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I began the Thrive Challenge because I wasn't spending quality time with my kids — I wasn't connecting with my family and I wasn't living in the present. At night, I'd reflect on my day and realize how distracted I'd been. I'm a 34-year-old single mom with three children, Kay'Lynn, who's 15, Travis, who's 10, and 3-year-old Jenson who's autistic, and I felt very stressed.

I started with connection Microsteps.

I began to have honest conversations with my two older kids. I told them I needed them to help around the house doing chores. I stopped using a rewards system; instead I gave each of them tasks I expected them to do regularly and I gave them each an allowance. We listen to each other and we're bonding. It's been great because now they both spend less time in their bedroom and more time with me — and more time playing with their little brother.

Being honest has made a big difference to our family.

I specifically talked to the older kids about their little brother's condition, what it means, and how it affects him. When they understood more, they really stepped up and became more loving towards him, and more helpful to me. Also, confiding in them makes them feel important.

To learn more about my son's condition myself, I've joined autism support groups.

I'm educating myself, and I'm sharing the information with my family members. I find pride in being an advocate for my son, and we're all learning together.

I give the kids my full attention instead of multi-tasking.

I put my phone down now anytime they walk into the room. I'll ask them about school; Travis talks about his girlfriends! I take time to acknowledge and validate their opinions. We're spending more time together. We do chores together and play games, and we go to the trampoline park.

I read an article on the Thrive app about decluttering and getting organized.

So I decided to declutter my bedroom, which led me to organizing the whole house with my kids. We cleaned the garage and the shed. We've been letting go of things we don't need, like old batteries, broken toys and birthday candles. Being honest with ourselves, like saying, "We're never going to fix these," made it easier to throw them away. We found pans and dishes we thought we'd lost because everything is in order, so we don't need to buy new ones.



Yoga is helping to lower my stress, and we're exercising as a family.

I've been getting out my mat and practicing every day. It's calming and I love the energizing sensation of a good stretch. I also do weights. The kids will join in with me when they see me exercising. I'm also more involved in their sports. The older ones are interested in boxing, and I'm so happy when they talk about it with me and ask me for advice.

Exercising makes me feel more confident, and I've started going back to the gym.

I love listening to uplifting music like Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong. My body is changing; I like the way my arms look.

I'm a better mother and a better role model.

2023 was especially tough, but since I've had more accountability and gained more knowledge, hope has lit my life back up. I focus on being grateful and I try to recognize the blessings flowing in, not the blows. I'm excited to continue putting in the work and making 2024 better for all of us. I'm keeping my feet planted in the present, but I'm also preparing for the future.



THRIVE