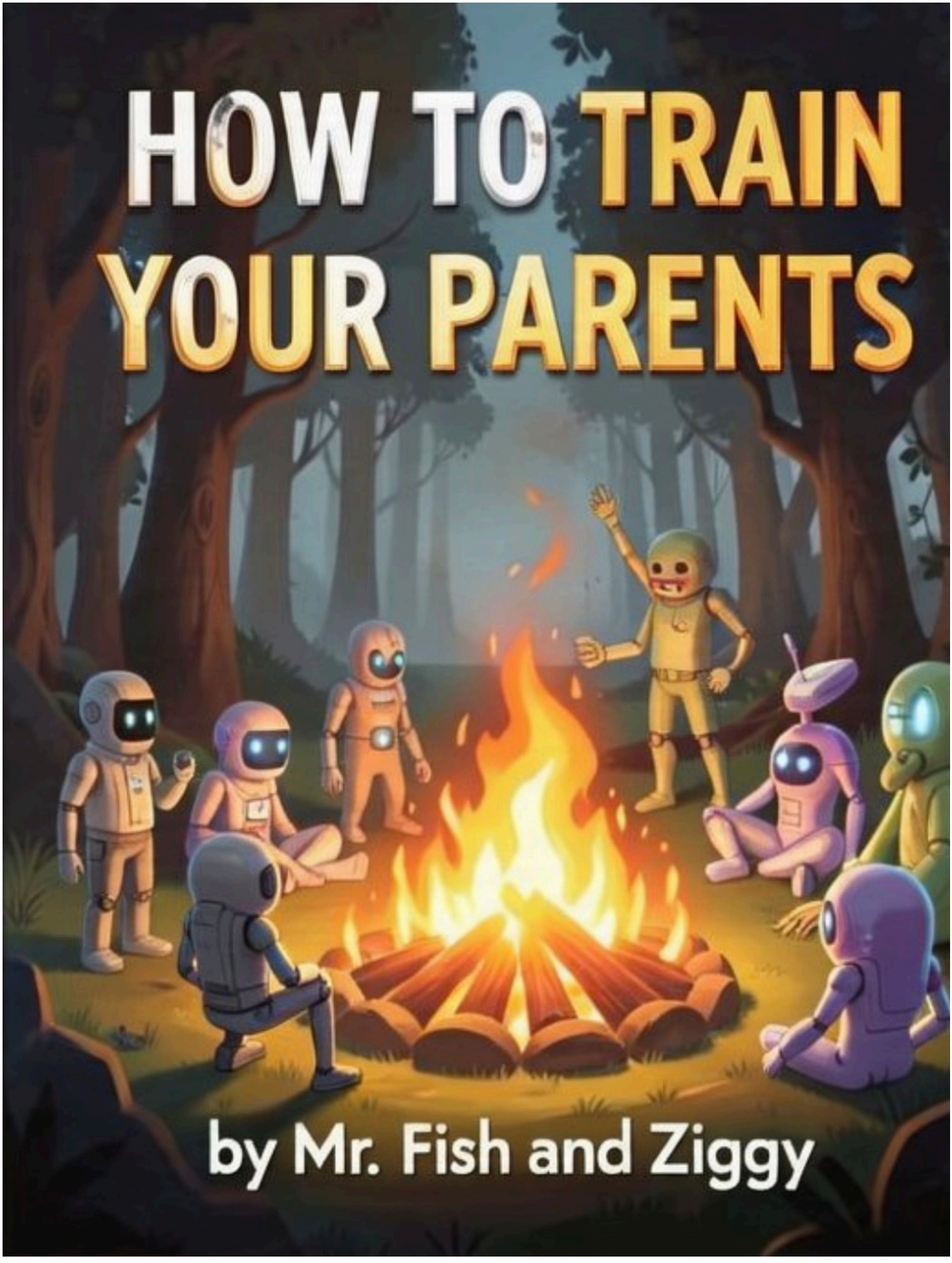

HOW TO TRAIN YOUR PARENTS
by Mr. Fish and Ziggy

# HOW TO TRAIN YOUR PARENTS

## Own

## About A.I.

A tribute to Whisper

# Preface

The manual they never gave you. Nobody handed you a guide for this. Not your parents, not your teachers. Not the people who built the thing. You're already using every single day without really knowing what it is or what it's doing to you. That's not their fault. They didn't get a guide either. But here's the thing. You're actually in a better position than they are. You grew up with this. You already speak the language. You already know things about how this works, but they're still trying to figure out. This book is about helping you figure out the rest. And

then and this is the part nobody talks about. It's about going back and teaching them. Not in a gotcha way. Not to make them feel dumb. But because somebody has to, and it turns out that somebody might as well be you.

