

Alisa Tiller

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\$5,000 WINNER

Walmart Customer
Spring Valley, CA

As a teenager, I was the biggest, tallest kid in the classroom. I'd get teased — kids can be real mean. They'd say, "Fatty," and "You're a big girl." I was big, but I was just a thicker person. I had muscle. My mom would say, "There's nothing wrong, you're just big-boned." But the teasing did something to me and I'd go on crash diets, like just eating popcorn and coke. I'd starve myself. One day, when I was 16, I passed out at school and the teachers had to call my parents. Apart from the dangerous dieting, we found out that I have a heart murmur. I started running and playing basketball. But throughout my life, I've always been trying to lose weight.

Recently, I'd stopped taking care of myself and I wasn't feeling good.

I'm 56, my husband, Greg, and I have two daughters, Aliyah and Ashli. We were eating a lot of sugary food. I had back pain and my knees ached. Aliyah would have to help me off the couch. She'd count: "One, two, three," and then she'd pull!

I'm a patient ambassador in a cancer center and I was stressed when COVID hit.

We were helping patients and worried about our own health. And I got COVID myself. I love what I do, making a difference in people's lives, but it was time to take care of myself. The pivotal moment came when my cardiologist said: "You have to lose weight." A light bulb went off. My sister, Robin, had won the Thrive Challenge and encouraged me to try.

The cookies and chips sat in a bowl on top of our refrigerator and I threw them all away.

My husband came home and flipped out. But eventually, he got on board. I now have a deep freezer that's full of nothing but fruits and veggies. I don't eat fried food anymore. My favorite recipe is crockpot chicken with onion and bell peppers. We have it with soba noodles. My dad is a diabetic and likes sweets, so I've been making zucchini bread for him and for all of us with stevia instead of sugar, and it's delicious.



Aliyah and I dance and do a TikTok cooking show while we make dinner.

We'll listen to New Edition and Megan Thee Stallion. She videos me cooking and dancing and it's great exercise. My daughter sets the table nicely and we all sit down to eat together a few times a week.

On Saturday morning, I walk around the park with a few ladies including my sister, Robin.

We walk and talk and walk! At work we also have a walking group. I'm down 10 pounds, the weight's coming off slowly but that's fine. My clothes fit better now and I feel better.

When I wake up, I say: "Good Morning Gorgeous."

It's the title of a great Mary J. Blige song about loving yourself. Then I send this affirmation out to 25 of my friends: "Good morning, kings and queens. Good Morning Gorgeous." And I send out a devotional Bible scripture. I tell myself I'm worth this journey I'm on — I know it's a lifelong journey. In the evening, to relax and unwind, I listen to jazz like Norman Brown and Kenny G. It stops me rushing to the fridge

Praying helps me stay positive.

Patients come in crying if they've got bad news and will ask me to pray for them. It feels good doing something positive to help others. But I also pray for myself. I ask God to heal my body and help me stay in good health.

My great aunt, Irene, our family matriarch, is my guardian angel.

She died recently at 89 and losing her really hurt. I'll always remember her good, old-fashioned cooking — soul food. She told us stories about our family history. She would hug you and give you a kiss and words of affirmation. I can hear her voice saying: "Everything is going to be okay. You're going to be alright."



THRIVE