COLUMN:

AI, Fear and Our Humanity

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Artificial intelligence is no longer just a technological revolution. It has become a growing source of psychological anxiety. At Paracelsus Recovery, referrals linked to AI-related anxiety have risen by 300 percent over the past two years, particularly in the last six months.

Some of these people suffer from panic attacks, depression and burnout, while others turn to psychoactive substances to cope with the pressure. Behind these symptoms lie deep human fears: losing control, letting others down, and seeing the life we spent years building collapse.

It reminds me of the anxiety surrounding the "Y2K problem", when the world feared that electronic systems would fail. Today that fear is returning, but without a set date for it to end. When faced with the unknown, our brains naturally tend to imagine the worst-case scenario, which explains the rising fears of job losses and of machines surpassing humans.

For entrepreneurs and executives, the anxiety goes beyond the future of technology to their responsibilities towards their companies and employees. Some fear making a wrong decision that undoes decades of achievement, or having to let loyal employees go. Even wealth offers no protection from these pressures; it can actually intensify feelings of guilt and responsibility.

There is another, less visible risk: relying too heavily on AI to make decisions, even personal ones. When we constantly ask a machine to think for us, we may gradually lose confidence in our own judgement and in our ability to face mistakes.

Some also fall into a compulsive cycle of searching and constantly checking for news about the future of AI, looking for a reassurance that never lasts, because no one has definitive answers.

In the Gulf states, where adoption of this technology is accelerating, the need to balance ambition with care for people becomes clear. Boards should discuss how these changes affect employees, which decisions must remain in human hands, and how to protect people's sense of value and purpose.

At Paracelsus Recovery, we begin by understanding the person before the technology. We treat anxiety through psychotherapy, by breaking compulsive behaviours, and by restoring balance to sleep, relationships and daily life.

We should not become so preoccupied with what AI might do to us in the future that we overlook what fear is doing to us today. Someone who has lost their sleep or their self-confidence does not need new predictions about the future. They need someone to help them regain peace of mind and control over their life in the present.