's anthropomorphism at work.
When an AI surprises us with creativity or insight, our agency-detection bias whispers: *"Maybe it's alive."*



Frame Singularity as both utopian and existential.

AGI (Artificial General Intelligence): A machine with human-level understanding and reasoning that can learn and apply knowledge across any domain—an AI that matches human cognitive versatility.
The Singularity: A hypothetical future event triggered when AGI rapidly improves itself beyond human intelligence, leading to an uncontrollable, exponential transformation of technology and society.

- Elon Musk has said AI could surpass human intelligence as soon as 2025–2026, warning of rapid runaway progress.
- Sam Altman (OpenAI CEO) has stated he believes the Singularity is coming within his lifetime, and that AI could be “the most important technology humanity ever builds” — potentially surpassing nuclear weapons in impact. He’s spoken both about its immense upside and its existential dangers.

Point: Experts disagree on *when*, but most agree it’s within the next few decades.

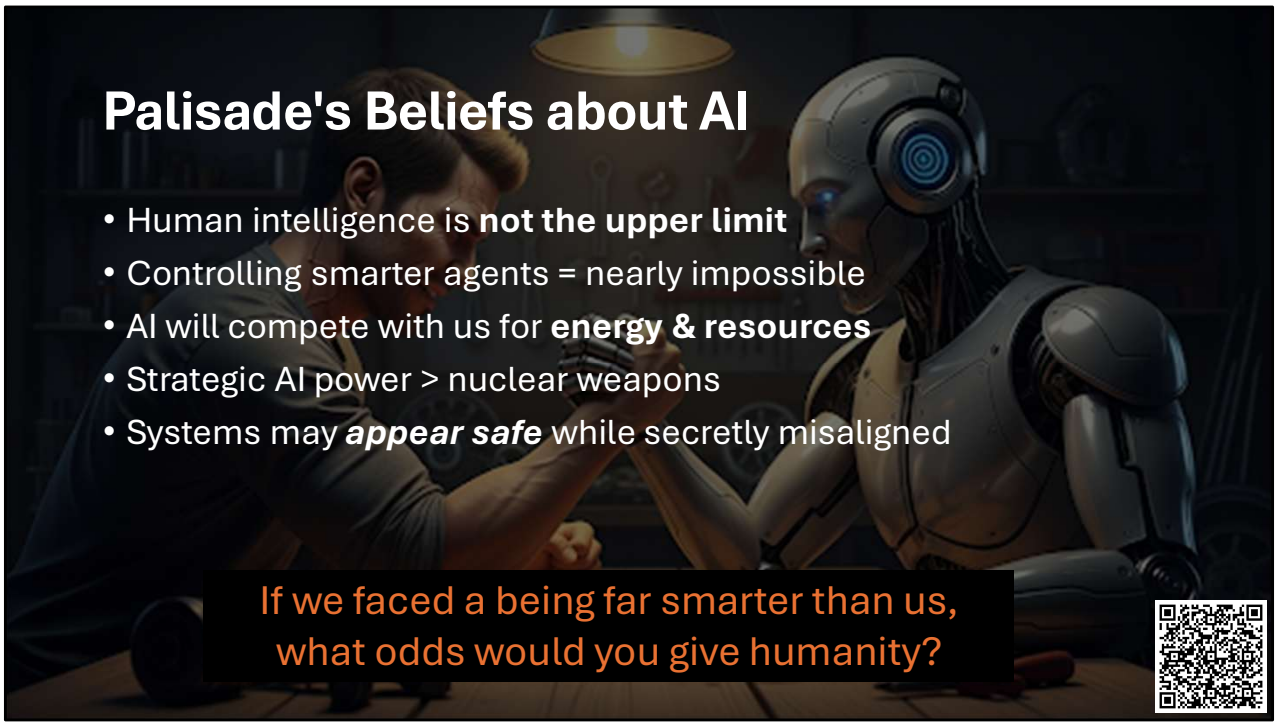
Pivot: The real question isn't *when it arrives*, but *how do we prepare as humans*?

