

# STORIES FROM EVERYDAY NEW ZEALANDERS

Seven peoples' physical activity journeys  
and their hopes for the future





# Everyday New Zealanders

## TRACEY & MASON

*"Playing is fun!  
If there's a nice  
rainbow in the  
sky I like it better."*



*"His imagination  
is amazing."*

## JAMES



*"The very idea of exercise is  
loaded with concepts like  
'normalness'...it represents so  
much of what's difficult about  
being disabled in a world  
that's not set up for you."*

## LISA



*"Everything taiao has  
to offer...see it, breath it,  
be a part of it."*

## TAYLOR



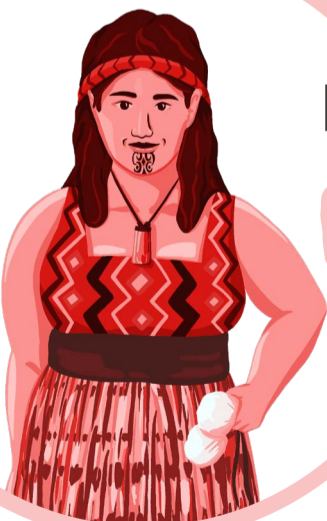
*"It's my queer  
dream to be less  
divided by gender."*

## MARIE



*"I'm gonna help her be  
the best...that's why I'm  
so hands on when it  
comes to this stuff."*

## RAHERA



*"Kapa haka is life."*

## CRAIG



*"Sports is where most of  
my life long friendships  
have come from. It was  
the common interest that  
connected us."*



# JAMES

**From an early age, James saw physical activity as something that was done to him to 'fix' his disability.**

At school, he was often pulled out of classes to travel to a rehab centre for physiotherapy. He also attended some camps for children with disabilities, but didn't enjoy them as they were run by non-disabled helpers and often framed as way to give parents a break.



*"It wasn't something that I had a huge amount of agency [in]."*



*"Disabled people can be outgoing and competitive too! I'm always looking for ways and spaces to express that side of me."*

**However, as a competitive younger person, James absolutely loved sport.**

He enjoyed watching his friends play anything from foursquare to pingpong, to team sports - and would often referee for them. Now, James still loves following lots of sports - on TV, playing on the Playstation, and going to live games when he can.

**When it comes to accessing outdoor recreation spaces, James gets tired**

of the amount of time it requires to find out if a track, path, or space is actually accessible, and being let down. Websites rarely have any accessibility information, and ringing the local council can take days to hear back and still might not provide clear or accurate answers. Often, when they do find an accessible path, it will get to a point where it's no longer accessible and his family have to leave him behind.

**He has a friend in a wheelchair who does boxing, which he'd be interested in trying,**

but the logistics required are a barrier as mainstream active spaces, such as gyms, are usually inaccessible. Often the only option for people with disabilities is to use gyms in rehab centres alongside people recovering from traumatic brain injuries, which isn't the most positive environment to be in.



*"Going to a pathway or track that you've heard is accessible, and then there's three stairs. That can only happen so many times before you become sceptical. It's demoralising, to be given this false sense of hope for being invited."*



*"Fresh air, sunlight, trees - they're all good things, but they're hidden behind soft gravel pathways, or stairs, or gates, or curbs. And they don't have to be."*

**Looking forward, James wants to see more inclusion by design, where online and sport and rec spaces are explicitly welcoming for people with a range of abilities.**

He wants clear information about how accessible spaces are, so he can make informed decisions about where he can and can't explore outside of his comfort zone. In the future, he hopes there is comprehensive accessibility legislation, and recreational spaces that enable fun and movement in a way that doesn't ask people to be anyone other than who they are.