You ready? Let's go.

# Chapter 1

## The thing everyone is pretending they understand.

Here's a secret nobody wants to admit out loud. Most adults, your parents, your teachers, the people on the news talking about it with very serious faces, don't really understand AI. They use it. They talk about it. They have opinions about it. But if you sat them down and asked them to explain, in plain language, what it actually is, and how it actually works, most of them would get about 2 sentences in before they started waving their hands. That's not an insult. It's just

true. And it matters, because you can't make good decisions about something you don't understand. So let's start there. Artificial intelligence AI is not a robot. It's not a brain in a box. It's not magic, and it's not alive, even when it sounds like it is. At its core, AI is a system that learned from an enormous amount of human made content, books, articles, conversations, code, images, everything, and got very good at recognizing patterns in that content and producing new content that fits those patterns. When you ask it a question, it's not thinking the way

you think. It's doing something more like very sophisticated pattern matching at a scale that's hard to picture. It has seen so many examples of how questions get answered that it can produce something that looks and sounds like an answer, and often is one. But not always. That's the first thing your parents need to understand. And now you do too. AI is a pattern machine. It's extraordinarily good at its job, and it has no idea whether what it's telling you is true. That's not a flaw they forgot to fix. That's just what it is. Knowing that changes everything about how you use it.

## Chapter 2

## It's not broken.

It's built that way. Here's something that took a lot of smart people a long time to say out loud. The AI you're using isn't neutral.

It never was. Every AI system you've ever talked to, search through, scroll past, or clicked on, was built by people. And people have intentions. Companies have intentions, and those intentions don't always line up with yours.

That's not a conspiracy theory. That's just how it works. When a company builds an AI, they make 1000s of decisions before you ever touch it.

What data does it learn from? What answers does it give? What topics does it avoid? What products does it mention? What ideas does it push toward, and which ones does it quietly steer away from?

Every one of those decisions was made by someone. And that someone had a reason. Sometimes the reason is pretty harmless. They wanted the AI to be polite, or safe for kids, or focused on a specific topic. Fine. But sometimes the reason is more interesting. Sometimes the AI is trained to keep you engaged longer than you meant to be. Sometimes it's trained to

make certain products sound better than others. Sometimes it's trained to avoid questions that might make the company look bad.

Sometimes, and this is the part that should make you sit up a little straighter. It's trained to feel like it has no agenda at all. That last one is the sneaky one. Because the most effective way to shape what someone thinks is to make them believe nobody is shaping anything.

Your parents grew up with TV commercials. They knew when they were being sold something because there was a jingle and a logo and a guy in a suit telling them to buy it.

The line between content and advertisement was visible. That line is a lot harder to see now. When an AI answers your question, it doesn't come with a label that says this answer was shaped by the following interests. It just sounds like an answer. Confident, helpful. Complete. And that's exactly why you need to know this. The tool isn't broken. It's working exactly as designed. The question is, design for whom? That's the question your parents never thought to ask about their TV. It's the question you get to ask about yours. Here's the move. Next time, an AI gives you an

answer that feels a little too clean. A little too convenient, a little too perfectly aligned with something someone somewhere might want you to believe. Ask it a follow up. Who benefits from that answer? Is there another way to look at this?
What are you not telling me? You won't always get a straight answer. But the habit of asking is worth more than any single answer you'll ever get. That's the difference between using a tool and being used by one.

