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I was at a low point in my life. I was feeling stressed and drained. You might say I was trapped in quicksand. I'm 45, and my wife Isabel and I have an 18-year-old daughter, Barbara, who's in college, and a five year-old son, Daniel. I used to have a higher level job at Walmart, but I stepped down to spend more time with the family. However, I didn't have the energy to be active with them because I felt so bad. I felt less valued at work, and I'm earning less, so I felt like I wasn't being a good provider. We were eating fast food and we weren't exercising or getting fresh air, which wasn't good for my son, or any of us. I gained weight and I was up to 215 pounds. I started the Thrive Challenge for support and motivation — I wanted to be a better role model for my son.

Isabel and I take Daniel for walks around the neighborhood.

We go to the park next to our house and play hide and seek, and run around. He loves the balance beams and the swings. And we take him to the community zoo. He really likes the big cats. I love seeing him outside laughing and running around, rather than being stuck inside with his tablet all day. And seeing my wife seeing her son smiling puts a smile on my face.

Microsteps are helping me change my diet.

I cut down on soda and only drink two or three a week. I drink water and natural juices instead. We're having more home-cooked meals and less takeout food. Our favorite dinners are chicken or steak with rice and salad. I've lost 10 pounds and I feel much better — my clothes aren't tight anymore.

Isabel and I were having a hard time connecting.

Now we've found common interests. She loves roses and we both enjoy gardening, so we're growing plants and flowers from seeds. We've put up an arbor archway with climbing roses, and planted a guava tree. Recently we bought a little green house and we're growing veggies. My mom and dad used to work in a plant nursery and I would always help them, so it's good getting back to that. I spend time outside with my son, watering plants or removing dead flowers, instead of just sitting down inside after meals.



Managing stress is tough, but I do breathing Microsteps when the stress builds up.

I make sure I get enough sleep by turning off the computer in the evening, silencing the phone, and turning off the TV an hour earlier than I used to. So I have more energy in the morning, which also means I get less stressed.

Our finances are a bit better.

We're taking Microsteps like waiting before buying anything online and keeping the items in the cart. For example, we were going to get a new T.V. and comforters, but a few days later, we decided we didn't really need them. Also, I'm saving money by not eating out — we used to go to restaurants three or four times a week. Instead, we're spending that money on things that really benefit our family, like going to the zoo.

As I've started to feel better at home, I've become more motivated at work.

I have better time management and I'm less depressed. I'm trying to move up again in my career and become a coach. I feel I'll soon be ready for that move because I've got more understanding of how to balance work and family time. I know it's possible to make time for everything.

I don't hate who I am anymore. I'm learning to like who I see in the mirror.

The past is behind me so I don't have any regrets. I'm grateful for my wife and kids, and I'm not going to take them for granted.



THRIVE