

Brenda Glover

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\$5,000 WINNER
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I had a troubled childhood with a lot of family secrets. When I was 13, I found out the person I thought was my “mom” was really my Aunt Goldie. One day, I was outside and saw a vision of a woman at the window. I told my “mom,” and she showed me a photo of a young woman — and asked me if that was who I’d seen. I said “yes,” and she told me that the vision was actually my birth mother, Gladys, who’d died when I was a baby trying to escape from a house fire and save us both. I’d survived and Aunt Goldie had taken me in. It was so confusing to me and she wouldn’t answer my questions, so I had to find out for myself what happened on that day back in 1958. I never knew my birth father, and my five siblings grew up with other family members.

My aunt was loving but my uncle was violent; he beat her and me.

I had very low self-esteem. I was the chubby little girl who got called “Fatty” and I was an emotional eater — I’d sneak down to the basement and get ice cream from the freezer. Ninety percent of our family is diabetic and most of my older relatives died of obesity-related heart conditions. Everyone said, “look at your aunts and uncles, they’re all fat,” so I grew up with the mentality that being heavy set was inherited. I’m 65 now and all my adult life I’ve tried diets and diet pills — nothing worked.

I had a total knee replacement and I was tired of being tired.

A year ago, I decided to take my journey into my own hands and let go of the past pain. I started a journal, writing about my feelings, how my day went, and what I want to accomplish. When I wake up, I look in the mirror and say, “I am important.” I say, “Brenda, today, nothing is going to burst your bubble.”

My goal was to break this generational pattern.

I began by cutting out honey buns and fried food. For dinner I’ll make salmon patties or tuna and veggies for me and my husband, William. He’s a cancer survivor and it’s important for him to eat well too. I drizzle a little oil on kale and bake it till it’s crunchy and eat it instead of chips. I’m using lots of seasoning — garlic has become my best friend!



William just bought a new dining room table and we sit down to eat together now instead of gulping food down in front of the T.V. In the evening, I walk in place listening to music. I always say, “Pitbull and Bruno Mars saved me!”

William and I are spending time outside together gardening.

We’re growing vegetables like morel mushrooms — which I love — onions, tomatoes, and cauliflower. When it’s harvest time, we let people know that the garden is ready and say, “Just take whatever you like.”

I’ve always loved photography and now I’m more inspired.

I take pictures of clouds because every day they look different. And I’ve been taking pictures of the crocuses, which are starting to bloom. I go to my great nieces’ and nephews’ football games and take photos, and I’m sharing my pictures. My passion for photography helps me stay positive. I say “Okay, it might have just rained. But look, there’s a rainbow.”

I’ve lost 52 pounds and I’m down to a size 10 which is exciting.

My nieces and nephews cheer me on. Marccus said, “Aunt B, you’re living proof that you can be old and still look nice and be healthy.” My sister and niece took me shopping and I got blue jeans and a nice blue top. I’ve been with Walmart for 23 years and my associates call me Mama. They say: “Mama, you look good!” And I feel amazing, I am walking on cloud nine.

I feel my mother’s protection with me all the time.

I believe in myself and I don’t focus on the darkness or pain of my childhood. That’s the past — I’m focusing on the present. I have so much energy and don’t feel 65, I feel like I’m in my 40s. I’ve changed my perception of myself and how I look at life; now I want to encourage others to do the same.



THRIVE