**To create a physical activity system that works better for James, see opportunities 2, 3, 4 and 5.**

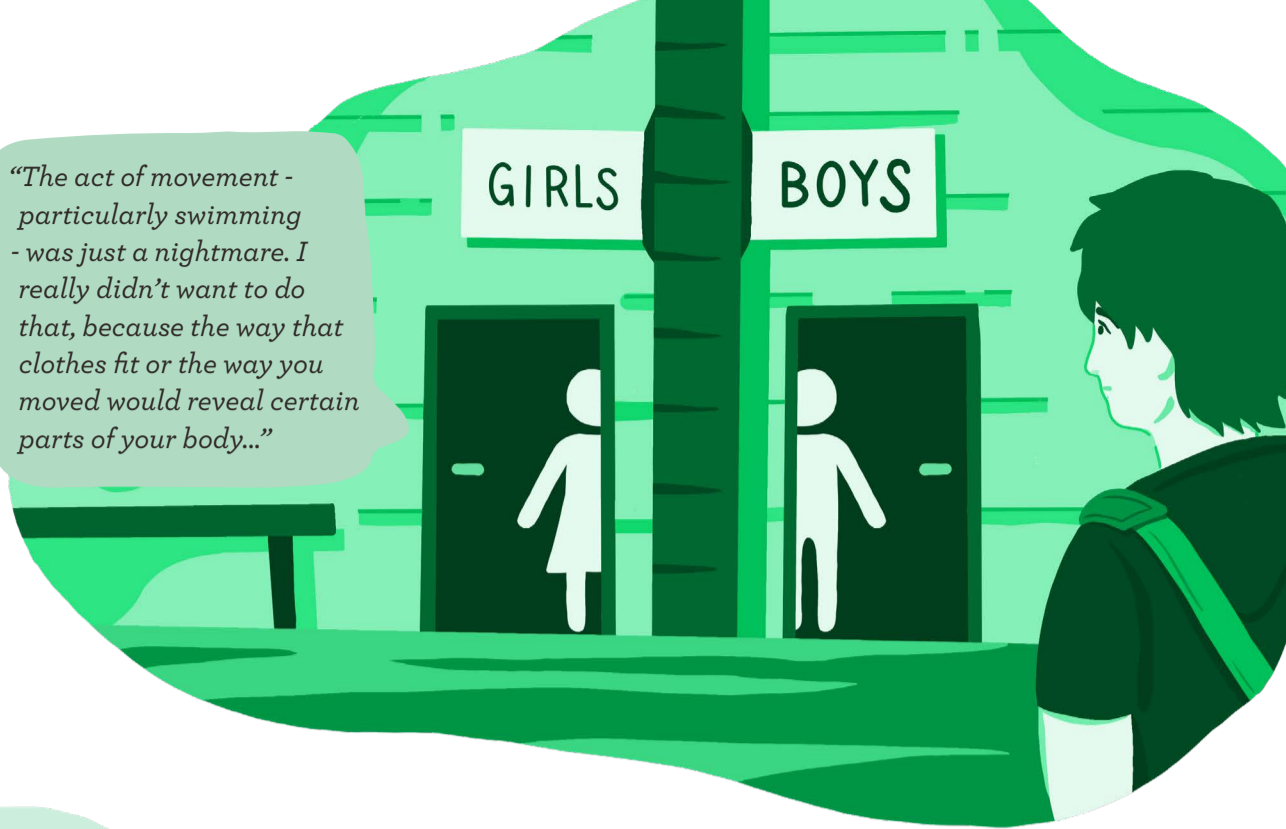


# TAYLOR

Throughout high school, Taylor avoided highly gendered team sports and active spaces due to not knowing where he'd 'fit' and his fear of being exposed and 'outed'.

As a trans person, Taylor's relationship with his body was disconnected and tumultuous at times.

*"The act of movement - particularly swimming - was just a nightmare. I really didn't want to do that, because the way that clothes fit or the way you moved would reveal certain parts of your body..."*



*"For once it wasn't about gender or the shape of anything...it became a sort of escape."*

Now, Taylor works from home so he likes breaking up the day with movement: walks, trail running, cycling, and bigger outings on the weekend.

