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My husband Jeremy and I have been together eight years, and we've been down a rough and hectic road. We got pregnant with our first child four years ago and I lost the baby due to an ectopic pregnancy. And then, the same thing happened every single year for four years. I ended up having emergency surgery twice because of internal bleeding. It was a horrible time. And ever since the losses, my mental health was horrible. I was depressed, and it was leaking into my whole life and my work.

I spoke to my boss, Tarah Voltin, who encouraged me to start seeing a therapist.

I was calling out sick all the time and she asked me what was going on. We sat down together and she told me to talk to someone on Talkspace. She also told me about the Thrive Challenge, and how at first she didn't think little steps could affect her life, but they really did. She thought the Thrive Challenge could benefit me too. I thought, "I'll try it out, but I don't think it will really change the way I feel." It turned out that little by little, it actually did.

I knew that I had to finally stop smoking.

I have Hidradenitis Suppurativa, which is an inflammatory disease where my body doesn't push out the toxins like it's supposed to. Doctors don't know what causes it, and there's no treatment for it, but it is helpful to cut out alcohol, gluten, and — most importantly — cigarettes. When I first found out I was pregnant five years ago, I quit smoking for two years, but I ended up starting again after all the losses, and it's been really hard to quit ever since. They say the more that you quit, the harder it gets to quit. So, I said to myself, "This time I'm done for good."

Jeremy and I have always lived paycheck to paycheck.

Now that I was putting my health first, we were able to start really looking at the money we were spending. Not buying alcohol and cigarettes was helping us save. I also have two stepkids, and we like to go out to eat at restaurants together as a family.



My husband and I struggle with portion control, and it can be hard to stick to portions when we always eat at home. We try to budget our money so we can eat out together as a family and make smarter choices. It's been really nice. We've also been taking the kids to this VR gaming center in town that they love. And when we do stay home together, we all sit down and play board games. My ultimate goal is to have at least \$5,000 in a savings account.

I don't feel like I'm just a depressed puddle anymore.

After everything Jeremy and I went through over the past few years, I'm so grateful for his support. I don't know where I would be without him. For example, I just had a horrible week because I was out for a kidney infection and then I was supposed to go back to work and I got pink eye. My husband was like, "Don't let it defeat you." He keeps me in a good mood, even after the losses from the pregnancies and that whole time. I used to make myself the victim because I felt sorry for myself, so I thought other people should feel sorry for me too. Taking time to improve my life really changed that.

I'm proud to say that I haven't had a cigarette since December 31st — four months ago!

I feel a lot better now that I'm pausing and thinking about the little things that affect my day-to-day life. My boss says she's noticed a huge difference. My goal now is to keep feeling good and make sure I'm here for my family. I'm committed to living better for myself and my family.



THRIVE