

Meet JAAQ, and discover comprehensive and credible mental health resources

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Danny Gray, Founder and CEO of JAAQ about breaking down the mental health stigma, creating a platform for accessing and sharing lived experiences, and helping the millions of people currently waiting for mental health support.

When I was 12 years old, I was bullied in the school playground because of my appearance. These comments triggered an obsession with the way I looked, leading me to develop Body Dysmorphic Disorder. The continuous worry and negative thoughts really took a toll on my mental health. I started my first business Warpaint for Men which is a very successful men's make-up business and caused so many people to reach out asking for help with their mental health. I very quickly realised there was a massive issue with people finding good quality help and information.

The average length of time it takes for someone to reach out for support is 10 years, often at this point, people are already at crisis point. The scale of the problem is only being made worse currently in the UK, with record NHS waiting times. Often, it isn't always the right help.

I wanted to create a platform that could provide free and accessible information from experts and those with lived experiences, so people can access the right information, as soon as they need it.

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

JAAQ is a free, interactive mental health platform where you can ask world-leading experts, doctors, and celebrities with lived experiences, and over 50,000 questions on over 50 different mental health topics. For example, you can ask Alastair Campbell, No 10's former Director of Communications and Strategy, how he copes with his depression, David Harewood MBE, Actor and Director, about his triggers for psychosis, or Jake Humphrey, well-known TV and radio broadcaster, about how he deals with anxiety. In terms of clinicians, you can ask Dr Janet Treasure, leading advisor to the government and expert on eating disorders, or Professor Paul Gilbert OBE, leading clinician on depression.

We're partnering with leading brands such as Bupa, PureGym, NatWest, and Holland & Barrett, to ensure employees and customers across the UK are getting the mental health support they need.

I truly believe this platform will change the world. Millions of people are struggling on waiting lists across the country, and JAAQ is here to break down the mental health stigma and get people talking about their mental health.

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

In 2021, we launched a test version of JAAQ which featured expert advice and experiences for depression, psychosis and body dysmorphic disorder. In 24 hours alone, we had received 13,000 visits, with 40,000 questions being answered across 60 countries.

The phenomenal feedback inspired the team to develop the most practical, comprehensive and credible mental health resources available, for free. In November 2022, we launched fully with over 50 topics on the platform. In the last month, visitors from over 100 countries have asked 100,000 questions with the most viewed topics being burnout, anxiety & depression.

Tell us about the working culture at JAAQ

People are always amazed at how small the team is at JAAQ. It's a tiny team doing very big things. It's fast-paced and can be chaotic but it's a very creative team with our own in-house creative team. Some days are focused on filming in the studio, others around meetings with investors or talking to new creators.

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

On May 9th 2019, when I was running my first business *Warpaint for Men*, we ran an ad on Twitter that went viral and not in a good way. It had 8 million views in 24 hours with people slating the business, the idea of make-up for men, claiming it was toxic masculinity and so on.

At the time, I thought my business had died; I didn't know how to handle it and my mental health started spiralling. With support from good people around me, wise advice and keeping calm and steady, I realised nothing lasts forever. It quickly became yesterday's news and my biggest learning when building a brand is that people not talking about you at all is worse!

How does JAAQ answer an unmet need?

The mental health epidemic in the UK is growing. 1.8 million people in the UK are on an NHS mental health waiting list, with 8 million more people struggling to access help. According to stem4, a charity that supports positive mental health in teenagers, 75% of 12-year-olds dislike their bodies and feel embarrassed by the way they look, rising to 80% of young people by the time they reach 18. People across the country are struggling with their mental health and there has never been a greater need.

JAAQ helps people to get access to the right information, at the exact moment they need it. We also have a feature to save certain questions and creators to a personal collection, so the information can be shared with loved ones so they can better understand and help you in the best way possible.

Helping people is our only goal – as long as JAAQ helps one person, then it's all worth it.

What's in store for the future?

We have huge things planned for JAAQ. The challenge is prioritising what to go after first! JAAQ.org will continue to expand and get better and better onboarding more topics, clinicians and creators onto the platform. We have a very exciting product launch pipeline as well which is coming in the next few months. We've only scratched the surface - JAAQ can help so many people.

What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

Never be afraid to ask. When JAAQ first launched, I called up the BBC and asked to go on The One Show - they said yes. I called up creators and asked them to be a part of JAAQ - they said yes. I called up PureGym for a partnership for our 2022 launch - they said yes.

You never know who'll say yes. Believe in what you're offering and go out and make it happen.

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

I always ensure to keep a balance and boundaries in place. I finish the day and switch my phone off between 5 pm and 8 pm so I can be with my wife and kids and have downtime.

Everyone has their own tools and it's about finding those tools - it might be taking a cold shower, which I'm also trying every morning for a few seconds which is working for me!

Danny Gray is the Founder and CEO of [JAAQ](#).