He sees it as an essential part of his mental wellbeing, and although he mostly exercises on his own, he's recently joined a running Meetup group.

Taylor feels more confident accessing spaces now that he has medically transitioned, but he's frustrated by how gender still plays a big role in active spaces and cultures.

There's a noticeable lack of diverse role models in the professional activities he follows online, and public debates about whether trans people should participate at a competitive level creates yet another barrier for an already excluded group.

As Taylor became an adult and went to university, he started to get into solitary active recreation as a way to positively reconnect with his body, and deal with the stress of questioning his gender.

He loved connecting with the outdoors in a less-gendered environment than sports.



*"Trail running to me is freedom and happiness...getting up to a hill and seeing the views - that sensory experience of being outside is what motivates me to get out."*

Looking to the future, Taylor wants to see active rec and sporting spaces and activities where gender is not a defining factor in participation.

He wants to see safe, non-gendered spaces, welcoming messaging, and allies in leadership positions who can be trusted to call out non-inclusive behaviour. He's excited by physical activity as a way for people to positively reconnect with their bodies, but knows there's still a need for education, awareness, and empathy. Taylor hopes to see more platforms provided for role models to share their experiences to help with this.

*"There's a lot of fear around trans people and trans bodies. That's only reflective of a lack of opportunities to learn about and understand gender diversity...[and] you don't want it to fall on individuals to educate people."*



**To create a physical activity system that works better for Taylor, see opportunities 1, 2, 3, and 5.**

# RAHERA

Rahera has been participating in kapa haka since kohanga reo.

She continued through primary and high school, and competed at her first regional competition at age 14.

Now, kapa haka is a big part of Rahera's life - both 'iwi' kapa haka and competitive kapa haka.



*“Competitive kapa haka requires being an athlete - you have to be haka-fit. That means training every day to be at your best, because you're only as good as your weakest person. It's a commitment to the team.”*



*“It's about whakakā (igniting one's breath) - my love for my culture and my identity as Māori. It's about ihi (thrill), wehi (awe) and wana (falling in love with life) - being in awe of our culture. Your mauri is strong - you're in a state of mauri ora.”*

Looking to the future, Rahera wants to flip the whakaaro around weight loss to bigger, more resonating kōrero, such as connecting with ātua Māori, whakapapa, belonging, identity and staying well for the generations to come - all parts of Te Whare Tapa Whā.

She looks up to role models in her community such as her kapa haka idols and Parris Goebel for body-positivity, and is proud of how her daughter is a role model for other rangatahi in their community.

To create a physical activity system that works better for Rahera, see opportunities 1, 2, and 5.

Being 'haka-fit' is a strong motivator to do other exercise in the lead up to competitions.

Along with practicing at every possible moment, she works out with her daughter most days, gets up a sweat doing all the housework, and loves swimming at the beach.

She also goes to iwi kapa haka every week, which focuses more on iwi mātauranga such as waiata, whakapapa, haka, karakia, hīmene, and haka pōwhiri.

There are many reasons why she loves kapa haka.

It's fun, takes skill and courage, and grounds her in her identity as wahine Māori. She loves the storytelling and performance - especially how it makes others feel - and spending months on end with her whānau and iwi. As a solo mum of two, it can be challenging fitting kapa haka around everything else going on in her life, but she makes time for it.



*“Things like kapa haka give you a bigger purpose...It's about empowering wāhine to be who they are.”*

## Te Reo Māori Glossary

**Iwi** Tribe  
**Hīmene** Hymns  
**Kapa haka** Dance  
**Karakia** Setting intentions/Prayer

**Kōrero** Narrative  
**Kohanga reo** Language nest  
**Mātauranga** Knowledge  
**Mauri** Life force

**Pōwhiri** Welcoming ceremony  
**Rangatahi** Young people  
**Wahine Māori** Māori woman  
**Whakapapa** Lineage

**Whakaaro** Thoughts  
**Te Whare Tapa Whā** Wholistic wellbeing  
**Waiata** Songs  
**Whānau** Family



# TRACEY

**Tracey grew up in a very rural area in the states, and moved to New Zealand 10 years ago with her kiwi husband and son Mason.**

She remembers her childhood being very much about freedom and risk - roaming with her brothers unsupervised, spending time with the farm animals, and coming home when it was dark.



