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I've been through a lot of loss. My husband, Kirk, died of lung cancer in 2010. Five years later, I met someone else, Tracey, but then he became ill and passed away in 2020. I'm 52, and the grief never goes away. My mom moved in with me because she was tired of living alone and we weren't taking care of ourselves. My mom would buy Doritos. For dinner, we'd heat up something quick in the microwave like burritos or popcorn. I weighed 265 pounds and I really wanted to change my life.

I started the Thrive Challenge and my first step was to cut down on soda and start drinking water.

My mom agreed to stop buying chips and we're staying away from junk food. She'll make soups and beef and veggie stews. Or I'll bring home rotisserie chicken from the deli at work, which is great with salad. I'm eating fruit, like watermelon and strawberries.

I downloaded a step app and I'm walking 10 to 12 thousand steps a day.

I used the Walmart discount and joined a gym. I feel so much better. I've lost 30 pounds. A few months ago it was hard for me to stand for very long, but now I'm always on my feet, going back and forth across the store.

The other day, I put my kayak in the water for the first time in several years.

My friend Sheri and I went to Sand Creek. It was so nice to have to have some peace and quiet. We floated down river and then paddled back against the wind. It was hard, but I felt good afterwards.

Working in my yard brings me joy.

There's lots of grass to cut, and it's so satisfying when it's trimmed up and looking immaculate. I'm rebuilding our flower beds; we're growing irises and narcissus. I bought lovely red and pink peonies and rhododendrons from my mom's house and I'm replanting them. I feel accomplished.

I'm devoting time to my hobby: I make hats for every holiday.

On the Fourth Of July, I wore one with styrofoam stars on it. For Arbor Day, I made a hat covered in trees. I call October "Wigtober" and I wear a different wig every day of the month. Everyone enjoys seeing me in my hats and wigs. When one co-worker had pancreatic cancer, she asked me to send pictures of me in my hats to cheer her up.

With rising costs, saving money is difficult, but I'm working on it.

I'm not going to Starbucks as much. My favorite drink is a Caramel Crunch Frappuccino, but I get them twice a week now instead of every day.



If I don't need it, I don't buy it.

I was always buying gifts for my grandkids. Now, I'm staying away from the clearance aisle and the toys. I used to spend money on cool little kitchen gadgets and household items like storage containers or a cup that's only two bucks. But how many cups do you need?

I want to save enough to take my mom to the Oregon coast or Hawaii.

I love the ocean. I could sit on the beach for hours and watch the waves.

I'm grateful for my job.

I've worked at Walmart for 27 years. My store is truly like a family; we celebrate each other's accomplishments and mourn each other's losses. Teamwork makes the dream work!

I'm more active with my grandkids now.

Khloe, who's nine, and Brooke, who's six, and four-year-old Avery, love to paint and we make things with construction paper. We also make jewelry with beads. My granddaughters play soccer and my grandson Matt plays baseball, and I go to every single game. I take my mom with me and it means a lot to them. It's important to me because it was a big thing for my husband to do with the kids when they were growing up; we never missed a game. And I've carried on that legacy. I go to their birthday parties and sometimes we go to the beach and play in the water.

My grandkids complete me. I feel their grandpa is with me when I'm with them.

I'm dealing with my grief and focusing on gratitude. You've got to keep going. I have wonderful people around me with my extended family — and I really appreciate my life.



THRIVE