

# We Make Our Big Life Decisions at 29, 39, and So On

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## *New York Magazine:*

The years before beginning a brand-new decade — ages 29, 39, and so on — tend to be spent in self-reflection, according to a new paper published online today in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. These are the prime *What am I doing with my life?* years, in other words, which prompts many people to behave in ways that suggest “an ongoing or failed search for meaning,” the authors write. Their data suggests that these are the ages when people are more likely to either train harder for a marathon or run one for the first time; they’re also the ages when more people tend to cheat on their marriages or take their own lives.

One way to think of the last year of a decade, in other words, is that it’s a 12-month-long transition period to a new life stage. “And transitions, they make us step back, they make us evaluate things,” said Hal Hershfield, a UCLA psychologist who co-authored this study with New York University’s Adam Alter. “Once you’re in the midst of something, it’s easier to keep your head down and just go, go, go. But when you take a step back, that’s when you say, ‘Wait, let me see how everything’s going here.’”

Read the whole story: [\*New York Magazine\*](#)