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I had back surgery in 2005 and was diagnosed with degenerative disc disease afterwards. Ever since, I'd been on pain medication because of severe pain in my back and arthritis. There were days I couldn't even get out of bed, and it affected my whole life. I couldn't get up off the couch to clean the house, or make dinner, or even be with my family. It wasn't until 2020 that I decided I needed to change that.

My wakeup call came from a comment from my nine-year-old daughter, Meredith.

I remember her saying to me, "Mommy, I wish you were like other mommies." That broke my heart. She wished I was able to do more with her, and that I wasn't so tired all the time and in pain. That's when I said, "I have to do something about this." I've been married for 28 years and we have two daughters, and I felt like I wasn't living. I was just struggling. I didn't want to depend on medication anymore, and I didn't want to live that way anymore.

I spoke to my doctor, and we made a plan for me to get off my medication.

I had to change my lifestyle, too — so I started small. I started cutting out fast food and I decreased my soda intake to only one or two a week. I also cut down on my smoking, which made a big difference. Once I started feeling better physically, I started using the Thrive app to take on different Microsteps to help me stay consistent. I remember the one that really stood out to me was, "Compliment a co-worker every day."

I started setting reminders on my phone to reach out to associates and compliment them.

This really helped me be a better leader. Walmart started talking about promoting some department managers to team leads, and I knew I could be a good leader. When things are overwhelming, I send my teammates texts saying, "You got this, you're strong, you've come this far. Just keep it going." There was even one associate on my team, Jeanie Grant, who I encouraged to apply for a team lead position in another department. And she did that, and she got the position. I like being that person for other people.



I got the promotion, and it was a huge financial help for my family.

I just kept telling myself, "This is going to happen for me." Now I'm the deli/bakery team lead, and it took me from \$15 an hour to \$21 an hour, which was huge for me. My husband and I have started doing date nights again, which we haven't gotten to do a lot. Our favorite thing to do together is going fishing — being away from everybody, in the quiet. Or sitting in the park and eating lunch together, or sitting out in our front yard with a fire, just talking. We also like playing music in the yard at night around the fire as a family. My daughter and I have been playing Just Dance together recently. She's a dancer, and it's a big deal that we can dance together now.

I've had a complete mindset shift.

I'll never forget when I lost my brother in 2015, the last conversation we had was him telling me, "I've spent my whole life working and working to give my family this and that, but I worked all the time, and I was never there for my family." He passed away two weeks later, and that always stuck with me. The most important thing is that I can be here for my family. I make sure I tell my daughters "thank you" for even the littlest things that they do, and I'm trying to be the best mom and wife I can be.

It's been eight months now that I haven't taken medication, and I have minimal pain.

Looking back at the times where I had to fight so hard just to get through the day, I can't believe how far I've come. And I know that if I can stop relying on pain medication after all of those years, I can finally quit smoking, I can lose weight, and I can improve our finances. I can give myself and my family the life, attention, and time that they deserve.



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