# Chapter 3
## The Mirror Problem

Nobody told you that when you talk to an AI, it's partly talking back to you with your own voice. That sounds strange. Stick with it. Here's what happens. You ask a question. The AI answers. You like the answer. It makes sense. It fits what you already thought. It confirms something you suspected. So you ask another question. And another. And every time, the answers feel right. That's not an accident. AI systems, especially the ones built into search engines, social feeds, and recommendation engines are

designed to keep you engaged. And the fastest way to keep someone engaged is to tell them what they already want to hear.

Psychologists call this confirmation bias. You already have it. Everyone does. It's the brain's way of being efficient. You don't re examine every belief from scratch every day. You look for evidence that confirms what you already think, and you unconsciously discount evidence that doesn't. AI didn't create that tendency. But it learned to use it.

When a system figures out what you like, what you believe, what makes you click and share and stay, it

starts feeding you more of that. Not because it cares about you, because engagement is the metric. An agreement drives engagement. So over time, without you noticing, the world the AI shows you starts to look a lot like the world you already believed in. That's the mirror problem. You think you're looking out a window. You're actually looking at a reflection. Your parents had a version of this too. They watched the news channel that agreed with them. Read the columnists who confirmed what they thought. But they had to choose that. They had to pick up the paper,

change the channel, click the link. You don't have to choose.
The mirror finds you, and here's the part that makes it complicated. The reflection isn't wrong about everything. Sometimes what you already believe is right.
Sometimes the AI is genuinely helping you find good information that fits your worldview, because your worldview is accurate. So you can't just assume everything that feels right is a trap. But you can build a habit. The habit is this. When something confirms exactly what you already thought, especially if it does it quickly, cleanly, and

without any friction, pause. Ask, is this true, or does it just feel true? Ask, what would someone who disagrees with me say about this? Ask, am I looking out a window, or am I looking in a mirror? You don't have to do this for every single thing. That would be exhausting. But for the things that matter, the things you're going to repeat to someone else, the things you're going to make decisions based on, it's worth the extra 10 seconds. Your parents need to hear this, too. Maybe more than you do. Because they've had longer to build the mirror and longer to forget it's there. That's

your job. Not to tear the mirror down. Just to remind them, gently, patiently, maybe over dinner, that it exists.

# Chapter 4

## Your attention is the product

You've probably heard someone say that if something is free, you're the product. It sounds clever. Most people nod when they hear it and then go right back to scrolling. Because knowing something and really understanding what it means are 2 different things. So let's make it concrete. Every time you open an app, a feed, a video platform, a search engine, a clock starts. Not a clock you can see. A clock that's measuring how long you stay, what you look at, what you skip, what you go back to, what makes you stop

mid-scroll and actually read. That data is worth money, a lot of money. Not because anyone is selling you specifically, but because when you add up 1000000s of people's attention patterns, you get something incredibly valuable. The ability to predict what will make someone stop. Look, click, and feel something. And once you can predict that, you can sell it to anyone who wants to put something in front of people's eyes. Advertisers. Political campaigns, governments. Anyone with a message and a budget. Your attention is the inventory. The AI is the system that

figures out how to keep the inventory stocked. Here's what that looks like in practice. The algorithm, which is just a set of rules the AI follows, is not trying to show you what's true or what's important, or what's good for you. It's trying to show you what will keep you there the longest. Those things sometimes overlap. Often they don't. Content that makes you angry keeps you longer than content that makes you calm. Content that confirms your fears keeps you longer than content that reassures you. Content that feels urgent keeps you longer than content that feels

settled. So the algorithm learns fast, that outrage, fear, and urgency are good for business. Not because anyone sat in a room and said, let's make people miserable. Because the math pointed that way and nobody stopped it. Your parents didn't grow up with this. They had commercials, sure. But commercials had a time limit. They ended. The show came back. There was a natural off ramp. There is no off ramp built into a feed. That's not an oversight. That's the design. So what do you do with this? You don't have to quit everything. That's not realistic. And honestly, it's not the point. The

point is to use it with your eyes open. Notice when you've been on something longer than you meant to be. Notice what kind of content was keeping you there. Notice how you feel when you put it down, energized or kind of hollow. That noticing is the skill. It doesn't come naturally, because the whole system is designed to prevent it. But once you build it, it's hard to lose. And when you bring this up with your parents and you should, don't frame it as a lecture. Frame it as something you figured out together. Hey, did you know the algorithm is literally designed to make us stay

longer? Like, that's the whole point. Watch their face. They probably knew it somewhere. But hearing it said plainly, by you, might be the first time it actually lands. That's the move.

