

Welcome to the third issue of the newly established Wellbeing Bulletin, where we talk about life, wellbeing and coping strategies for handling a CERTEFL Course!



THE WELLBEING BULLETIN

Is AI stealing your mind?

Today, we look at ways to approach AI in a mentally sustainable way.

You are halfway through your CERTEFL module. It has taken you the better part of an evening to sit down, settle the noise of the day, and finally open your laptop. You type a question about lesson sequencing into the chat window — and within three seconds, a fully structured answer appears. It is confident, coherent, and, as far as you can tell, accurate. You stare at it for a moment. Then a quiet, unsettling thought creeps in: Why am I even doing this?

If that moment sounds familiar, you are not alone. Many adult learners working through online courses right now are asking the same question in different forms. Do I still need to understand this? Does my thinking matter anymore? Am I learning, or am I just supervising a machine? The anxiety is real, and it is worth taking seriously. How you answer those questions will shape not just how you finish this course, but how you grow professionally for years to come.

The good news, as you will see, is that your mind is not being stolen. But it does need a new strategy.

There is growing evidence that students who lean heavily on AI during learning retain significantly less than those who engage in generative processing — the mental effort of producing, organising, and connecting ideas yourself. Research consistently shows that wrestling with a problem before receiving an explanation leads to deeper understanding than receiving the answer first.

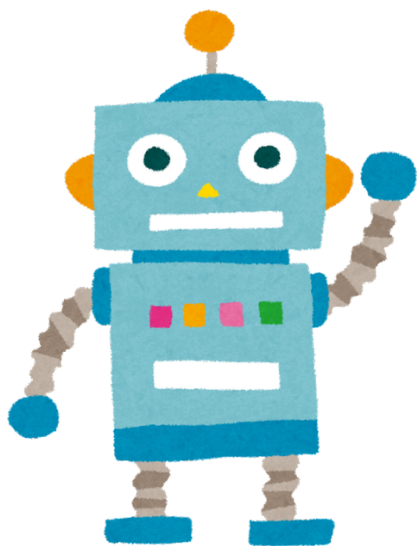
The OECD's Education Policy Outlook of 2024 echoes this concern, warning that delegating too much cognitive work to technology risks weakening higher-order thinking skills over time. Crucially, the report does not recommend avoiding AI altogether — it calls for intentional, balanced use that keeps students genuinely engaged with complex thinking, rather than outsourcing it.

This Is Not a Failure of Willpower

Here is something worth sitting with: the disorientation you feel around AI is not a personal failing. It is a rational response to a genuinely disorienting situation. The tools are new, the norms are unclear, and nobody handed you a manual. Of course it feels strange. Of course you are uncertain about the rules. You are not behind. You are navigating something that even experienced educators and researchers are still figuring out. The question is not whether to use AI — most of you already are, and that is fine — but how to use it in a way that keeps you at the centre of the learning. So here are some tips that may help you along the way.

Think First, Then Ask

Before you turn to an AI tool for help with an assignment or concept, spend five minutes writing down what you already know or think about the topic. A few bullet points, a rough paragraph, a question you are trying to answer — anything that externalises your existing thinking. Only then, start asking the tool to critique it, suggest alternatives, or play devil's advocate.



This keeps intellectual ownership with you. Instead of receiving information passively, you are evaluating it against your own ideas. You notice gaps. You push back. You are learning, not transcribing. This small act changes everything about the interaction that follows.

Protect Your Thinking Time

Designate a regular study window — even thirty minutes a week — where you work entirely without AI assistance. No search, no chat tools, no instant help. Just you, your course materials, and whatever you can work out on your own. The discomfort you feel in those sessions is the feeling of your understanding consolidating. It is a good sign.

So, Is Your Mind Still Your Own?

Yes. Unreservedly, yes. AI has not made your thinking obsolete — it has raised the stakes for it. The skills that CERTEFL is building in you — the ability to reflect, to analyse learner needs, to make considered pedagogical choices, to communicate clearly — are precisely the skills that no tool can replicate. Use the tools available to you wisely and strategically. But never mistake speed for depth, or convenience for competence. The most important thing you bring to your teaching career is a mind that knows how to think. Guard it, train it, and trust it.