

Alon Lits, cofounder of Panda

By [Emily Stander](#)

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This week we caught up with the cofounder and co-CEO of Panda, a free-to-download digital app designed to put mental health information, community support and expert help literally in the palm of the user's hand.



Image supplied: Alon Lits

▣ *Where do you live, work and play?*

I am Joburg born and raised, and I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. Joburg is where family and friends are and that makes it home.

Work is currently focused on the South African market, but we aspire to launch in the US in 2023. With work and two kids, I don't get much playtime, but I love to play with my children, coffee brings me a lot of joy and I try my best to keep active, keeping me in balance.

▣ *What's really behind your selfie?*

Hmm, tough question - honesty, trust and transparency are the traits that I look for the most in people. So, I like to think that what you see is what you get.

▣ *What does a typical weekend look like for you now?*

It's mostly centred around family time. We do our best to kick off our mornings with coffee with my wife, boys, and dogs.

I try and squeeze in some exercise and then I do my best to entertain my two (super active) boys together with my awesome wife. We are fortunate to have three very involved grandparents who play a big role in our lives. Ideally, we also spend time with friends over a meal.

▣ *Describe your career so far*

I started my career at Investec Bank in their corporate lending area. It was an amazing place to start my career. I worked with and learnt from some amazing people, and I was given unbelievable opportunities during my time there.

I then went on to complete my MBA at Insead in Singapore. I came back to South Africa with the hope of joining a startup. I was lucky to have the unique opportunity to join Uber as their first employee in Africa in 2013. I grew with the business over the seven years that I was there, and I was director for Uber across Sub-Saharan Africa (seven countries).

I left Uber just over two years ago. I loved my time at Uber, and I am incredibly proud of the impact we made on the continent. I still care deeply about our team and driver-partners.

Shortly after leaving Uber, I was fortunate to be introduced to my cofounder at Panda - Allan Sweidan. He is a clinical psychologist and the founder of the Akeso Hospital Group. At the beginning of 2021, we started building the Panda technology platform where we have a mission to improve access to mental health care by reducing the barriers that exist.

▣ **What are you streaming/reading/listening to right now?**

I'm not reading a particular book now, but I love to stream the *Huberman Lab* and the *All-in Pod*

▣ **What's your favourite gif?**

Anything with a panda!

▣

▣ **Give us the quote you like to live your life by?**

Never, ever give up.

▣ **Do you have any secret talents?**

I can type without looking at my phone.

▣ **What are some of your best loadshedding survival tips?**

Plan based on the schedule. If you can get a basic UPS/inverter it should be enough to keep your internet running during loadshedding.

If that isn't possible, find a coffee shop with backup power or use the downtime to focus on yourself (gym, admin, family time etc).

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

Freelancer specialising in games and entertainment | My first loves are writing, music and video games

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