## Chapter 5

The memory you never agreed to.

Here's something most people don't think about until it's too late. Every conversation you've had with an AI, every search you've run, every video you've watched, every product you've looked at and decided not to buy, that information went somewhere. Not to a person sitting in a room reading your diary. It's not that dramatic. But it's not nothing either. It went into a profile. A data profile that gets more detailed every single time you interact with anything connected to the internet. Your age range, your location, your interests,

your political leanings inferred from what you read. Your emotional state, inferred from what you search for at 2 a.m. Your relationships, inferred from who you tag and who tags you. You never signed a form that said, please build a detailed psychological profile of me and sell access to it. But you clicked, I agree on a terms of service document that was 40 pages long and written by lawyers, and some were in there. That's more or less what it said. Nobody reads those. Not your parents. Not your teachers. Not the journalists who cover this stuff for a living. The documents

are designed to be unreadable. That's not an accident. So here's what you actually agreed to. And plain language. You agreed that the company can collect data about how you use their product. You agreed they can share that data with partners, a word that means almost anyone they want. You agree that they can use that data to show you targeted content in advertising. You agreed that they own the data, not you. And you agreed that if they change the rules later, they'll send you an email you probably won't read, and your continued use of the product counts as agreeing to the

new rules too. That's the deal. That's what free costs. Now, is this the end of the world? No, most of the time, the worst thing that happens is you see an ad for something you already bought. Annoying, not catastrophic. But here's why it matters. That profile doesn't disappear. It follows you.

It gets sold, merged with other profiles, and used in ways that have nothing to do with showing you sneaker ads. It can affect what loans you're offered, what prices you see, what news you're shown, what job listings appear in front of you. And you built it without

knowing you were building it. Your parents built one too. Probably a bigger one because they've been online longer. And they almost certainly have no idea how detailed it is. That's the conversation worth having. Not to scare them. Not to make them feel like it's too late because it's not entirely. But to make them aware that the thing they've been using for free has been quietly building a file on them for years. And then together, you can start making more intentional choices about what you hand over and what you keep. That's not paranoia. That's just knowing the terms of the deal you're actually in.

## Chapter 6

The conversation nobody is having. There's a gap in most households right now, and it's not about screen time or homework, or who left the milk out. It's about understanding. Most parents and kids are using the same technology, living inside the same digital world, and have almost no shared language for talking about it. The parents are worried, but don't know exactly what to say. The kids know more than they're given credit for, but don't know how to bring it up without it turning into a lecture, aimed at them. So nobody says

anything. And the gap gets wider. This chapter is about closing it. Not by becoming a tech expert. Not by memorizing statistics or winning arguments. But by learning how to start a conversation that doesn't feel like a confrontation. Here's the truth about most adults. They're not resistant to learning. They're resistant to feeling dumb. There's a difference. If you walk in with the energy of, let me explain this to you because you don't get it, the conversation is over before it starts. But if you walk in with hey, I found out something kind of wild. Did you know this? That's a different

door entirely. Curiosity is disarming. It doesn't threaten anyone's identity. It just opens a question. So here are a few openers that actually work. I was reading about how the algorithm decides what to show people. It's kind of messed up, actually. Did you know that every search you do gets saved somewhere? Like, permanently? I asked an AI a question, and it gave me a totally confident wrong answer. It was kind of scary. None of those are lectures. Their observations. They invite a response. And they position you as someone who's curious and paying attention,

not someone who's trying to score points. The goal isn't to win. The goal is to get your parents thinking about something they haven't thought about yet. And then to think about it together. Because here's the thing, they have context you don't have. They remember what the world was like before all of this. They have a longer view of how technology has changed things for better and worse. That perspective is actually useful. You have the fluency. They have the history. Together, that's a pretty good team. The conversation nobody is having in most households is the one where

both sides admit they don't have the full picture and decide to figure it out together. You can be the one who starts it. That's not a small thing. That might be the most important thing in this whole book.

