

Marissa Clauson

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\$5,000 WINNER **Walmart Supercenter #123** **Seminole, OK**

I have a lot of mental health issues from childhood trauma.

I was sexually abused by my father and I haven't had any contact with him since I was 16. At 35, it's still hard for me to trust people and I've suffered from anxiety. I've had extensive therapy, but still felt stressed.

Last year I was tired and overwhelmed.

I was promoted at work and I love my job. I wanted to be the kind of leader people can come to for support. But I'd get irritated. I was snapping and irritable at home too. I felt distant from my husband, Doug, and our 12-year-old daughter, Teghan. I was stressed about finances and eating fast food like fried chicken and boxed dinners. I felt terrible.

I downloaded the Thrive app and right away I cut out soda and sweets.

I have a huge sweet tooth, but instead of Reese's Peanut Butter Cups, I'll have a teaspoon of peanut butter, or some fruit — pineapple is my favorite. We're cooking from scratch, and we'll make whole wheat spaghetti, or chicken tortellini with asparagus, artichoke hearts, and pesto. My husband and I read cook books together and try new recipes.

My job is fast paced — it's 'go go go.'

When I get overwhelmed, I'm learning to take a step back. I'll walk into a cooler and just reset and have two minutes to myself. I breathe in positivity and exhale negativity, then I'm ready for any challenges. And on my way home, I unwind listening to piano music.

I'm better at supporting people at work.

One colleague is in a bad relationship and asked if she could vent to me. So we had a talk and I gave her a list of organizations in town that could help her. And I went the extra mile trying to help her move and find a new apartment.

I walk 13 miles a day.

I walk all day at work and on my days off, Teghan and I go hiking in the hills with our dog, Bella. We really appreciate our time together. Everything smells fresh and we love looking at the trees and the leaves on the ground. It's beautiful with the seasons changing — it's the circle of life. Whenever I can be in nature, it helps me.

Teghan and I talk about school, her friends, and her activities.

She's in two different dance classes, tap and hip-hop, and she plays the violin. It's crazy because we used to sit on separate sides of the couch, and now we're bonding.



We're having family games nights.

We'll get together once or twice a month with my mom, my grandma, and my brother, and we play board games like Clue. We'll have what we call "cheat night" and order pizza.

I'm working on my confidence and self-esteem.

I don't think I'm super pretty, but I try to look in the mirror and find something I like. I'll say, "Hey you have a cute nose, and you have really pretty eyes."

I have a new financial mindset and I saved enough money to buy our first house.

All the money we weren't spending on eating out we put into a "house savings account." When we were shopping, we only bought what we really needed. And we saved through the Even app at Walmart. It added up quickly. On November 16th last year, we moved into our own home. It's amazing, and I am so blessed. I wake up and think, "This is my home. I love it."

My kitchen is my favorite spot.

It's where we cook, eat, hang out, play games, and have serious conversations. It's where I sit and think about what I've achieved.

At night, I enjoy a glass of sleepytime herbal tea and I meditate.

I put my phone on the charger and don't touch it again until morning. That helps me to sleep better.

Life is not always rainbows and butterflies, but I'm not a sour patch anymore.

I'm happy. I've even got to a place where I can forgive my father and pray for him. I don't need to see him, but I feel a tremendous weight lifted off my shoulders. I feel peaceful. And I am blessed to be able to wake up each day to my family.

