Teacher Answer Key

Case Study

1. At least two patterns are present. First, withdrawal discomfort-adjacent behavior: Cameron opened the app 28 of 30 days, and the only two days it was not opened were days that were unusually full — not days Cameron chose to skip. This suggests the app has become the default, not a deliberate choice. Second, substitution: Cameron declined two real social invitations in a month after already talking to the AI, suggesting the AI interaction displaced a real-world social opportunity. A third pattern — disclosing something about hopelessness to the AI that Cameron had not told any real person — suggests the AI has become the primary emotional processing channel, which is a concerning form of emotional substitution.

2. 'Being used by a tool' describes Cameron more accurately than 'using a tool.' Using a tool means the decision to use it is made deliberately, in advance, for a reason you can articulate. Cameron's pattern shows automatic use: the app is opened almost every day, and the only gaps are days when circumstances prevented it, not days when Cameron decided not to. The declinations of social invitations — made after talking to the AI — suggest the AI interaction satisfied a social-emotional need in ways that reduced the urgency to pursue real connection. The disclosure of hopelessness to the AI and no one else suggests emotional processing is happening in the app by default, not by deliberate choice.

Multiple Choice

1. C
2. B
3. B

Matching

1-D, 2-A, 3-E, 4-B, 5-C

Fill-in-the-Blank

1) bounded, 2) identity, 3) need

Short Answer (Sample Responses)

Q1: Positive directionality means that after an AI companion interaction, the user's energy moves outward toward real life. A student who uses an AI to process anxiety, then feels equipped to have a real conversation they had been avoiding, is showing

positive directionality — the AI interaction built toward something real. The problematic pattern reverses this: the AI interaction becomes the goal itself, and real-world activities feel less important or rewarding by comparison. The question is whether the AI is a launching pad or a destination.

Q2: 'Cognitive foothold' means having the conceptual vocabulary to identify what is happening, which creates a moment of deliberate choice where there was previously only automatic response. A user who knows that intermittent reinforcement is a deliberate design mechanism — engineered to produce exactly the pull they are feeling — can pause and notice: 'This pull is a response to a behavioral technique, not a genuine need I should act on.' This is more useful than 'use less' because it gives users a specific tool. 'Use less' requires willpower applied to an unexamined impulse; naming the mechanism creates the gap between impulse and action where a real decision can be made.

Q3: Most people associate problems with obvious distress — difficulty, pain, noticeable dysfunction. If something feels comfortable and reliably comforting, the intuitive conclusion is that it is fine. But the reading describes a slow drift in which the AI becomes more comfortable over time and real-world relationships become comparatively less satisfying — and this drift feels, from the inside, like relief, not trouble. Cameron's audit does not describe suffering; it describes a comfortable pattern that, when examined, shows declining real-world social investment and automatic AI dependence. This makes honest self-assessment hard because the normal signal — discomfort — is not present. You have to evaluate the pattern rather than the feeling.