

Hannah Gomez

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\$5,000 WINNER
Walmart Supercenter #4597,
North Tonawanda, NY

I'm a 41-year-old single mom with three kids, and my life was out of control. Last year, my 19-year-old daughter, Dayna, developed an eating disorder. She was so thin and the doctors gave her two weeks to live. She was critically ill in hospital for two weeks. She's much better now and she's living at home with me. But I was overwhelmed and I was eating junk food to ease my anxiety. Then my mom, who's my rock, was diagnosed with stage 4 ovarian cancer. She's having treatment and my brother and I help to take care of her.

My store manager Brandi Taylor and I started the Thrive Challenge together.

Just reading the stories on the app made me hopeful and excited. And Brandi and I encourage each other.

The very first day, before grabbing the Reese's Cups, I just stopped to breathe.

I told myself, "This craving will pass," and it did. That was a huge win. Now I skip the sugar and drink water instead. My go-to snack is a tablespoon of peanut butter with celery. I'm also starting each day with a tall glass of water.

I used to eat pizza three times a week — now Dayna and I are cooking together.

We have a structured meal plan. One of my favorite recipes: we'll get chicken tenderloins, add a small amount of mayo and some parmesan cheese, then bake until ready! It's delicious. And we're enjoying going for brisk walks. Dayna and I go over to my mom's house and cook with her. My mom likes to make roasted cauliflower with garlic. We'll talk about how Dayna's doing in her recovery and we'll reminisce. It feels good to have the three of us together — three generations of women just there supporting and loving each other.

I have more energy for my grandson, Angel, who's three.

He calls me Bama and when he sees me, his face lights up. We cook together. He'll say, "Egg, egg, egg," and he'll help me scramble the eggs in the pan. Every day, we read together. Our favorite book is Guess How Much I Love You. We take him for walks and he'll find sticks and stones and bring them to us. He is adorable and melts my mom's heart.

After dinner, we all do jigsaw puzzles.

We'll do 300 to 500 piece puzzles that we can complete in an evening. We have one of Ocean City, New Jersey because we used to go there when I was growing up. My daughter loves Disney princess puzzles and we all love our Star Wars puzzle.



Yoga helps me relax.

I've found a great 10-minute morning yoga video on YouTube and another slow stretch one for the evening. Dayna will join me. Because they're short, it's easy to commit to doing them. Sometimes we'll do half hour videos. It feels like a release. And I'm proud that I've made the decision to move my body.

I'm more confident and I'm not exhausted any more.

I've lost 15 pounds, and I can fit into my favorite black sweat suit again. It feels so good.

My hobby is collecting crystals.

I love going to metaphysical stores and finding out about the properties of all the stones. I have selenite crystal towers that they say cleanse negative energies in my home. And if I want extra protection or if I'm worried, I'll carry a tiger's eye in my pocket.

My goal at work is to be a strong leader — I really pay attention to my associates.

I noticed one team member limping and when I asked him if he was okay, he broke down and told me he had holes on his feet, but he hadn't been to see a doctor. I talked to him about the importance of taking care of himself and I helped him make a doctor's appointment. It turned out he had a diabetic ulcer. His doctor saved his foot — and maybe his life. Now he's doing well and he's on the medications he needs.

Our doctors say there's still hope for my mom.

And I'm cherishing every moment I have with her. Because I'm not down in the dumps, I go over there with a positive attitude and that really encourages her. She cared for me her whole life and now I just want to take care of her. But I've also learned to take care of myself as well as my family — it's time to start loving myself again.



THRIVE