

# Kaya Walker

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**\$5,000 WINNER**  
**Supercenter #5727**  
**Bradenton, FL**

I went through a lot as a teenager because my mom was addicted to prescription drugs. She was a single mom and had boyfriends in and out of the house and it was traumatic for me and my two younger sisters. I would isolate by playing video games and didn't know how to cope. I felt I had no one to rely on except my grandma, Gwen, who took us in. When I was 17, I went to live with my partner, Esper — she also works at Walmart. I'm 21 now, and a few months ago I was feeling lost and broken inside, and I wasn't sleeping well. I'd been at school studying to be an esthetician and didn't have a lot of time to cook, so I'd eat fast food. I was depressed and I wanted to bring in some new positive energy to my life. My co-worker, Sunday Oguntoyinbo, inspired me to start the Thrive Challenge. He's dedicated to helping people and is always happy and kind.

## **I started journaling, putting all my thoughts and feelings onto paper.**

It helps me vent and get things off my chest that I'm not able to say out loud, like any resentments. I write about my day, and realizations I have, like how extremely grateful I am to my grandma, and how happy I am that she's in my life.

## **Painting is the number one activity that clears my mind.**

I go to the beach and put a sheet on the sand. I sit there, enjoy the scenery, and take deep breaths. Then I start painting. Right now I'm painting wooden boxes in green forest colors and I'll put my plants in them. I love painting, it's completely peaceful. I get inspired and feel the energy shifting inside me. I actually think in the future I'd like to refurbish furniture like dressers; paint them, fix them up and sell them.

## **I've cut out fast food and sugary food and I started cooking.**

I was really missing home-cooked meals. Recently, I've been making honey garlic chicken bites, which I serve with brown rice and carrots. That's my favorite meal right now. I feel better mentally and physically, and I'm much more energetic

## **Esper and I are spending more time together.**

When I was in school, we didn't have a lot of quality time and it was really affecting our relationship.



So now, we reserve one day a week just for us, whether it's watching a movie, going to the park or going shopping. We're communicating better and learning to understand each other more.

## **I reserve Fridays for my grandma; she's my whole world and we're extremely close.**

I wouldn't know what to do without her. She's always been there for me and my sisters. I go over in the morning, we have coffee together, and she makes breakfast. We just sit and chit-chat and catch up. Sometimes we go out to little metaphysical shops and we look for crystals and sage. My grandma is very caring. She has always put me above anyone and everyone.

## **I take our dog Lambo —short for Lamborghini — for walks, which helps clear my mind.**

I also love listening to music by Fleetwood Mac and a group called Phantogram. Music is an escape for me, honestly, and helps me get a clear perspective on everything.

## **I'm working on forgiving my mom.**

Our bond isn't close because I need to have boundaries, but I'm trying to be more open. I still go over to hang out with her and have dinner with her. And in the future, I hope to let go of the pain and forgive her fully. Watching educational psychology videos and listening to calming podcasts helps me clear all the negative thoughts. I'm less stressed and sleeping well.

## **I'm now a licensed medical esthetician and my dream is to own my own practice.**

I want to go back to school and study to become a holistic nutritional coach. I feel happier and more positive than I've ever been. I want to heal from the inside out and then I can start helping other people heal too. We're saving money by living with Esper's parents and I'm planning to be financially stable. My big dream: to put a down payment on my own first home.



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