

Michelle Tisnado

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\$5,000 WINNER
Walmart Supercenter #2479
San Diego, CA

I have three grown children and three wonderful grandchildren, but life has been difficult since my divorce 13 years ago. When my husband told me he was leaving, I was caught off guard. I thought we'd be together forever and I was heartbroken.

Over the years I've had to rebuild my life.

I wasn't taking care of myself and, then during COVID, I was eating a lot of fast food and ice cream, and I quickly gained 10 pounds. I thought, "If I don't get this weight off, it's going to turn into 20 pounds, then 30 pounds." My mom and my sister had heart attacks when they were young and I want to be healthy for my family.

I remember sitting at McDonalds on my break and downloading the Thrive app.

Everything changed from that day. I started moving, walking around the store and going outside. I got home from work and told my 13-year-old granddaughter, Cecilia: "I'm going to be your PE teacher." We began exercising together. She loves going to Starbucks which is a mile away and I said: "I'll take you, but we're going to walk. Now we run there, she gets her frappuccino, I get my caramel macchiato, and we walk back with our drinks.

I've gone back to running, which I loved in high school.

I've gradually built up to 10 miles a day over two years. My granddaughters run with me! My goal is to run a half marathon before my 60th birthday next October. I'm already in training, and I'm in the best shape of my life.

After my run, I take a bath, have a glass of wine, and read.

I just finished an amazing novel called *Two From Galilee* by Marjorie Holmes. I'll tell you one thing, I'm sleeping better. When my head hits the pillow, I'm out — no more tossing and turning.

I'm eating less and focusing on portion control.

I cut down on red meat and I eat more chicken. I make a really good Chinese chicken salad with lettuce, wonton chips, and a great dressing. If I have ice cream, I eat a small amount in a tiny bowl so I still get the taste and I'm not depriving myself. I've lost 12 pounds and I feel fantastic.



We never used to eat as a family and now we sit down to dinner together.

We talk about our day and tell jokes. My daughter, Clarisse, and her teenagers are living with me and I'm learning so much about them. One evening, Janelle said: "I saw a girl sitting alone so I sat with her." And I was like, "That's so sweet of you." She has a kind heart. Jaylah is a straight-A student and told me when kids are struggling, her teacher will sit them next to her, so she can help them. I'm so proud of her.

I'm saving money by eating less fast food and spending less.

I'll ask myself, "Do I really need this dress?" Instead of buying it, I'll transfer the money I would have spent into my savings account. I'm also great at finding bargains. This is the honest truth, every outfit you'll see me in cost under \$20.

I help out however I can.

A young man came into our store to buy some things on the clearance rack. I was his cashier and he was five dollars short. I said, "Please let me pay." He came back a month later and said, "I need to tell you something, when you paid that five dollars, I went to my car and cried. I've been bullied my whole life and I never felt like anybody cared." He'd been out of work, he'd got a job and turned his life around, and he wanted to repay me. I said, "No, when you win the lottery, come back and retire me!" You know that saying: "It's better to give than to receive because the giver gets the bigger blessing," and that's true.

My self-esteem is pretty darn good; I think it shows in my smile.

And I'd say I look pretty darn good for 59. I'm going on dates and I'd love to meet somebody special. I want to get married again before I get too old.



THRIVE