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“E mahi tahi ana ki nga oranga pai ake”  
Working together to better lives

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[www.braininjurybop.org.nz](http://www.braininjurybop.org.nz)

**JUNE 2026**

**NEWSLETTER**

## The Story of James Cracknell

### **Background as an elite sportsman**

James Cracknell, OBE, is a British rowing and endurance athlete. He is a double Olympic gold medalist and winner of 6 world championship titles. He was first selected in 1992 to compete in the Barcelona Olympics, but withdrew with injury, went back to training for the next 4 years and was selected to compete in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. He had to pull out again, this time due to illness. He won gold in Sydney 2000 and again in Athens in 2004. That's 16 years of dedicated training as a top athlete. James talks about the training – row in training for a total of 5,000 kilometers a year to race for 2 kilometers every 4 years.

### **The Accident**

After competing in the Olympics, James took to endurance racing. In July 2010 he was endurance racing from L.A to New York. The race was a combination of cycling, running, rowing and swimming, and was to be completed within 18 days. James was cycling in Arizona, when he was hit from behind on his head by the side mirror of a petrol tanker. Apart from a broken foot, the only injury sustained was to his head. He credits the helmet he was wearing for saving his life, but his recovery journey was long and hard.

Before he left the hospital to return home, his neurologist told him that 80% of couples where one or both have suffered brain injury, will divorce. He was also told

that where he was in his recovery after 3 years is where he will stay. There would be no further recovery from then on.

## **Home From Hospital**

James went home and struggled for 8 years before asking for help. In the beginning, James assumed that his experience as an elite athlete would help him in his recovery. He knew about resilience, discipline, how to tough things out, but his thinking was ridged. He found himself enraged multiple times a day by things that had never bothered him before.

## **Family Life**

Mealtimes with his young family became battle grounds, the sound of chewing drove him mad. He had lost his sense of smell and taste. A change in any daily routine was a crisis. His wife could say 1000 positive things to him, but the 1 negative comment could be so hurtful and what was remembered and ruminated on. James refused to rest; he thought of it as a sign of weakness. In his media training as an athlete, he was taught "never swear and never apologise". He had opinions he couldn't compromise on, and he had no filter.

He was verbose and uninhibited – he once attended a fundraiser and told a man there he looked like "Prince Harry in a fat suit". It was Prince Harry. He felt the stigma of brain injury and was aware that he had trouble regulating his emotions He had had to apologise to a lot of people!

## **Recovery**

James was determined, and despite what the neurologist had said, he believed that things never stay the same; humans never stop learning, adjusting and overcoming obstacles. He signed up to study at Cambridge University. He called a friend who was a doctor and said he needed help. His friend referred him to a specialist. James knew he had suffered an injury, but it was a leap for him to realize that he needed help. For him, that meant through both medication and counseling.

Slowly things started to change and improve for James. He wished he had not waited for 8 years to ask for help. His marriage had broken down, and he realised he was not being honest with himself. Not resting during the day made him exhausted and incapable of ever being his best self. He went to therapy, but it took time to be vulnerable and open up. The first time he walked in, he pointed to the box of tissues on the table and asked who had a cold? It was like he was going into battle, but in fact, he was his own worst enemy.

## **What James learnt:**

- To rest during the day
- To stop an argument before it became hurtful and unhelpful .

- That brain injury is an invisible injury and that others will judge you without knowing your struggle. Carry on regardless.
- If you focus your energy on anger, you waste the energy needed for your recovery.
- Recovery is tough and subjective. Each person has different needs and goals.
- It is fascinating and inspiring how families and individuals cope with horrible situations.
- That everyone's progress is inspiring to those around them.
- We all change, no matter what. No one is the same at 40 as they were at 20.
- Everything should be done in moderation.
- Enjoy the process rather than focus on the end result. Enjoy running rather than focusing on becoming a marathon runner.
- Seeking help is a sign of strength.

### **Best News**

James wrote years later to his original neurologist to ask him not to say to people that their recovery ever ends.

To listen to this podcast, go to "[How do you cope? BBC with Elis and John.](#)"



### **The Crash Reel**

To watch the doco/film "The Crash Reel", go to YouTube. It tells the story of American Kevin Pearse, an elite snowboarder – the lead up and aftermath of his head injury. Its interesting in that he goes through the same process many others go through – of willing himself to return to how he was before the accident, the realization that for him, it's not possible, then acceptance and recovery.

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH](#)



### **To all our Amazing Volunteers**



Thank you to the wonderful volunteers who assisted with the two recent fundraisers at Bethlehem Woolworths and Gate Pa NW. These volunteers were the first to experience using the Eftpos machine. They mastered this well and made a difference to our collections. The total collected across five venues (three fundraisers took place in April) was \$1,587.35.