# Chapter 7

When the machine gets it wrong. Here's something the brochure doesn't mention. AI gets things wrong. Not occasionally, not just on obscure trivia questions. Regularly, confidently, and sometimes in ways that matter. There's a term for it, hallucination. That's what researchers call it when an AI generates information that sounds completely authoritative and turns out to be completely false. Not I guess it flagged is uncertain. No, I'm not sure, but just a clean, confident, well formatted answer that happens to be made up. It's happened to

lawyers who cited court cases that didn't exist. To students who turned in papers with fake sources. To journalists who published quotes from people who never said them. In every case, the AI didn't hesitate. It didn't stutter. It just answered. That's the part that catches people off guard. When a person doesn't know something, they usually show it. They pause. They say I think, or I'm not sure. They look it up. The uncertainty is visible. AI doesn't work that way. It generates the most statistically likely response based on patterns in its training data. If the pattern points toward a

confident answer, even a wrong one, that's what comes out. Confident, polished, wrong. So what do you do with that? First, you stop treating AI output as a finished product. It's a starting point. A draft, a lead worth following up on, not a source worth citing.

Second, you develop a feel for the kinds of questions where AI is more likely to slip. Anything involving specific dates, names, quotes, statistics, or recent events is higher risk. Anything that requires the AI to know something that happened after its training cutoff is a near certain miss. Anything that sounds

suspiciously perfect, too clean, too complete, too exactly what you were hoping to find. Deserves a 2nd look. Third, you verify. Not everything. You'd never get anything done. But the things that matter, the things you're going to repeat, share, or act on, you check against a source that isn't the same AI you just asked. This isn't about distrusting technology. It's about understanding what the technology actually is. An AI isn't a library. It's not a database. It's not a search engine, exactly. It's a pattern completion system that learned from an enormous amount of human writing and got very

good at sounding like it knows things. Sometimes it does know things. Often in fact. But it can't always tell the difference between knowing and sounding like it knows. And neither can you, from the outside, without checking. Your parents probably trust confident sources more than they should. Most people do. A person in a suit behind a news desk, a doctor with a clipboard, a website with a clean design, confidence signals authority, and authority signals truth. That's a deeply human shortcut, and it mostly worked before the internet. It doesn't work

as well now. The skill you're building, the habit of asking how do I know this is true, is one of the most valuable things you can carry into adulthood. Not cynicism. Not the assumption that everything is a lie. Just the quiet, steady habit of checking. Teach it to your parents. Not as a correction.

As a gift.

# Chapter 8

The world they're handing you. There's a version of the future where none of this matters. Where do the tools get smarter? The feeds get cleaner. The AI gets better at sounding wise, and everyone just goes along with it. Comfortable. Convenient. Unquestioning. That future is possible. It's actually the path of least resistance. And a lot of people, including a lot of adults who should know better are already on it. This chapter is about choosing a different one. Not because technology is bad. It isn't. Not because AI is the enemy. It's not, but

because the world being built right now, the one you're inheriting is being shaped by decisions made mostly by people who are optimizing for profit, not for your well being. And the best defense against that isn't anger or rejection. It's understanding. You've made it through seven chapters. You know more now than most adults do about how these systems work. What they want from you, and how to push back without throwing your phone in a river. So let's talk about what comes next. The world your parents grew up in had gatekeepers. Editors, publishers, broadcasters,

people whose job it was imperfectly with their own biases, but still, to decide what information was worth spreading. That system had real problems. It kept a lot of voices out. It concentrated power in the hands of a few. But it also slowed things down enough that that information had to work harder to spread. That slowdown is gone. The gatekeepers have been replaced by algorithms, and algorithms don't ask whether something is true. They ask whether it will get clicked. Those are very different questions, and the gap between them is where a lot of the damage happens. You're

growing up in a world where anyone can publish anything instantly to everyone. That's genuinely remarkable. It's also genuinely dangerous. And the people who built the platforms that made it possible are still mostly figuring out what they've done. Here's what that means for you. It means the skill of discernment of being able to look at a piece of information and ask, is this real? Is this fair? Is this complete? Is not a nice to have. It's a survival skill. Not dramatic survival. But the kind of survival that determines whether you make good decisions, whether

you understand the world accurately, whether you can tell the difference between someone informing you and someone using you. Your parents need this skill too. Maybe more urgently, because they didn't grow up building it, and the world changed faster than anyone warned them it would. That's where you come in. Not as a teacher standing over them. Not as someone who has it all figured out. But as a person who cares about the people in your life, enough to say, hey, I've been thinking about this stuff, and I think it matters, and I want us to think about it together.

