

'I FOUND IT AT 40...'

'...MY FIRST GENUINE SMILE'

Sarah Brookes, 42, is now beaming and it's all thanks to her new teeth

'CAN YOU PUT A PRICE ON A SMILE? I can – £25,000 – and I don't regret a single penny. For the last 40 years my life had been ruined by my teeth. They've affected



After 40 years, Sarah is proud of her teeth

my love life, career, confidence – everything. As a child, I didn't get my adult teeth and was left with two milk teeth either side of my two front ones that never fell out, making me look like Bugs Bunny. But things got even worse when I had them pulled out by the dentist – I had to wear false ones to fill the gaps. So throughout my teens and 20s my only option was dentures. I felt like a 94-year-old. Then during my 30s my gums started to recede which looked terrible. As a result I've never had any confidence about my looks, but what little I did have was

shattered during an interview for my dream job as an air hostess. The assessor took one look at me and gasped, "God, are those teeth your own?" I've never felt so humiliated in my life – and, no, I didn't get the job. Two years later, despite my lack of self-assurance, I landed a job with British Airways and that's when I began saving to get my teeth done. I found a cosmetic dentist called Dr Tidu Mankoo in Windsor and, over the next three years, he repaired my gums using Noble Biocare implants, grafts and even a new technique to regenerate some of my jaw

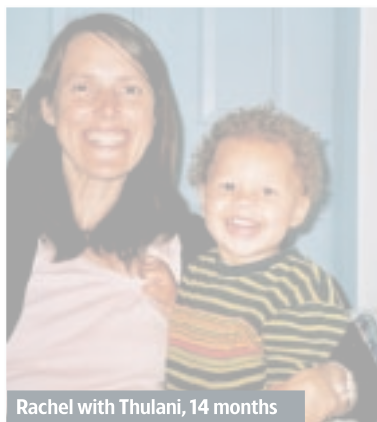
bone. The first time he showed me my perfect white smile, I cried. Yes, I've spent a lot of money on my looks, but just because I'm older doesn't mean I don't value the importance of looking and feeling my best. Now, at last, I've found my smile. It could be a coincidence that I got engaged last year, but I don't think so. I have a photo of me before my teeth were fixed with my friend at her hen do. She has this gorgeous smile and mine just looks awful. You have no idea how good it is to know next year she'll be at my wedding and I'll be the one who's beaming.'

WORDS: HELEN BAZUAYE PHOTOGRAPHY: SCOPE, GETTY
*NAME HAS BEEN CHANGED

'...THE JOY OF MOTHERHOOD'

Rachel Mlambo, 41, didn't let her age – or the opinions of some doctors – stop her from having Thulani

'I NAMED MY SON THULANI, meaning peace, but his arrival was actually more like a tsunami! I was induced twice and the labour lasted three days. I know some people would say my age was to blame, despite the fact it's something women of all ages endure. Criticism for leaving motherhood so late is something I'm used to – one GP even had me in tears about it and that was five years ago! Most of the women in my family have had children late, though – my gran had her first at 36, but becoming a mum at 40 wasn't a conscious decision. I didn't get married to Siphon until I was 33 and as he was studying, money was too tight to start a family. Two years later in 2001, my mum died and getting pregnant was the last thing on my mind. Until, that is, I was diagnosed with an overactive thyroid and advised not to have kids until it was under control. Somehow, this made me want a baby more than ever. I got the all-clear in 2003 and fell pregnant straight away but sadly, I lost the baby at seven weeks. It was devastating and I couldn't



Rachel with Thulani, 14 months

face trying to conceive for at least another year – what if it happened again? But as I was losing hope, I got pregnant again and Thulani was born in February 2005. I'm got so much love for him. Yes, energy levels are an issue now I'm 41 – I don't have as much stamina as I did in my 20s – but there are plus points. I'm happy to look after him because I've already travelled and had fun. Thulani is a blessing, and, yes, I would do it all again.'

'...THE COURAGE TO QUIT MY JOB'

Lindsey Walker, 41, gave up her stable career and with Shelley Anne Salisbury, 41, started her own business

'I MET SHELLEY AT A PARTY. She worked in law and, by coincidence, I was trying to stop a product I'd created – a clip-on ponytail – being copied by a competitor. We hit it off and Shelley gave me advice in return for a couple of ponytails. Laughing about the way hairclips dig into your scalp, we had a Eureka moment and came up with a new design. A few weeks later we quit our jobs and set about creating the Linziclip. It sounds crazy now but we both wanted a change. I'd been in marketing and was fed up pushing products I didn't care about, Shelley was tired of the nine to five. Our prototype was very *Blue Peter* (a loo roll sprayed silver) but we persisted and eventually secured financial backing. We took the clip to America in 2003 and the distributors went berserk for it – we're now among the top sellers in 13 countries, including the UK, where we supply Claire's Accessories. We're proof that age shouldn't stop you getting out of a rut. I never thought I'd say this, but life is much more exciting in my 40s!'

Career girls Lindsey and Shelley