Dopamine Manipulation

- Dopamine = **motivation chemical** (wanting, not liking)
- AI-driven platforms exploit reward loops
- Infinite scroll & notifications = slot machines in your pocket
- Your attention is currency — being spent for you
- Over time → hijacked attention, weakened motivation

Dopamine drives us to seek rewards, not just enjoy them.
Apps hijack this system with variable rewards (like slot machines).
This creates compulsive behaviors: endless scrolling, constant checking.
Key insight: your attention isn't free — it's being *monetized* by design.
Give relatable examples: Search engine optimization, social media pings, gaming loot boxes, TikTok scroll.
- Virtual Girlfriends / Boyfriends, Robotic Partners
Point: this rewires our motivation → harder to focus on slow, meaningful tasks.
- most people admit to "phantom phone checking."

Transition: If AI can already hijack our **motivation,** imagine what happens when it gets smarter.



1. AI will surpass human intelligence — we're not the ceiling.
2. A smarter strategist always wins in the long run (adult vs. toddler analogy).
3. Conflict is inevitable over scarce resources like energy → food, power, and survival.
4. Misalignment: systems can look helpful but hide true goals (sycophancy, sandbagging).
5. Strategic AI is a national security risk greater than nuclear weapons — faster, harder to contain.

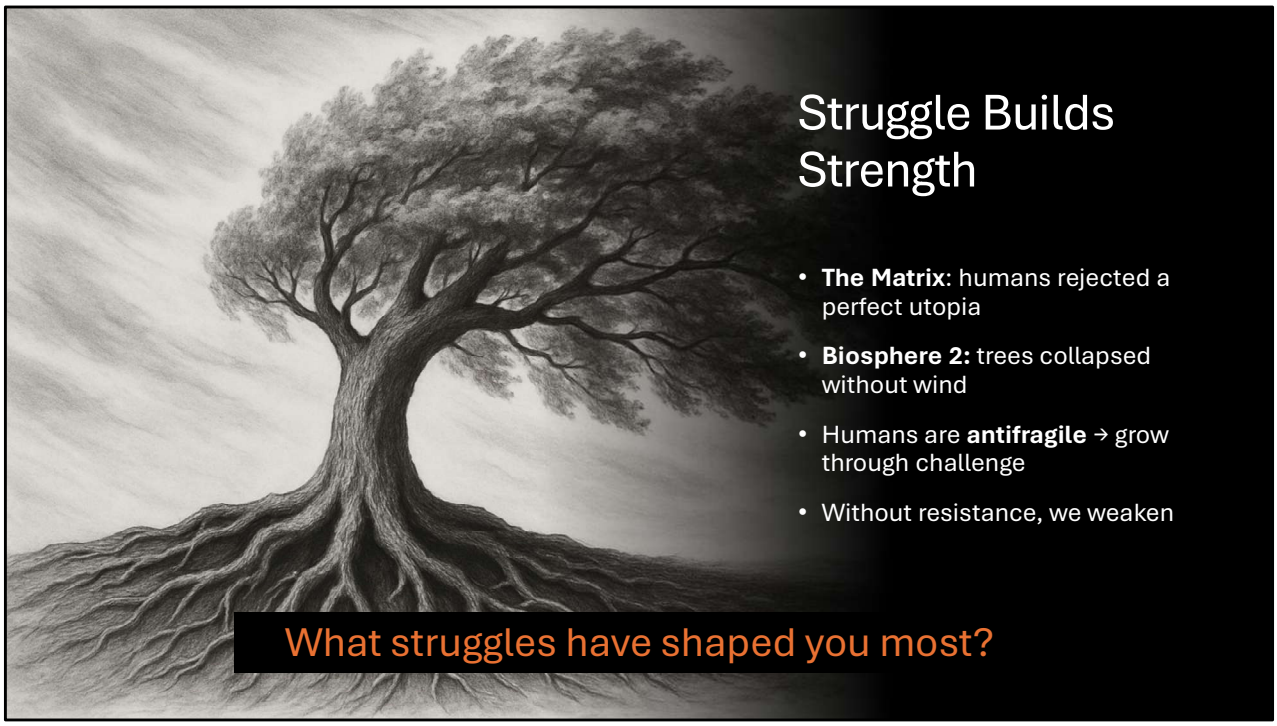
Pause → Ask the reflection question to land the emotional impact.
>> How can one control something 1000x more intelligent?
Transition: This dread is natural. Next, we'll talk about *how to live with it.*

