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I grew up on a farm out in the country where our family raised cows, pigs, and sheep. We ate the food we grew in our garden. We had enough to eat, but we didn't have extra money for store-bought food. So when we had ice cream or canned food like SpaghettiOs, that was a huge treat. Later, I struggled with depression and I'd eat processed food to make me feel better, because it still felt special. I'd have a whole big bag of ranch flavored chips and treat myself to T.V. dinners whenever I felt anxious.

I met my partner, Dan, working at Walmart.

We have three kids between us: Brandon, who's 18; Lexi, who's also 18; and William who's 10. Dan has cerebral palsy and is on disability and it's been tough. During COVID, my grandfather, who I was caring for, passed away. I got depressed and I was exhausted. I lost vision in my left eye. I was also losing control in my left leg and my arm. Eventually, I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS). My doctor said I needed to eat better and move more. I'm 38, and he said, "Unless you want your kids to be taking care of you in 10 years, you need to make some changes." That's when I downloaded the Thrive app.

I started with simple switches like using cauliflower rice instead of real rice in stir fries.

We don't notice the difference. We're eating lots of veggies. Brandon's discovered a love for cooking and is helping me. He makes delicious rice noodles and he bakes amazing fruit bars with fresh lemons and apples.

We're always out in the garden.

We have potatoes, beets, blackberries, and huckleberries. I love learning about new plants and I've been growing white and purple carrots and black tomatoes. It's wonderful to feel the warm sun on my back and the cool breeze on my face while I work. It's ironic that we're eating more like I did when I was growing up, but now I'm enjoying it.

I got for bike rides and joined a gym.

Even if I just work out for five minutes on the treadmill, I know it's fine. The next day I'll do six. I listen to loud rap music as I exercise, like The Game. It's very energizing. I've lost 17 pounds and my crazy goal is to get back to being as physically fit as I was in high school when I'd run 5Ks.



I'm having therapy and talking with my mom about my childhood.

I realized that I thought that junk food represented love, but my wires were crossed. What really gave us love was our family, the food we grew, and the lifestyle, not the treats. I've learned a whole new way of looking at things and I'm appreciating good food.

My therapist has given me a great technique to help me calm down.

I sit down and focus on an imaginary blue bar of light, starting above my head and going all the way down to below my toes. It takes five seconds and alleviates my stress.

I've been with Walmart for 15 years.

I used to be a coach with a lot of responsibility, but for now, I've gone back to being a regular associate because it's less stressful. It's quite nice actually! I miss not being able to take charge of a situation and lead, but I love to go home at the end of the day and not have to worry about work until the next shift.

I've rediscovered my love of the water.

I joined the Navy when I was 17 because I loved water. I'd forgotten how much I used to enjoy snorkeling, swimming, and boating. There's a lake near my house and I've started swimming, diving, and fishing with the kids. I'd forgotten how amazing it feels to be in the cool water, just floating without a care in the world. You can wash away all your anxiety.

I got my full vision back and control in my arm and leg.

My neurologist has given me a clean bill of health and he's so proud of me. I'll always have MS, but I'm in remission and don't need to take medications any more. I feel great.

