

Nikole Gregg-Ortiz

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\$5,000 WINNER
Distribution Center #6561
Colton, CA

Growing up, my dad wasn't around and my upbringing was traumatic. My mom was absent a lot and left me and my brother to take care of ourselves. I didn't get to be a kid — I was a lone soldier. I moved out when I was 16 and latched onto relationships. I got married twice and each time I found that I really needed to be on my own. I'm 30 now and I have a partner, Joseph, who's very supportive and also works at Walmart. But it's been hard. I lost a close friend, Jennifer, to suicide in 2018. Now, in her name as well as in my name, I just want to strive to do well and be okay with who I am.

I downloaded the Thrive app and my focus was time management.

I'm studying for my bachelor's degree in business administration and it's been hard juggling homework with work and everything else. The first change I made was to spend more time at home. I figured out when to study, when to go to the gym, and when I can see friends. It's important to have balance. I became a big fan of Google Calendar and I have it filled out for the next month.

It's all about weighing up my options.

I'm more disciplined about studying. I only have six classes left until I get my degree. I can see the end of the tunnel!

Instead of seeing friends on different days, I get everyone together at the same time.

That means I'm not going out as much and I'm saving money. I bring people from my different friend groups to one event, and it turns out that they all get along — they all have me in common. One evening we had pizza and then went to watch the '80s film, *The Breakfast Club*, at the movie theater — they have a \$5 classics program. Sometimes we'll go bowling or to the pool, or we'll have a barbecue and everybody will pitch in.

I've learned how to be alone.

I've always had a security blanket, either being in a relationship or being around people, but I've become more independent. I have a SeaWorld pass and go by myself. I love seeing the animals and channeling my inner child. I also go out to lunch. I know I can enjoy my own company and love myself.



I'm eating better and working out, and I've lost 10 pounds.

If I go out for breakfast, instead of ordering hash browns, I get fruit and tomatoes. And I'm eating a lot of chicken Caesar salad. I joined a gym, and Joseph and I walk to the park together.

I call my stepmother, Margot, my adoptive mom.

She's a great mentor for me, helping me with school and relationships. We have so much in common. She got her master's degree late in life and that's inspired me because I might want to do that too. It's never too late.

The Thrive app helps me de-stress and breathe and gather myself in my job.

I work in HR and I see people when they're going through tough times at home, like if there's been a death in the family, and they're often crying. I have to stay calm and professional and reach out to their managers. Someone was going through a difficult time with her autistic child and needed to work specific hours. She wanted to change departments and I supported her until the position she wanted became available. She was so happy! It was one of those moments when I wanted to cry with her because we worked it all out. It was a job well done, and I knew I was having a positive influence in her life.

I'm happy now and I feel more self-confident.

My dream is to buy my own house and so far I have \$1,000 in my savings account. Also, I really want to travel. I've never been outside the U.S. and I would love to get a passport and go on a trip with Joseph to Mexico or Thailand. That would be exciting — it would mean the world to me!



THRIVE