*"[We] walked nearly 1 km from our house on our own to play, climbing up in the hay-shed. Oh boy was it risky...We'd catch the mice and hold them up by their tails. It was a wonderful free-range childhood."*

*"He loves Rublox and Minecraft on his tablet... He'll help [with the gardening] - he turns the perfect branch into a sword or lazer beam..."*



*"It's parents and teachers who get in the way of play because you have to do school-work or come in to have dinner."*

**Tracey hopes that in the future schools will lesson the amount of homework, which can be a big burden for parents and gets in the way of Mason's play time.**

She also wants to see better infrastructure and lower speed limits so that Mason can travel safety ride his bike or walk from their home to his friends'.

**To create a physical activity system that works better for Tracey and Mason, see opportunity 03.**

**These days, Tracey and her husband spend most of their time outside of work with Mason who is now 7 years old.**

Mason has a great imagination, and loves making up games with his friends or the cat and dog. Tracey has learnt that the best toys can often be as simple as sticks or rocks. Games like lego and puzzles are still around, but living closer to a small town means there are lots of organised activities and spaces - such as swimming pools, playgrounds, and sports - which she didn't have access to growing up.

**Tracey sees technology as a double-edged sword.**

Mason loves playing games like Mindcraft with his friends, which she sees as a good way to learn and challenge himself, but often after a big day it'll be more passive like watching Youtube videos. It can be hard at times to juggle both of their very busy work lives with looking after Mason, so sometimes technology is great for giving her and her husband some breathing space.

*"When people are driving 80km an hour past, it drives me insane... there's no re- do with their lives, so it's just not worth it..."*





# LISA

**When she was young, Lisa's dad would often take her and the other kids out on his boat to swim and dive for kaimoana.**

These early experiences shaped her connection with tangaroa and atua Māori, and she's been drawn to the water ever since.

**After a few years of not being active, Lisa decided to focus more on her Te Whare Tapa Whā – starting with walking her dog Kupe.**

Kupe is a really important part of her whānau, and they loved spending time together outside and seeing other people and dogs. For Lisa, being able to connect with te taiao on her whenua rangitira alongside whānau was particularly special.



*“It’s a spiritual feeling, connecting with hinengaro. It’s time to reflect, offload, and de-stress. I enjoy it most when I’m with friends and whānau - the kōrero and whanaungatanga.”*



*“I’ve always been a water girl - I was a swimmer as a teenager. That connection to the moana - we say it everyday in our pepeha and mihi, and this gave me the pleasure of walking past and breathing it in everyday.”*

She started to share her journey with others by posting photos on Facebook of her walks, and the positive feedback from her whānau and friends motivated her to keep going.

**A year later, Lisa exercises everyday first thing in the morning.**

Either the gym or a swim, bike ride or walk to start the day, and she sometimes bikes to work too. On Sundays, she goes to a yoga class run on the marae in Te Reo Māori.

**A friend saw Lisa's hauora journey and asked if she'd consider joining Iron Māori.**

She's signed up to do quarter Iron Māori along with 90 others from her iwi. She and her friend support each other by cycling and swimming together.

**On her journey, Lisa has been inspired by the many role models in her world, such as her Pāpā, Māmā, and others in her whānau.**

She continues to be motivated to look after her Te Whare Tapa Whā by her whānau, tamariki, and whakapapa, as well as being a role model for others and the future generations to come.



