

# Taliesa Olivares

**\$5,000 WINNER**  
**Distribution Center #9153**  
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I recently lost the mother-like figure in my life. I grew up in Hawaii, and my own mom was working two jobs, so our family friend, who I called Auntie Rose, raised me with her own kids from the time I was a few days old. She was like family to me and when she passed away it was devastating. I'm 46 and a single mom with three sons. Dylan, who's 18, and Drew, who's 17, live with me, and my 21-year-old, Devon, and his girlfriend have a 6-month-old baby, my granddaughter, Everli.

## **I was feeling very stressed and sad, and I was doing a lot of emotional eating.**

I was too sad to exercise. I have high cholesterol and I really needed to get healthy. I've known about the Thrive Challenge for years and I downloaded the app three months ago. I wanted to focus on connection and taking care of myself.

## **Instead of eating fast food I began cooking family meals.**

I love to make baked salmon with fresh tomatoes. And I make shrimp stir fries with vegetables like zucchini, asparagus, and jalapeños for a little kick. Auntie Rose was from Guam, she was a really good cook, and I'm enjoying making her recipes like spicy chicken and squash soup, and fermented cucumber salad. It's a great way to remember her.

## **I've been attending a grief counseling group.**

We meet at a local church. There's a group leader, and people tell their stories and share the ways that they're coping and moving on, and we share memories of our loved ones. Getting support from the group has reminded me that I'm not alone.

## **Writing about my emotions is also helping me heal.**

I have a journal called Cherished Memories, and I write a lot about my aunt, what I learned from her, my feelings for her, and how blessed I was to have her as my angel as I was growing up. I write positive sayings and affirmations like, "Always do what makes you happy" and "Always do your best."

## **I'm taking movement Microsteps and making a choice to move my body.**

Going for walks makes me feel calm and less stressed. And I love to dance; I do 30 minute online dance classes. The instructor tells you to move however you like — she says there's no right or wrong way to dance. I love the freedom of expression, it's a great workout, and I'm moving my body without being judged. If my boys catch me dancing when the instructor is saying "Shake shake shake... use your hips," it makes them laugh. But they're happy to see me having fun.



## **Connection Microsteps are helping me spend more time with my family.**

We have weekly dinners and we play cards or board games. We'll grill and talk and watch football together. We just enjoy being together and it's important because we're making memories.

## **My granddaughter makes everyone smile.**

Everyone says being a grandparent is one of the best things in life. And it's true. I love playing with Everli — she opens my heart — and I experience everything in a more joyful way when I'm with her.

## **I'm giving myself permission to do things that make me happy.**

I'm more sociable and I'm getting together with good friends. We went to a George Strait concert, which was amazing. We'll go to the movies and explore new towns and new places to eat.

## **Saying thank you and letting people know I'm thinking of them feels good.**

I'm writing cards to people I care about, which is something I used to love doing. In fact, everyone calls me "Ms. Hallmark." I find lovely cards and add my own personal message like, "I just can't imagine what life would be without you." I send them to family members and friends, but I also like sending notes to my team members, celebrating their successes and telling them how much I appreciate them.

## **My Auntie Rose will always be in my heart.**

She taught me about the importance of family. Her house was always the gathering place for everyone — she made a difference to so many people. Now I am continuing that legacy. She would be happy that I'm finding joy with my family — and I know the best is yet to come.



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