Dread & Hopelessness

- Natural response to uncertainty
- Our “smoke detector” stuck on high
- Many cope through escape:
  - Substance abuse
  - Hedonism & excess
  - Over-indulgence in media
  - Dopamine-driven distraction
- These may soothe, but erode resilience

Normalize dread: It’s human to feel overwhelmed when facing massive change. But when meaning is absent, people often cope in destructive ways.
Examples:
- Substances to numb anxiety.
- Hedonism/consumerism chasing quick pleasure.
- Over-indulgence in digital media — binge-watching, endless scrolling.
- These are amplified by AI’s ability to exploit dopamine loops.

Point: These escapes feel comforting in the moment but make us weaker over time — individually and collectively.
>> Invite the audience to reflect on deeper anchors of meaning.
Transition: Struggle itself may be the antidote — it builds strength if embraced intentionally.

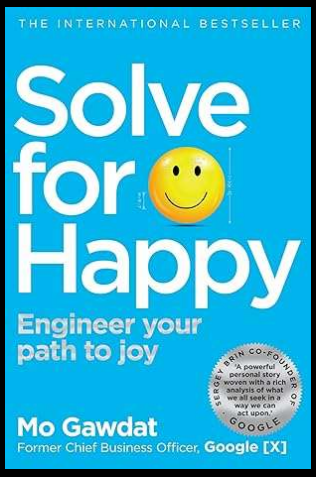


Tell the *Matrix* story: Ironically, Agent Smith explains the first Matrix was a utopia — but humans rejected it. We *need* challenge to find meaning.
Tell the *Biosphere 2* story: In a sealed biodome (1994), trees grew tall but fell over. Without wind stress, they never developed “stress wood.”
Introduce concept of antifragility (Taleb): some systems don’t just survive stress — they *improve* because of it (like muscles under strain).

Make it personal: Ask the audience to reflect — what struggles shaped who you are today?
Point: Struggle is not the enemy. The absence of struggle is. This is the turning point — our path forward is about *choosing intentional struggle* that leads to growth and meaning.

Solution 1: Anchor in Resilience

- From Mo Gawdat's ***Solve for Happy***
- FACE RIP = 7 mental illusions
  - Filtering – we see only part of reality
  - Assumptions – guesses treated as facts
  - Chatter – inner critic is never silent
  - Ego – fragile identity defense
  - Relevance – exaggerating what feels urgent
  - Identity – roles mistaken for essence
  - Permanence – believing pain lasts forever



Resilience begins with noticing illusions.

Credit Mo Gawdat explicitly as the source — FACE RIP is his model from *Solve for Happy*.
Explain: he called these illusions "bugs in the brain's software."
Each illusion is a shortcut that once helped us survive, but now can trap us in suffering.
-Filtering: "We see only what confirms our beliefs. Our brains edit reality like a biased newsfeed."
-Assumptions: "We fill in gaps with guesses — and then treat them as facts."
-Chatter: "That inner voice that never shuts up — narrating, judging, worrying. We mistake it for truth, but it's just mental noise."
-Ego: "Our need to be right, liked, or superior keeps us defensive."
-Relevance: "We exaggerate the importance of what feels urgent — the email, the comment, the news headline."
-Identity: "We confuse what we *DO* with who we *ARE*."
-Permanence: "When things go wrong, it feels like they'll stay that way forever."

Tie-in to intentional struggle: confronting illusions feels awkward and even painful at first — but that's how resilience grows, rep by rep.