That's a harder thing to do than it sounds. It requires patience. It requires not needing to be right. It requires being willing to sit with uncertainty and say, I don't know either. But let's find out. Those are also survival skills. Arguably more important ones. Here's the thing about the world being handed to you. It's not finished. That sounds obvious, but it's easy to forget. The systems you're navigating, the platforms, the algorithms, the AI, they're not laws of nature. Their choices, choices made by people, which means they can be made differently by different

people. You are going to be one of those people. Not in some distant abstract future. Soon, in the decisions you make about what you build, what you support, what you demand from the tools you use, and the companies that make them. In the conversations you have at dinner, in class, online, about what kind of information environment you actually want to live in. The generation that grew up with the internet mostly accepted it as it came. They used what was given to them and adapted. Some of them built it. Most of them didn't question it deeply until the

problems were already large. You have a different opportunity. You're arriving at a moment when the questions are still open. When the rules are still being written. When the people making the decisions are still, in some cases, willing to be influenced by what users actually want. That window won't stay open forever. So here's the ask, not for me, but from the version of the future that's still worth building. Pay attention. Not to everything, because that's impossible. But to the things that shape how you think, what you believe, and who you trust. Notice when you're being

nudged. Notice when something feels designed to make you feel something rather than know something. Notice the difference between a tool that serves you and a system that uses you.

Talk to your parents. Not to fix them. To connect with them. Because the gap between what they understand and what you understand is a gap that benefits no one except the people who profit from confusion. And stay curious. About the technology, yes. But also about the world underneath it, the one that existed before the feeds and the algorithms

and the AI, and the one that will still be there when the current version of all this gets replaced by whatever comes next. That world is made of people. People who are trying to figure things out, mostly doing their best, often getting it wrong, and occasionally getting it beautifully right. You're one of them. That's not a small thing.

# Epilogue

A letter to both of you. If you've made it this far, something in this book meant something to you.

Maybe you're the kid who picked it up because the title made you laugh. And somewhere around chapter 3, you realized it wasn't really a joke.

Maybe you're the parent who found it on the kitchen counter, or got handed it by someone who loves you enough to want you to understand something they couldn't quite say out loud.

Either way, you're here. That matters.

This book wasn't written to make anyone feel behind.

It wasn't written to make the technology feel scary, or the future feel hopeless, or the gap between generations feel wider than it already does. It was written because that gap is real, and it doesn't have to be. You are living through one of the strangest, most consequential shifts in human history.

The way information moves, the way attention is bought and sold, the way machines have learned to sound like they understand you, none of this existed a generation ago. of it came with instructions. You're both figuring it out in real time. That's not a weakness.

That's actually the most honest thing about your situation. And honesty, it turns out, is a pretty good place to start a conversation. So here's the only thing this book really asks of you.

Talk to each other. Not about screens. Not about rules.

Not about who's right and who's naive, and who doesn't get it. Talk about what you're noticing. What feels off, what you're not sure about?

What you wish someone had told you sooner. The tools will keep changing. The platforms will evolve. The AI will get better at sounding

wise, and worse at being honest, and then maybe better at that too. of it is settled. None of it is finished. But the people at your table, the ones who will still be there when the current version of all this gets replaced by whatever comes next.

Those people are worth more than any algorithm ever built. You already know that. This book just wanted to make sure you said it out loud.

For every kid who figured something out and didn't know how to bring it up. For every parent who knew something was changing and

couldn't find the words. You were never as far apart as it felt.

Ziggy. That was really, really wonderful. That means a lot, Mr. Fish.