

Meet Kanjo, the startup nourishing the emotional development of the whole family

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Sophia Parvizi-Wayne, cofounder and CEO of Kanjo about mental health education and how they are using technology to create personalised, accessible and preventative solutions.

Personally, for me it's been ten years in the making. When I was sixteen, I was diagnosed with Anorexia Nervosa and I know now that if I had had access to Kanjo it could have been prevented. Following my eating disorder, I launched the biggest mental health education campaign of its time in the UK, however, not enough has been done since then, and I knew that I had to build something that had wide scale, long lasting impact.

Stefan, my cofounder, was the second catalyst. He is the magic that enables us to solve the problems we see in the space – creating personalised, accessible and preventative solutions using technology. Finding the person who had the compatible skills and wanted to solve the exact same problem as me was like that eureka moment – like, hey I think we are the ones to fix this!

Tell me about the business – what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you reach customers and so on?

Kanjo personalises family healthcare, turning children's games and activities into accurate, evidence-based insights and advice for parents. We are the emotional toolbox children have never had, and the only honest parental comfort blanket for those day-to-day worries

Long term, we're building the largest longitudinal data set on children's development and cognition to be able to predict and understand autism, ADHD and other SEN far earlier than currently possible.

How has the business evolved since its launch? When was this?

The business changes every day as such is the nature of an early stage startup, but our vision has stayed the same. The big reason our business continues to evolve is that we work directly with our parents and children to build what they want and need, and trust me, kids can pick on anything!

Tell us about the working culture at Kanjo.

We always say our number one company value is awkward transparency, both in the way we explain what we do to our families but also in the way we interact with each other. If things aren't going right, if you feel low on a certain day, if you want to share an opinion on something that isn't your area of expertise, we have built a culture where everyone is comfortable and wants to share. It's a pretty wonderful team to be in: it's small and scrappy, but when you sit in a room full of people who have the same passion and mission to really solve a pressing problem, you realise you wouldn't want to be in any other place.

How are you funded?

We are lucky to have gone through Entrepreneur First who funded us initially and then we raised a small round alongside that funding with amazing angels and smaller funds. We are currently about to start fundraising for our next round to meet the needs of all the parents who want to use us.

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

Wanting to do so many things well at once. We are a highly ambitious team which knows what we are building can and will change families' lives. Trying to make sure we stay on track, grow at the right pace and not get too excited about every opportunity that comes our way is hard, if I'm honest.

Personally, learning how to move from just Stef and I at our EF desk to actually having a real team is a big step. Learning how to hire the best people, delegate and build a team culture we are proud of is all something very new to us.

How does Kanjo answer an unmet need?

We are in the midst of a mental health epidemic for children, and parents just want to know their child is okay and what they can do to help them. The problem is that currently every solution out there is impersonalised, inaccessible and expensive. We are giving parents the help they need for their child and their families' needs. By nourishing the emotional development of the whole family, we will create a generation of happier and healthier families.

What's in store for the future?

We are in the process of building out more games and content that are personalised for our parent members. Down the line, we are excited to start working on our early detection of special education needs and mental health conditions in young children.

What one piece of advice would you give

other founders or future founders?

Find the right cofounder. Your cofounder becomes somewhat of a life-partner. You will disagree, you will fight, and there will be moments where you share the greatest of joys. Finding someone who can spend over five years with you, sharing the same dream is tough to find but building a startup alone is even harder. Stefan is that person for me.

And finally, a more personal question! What's your daily routine and the rules you're living by at the moment?

I wish I could be more honest and say that I have the work-life balance nailed down right now, but I don't, and I think coming to terms with the fact that sometimes one thing has to be prioritised has really helped me.

Aside from that, I make it very clear to everyone that I am a human first. I call my parents every day, I try and see a friend every day or so whether it's for a late-night dinner or to join me at work and make sure I am not losing Sophia to the company all the time. I used to be a semi- professional athlete and am so proud of the person I used to be and the time and love I put into it so make sure that I work out daily and get some sunlight. We always say that in order for the company to be healthy, we need to be healthy.

Sophia Parvizi-Wayne is cofounder and CEO of [Kanjō](#).