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# Get your life on track!

Emma Pritchard talks to five women who faced a crossroads and had to make key decisions

## TURNING POINT

### *A landmark birthday*

**JESSICA THOMPSON, 42, is married and lives in Devon with her two children, aged ten and five.**

"Like many women, I dreaded hitting the big 4-0. Instead of feeling like an attractive, independent woman, I just felt like a wife and mum – and I felt old. I knew I had to do something to regain my identity, but I didn't know what. So rather than be miserable, I decided to see my birthday as a fresh start.

A friend of mine said she was cycling in Vietnam to raise money for charity, and the idea caught my interest. Ten days away

from my family with people I didn't know and travelling 480km was a daunting prospect, but I knew if I didn't do it now I never would.

I signed up for Charity Challenge's Rajasthan Tiger Challenge in India ([charitychallenge.com](http://charitychallenge.com)), and started training straight away. It was a challenge in itself just finding the time to practise, with family taking priority, as well as the baby swimming business my husband and I run, but I managed. I cycled near our home in the hills and dales, which was great training.

The trip was incredible. We set off from the Taj Mahal and cycled over open plains to Jaipur. There were times when it was hard – and it wasn't without the occasional tumble – but I was spurred on by the 25 other people in my group. We all got on

amazingly well and had so much fun, and I felt an overwhelming sense of achievement when we crossed the finish line.

I also had some 'me-time' for once, and cycling through breathtaking scenery on my own gave me an exhilarating sense of freedom. The time apart did my relationship the world of good, and I think it sets a good example to our children, too, to see their mum being active and independent.

The trip really boosted my confidence and helped me feel like an individual again. I've since done another Charity Challenge, cycling 400km in Peru, and came back feeling younger and more relaxed than ever. And, because I've raised over £6,000 for UNICEF, it's a win-win situation." [waterbabies.co.uk](http://waterbabies.co.uk)



Turning 40 gave me a new lease of life and I feel younger than ever