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My biggest struggle was not having my dad with me when I was growing up. We were in Colombia and he was in America. I knew my dad was doing his best to provide for the family, but as a kid, that was difficult for me to understand. We hardly saw him and I missed having my dad in life. Finally, when I was 13, my mom and I came to America to be with him and we settled in Florida. But not having support from a father's presence meant I didn't learn to set goals and I didn't have a sense of direction or purpose. I'm 28 now and live with my wife, Marcela, who works at Walmart, our dog Lilo, and our cat Michu. But I was just working to pay the bills with no direction. I was eating a lot of junk food like hot dogs and pizza, and I was tired all the time.

I heard about the Thrive Challenge from Sunday Oguntoyinbo, a 2021 Grand Champ.

He was my supervisor when I worked at Walmart. He told me how his life had changed for the good, so I downloaded the Thrive app. Sunday encouraged me and taught me about the importance of setting goals.

The first thing I did was to get moving.

I have a road bike and started cycling. Being on my bike feels amazing. I literally feel free. I also go to the gym.

Marcela and I are doing the Thrive Challenge together.

We walk the dog every day which is great, because we get a chance to talk and share time. We go to Nathan Benderson park. It's very relaxing for both of us and helps us appreciate life and each other.

We cut out take-out food and we only eat out on the weekend.

We're planning our meals. We make big salads with cucumber, tomatoes and avocado, and a really good home-made vinaigrette. We'll change our protein every day, so it will be either chicken, steak, or fish. My wife is also Colombian and we love making Colombian dishes like empanadas filled with shredded chicken and potatoes. We cook together and split the tasks. It's nice being in the kitchen with each other. We play Colombian music while we're preparing dinner, like Rodolfo Aicardi. I've lost 10 pounds and I feel really good.

We never used to budget, but now we know where every dollar goes.

It was my wife's idea to make a budget and she helps me. We have a spreadsheet with income and expenses. And we put aside money for emergencies.



I used to buy a snack every time I stopped at a gas station, so I stopped carrying my debit and credit cards with me except when I know we're going shopping. We're saving money and putting away at least 300 dollars a month.

We're saving to buy a house, a place that's our own, with a back yard.

It will be somewhere that we can be happy together. I have a pamphlet advertising a new housing development in our area with townhouses, and I've put it on our fridge. It's a real motivator because we can visualize where we want to be. That's my gasoline.

Marcela and I have one date a month.

Before starting the Challenge, we weren't doing fun stuff. Last week, we visited family in Miami. Then we went to the Bayside Marketplace. It's outdoors and we like the vibe. We walked around and had dinner. Having dates with your loved one is really nice and brings back the romance. I'm appreciating the small moments.

Now, every day I know what I want to achieve.

For support, I'll listen to an inspirational video or podcast. I used to just let the days roll, but now I have purpose and a new energy inside me. I wake up and say, "let's go." I'm always motivated to do better and I've just started an airport transportation company with a friend.

I love the Thrive Microsteps because they help me achieve bigger goals.

My favorite is making a choice every day to move my body. I feel happy, I've changed my mindset, and I'm changing my life.



THRIVE