

David Layton

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\$5,000 WINNER
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I used to be tired all the time. My wife, Kimberly, and I have two grown sons and three grandchildren; seven-year-old Katrina, J.J. who's two, and one-year-old Eva. But I never had the energy to do anything with them. I'd eat pizza, burgers, and deep fried chicken — anything to grab and go. I'm 53 and I weighed 235 pounds, and I'm only 5 foot 4 inches tall.

I was on a fishing trip in Alaska last September and I had a health scare.

I was with my dad and eight other guys. One day, after we were done fishing, I started to have upper chest pain that went down my left arm. I had a heart attack and had to be airlifted to Anchorage where I had open heart surgery. The surgeons also found a mass on my kidney. They froze the tumor, but it was a huge shock. The whole family flew to Alaska, and my wife didn't know if she was coming to see me after my surgery or to claim my body.

That was the turning point.

I know the pain I would cause to my family if I wasn't around and I wanted to be there for them. So I started the Thrive Challenge. I thought it would be difficult, but I found out about Microsteps and how you begin with one small change and build on that, so it's not at all daunting.

My first small change was walking around the neighborhood.

I felt really tired, but then it got easier. I'd say, "Tomorrow I'll walk a little bit further." And I'd walk to the mailbox and back. Then I'd build on that and walk to the park, and now I'm walking three miles a day. I take different paths and map the routes out with my Samsung health app. Along some of the trails there are workout stations and I'll learn new exercises.

Complete strangers will say hi.

They'll have a big smile on their face and I'll smile back. I really like making those connections. Kimberly and Katrina walk with me sometimes. It's wonderful — we're noticing the birds, the coyotes, nature all around us — and I'm soaking it all in.

Kimberly and I lift weights in the living room.

We'll do a core routine with leg lifts and stomach crunches. We're motivating each other; sometimes we'll do arm curls watching our favorite shows like "The Masked Singer" and "Lego Masters."

I haven't had a soda since last September!

Kimberly and I are cooking together, and while we're in the kitchen, we're catching up and connecting. She's a medical administrator and we'll talk about our jobs.



We make eggs with turkey sausage for breakfast.

We cook a lot of fish — sometimes it's salmon we've caught ourselves. I bought an airfryer, which is great. And I always make my plate colorful with lots of vegetables. One of my favorite dinners is grilled chicken with rice and broccoli.

I have the energy to play with my grandkids.

Katrina and J.J. spend half the week with us. And instead of sitting on the couch with tablets, we're playing hide and seek. We go to the park, kick a soccer ball, and run around. I can go down the slide with Katrina, which she thinks is the greatest thing in the world. She'll say, "Look, Pop's on the little girls' slide!" J.J.'s always trying to keep up with his sister so I'll pick him up to chase her.

The kids are discovering nature.

Katrina is always pointing out different birds and she loves watching squirrels going up and down the trees and grabbing nuts. I'm teaching J.J. T-Ball — it's a blast. I feel I'm helping them to have a good childhood and teaching them good habits.

I love spending time with my family.

We all went to Brick Fest, a Lego event, last weekend. Katrina built a tower and a glow-in-the-dark spaceship. We walked around all day. The kids are going 100 miles a second and I can keep up with them without pulling them back to wait for me.

I've lost 40 pounds and my doctors are elated.

They love the fact that I'm eating well, moving more, and losing weight. And I feel so much happier. After tackling what I've been through, I know I can tackle anything.



THRIVE