The Western Bay of Plenty  
Disability Support Trust

Warmly invites you all to their  
FREE Networking for Inclusion Seminar:  
Understanding DSS Flexible Funding

Date: Friday 19 June 2026 -10.15 am to 12.30 pm

Venue: Bethlehem Baptist Church, 90 Bethlehem Road, Bethlehem

# Understanding Flexible Funding

*flexible funding  
can support more  
choice and control.*

We warmly welcome everyone to our Western Bay of Plenty Disability Support Trust Networking for Inclusion Seminar.



*Stronger  
choices.  
Better  
lives.*

**FRIDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2026**

**10.15AM - 12.30PM**

**BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH,  
90 BETHLEHEM ROAD, TAURANGA**



## Speakers:

**Simone Newsham** – Chief Executive of NASCA (Needs Assessment Service Coordination Association) – Understanding Flexible Funding. Also a chance to ask questions from the floor.

**Janette Third** – Individualised Funding Regional Manager of Enliven Northern – Individualised Funding explained and what this funding may be used for since the flexible funding changes.

**Julia Genet** – A mother who has successfully used Enhanced Individualised Funding to support her son, Richard, for 22 years.

As well as listening to our wonderful speakers, there will be a chance to Network, browse the stands and enjoy refreshments in a safe and accessible environment. Plenty of easy car parking.

**Booking:** Contact Gill Gardener to reserve your place  
**Contact:** [coordinator.wbop.dst@gmail.com](mailto:coordinator.wbop.dst@gmail.com) or Tel: 021 333 900



## NOTICEBOARD

Mt New World \$15.00 Voucher April 2026

The lucky winner was **Ross Andrew**  
*Big thanks to owner Alan Rudkin for supporting Headway.*

## Brain Injury ID Card

Our Brain Injury ID cards help explain your condition in situations where others may not understand. Carry one for a discreet way to communicate your needs and ensure better support.

This card is free thanks to Drake Meddox!



## HOW TO APPLY

If you would like a card please contact  
Diane at [liaison.headwaybop@brain-injury.org.nz](mailto:liaison.headwaybop@brain-injury.org.nz)

## HAVE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS CHANGED?

Please let us know if your address, email or phone number have changed by emailing [admin.headwaybop@brain-injury.org.nz](mailto:admin.headwaybop@brain-injury.org.nz) with your new details.

## DATES TO PUT ON YOUR FRIDGE

**FRIDAY 5 JUNE** - Katikati Coffee Group, 10.30am Digital hub next to the library. All welcome

**FRIDAY 12 and 26 JUNE** - 10.00 am Senior Citz Hall, Maitland Street, Greerton. All welcome

### MID-WINTER & MEET YOUR COMMITTEE LUNCH

**16 July 2026 - 12 noon at the Club Mount Maunganui**

45 Kawaka St, Mt Maunganui

All welcome. More details will be sent out soon.

Please RSVP to Jan at [admin.headwaybop@brain-injury.org.nz](mailto:admin.headwaybop@brain-injury.org.nz) by 14 July

2026.



## SUBS & DONATIONS

### MEMBERSHIP SUBS

**1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026**

**Headway bank account number: 03-0445-0195410-00**

Please include your name as reference.

**THE MORE FINANCIAL MEMBERS WE HAVE, THE MORE GRANTS WE RECEIVE FROM FUNDING TRUSTS, AND THE MORE WE CAN DO. SO IF YOU ARE NOT ALREADY A MEMBER, WHY NOT JOIN TODAY!**

To become a member of Headway BOP please complete the form below and send back to [admin.headwaybop@brain-injury.org.nz](mailto:admin.headwaybop@brain-injury.org.nz) or mail to 53 Fraser St, Tauranga 3112.

Name/s .....

Address .....

Phone .....

Email/s .....

Subscription: Individual \$5 or \$10 Family (please circle one)

I consent to the collection and retention of the above information by Headway Brain Injury Assn BOP Inc for purpose of membership records in accordance with the Privacy Act 2020.

Signed: ..... Date: .....

**Headway gratefully accepts donations direct to our  
Account 030445 0195410 00**

Contact Headway office on 07 572 4547 or Gill 021 333 900 or click below to donate via our Give a Little page.

**DONATE**

**Headway acknowledges support and funding assistance from Lottery Grants, COGS, Lion Foundation, NZ Community Trust, Pub Charity, WBOP Disability Support Trust, Mt RSA, and Ministry of Health. Lions Papamoa, Lions Greerton, Lions Harbour City, Lions Katikati, Tauranga Rotary Trust; Good OP Shop Presbyterian, TECT, St George Centrepoint, Endeavour, Legacy Trust.**

**Thank you to the many retailers allowing donation boxes on their counters.**

**COMMITTEE**

S. Rutherford, P. Taylor, J. Simpson  
A. Anderson, G. Gardner, M. Bindon,  
L. Martin

**PERSONNEL**

Liaison Officer - Diane Hurdsfield  
Services Coordinator - Gill Gardner  
Admin Officer - Jan Simpson



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