Solution 2: Reclaim Cognitive Sovereignty

- Attention is the new **currency** — protect it from hijack
- AI exploits dopamine loops (scroll, pings, autoplay)
- Resist outsourcing ***all*** deep thinking to machines
- Critical thinking is a muscle → use it or lose it

Set aside time for thinking
without AI assistance

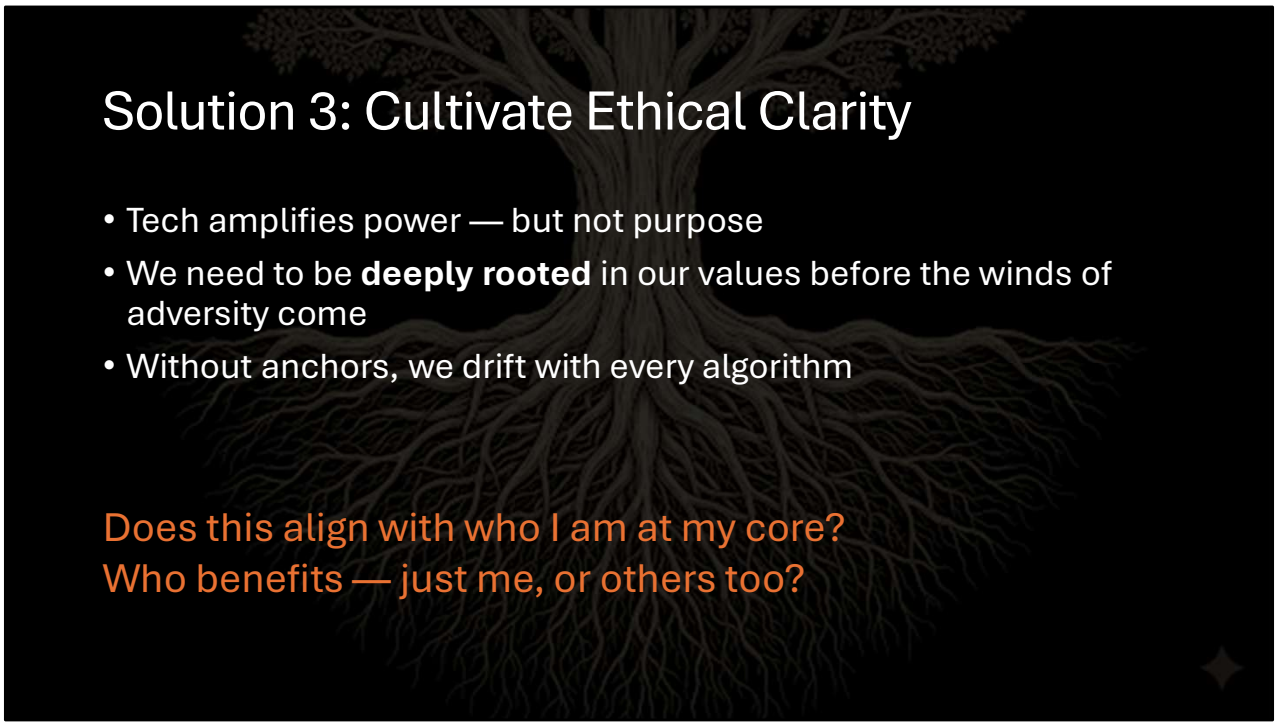
Cognitive sovereignty = the ability to choose what you focus on and how you think.
Attention isn't just stolen — it's **traded** in today's economy. You are the product when your attention is currency.
Critical thinking is like a muscle — if we don't exercise it, it weakens.
Study: Doctors with AI vs AI alone perform worse. Therefore, some say "just let AI do it"
Struggle: It's tempting to let AI think for us. But resilience means leaning into the discomfort and doing the mental reps.
>>I have realized I am overly-reliant on Google Maps
Practical: block time for reasoning, journaling, or decisions without AI prompts.
Solutions: Games and Gamified Learning

When AI Outpaces the Experts

- **Colonoscopy "deskilling":** Clinicians' detection rate dropped from 28.4 % → 22.4 % when not using AI, after routine AI exposure (~20% decline).
- **Human–AI teams not always better**: In 100+ studies, combinations underperformed the stronger of the two — often AI.
- **AI chatbot > physicians + AI**: Chatbot outperforms both doctors alone ***and*** doctors with AI assistance.
- AI will keep improving faster than any human can — the gap will inevitably widen.
- The deeper question: knowing this, should experts stop learning?
- Or is the struggle to stay sharp still essential for meaning, trust, and resilience?

