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Recently, I was feeling stressed and anxious. I'm 48 and my husband Jose and I have three children, and we weren't eating healthily. I'm Mexican and it was hard to lose weight because I was cooking a lot of our traditional food made with corn, flour, sugar, and spices, and we'd eat out three to four times a week. I had headaches and I was gaining weight — I weighed 200 pounds.

The past year had stressful health challenges.

My 24-year-old daughter, Ana, was diagnosed with Guillain-Barré syndrome, a condition that attacks the nervous system. Fortunately, Ana is now much better, but I was very worried. We had so many appointments with doctors, which made healthy eating really challenging because I didn't have time to cook.

I got started on the Challenge and it was exactly what we all needed.

I began taking Microsteps to build better habits, like making sure I always had a tumbler full of fresh water or a water bottle by my side. And that helped stop me being tempted to eat sugary snacks.

I've learned to enjoy cooking good food.

I meal prep for the week ahead. Our favorite easy meals are chicken soup with vegetables and salmon with salad. I love the Microstep about sitting down and enjoying your food without rushing. As a family we try to eat dinner together before 6 o'clock. And if we're out, we always have to-go snacks with us, like nuts and fruit.

I've become more active — I'm always on the go.

Dancing is a passion, and lately instead of watching T.V. we put on music and we all start to move. I learned to dance cumbia by watching my grandmother and I've taught my whole family. We have family dance parties, which are such fun. One of my favorite songs is "Como la Flor" by Selena y Los Dinos. Dancing helps me to stay positive. I've lost 12 pounds and I'd say regular movement has been the biggest key to my mood and my weight loss. I also take long strolls with Ana and my 9-year-old, Lucas. We go to a beautiful park that's minutes away from home and the views are magnificent.



I'm focusing on gratitude.

Having been through the health scare with Ana, now more than ever I'm grateful for the smallest things. We're focusing on connection and kindness as a family. We visit my mother and my grandmother as frequently as possible. And I'm teaching my children to be compassionate and thoughtful and put away their phones when they're with other people.

We know that too much technology isn't good for our health.

For us it would lead to loneliness — sometimes we were together, but everyone was on their cell phone. Learning new ways to be 100 percent present has been challenging, but so rewarding. It means paying attention and listening to each other. We share our daily stories with our phones on silent.

Repeating affirmations help me to feel positive.

These are my favorites: "I am at my best when I take care of myself," and "Today is a great day to be great." Who would have thought that making small changes, like dancing and going for walks, would have such a big impact on my life?



THRIVE