

# Daniele Crusan

.....

**\$5,000 WINNER**

**Walmart Supercenter #2663  
Edensburg, PA**

When my son Derek graduated in June, I became an empty nester after raising him alone since he was eighteen months old. It was such a drastic change. Around the same time, my father was hospitalized with COVID and I started gaining weight because of the depression. My sister also had a stroke, so on my days off I'd drive three hours to do her housework and shopping, and help with her exercise. It all got to a point where I said, "If I don't take care of myself, I can't take care of anybody else."

**One morning after my prayers, I said, "Give me a sign to help me continue this journey."**

All of a sudden, Thrive popped up on Facebook. I had seen the brochures in the lounge at work, but when I saw it on my screen, I decided to download the Thrive app. I started reading about other peoples' journeys and they inspired me to get started on my own. I was about to turn 55 at the time, and my mom died from a stroke when she was 48. I beat that age, but I knew that I couldn't afford to gain more weight. I've got too much to live for.

**First, I cut out sugar and cut back on carbs.**

I had terrible withdrawals at first, but I kept going. Now when I want something sweet, I freeze sugar-free whipped cream and have a scoop of it like vanilla ice cream. I also like to flavor my water with cucumbers, lemons, limes and even raspberries.

**My next step was working on my mindset.**

I hadn't even looked in the mirror for 11 years because I just hated looking. I would do my makeup freehand. Once I changed my diet, I started seeing a difference on the scale and how my clothing fit, but I saw the biggest difference in my attitude. The people around me notice that I'm happier now. When people need a pick-me-up, they'll say, "Daniele, I'm struggling today." And I'll send them a funny picture on Facebook, or a message with a funny face, or a motivational meme. One day, my son visited the house and said, "Oh mom, you look beautiful." That's the first time I've heard him say that since he was a little boy!



**I used to always say yes when people asked for help with money, but now I've learned to say no when I need to.**

I actually stepped down from system manager to online grocery team lead because I love what I do. But between the pay cut and no more child support, I'm down \$12,000 a year and I've been struggling to save. I'm focusing on changing little things — I shop at thrift stores, I changed my network, and switched my garbage company. I'd love to save up to get all my siblings together with our dad.

**At 55 years old, I realize it's never too late!**

I'm so proud of myself. I started at 240 pounds and today I am at 173. My original goal was 180! I posted a before-and-after photo on Facebook recently, and now I'm helping 12 other people on their journeys who reached out. The Thrive Challenge not only changed me, but it changed those involved in my life, and I'm so grateful.



THRIVE