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I didn't have the best childhood. My brother, sister, and I had to fend for ourselves and make our own meals. I never had the support and encouragement I needed from my parents. I went to college and got a degree in computer science. But I didn't feel good. I'm 33 and I was depressed. I was eating a lot of fast food like McDonald's because it was easy. I weighed 400 pounds and I was tired all the time. I didn't feel comfortable going out in public and socializing.

I started the Thrive Challenge and I began by taking a brisk walk every day.

There's a beautiful park across from my apartment with pretty trails and trees. I'm enjoying breathing in the fresh air. I started with half a mile and now I walk for two miles. Being out in public made me feel nervous at first. I felt I'd be judged by people because of my size, but now I believe it was all in my mind. I look forward to my walks — I feel refreshed and energized.

I invested in an indoor bicycle.

It has a heart rate monitor and I can feel myself getting stronger. To get me motivated, I listen to upbeat alternative rock like The Smashing Pumpkins and Pearl Jam.

I've been making friends at work.

My co-worker, Brian, and I like to go to the park and explore nature. We'll talk about the wild animals we see like rabbits and beavers. We both share an interest in wildlife. I go for lunch with other friends, Ron and Jennifer, but nowadays I made healthy choices. I might have a chicken salad. I've lost 50 pounds in the past year and I feel accomplished.

Sometimes I go to friends' houses for barbecues.

We'll each bring a side dish like potato salad. Everyone gets along and no one judges anyone. I feel a sense of belonging, which I've never had.

I'm cooking whole foods and eating lots of vegetables.

My favorite recipe is baked lemon chicken, and I'll have it with spinach or broccoli. For snacks I'm sticking to nuts like walnuts, pecans, and pistachios. I don't eat out much anymore, but when I do, I choose something that fits in with my new lifestyle, like a burger without the bun.



When I'm having dinner, I switch off my devices and eat on a stool at my kitchen bar.

I'll put on classical music like Beethoven to relax. After dinner I wind down and think about the day. I reflect on one good thing that happened: for example, one day last week I got praise from my manager for a work project.

Before I go to sleep, I do some self-reflection.

I'll listen to a meditation to clear my mind, and focus on my breathing for two minutes. It helps me let go of anything negative and get ready for the next day. I also tell myself: "I matter and I am valued. I am worth it, I belong here."

I like Thrive because it's about taking things one small step at a time.

I don't try to overwhelm myself by doing everything all at once. It's like moving an iceberg by an ice cube at a time.

My best friend from college, Bailey, is a great support.

She lives a long way from me in New Hampshire. But we text each other every day with words of wisdom and motivate each other. She tells me I'm smart and kind and I can accomplish anything I put my mind to. And I know that's true now. I've paid off my car and all my debts. It feels amazing.

I adopted a cat.

She's called Norry and she's just over a year old. She's very playful and she likes cuddling at night! Before I adopted Norry, I felt alone at night. Now I feel somebody's here with me, which is comforting.

My goal is to buy a house.

I want to have something I own that I can say is mine, that I worked for. And one day I'd like to start a family. I visualize myself with a family, living somewhere nice with lots of animals.



THRIVE