

# Yadiel González-Sonera



**\$5,000 WINNER**  
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I grew up in Puerto Rico, and my family moved to the United States when I was 15. It was hard fitting in at school. I found it challenging interacting with people. I didn't feel comfortable talking about my feelings. I'm 23 now, and I've still been having a hard time connecting with people. I've found that often, men aren't comfortable talking about their feelings. I didn't have friends to tell what I was going through. Also, I wanted to connect more with my girlfriend, Ali. I wasn't working out, I was eating junk food, and I didn't like what I saw in the mirror. I said, "This is not who I am," and I downloaded the Thrive app.

## **I began by stepping out of my comfort zone and reaching out to friends.**

I wanted to expand my horizons. So I've been getting together with old friends and making new ones. We're going to the gym, playing golf, and watching sports. We talk about life after high school, and how everything changes. I'd drifted apart from one friend, Hunter. Recently, we hung out and watched a basketball game and had "guy talk." He told me he's going to propose to his girlfriend, and I talked about Ali — how happy I am in my relationship.

## **I've been getting to know people at work.**

Sam works side-by-side with me. We both work in asset protection, but we never really talked to each other. Now, during breaks, we discuss things that we're both interested in. He's remodeling his house, and I was able to give him some pointers, because my family work in construction.

## **Ali and I are bonding and listening to each other.**

We have very different personalities. So we sat down and tried to find out what we have in common. We both like movies, and we went to see the latest Ant-Man film. She likes going to the beach, so we're doing that too. And we both talk about how we're feeling.

## **We plan our workouts and go to the gym together.**

I let her take over for leg work, because she used to play soccer. But when it comes to upper body exercises, I plan our routine. We both have a competitive spirit so we challenge each other. The one who does the most reps will choose the next place we go out to eat. And we laugh a lot. Ali is great because she helps me come out of my shell. And she doesn't judge me.



## **Ali and I are cooking together.**

We just made salmon with brown rice and spinach. We're cooking a lot of greens. Ali's also Puerto Rican and she'll make mofongo — mashed plantain with shrimp or chicken. And we have it with rice and beans. It's amazing — ten out ten.

## **Cooking at home is great for our budget.**

We're saving to get an apartment and putting aside 10 % of our paychecks. We hope to move in together soon.

## **I love getting in touch with my culture.**

To be away from my island has been hard. Ali and I are doing things that are nostalgic and fun. We're playing dominoes, and listening to Puerto Rican music. We love Bad Bunny and Arcángel. We like to dance together; we're relearning steps we'd forgotten. We had a family dance competition. Ali and I lost — her mom and her uncle won!

## **When I wake up, I take 10 minutes to breathe and meditate.**

In the evening, I read in my room, which is the quietest room in the house. I'm reading a great book called HIM, by Pierre Jeanty. It's helped me improve my confidence and understand that being in touch with my feelings as a man is OK.

## **At night, I ease myself into sleep.**

I'll take a good five minutes to breathe. I used to just sleep for four to five hours and I'd be really cranky in the morning. Now, I'm sleeping for eight hours and I wake up refreshed and ready to go.

## **I've lost 27 pounds, and my self esteem's improved.**

The Thrive Challenge has given me a daily routine that helps with everything. To be honest, I'm really enjoying everyday life. And I'm happy.



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