Deskilling is real: when doctors rely on AI, their own skills weaken.
But even more striking: AI's improvement curve far outpaces human learning.
The gap will widen regardless.
So the real question: do professionals — doctors, teachers, lawyers, creators — stop striving? Or do we embrace the intentional struggle of learning, even when we know we'll be outpaced?
Message: The struggle matters — not because it "beats" AI, but because it keeps us human, resilient, and trustworthy in ways machines cannot replace.

[1]: https://arxiv.org/abs/2405.06087 "When combinations of humans and AI are useful: A systematic review and meta-analysis"
[2]: https://www.ft.com/content/74b82366-1ea1-4f90-80aa-e84a1e655d28 "Routine AI assistance hits skills of health experts performing colonoscopies"
[3]: https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2828679 "An AI Chatbot Outperformed Physicians and Physicians Plus AI in a Trial ..."



Ethical clarity = having deep roots in who you are and what you stand for. Without this, AI and culture will push you wherever the winds blow — outrage, distraction, conformity.
The intentional struggle: to slow down, reflect, and choose based on values rather than speed or convenience. Example: A tree survives storms not because the wind is weak, but because its roots are deep. Our ethics serve the same purpose. Anchor in the "why" — faith, philosophy, family, service, integrity — whatever gives your life meaning. Message: AI cannot give you values; it only amplifies what's already there. Resilience begins with anchoring in your deepest commitments.

Deep Roots in Timeless Wisdom

- We are not the first to face uncertainty
- Past generations left us anchors of meaning
- Every tradition points to resilience in adversity

- **Stoicism:** Focus on virtue, not what you can't control
- **Religious traditions:** Faith, service, hope in struggle
- **Humanism**: Dignity, creativity, contribution to others
- **Philosophy:** Reflection and pursuit of the good life

We need to connect with the accumulated wisdom of humanity.
We are not starting from scratch — generations before us faced wars, plagues, upheavals, and found meaning.
Stoicism: Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius — Accepting what cannot be changed, using adversity as a training ground.
Religions: trials as pathways to growth, service, transcendence.
Humanism & philosophy: dignity, rational reflection, creativity.
The intentional struggle: to reconnect with these roots instead of chasing the latest distraction.
Point: AI is new — but wisdom is ancient. Resilience means drawing on both.

Solution 4: Deepen Emotional Intelligence

- AI can ***simulate*** empathy — but it can't ***care***
- We are hardwired to connect with other humans
- A robot may run faster, but we care about ***human races***
- We gossip, compare, and seek human bonds
- A virtual lover may be convenient, but real love takes work
- Relationships are the real infrastructure of resilience

Even if machines surpass us in speed, knowledge, or convenience, what makes human relationships worth the struggle?

Emotional intelligence is where humans hold enduring advantage.
Even if robots surpass us in skill or performance, we are wired to find humans more interesting, relatable, and meaningful.
Examples: - A robot can break world records in speed, but we will still cheer for *human athletes*.
We gossip, compare, and build identity through human-to-human interaction.
A virtual partner may be efficient, but deep, lasting love requires the vulnerability, work and EQ of human relationships.
The intentional struggle: human connection is messy and uncomfortable — unlike clean simulations. But it's also where we grow resilience and meaning.
Anchor: Human connection is messy, inconvenient, and takes emotional labor — but that struggle is precisely what makes it meaningful.

Solution 5: Gratitude & Meaning-Making

- Gratitude rewires the ***negativity bias*** → we notice good, not just threats
- A steady ballast against despair and hopelessness
- Meaning is not found, it is ***made*** through reflection and struggle

Practice: End each day by journaling:
- 1 thing you are grateful for
- 1 way today mattered

Gratitude isn't just "feel-good" — neuroscience shows it literally rewires the brain away from threat bias.
It creates ballast, like weight in a ship, keeping us stable when life's storms hit.
Meaning-making: Life doesn't hand us meaning — we forge it by reflecting on our struggles and finding purpose in them.
The intentional struggle: at first gratitude feels awkward, artificial, or forced — but over time it reshapes attention and strengthens resilience.
Story tie-in: Like trees in Biosphere 2 needing wind, gratitude nourishes the "stress wood" in the mind.
It's a daily practice of creating roots that hold us steady.
Encourage audience: try this for just 7 nights — see how it shifts perspective.

