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I lost my mother to pancreatic cancer in August 2014. That pretty much broke me, because I missed so many opportunities to show her how much I loved her. I felt so bad about myself and I'd eat as if that was going to make me feel better. It wasn't until this past May that I decided that I was done letting food have power over me. I'm 48, and when I started my journey I weighed 254 pounds. My wife, Melanie and I have two wonderful kids, 14-year-old Maggie, and 20-year-old Brady, but I was always stressed.

I used to treat food as a reward.

I'd have a rough day, and then I'd tell myself that I deserved to cheat. On the other hand if I stepped on the scale and saw that I'd gained a couple pounds, I'd punish myself. And to make matters worse, I wouldn't eat in public, but then I'd binge when I was alone. Emotionally and mentally I wasn't happy with myself, so I started the Thrive Challenge.

I began taking Microsteps like not eating late at night.

I also stay hydrated — and drink water before every meal. I cook a lot of chicken, and lean steak. I'm eating healthy snacks, like nuts, and I measure out portions. I used to take almonds into work and I'd eat the whole bag in my office. Now I measure out a serving and that's what I pack in my lunch bag.

I was raised to eat everything on my plate, but now I stop when I'm full.

And one of my favorite Microsteps is making simple food swaps, like eating egg whites instead of the whole egg. I'm happy to say that my cholesterol is the lowest it's been in years.

By making healthy choices, I'm learning to have a positive relationship with food.

Sometimes I've faltered. There was a day when I sat on the couch and next thing I knew I'd eaten a bag of popcorn. Previously I would have shamed myself. Now I think about what I was feeling when I ate that food, I learned from the experience so I can make a different decision when that feeling comes up again. I am still grieving and miss my Mom — and it's healthy to grieve and feel sad. What I won't do is eat those feelings.

I've lost 32 pounds, and when I look in the mirror I like the person I see.

I feel more energized. I am happier when I put on clothes. And more importantly, I like the person who I've become — I can't remember the last time I felt that way.



Once I started losing weight, I focused on lowering my stress.

The biggest thing I'm doing is just breathing. Sure that sounds simple, but spending a few minutes focusing on breathing in, holding my breath, and then exhaling is a game changer. It helps me stay calm.

Another Microstep I like: "Make a choice to move your body today."

I committed to getting up at 4:30 a.m. so I can work out before taking my daughter to school. I have stayed true to this commitment. Also I'm a runner — I ran the New York City marathon twice — but I wasn't healthy because I wasn't paying attention to what I was putting into my body. Today I can say that I'm a healthy runner.

I've found a new passion: swimming with my daughter, Maggie.

She's a competitive swimmer and I always wanted to join her for swims, but I could never keep up with her. Recently, Maggie asked me to do a mile long open water swim with her. I was nervous for sure, but I'm proud to say that I completed that swim with her, and it brought me so much joy. Also I started volunteering for my daughter's swim team and have taken this to new levels by getting certified as an official USA coach.

I didn't realize that losing weight would help put me in a better mood, but it did.

My wife would be the first to tell you that I'm more positive and outgoing — I feel good about myself. I feel so much lighter — and it isn't just about the weight. I don't use food as a reward. The biggest change in my life is that I'm more confident and I'm more pleasant to be around — I feel balanced and much happier.



THRIVE