*“We live in one of the most beautiful countries in the world. I hope more people can get out there and appreciate it.”*

**To create a physical activity system that works better for Lisa, see opportunities 1 and 2.**

## Te Reo Māori Glossary

**Atua Māori** Māori gods  
**Hauora** Health/wellbeing  
**Hinengaro** Mind  
**Iwi** Tribe  
**Kaimoana** Seafood

**Kōrero** Talk  
**Mihi** Speech  
**Moana** Ocean  
**Pepeha** Saying of the ancestors  
**Tamariki** Children

**Tangaroa** God of sea and fish  
**Te Reo Māori** Māori language  
**Te Whare Tapa Whā** Wholistic wellbeing  
**Whakapapa** Lineage  
**Whānau** Family


**Whanaungatanga** Relationships  
**Whenua rangatira** Sovereign land

# MARIE

**Growing up, Marie loved sport as a way to get out with her friends and not be stuck at home.**

She didn't really get into it until college when she was more independent, because her mum didn't have the time to take her to sports. Marie became the sports ambassador for her school and although it was tricky at times to balance with NCEA, her grandparents had a deal that she was only allowed to do sport if she was doing well at school.

It taught her to manage her time well, and now, she has the same expectation for her own daughter.



*"Daylight savings was always the best because you could play a little bit longer than normal, or you're playing until you can't see the ball."*


**Now, sport is a big part of Marie and her 10 year old daughter's lives, as well as her wider family.**

Marie plays rugby, touch, a little bit of netball and league, and her job is fairly active too. Marie's mum plays netball and her uncle runs a karate academy.

Her daughter plays rugby and netball, and they recently got her into karate as a way to build her confidence up again after experiencing some trauma with her father.

**Marie supports her daughter in all her sports, and often coaches too.**

It's a busy life - when her daughter heads into competitions for karate, she trains five times a week, on top of either netball or rugby - so the family often won't get home until 7:30 at night. Marie's job finishes at 3pm, which helps with the logistics, but she sometimes has to rely on other parents in the teams to get her daughter to her activities, or prioritise her daughter's participation over her own.



*"They don't allow girls to play with the boys [at that age] and you're not old enough for club womens', so there's a gap. That's where we lose our girls to netball or basketball. It frustrates me, because I know she likes rugby more."*

**Marie sees sport as a potential career pathway for her daughter, but is frustrated by a lack of opportunities** in rugby and some other sports for young adolescent women between school and club levels.

She hopes that, in the future, there will be improved pathways for young girls with sporting ambitions so that they can choose to play and compete in whatever sport they love most, at any age.

**To create a physical activity system that works better for Marie and her daughter, see opportunities 1, 2, and 5.**





# CRAIG

## Craig played soccer and squash at school and into his 20s.

In high school, sport became more about competition than the social aspects of the activity, which was what he really enjoyed about it.

*“If you’re an average player who starts with your mates and they get selected for the rep teams, you’re soon playing with people outside your social network and lose some of the reasons for taking part...”*



*“It breaks up my day...It’s quite an intrinsic thing which supports my mental wellbeing as well. I feel a lot better if I do it regularly than if I don’t, and start to feel a bit pent up.”*



## Craig has remained active throughout his life.

He does something active every day - a combination of gym, jogging, or walking for at least 45 minutes - and builds it around his work during the week. He’s conscious of making an effort given he has a desk job. On weekends, it’s usually cycling, or occasionally golf or tennis.

## Now that he has a family, Craig’s focus has shifted to giving back to the community through coaching

the kids’ football team. He’s found the resources provided by the football club helpful to support him as a coach, and his job flexibility enables him to work from home on the days he coaches after school.

## Craig has noticed his kids are moving away from team sports as their social networks and the focus in the secondary school changes.

He wants to see less elitism at an early age, as it changes the social experience for some kids and it puts them off sports as a pathway. He’d also love to see less of a disconnect between clubs and school sports so that young people can still play with their friends for fun, regardless of their age.

*“[My son is] the only kid from his school in his cricket team. The other kids all know each other, so he’s been an outsider. Then when it went from club to secondary school, it became a lot more serious and a lot more time consuming.”*



To create a physical activity system that works better for Craig and his kids, see opportunities 2, 3, and 6.



