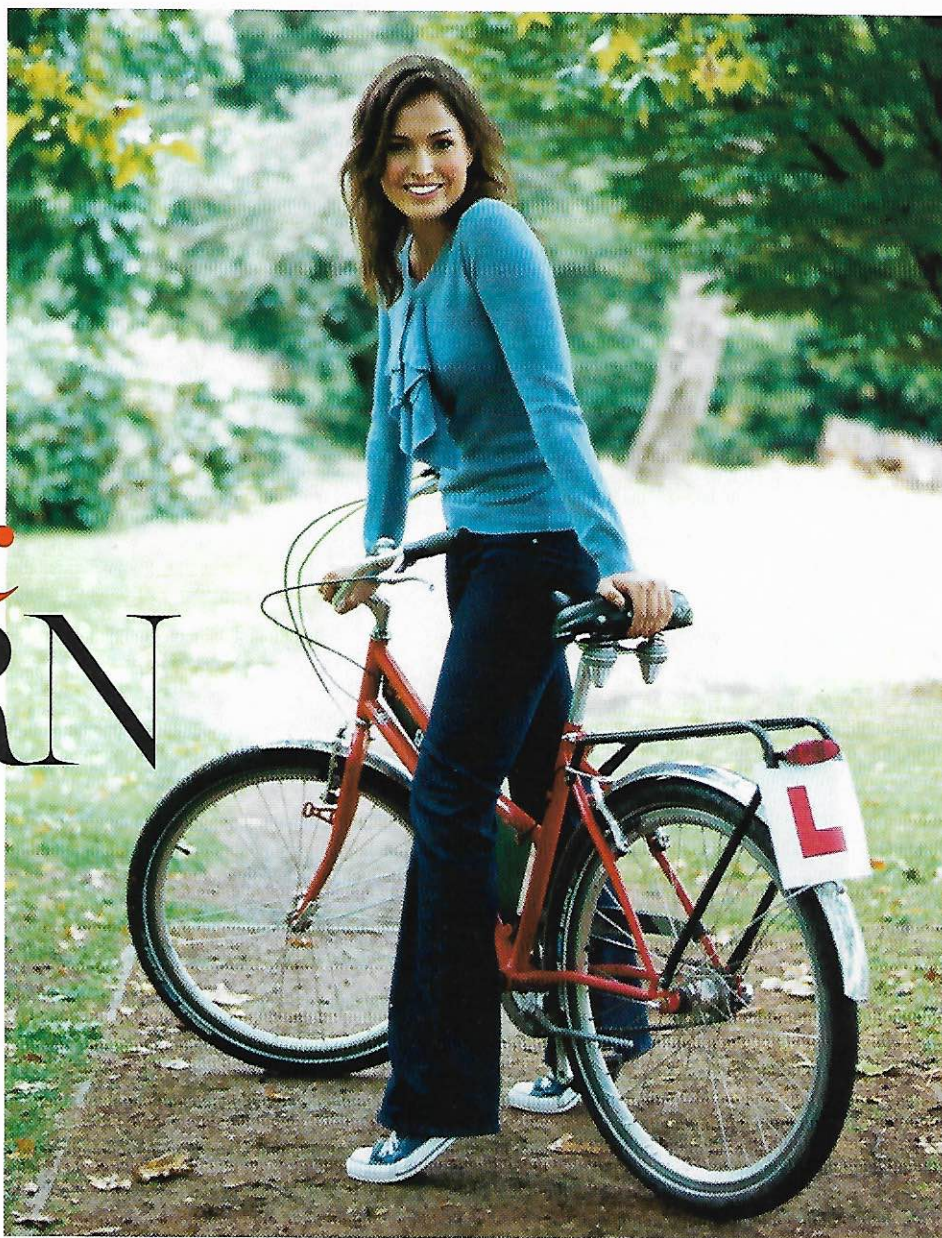


# Live & LEARN

TRYING TO MASTER A NEW SKILL AS AN ADULT CAN BE A REAL LEARNING CURVE - IN EVERY WAY - BUT LIBERATING, TOO, SAYS ELENI KYRIACOU



**M**y favourite memory ever? Riding my bicycle for the first time, completely unaided. Going more than just a bit too fast. Feeling more than just a bit scared. But relishing every moment, as I juddered along, pedalling furiously, thinking that, if I slowed down, the balancing magic would surely stop and I'd fall off. I was 41 at the time. My six-year-old son was behind me, shouting, 'Come on, keep pedalling. Good! I'd give you eight out of 10!'

Yes, yes, I know, you learnt as a child. But I'm a late bloomer. I grew up in an overly protective immigrant family, who felt they only had the right to travel anywhere if packed like cattle. So, public transport it

was. Nobody in our family even drove, let alone rode a bike. We didn't trust cars, so we were hardly going to trust bikes to get us from A to B. (Don't even get me started on scooters and skateboards.)

So, when I realised I was missing out on some serious fun, I decided to learn to cycle. At weekends, my husband, Andrew, would pedal into town with our sons, finding new routes, secret trails and, eventually, the ice-cream parlour. I couldn't join them and that hurt. I love ice cream. But, more than that, I really loved the way cycling looked - so carefree and liberating. I envied anyone who could do it. What would it feel like to cycle?

I imagined myself, in a gorgeous, floaty skirt (possibly Prada, maybe

Marni - could never really decide), cycling through a park.

Learning anything new as an adult can be embarrassing and exasperating. But rule number one is you need a strong motivation. Mine - that image of me, in that skirt, cycling with my family alongside me - was stronger than any worries about failing.

Anyway, everyone cycled. Kids, old people. I even saw a dog do it on TV once. It couldn't be that hard. Rule number two for adult learners: ask for help, when you need it. I had no idea how to go about learning to cycle. So, I went into my local cycling shop and

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