

Dallas Phillips

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\$5,000 WINNER
Walmart Supercenter #3474
Bradenton, FL

In high school, I had a struggle connecting with people. I felt alone and isolated and I didn't fit in with the crowd. I was always skinny and I wasn't seen as a cool guy. Then, when I was 21, I lost my father. My dad and I were very close and he was a bright light in my life. We'd hang out and he'd take me to baseball games and get me a hot dog and a souvenir. I'm 27 now, but I remember those times like they were yesterday. I'm still close to my mom and my little sister, Raven, who's 19, but things have been hard.

I'm trying to provide for myself, my mom, and my sister.

But it's been difficult to stay afloat financially. Half of my paychecks go to Uber because I don't have a car to get to work. Also, my girlfriend, Marissa, is recovering from a brain tumor. She's doing great and I'm helping pay her medical bills.

The day I met Sunday Oguntoyinbo, I downloaded the Thrive app.

He's a Thrive Grand Champ and I told him what I'd been going through. Sunday motivated me to get started and he's a great mentor to me. I don't know where I'd be to this day if it wasn't for him.

I started connecting with nature.

I live with my uncle in my grandmother's house. She passed away and we've created a garden in her memory. She always dreamed of having a flourishing garden, so we're growing vegetables and watermelon, and we planted an apple tree. I love digging, planting and watering, and getting plenty of sunlight. I listen to the birds chirping and the trees rustling. I breathe in and out and I feel good. I also jog in the park up the road from us.

I'm learning to cook my own meals.

Honestly, I just used to eat anything that would fill me up, like junk food and candy.

Now I love making pasta, or chicken and rice with veggies from the garden. And I've almost stopped drinking soda. I'm getting stronger and I have more energy.

I'm connecting with my cousins, and we're barbecuing in the backyard.

We'll cook hotdogs and hamburgers, bring out the ice cooler, and kick it with the family. We have little relay races which are fun.



The get-togethers give me positive energy because I feel comfortable around my family.

I love to clean the house and listen to music.

I turn on my speaker and crank up some good R&B jams by J. Cole and Chris Brown while I get down to the nitty gritty. I'm very detailed — I dust all my furniture, and make sure that my bed is neat. Every weekend I like washing my sheets and my work clothes for the week ahead.

When it comes to money, I'm being more responsible.

I've cut down on spending and don't buy things I don't need like junk food, video games, and jewelry. Every time I get my paycheck, I put \$100 in my savings account. I've set a goal to put that money towards a car, buying my first house, and helping out Marissa and my mom.

Marissa and I communicate better and talk about how we're here for each other.

We'll go to the park on bright, sunny days, take sandwiches, lay out a picnic blanket, feed the ducks, and enjoy each other's company.

I'm an artist and I've gone back to drawing.

I really love cartooning. I'm a '90s baby and I grew up on cartoons like "Dexter's Laboratory" and "SpongeBob SquarePants." Now, I'm creating my own brand of hand-drawn characters, objects like water bottles with cartoon eyes that I could put on shirts and other merchandise.

I feel like a cloud has lifted.

I don't feel insecure about my looks anymore. I learned that it's okay to be yourself, to be different, and I have a positive mindset. I know that if there's a problem, it's not the end of the world, and I'm not alone.



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