

# Ashley Conwell

## **\$5,000 WINNER**

**Walmart Supercenter #3008**

**Atlanta, GA**

I'm a single mom and my biggest challenge has been helping my 17-year-old daughter, Genesis, overcome depression. She was diagnosed in 2020. She was isolating and didn't want to do anything. And I've had to make hard decisions on my own, like actually putting her on medication. She's been having therapy, which has helped, but I blamed myself, thinking I was not a good enough mom — I didn't believe in myself. I was doing a lot of emotional eating — a lot of pizza. I gained weight and I was diagnosed with high blood pressure. I heard about the Thrive Challenge a couple of years ago, but I jumped right in this January and I've been consistent.

### **The first thing I did was to change my thinking.**

When things didn't go right, I'd catch myself. When I was about to overeat, I'd say, "You know what? You're not hungry. Let's walk instead." Now, I channel that energy somewhere else. And I tell myself, "You're a good mother."

### **Genesis and I have little staycations or mental health weekends.**

They help us unwind when things are overwhelming. We started coloring together — I'd read that coloring helps with anxiety. We got coloring books with mandalas and butterflies. While we're coloring, we have good conversations and we feel happy.

### **We've published our own coloring book called I Choose Me.**

We came up with the idea together and created it to help young girls who are dealing with depression and anxiety. There are pictures for people to color in of teenage girls doing the things young ladies do, like being on the phone or doing yoga, and there are positive affirmations to color in like, "I am not my trauma," and "I am healing on my own terms." We both realized that our stories could help others. Some of the proceeds go to our church and we put some towards Genesis's college fund.

### **We're cooking together.**

We're making delicious dinners like spinach ravioli, baked chicken and fish, and roast veggies. We also have mother-daughter days — we'll get a mani and pedi or watch a movie. We just saw The Buzz Lightyear movie, Lightyear. Spending that time together puts Genesis in a good mindset, and I feel grateful and happy.

### **Genesis and I love swimming and we're doing water aerobics.**

We're moving a lot, doing little TikTok dances, and dancing to music like Beyoncé's song "Break My Soul."



### **I meditate and pray when I wake up and before bed.**

When I get stressed, I'll breathe deeply, which helps me sleep better. I don't worry as much as I used to.

### **My best friend, Marquita, is my biggest supporter. She's the angel on my shoulder.**

She motivates me and she also motivates Genesis. We go to lunch and talk about anything that might be bothering us, and it's always great to have another perspective.

### **I've lost 26 pounds and I have much more energy.**

I'm 39 and my goal is that by the end of the year, my doctor will take me off my blood pressure medication.

### **This isn't just my story, it's my daughter's story as well.**

Genesis is doing great. She got all A's at school and wants to go to college. She's off her medication because she's been doing so well. She has coping mechanisms for life and the changes we've made together have helped us forge an unbreakable bond.

### **We're working on our second coloring book; it's about body positivity.**

We want to help young girls feel good about themselves.

### **I'm grateful for "now."**

I've learned that life can change in an instant but being a good person, helping my daughter cope with depression, and changing how I eat has given me a new mindset. I know that everything is a learning step and opportunity.

### **I'm planning on going back to school.**

I feel comfortable focusing on myself now and I want to study business administration. My journey is about freedom. I will continue to challenge myself so I am free from anything that doesn't make me feel at peace.



THRIVE