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\$5,000 WINNER
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Eight years ago, I lost my husband of 27 years. Since he died, I've struggled with credit card debt and medical bills. I'm 61, and I wasn't feeling good. I weighed 266 pounds, and losing weight seemed like a huge undertaking. I just worked and went home and had no social life, so my relationships with friends and family suffered as well as my happiness.

I started the Thrive Challenge and my first Microstep was to stop drinking Dr Pepper.

I'm doing intermittent fasting and eating a low carb diet. My favorite new recipe is homemade pizza using low carb tortillas. I also love provolone cheese sliced baked on parchment paper and sprinkled with everything bagel seasoning. I don't keep sweets in my home and I've learned to be content with berries or sugar-free chocolate chips. I'm more mindful about what I put in my mouth — sugary food doesn't even sound good anymore.

Moving is helping me improve my energy.

I do yoga videos at home. I've joined Planet Fitness and I'm lifting weights to improve my upper body strength. I've also found I have an adventurous side — I'm planning to walk the the Pacific Crest Trail with a group of women.

At work, I get up from my desk every hour and walk.

I also take an evening walk around the block. I turn on music and dance around my house while doing my household chores to '80s music, like Tom Petty and Fleetwood Mac.

Social media was stressful for me, so I made the decision to limit my time online.

I removed myself from apps that caused me to compare my life to others. Instead, I am reading more and meditating. I'm keeping a thankfulness journal. I tell myself what I'm grateful for at the beginning and end of each day. For example, I'm thankful for my new energy, and for my friends and family.

I've lost 51 pounds, and the Challenge reminds me to take it one step at a time.

I don't get overwhelmed about how much I still need to lose. Instead, I focus on getting healthy.

My doctor is thrilled.

Prior to starting the Challenge, I was prediabetic. I am no longer in the diabetic range, and my A1C is back to normal. My doctor lowered my blood pressure medicine. She said, "Girl, you've done amazing!" She said she expects me to get off medications altogether by my next appointment in March. Also, the swelling I used to have in my left ankle has gone away.



Thrive is helping me become more confident.

I put sticky notes with encouraging words like "You have lost 51 pounds," "You are loved," and "You can do this," on the fridge and mirror. I read instead of being on social media, and I'm spending much less time on my phone.

I'm much more connected to my family.

Just this last weekend I went to an art fest with my daughter, Kelly, and my granddaughter, Bailey. We walked a lot, and I never got tired or achy like I used to. We had a very good time!

I have less financial stress.

With the help of my oldest granddaughter, Payton, I made a budget. I put more in my 401k, and I'm saving \$200 a month! This has reduced my worries about the future. It somehow made me feel more organized. I'm hoping to have an emergency fund, and take a week's vacation. And my goal is to retire at 67.

The Thrive Challenge has changed my life in so many ways.

Because I'm emotionally stronger, I can give more support to others instead of feeling like I'm the one always needing help. It's a great feeling.

One day a coworker told me my clothes were falling off me.

I went home and looked in the mirror and she was right — my clothes swallowed me. I went to my closet, and I filled two large laundry baskets with clothes that were too big for me! I realized what I had achieved in that moment. Another amazing moment was when I saw my daughter after not seeing her for a while and she said she couldn't believe how great I looked. When enough people notice your changes, you have to look at yourself a little harder. You stop seeing that hurting girl you used to be and start appreciating your accomplishments. I do that now!



THRIVE