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I decided to start the Thrive Challenge because I wanted to overcome my financial difficulties. I'm 21 and I'm pursuing my computer science degree while working at Walmart. I was often exhausted from working long hours and trying to excel in my academics. I had little time to prioritize exercise or a healthy diet.

The financial stress and juggling of responsibilities took a toll on my mental health.

I felt overwhelmed and anxious, and at times, I even doubted my ability to succeed in both my studies and my job. It was a difficult period. I wanted to lose weight and incorporate healthier habits into my life. And I saw the Thrive Challenge as an opportunity to seek guidance and support.

To improve my sleep, I established a consistent bedtime routine.

I limit screen time before going to bed and I charge my phone away from my bed. These changes have helped me to wake up feeling more rested and focused.

I began eating more fruit, veggies, lean protein, and whole grains.

I practice portion control, plan my meals, and stay hydrated. I've been discovering the joy of cooking. Two of my favorite recipes are rigatoni with beef and zucchini ragu, and bang bang broccoli bowls with rice, cucumber, cabbage slaw, and sesame seeds. They're budget friendly — I can easily find all the ingredients at Walmart. I'm proud to share that I've lost 20 pounds.

By moving more, I feel more energized.

I dance while doing chores, and I take short walks after dinner. I recently achieved a milestone by running a mile for the first time in years. I'm excited to continue training and work towards a 5K.

To help lower stress, I cut my work hours.

This decision gave me more balance and has significantly improved my mental well-being. I'm also doing breathing exercises, and prioritizing hobbies that bring me joy. Photography has become a meaningful pursuit. Capturing moments allows me to express my deep appreciation for people and the world around me.

I'm maintaining a better work-life balance.

Practicing mindfulness helps me have a healthier perspective on life. To unwind and relax, I listen to the jazz and soul music I grew up with. I find it very calming. Also, I've been using Thrive Reset videos, particularly those featuring water scenes, which I find create a peaceful ambiance for meditation.



To sharpen my focus I've adopted several Microsteps.

These include setting clear boundaries with technology to limit distractions, as well as time-blocking for focused work and relaxation. I'm taking breaks between tasks, and I am prioritizing "single-tasking" over multitasking. Occasionally I'll have digital detox days.

I've started budgeting.

While I'm still working toward substantial savings, the steps I've made have had a positive impact. I'm building an emergency fund, and focusing on reducing debt, while also investing in financial education. And I'm beginning to feel more financially stable.

Microsteps are helping me improve my relationships.

I'm spending quality time with loved ones, actively listening, expressing gratitude, and providing support and caregiving to family members when needed.

I take joy in helping my family financially when I have extra money.

I like to support the younger members of my family. This includes helping with the cost of toys, school books, and clothes. I've also made a conscious effort to share the financial literacy knowledge I've gained through Thrive with my family.

The Thrive Challenge has had a profound impact on my life.

I've adopted a healthier lifestyle and I'm effectively managing stress. I still have financial worries, but I approach everything with optimism and hope. The Challenge has helped me instill discipline, giving me a sense of control over my life.

I was at a family gathering recently and realized what I've achieved.

As we sat around the dinner table, engaged in lively conversation, I couldn't help but notice how much more present and connected I felt with my loved ones. I was genuinely enjoying the moment. My journey as a college student supporting myself has been tough, but I'm determined to get my degree and go on to fulfill my dreams. I know now that I'm going to be the best version of myself and fulfill the dreams of the young woman I've always aspired to become.



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