

# Michael Pendergrass

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**\$5,000 WINNER**  
**Walmart Supercenter #48**  
**Monett, MO**

I used to work nights and my sleep schedule was out of whack. As overnight team lead I was responsible for a lot of people and I had to make sure the store looked good. My wife Katie and I had a baby, KaeLeigh, who's now 14 months old. I struggled with thinking I wasn't home enough and I wasn't a good enough father. I was focusing too much on work. I switched to days, but I was still having a difficult time.

## **I struggled with stress eating.**

I'd eat a lot of brownies, donuts, and muffins. Back in December, I weighed 280 pounds. I'm 23 and I realized I needed to change. I started to lose weight, but I wanted more support. One day, KaeLeigh was trying to walk and I suddenly realized this is our first kid and you're never going to recapture those special moments. So I started the Thrive Challenge.

## **I began by getting off my phone when I got home from work.**

I pay attention to my family. We go outside a lot instead of watching T.V. I push the baby around in her carriage, and I'm teaching her to ride her little tricycle. It makes me feel warm inside watching KaeLeigh grow up. When she says Dada, it melts my heart and she's so cute. I read stories to her and we give her baths. She loves bath time. I love seeing her playing with her mermaid toys and balls.

## **We're cooking more instead of eating out.**

For dinner, we'll make chicken and rice or we'll grill burgers and hot dogs. It's much better than take-out pizza. We sit down and have dinner together without our phones. The baby will sit in her high chair and throw food around! We stopped buying brownies and cakes. I'll eat a banana for a snack instead. I bring my lunch to work. And I've noticed that my bank account loves me! I can spend more money on my family.

## **I'm in training for the Heart Of America Marathon In September.**

It's in Columbia, Missouri. When I signed up for it, I hadn't run in over 3 years. I got excited and began jogging for 30 minutes, then I increased the time and now I'm running for 55 minutes. I also like to run on trails around southwest Missouri. I feel intertwined with nature. About half way I feel I want to give up, but at the end of my run, I feel really accomplished. It's a great feeling. I've lost 10 pounds since starting the Challenge and I feel great.



## **At home, I do core workouts and stretching exercises.**

And Katie and I walk our dogs, Ollie and Oatmeal; the baby loves playing with them and giving them hugs.

## **I'm studying for a degree in business management, and Katie helps me.**

She has a master's in nursing, and while she was in school I gave her emotional support. And now she gives me time at the computer to do homework after work while she does some of the chores. Then later I'll help around the house. I'll clean the dishes, we do laundry together, and we take turns vacuuming the house.

## **Thrive Microsteps help me focus on the little things.**

I connect with myself, as well as others, and I make time to go outside. I have a new role at work, and when I feel overwhelmed, I take a moment to slow down and breathe. Thrive helps me stay honest. I feel good at the end of the day.

## **Katie and I are bonding and going on date nights.**

But when we go out to dinner, we take the baby with us. KaeLeigh is a little menace walking around on the table. We have a lot of fun. She's trying new food like gnocchi. The other day, I had fettuccine alfredo with chicken and she loved it.

## **When the baby's asleep, Katie and I sit down and hang out together.**

We talk about our days, and we discuss our dreams and plans. We want to have more kids and we'll need a bigger house. So we're designing it together and doing a floor plan. We want five bedrooms, three bathrooms and a big yard. Katie's parents have some land so we're going to build on their property. And they're happy because they'll have grandchildren close by. We're excited about the future.



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