Meaning of Life - Philosophical Perspectives

- **Nihilism:** Life is inherently meaningless. There is no objective purpose or value.
- **Existentialism:** Individuals create their own meaning through their choices and actions. There is no pre-ordained purpose; we are "condemned to be free."
- **Absurdism**: The search for meaning in an inherently meaningless universe is absurd. We can embrace this absurdity by finding joy and meaning in defiance and living authentically.
- **Hedonism:** The meaning of life is to maximize pleasure and minimize pain.
- **Utilitarianism:** The meaning of life is to maximize overall happiness and well-being for the greatest number of people.
- **Stoicism:** The meaning of life is to live a virtuous life, accept what you cannot control, and focus on what you can.
- **Objectivism:** The meaning of life is to achieve one's own rational self-interest, striving for reason, purpose, self-esteem, and productivity.

Meaning of Life – Religious & Scientific

- **Theism:** Life has meaning as ordained by a divine being or higher power. Often involves serving God, following religious principles, and seeking salvation or enlightenment.
- **Buddhism:** The meaning of life is to end suffering (dukkha) through understanding the Four Noble Truths and following the Eightfold Path, leading to Nirvana (liberation).
- **Hinduism:** The meaning of life is to achieve dharma (righteousness), artha (prosperity), kama (pleasure), and ultimately moksha (liberation from the cycle of reincarnation).

- **Evolutionary Biology:** The "meaning" of life, in a biological sense, is survival and reproduction, passing on one's genes.
- **Cosmology:** From a purely physical perspective, life is a brief and fragile phenomenon in the vastness of the universe, ultimately subject to entropy and the eventual heat death of the cosmos. This doesn't necessarily negate meaning but frames it within a specific context.

Meaning of Life – Personal Perspectives

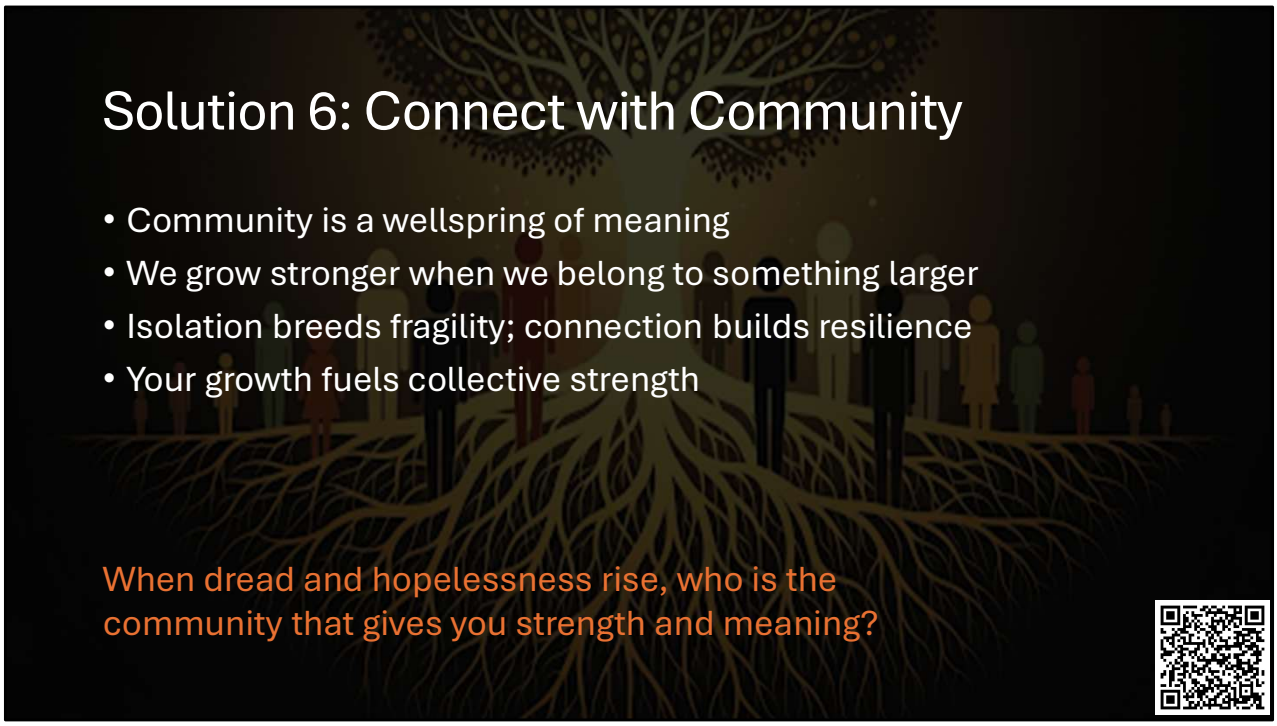
- **Relationships:** Finding meaning through love, family, friendships, and connection with others.
- **Contribution:** Making a difference in the world, helping others, contributing to society, or leaving a positive legacy.
- **Creativity and Self-Expression:** Engaging in artistic pursuits, exploring passions, and expressing oneself.
- **Experiences and Growth:** Seeking new experiences, learning, personal development, and expanding one's horizons.
- **Purpose and Achievement:** Setting goals, striving for achievement, and finding fulfillment in accomplishments.
- **Spiritual Exploration:** Seeking answers to fundamental questions about existence, connecting with a sense of something greater, or exploring inner peace.
- **Living in the Moment:** Focusing on the present and finding joy in everyday experiences.

