

# Anna Masse



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One morning in March, I was working at home when the phone rang. I learned that I'd won the Thrive Challenge. I was completely shocked and started crying. My fiancé, George, came rushing in, wondering what was wrong. It was overwhelming — I've never won anything in my life.

I had decided to make some changes at the start of the year, because I'd been feeling depressed. Twenty-five years ago, when we were living in California, my husband, Paul, a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy, took his own life at the age of 48. Just nine months later, our 19-year-old son, Eric, also committed suicide. I've held my grief and pain inside for so long and I used to relive it all the time, especially on birthdays and anniversaries.

**My life hasn't been easy during the pandemic.**  
I gained weight and was up to 240 pounds. I'd eat hamburgers, fries, and steak. Rocky road ice cream became a nightly ritual. Then one day at work in a Zoom meeting, I heard Arianna Huffington talking about the Thrive Challenge. She talked about taking small steps to make changes. My manager, Eugene Cook, encouraged me to download the Thrive app.

**My first step was learning not to grab my phone when I wake up.**  
Instead, I would just breathe. Now I do breathing exercises and listen to guided visual meditations. Focusing on flowers and butterflies and scenes from nature helps me relax and takes my fears away.

**I've changed the way I eat and I've lost 50 pounds in the past six months.**  
I feel fantastic. Instead of eating fast food, George and I are cooking at home, grilling chicken and fish and eating salads. Our favorite is a delicious avocado, tomato, and corn salad with cilantro. If you came to my house before the Thrive Challenge, you'd have found chips and cookies. If you come to my house now, you'll find tangerines and apples. I do have treats, but if we occasionally go out for a scoop of rocky road ice cream, we'll walk around the lake by the ice cream place. I can walk four miles now, and I couldn't walk one before.



**The biggest change in my life is that I'm finally healing from my grief.**  
I didn't cry on the anniversary of Eric's death this year. When sad thoughts pop into my head, I stop and take time to breathe freely and meditate, which has helped me find mental clarity and peace. I know I'm not alone. I'm stronger now than I ever thought I could be. Eric wouldn't have wanted me to be sad.

**I want people who've had suicide in their family to know that there's help out there.**  
You can overcome the grief and it doesn't need to take as long as it's taken me. The Thrive Challenge has helped me accept that it's OK to acknowledge my emotions and be sad — then move on with my life. I don't have to rob myself of the chance of being happy.

**All my relationships have improved.**  
George and I spend more time together, and he supports me in my Thrive Challenge journey. With my Thrive Challenge prize money, we planted a new garden. We're growing zucchini, broccolini, onions — all kinds of vegetables. And I'm much closer to my 38-year-old son Anthony, who has multiple sclerosis and is seriously disabled. We go for walks and encourage each other to be positive. He's even begun his own Thrive Challenge.

**I feel optimistic about the future.**  
I'd like to get down to 170 pounds, and I want to be here for my five grandkids as they grow up. Eventually, when I retire, George and I plan to travel — something we'd never thought about before. I'd love to go to Colorado, and we have a dream of going to Greece. Now everything seems possible. I've realized that at 62, my story is not over. I have so much more to tell.