

Chris Harris

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\$5,000 WINNER
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I'm a disabled veteran — I was diagnosed with early onset Parkinson's, I had a lot of anxiety, and left the Air Force ten years ago. I'm also in remission from cancer. I had small cell sarcoma. My wife, Elizabeth, and I were high school sweethearts and we have two wonderful children: Carol, who's 16, and David who's 13. I'm 39 now, and I thought my biggest challenges in life were behind me, but I lost my brother to complications of diabetes, and it shook my whole world. I gained 75 pounds, and I was lost. I was heading down the same path as my brother, with my health, so I wanted to take a different path. One of the managers at work told me about the Thrive Challenge, and it was just what I was looking for.

First, I focused on nutrition and hydration.

With Microsteps, I gradually took caffeine and sugar out of my diet. A diet rich in fruit and veggies helped that process and kept me from craving sugar. I'm eating balanced meals and cooking for the family. My favorite dinner is Japanese stir fry, but I will say the sausage and potato bake I make has become one of my kids' favorites. I don't eat on the go — I sit down and enjoy my meals, which helps to stop me from overeating.

Once I was eating well, exercise found its own groove.

I started out doing 15 minute workouts and then increased the time. I bought a stationary bike and got an exercise ball, so even sitting has become a workout as I try to keep my balance. I listen to music while I'm working out. At work, I go for walks throughout the day. If I've been sitting for too long I get up and get some steps in — just pacing the hallway in front of my office means I'm moving.

I have energy for my family.

Most of the stuff we do is in the kids' orbit. Carol is a professional dancer so we go to all her dance competitions. That doesn't mean David gets neglected. We go for adventures and hikes together.

Money has always been a heavy stressor, but financial Microsteps help.

Elizabeth and I have check-ins a few times a week; we go over bills and upcoming payments. I love to shop online but I leave things in the basket queue now and if I still "need" something after two to three days, I'll budget for it. But if I forgot it, I just let it go. It's saved large sums of money so far.



Mental health has always been a struggle for me as a veteran of Iraq.

But with Microsteps and Resets, I've learned to focus on my breathing. I can break down stress relief into one word: meditation. I started meditating and I've unlocked a stress-free me I wouldn't have recognized a few months ago. I upgraded my shower and turned it into a personal meditation chamber. I let the hot water help me focus my thoughts, and I always have an amazing meditation session. I've utterly changed my inward perspective. I'm less critical of myself and much happier.

I've lost 80 pounds. I love the new me and I'm excited to see where this journey takes me.

I still have Parkinson's, but it hasn't progressed, and my doctor says I could live like this for 60 years, so I try to live in the present. And Thrive helps me do that.

The biggest change has come from the confidence boost I've had.

I've accomplished so much and I'm happy. My relationships with everybody around me have changed. And I have a new-found optimism. I look to my old service motto, "Aim High," with pride now. I used to think it was cheesy. The lessons I learned in the Air Force have been revitalized and given new zeal.

No matter how I look at it, the Thrive Challenge has changed my life.

The looks and smiles I get from my wonderful family make it all worthwhile. They are the reason I've done everything I've done. I thought I had lost the ability to get healthy again, but now I have a new lease on life. I will not squander this chance I've been given.



THRIVE