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\$5,000 WINNER
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I'm a single dad and separating from my wife was the lowest point in my life. I was waking up in the morning with so much emotional pain and stress that life felt unbearable. I'm 33, and my 8-year-old daughter, Natalee, is the biggest joy in my life, but I wasn't feeling joyful. I miss her so much when she's not with me. I've always been the funny guy and a real people person, but I lost that light and I was closing myself off from the world.

I found out about Thrive Challenge and I thought it would be really good for me.

Instead of trying to change my lifestyle all at once, Microsteps meant I could take things slowly at my own pace. Right away, it helped me feel like I was doing something to better myself.

I wanted to change my diet, since I'd been living off fast food.

I started by making my lunch for the day, and now I'm prepping my lunches for the whole week. At first it was just a turkey sandwich, but I began to work in veggies and fruits into my meals. My favorite lunch is a nice cut of turkey from the deli, with lettuce and tomatoes. And I'll have fresh watermelon or strawberries.

Exercise was a bit of a struggle at first.

My job requires a lot of movement — walking over five miles a day through a facility. But I wanted to move outside work. And before Thrive, I'd go home and go right to the couch. I decided to change things. I live in the country, but hadn't been taking advantage of that, so I go for a short walk after work on a nature trail. It feels peaceful in the silence, and it's made a big difference.

I have more energy and pep for my daughter.

We go to the park and we go to museums. She loves the dinosaur displays at the Museum of Natural Sciences, and she loves the stingrays in the "touch tank." We both really like reading. Natalie's a bookworm and reads on her own, but we read poetry together. Our favorite book is *Where the Sidewalk Ends* by Shel Silverstein.

I'm dealing with stress and anxiety with breathing exercises.

After a stressful encounter, I take five minutes to myself to just inhale and exhale. That means I'm not dwelling on the situation throughout the day. I end my day reflecting on my life and asking myself how I can improve my daughter's life. Thrive Resets are also a great way to let go of the stress; the calming music and peaceful views help me focus on my breathing.



I've also been focusing on my sleeping habits.

I work the night shift, and I was only sleeping a few hours a day, then going right back to work. So I started by cutting down the distractions in my bedroom. I cleared my bedside table, which felt more restful. I moved my phone out of the bedroom. That meant I wasn't tempted to roll over and check messages and surf social media. Breathing deeply before bedtime helps to calm my mind. Instead of lying there for who knows how long with my mind racing in a hundred different directions, I relax and fall asleep now.

After my separation I was very down on myself.

I didn't want to feel like a burden or a drag on my friends. Now, I've started building myself back up, I can hold my head high again; I feel like I can look people in the eye, and I'm more social. I've been reaching out to old friends and spending time with my family again, planning trips to the lake with Natalee, or just relaxing around a fire in the backyard.

I remind myself that I'm doing my best.

One of the best things that happened recently was when an older man I work with said to me: "In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: Life goes on." As simple as it sounds, something about that just hit home with me. I know things are getting better.



THRIVE