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Earlier this year I was feeling terrible mentally and emotionally. I weighed 420 pounds, I struggled with low energy, and my mental health was suffering. I'm 35 and I felt like I was a mess. I couldn't work because I was out of breath just sitting on the couch. I didn't have the energy for my wife, Shanna, or to play with Owen, my four-year-old. I had a heart condition, and my cardiologist said I needed to lose weight. I reached rock bottom. I had sleep apnea and I was afraid to go to sleep because I didn't think I would wake up. I'd just sit on the couch and watch TV until I would finally fall asleep for a few hours.

I've known about the Thrive Challenge for a long time.

And I finally decided to download the app in May. I started by focusing on food. I stopped going out for fast food and set up an eating plan that I stick to. For breakfast, I have a turkey sausage patty and yogurt. For lunch and dinner, I have a salad with some sort of protein, usually grilled chicken. There were many times during my weight-loss journey when I wanted to eat food that was not on my plan and I would motivate myself by reading the inspiring success stories on the app. I knew that I could continue on and become one of those stories I was reading. We're saving money by not eating out, and buying fresh ingredients has pushed us in the right direction more than ever.

Daily morning walks have become my happy time — the best part of my day.

I started with short walks and now I walk about five miles around town. I listen to my favorite music, like Bon Iver, and I love classical piano — it's really calming. I always feel less stressed when I'm out walking. I also got my four-year son involved by taking him for walks — and that turned into great bonding time for us.

Work is so much easier now because I can walk long distances without being fatigued.

I can go up the stairs without feeling breathless and I can climb ladders to reach the roof hatch that I would have never been able to do before. I find that the Challenge drives me to keep making small positive changes every day with check-ins and reminders. And I love telling my story. It's always fun for me to get asked, "Where did the other half of you go?" Those kinds of questions strengthen my drive to continue to do better. I want to inspire others now.



Connection Microsteps are bringing the family closer together.

We're spending more time together. The biggest change is that I have so much more energy, and I can get down on the floor with Owen and play. We do a lot of puzzles. We built Owen a play house with a swing set and I get up there with him now! We have a lot of fun together. I feel like a real dad! And I'm making up for lost time.

Setting up a nighttime routine has helped me sleep well.

We turn off the T.V. once we've put Owen to bed at eight o'clock. Then we turn off our devices and disconnect. We'll just sit and talk about our day. And we're both getting to sleep easier.

I've lost 170 pounds.

My health is at an all time peak. My knee and back pain has completely gone and I no longer have sleep apnea. I was dangerously close to being diabetic before the Challenge, but I just had a blood test last week and am no longer pre-diabetic. My cardiologist says he's amazed. I will probably always be on my current medication for my heart. But he's very happy with my progress. My blood pressure is now perfect and blood work labs are good.

A few days ago, I ran into a friend from work who I hadn't seen since I started my journey.

He had no idea who I was until I started talking because I've lost so much weight! It made me realize what I've achieved — I just felt very accomplished. I feel like a new person. I have always been an outgoing person, but with my new confidence I feel like I can do anything.



THRIVE