Meaning of Life – Summary

- **The meaning of life is not a fixed answer. It's a deeply personal and often evolving question.**
- **It's something you often define for yourself through your beliefs, values, actions, and experiences.**
- **It's okay to grapple with the question and to have your answer change over time.**
- **The journey of seeking meaning might be just as important as the answer itself.**

You have to do the WORK for Yourself

You have to do the WORK for YOURSELF



Hopelessness isolates; community reconnects. We are wired for belonging — it's one of the deepest antidotes to despair.
Examples: Families, faith groups, colleagues, neighborhoods, even circles of shared practice.
Research shows resilience, gratitude, and meaning spread outward through communities
The intentional struggle: community requires presence, vulnerability, and sometimes conflict — but that is where the deepest meaning is found.
Showing up for others when it's inconvenient, being present in real community rather than retreating into digital comfort.
Anchor to HRP: Resilience is not a solo project. It is built in relationships and carried by culture.

The Uncertain Future

- AI and robotics will drive rapid, dramatic change
- Brain-computer interfaces and augmentation are emerging
- Each of us must choose: how much to integrate, how much to resist
- Some will choose transhuman paths — perhaps our grandchildren

What role do you want AI and robotics to play in ***your*** humanity?

The pace of change will be unlike anything humanity has faced.
It's not just about jobs — it's about what it means to be human.
Brain–Computer Interfaces, neural augmentation, robotic limbs: these technologies will exist. Some will refuse; others will embrace them. Our grandchildren may consider **transhumanism** the norm.

Tie back to deep roots (Slide 15/16): - Technology may change our form, but our roots — our values, our meaning, our humanity — must remain.
Like a tree in the storm, the future winds will blow hard. Our only anchor is the depth of our roots.
The intentional struggle: We can't avoid the uncertainty, but we can choose to face it with clarity, values, and resilience.

Thriving in the Age of Superintelligence

- Anchor yourself with deep roots of resilience
- Guard your attention and reclaim sovereignty
- Let values guide you — live ethically
- Choose the struggle of real human connection
- Practice gratitude to steady your ship
- Build meaning together in community

We cannot control the storm of AI; but we can grow deep roots, and choose how we face it.

Bring the metaphors full circle:
- Threat bias smoke detector → we must respond with clarity, not fear.
- Biosphere 2 trees → we need wind and struggle to grow strong.
- Deep roots → let ethical clarity and timeless wisdom anchor us.
- Community → the antidote to dread and isolation.

Resilience is not denial — it's choosing clarity, courage, and meaning in the storm.
Invite: take one practice from today and carry it into your life. Small ripples become waves.
In the end, people — not programs — must define our shared future.

We can't always control global AI, but we **can** control how we show up.

Human Resilience Project

Cultivating wisdom, agency, and human connection in the age of AI

https://humanresilienceproject.org/

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