

# Nicole Ford

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**\$5,000 WINNER**  
**Walmart Supercenter #2479**  
**San Diego, CA**

I've had epilepsy my whole life, and I have seizures. Growing up, the seizures were scary. I take medication and they are manageable now, but I was having them almost every day. It's been stressful and sometimes traumatic. I couldn't go out as much as I wanted to. I'd have to cancel plans at the last minute. I've been feeling down and hopeless.

## **My biggest challenge was staying consistent with my goals.**

I'd get super-motivated and exercise, then I'd stop. I live with my mom and I'd have take-out almost every night and drink soda. I didn't have any energy to do anything. The turning point came one day when I had continuous seizures at work and I was recovering in the store manager's office. My head hurt, I was exhausted, and I was reflecting on my life. I knew stress was the main trigger and I said "Okay, something has to change."

## **I went to see my doctor and we came up with a plan.**

He told me to get on track with exercise and eat nutritious food, because that could help with the epilepsy and lower my stress. So I started the Thrive Challenge.

## **Instead of soda I started drinking water; and every once in a while I'll have juice.**

I began cooking, using an app called eMeals which has great recipes and partners with Walmart, so you add the ingredients you need to your cart. I made chicken pot pie without the crust, and angel hair pasta with arugula and shrimp in a pesto basil sauce. My favorite so far: beef and vegetable lo mein. I didn't need to lose weight, just to eat better.

## **I love to go to the beach and walk along the boardwalk for miles.**

It's very calming; you can feel like the breeze on your face and that salt air. It makes me so happy. And when I'm out hiking, I'm not craving French fries. At the beach, I put on my headphones and listen to hip hop, like Watsky. Watsky had juvenile epilepsy and I absolutely relate to him, and his struggles. He's got a song called "Seizure Boy." He's also an amazing poet and author.

## **I bought a pair of pink roller skates.**

I used to roller skate as a kid and it's fun getting back to it, with all the nostalgia of those childhood memories. I skate around my apartment complex and it helps me focus because I concentrate on my balance.



A couple weeks ago, I finally rolled over my first speed bump without falling! It was so cool. I'm 32, but because I'm short and I look young, kids think I'm their age and ask me, "Can I roller skate with you?" I'm like, "You need to go ask your parents first!"

## **I do breathing exercises when I'm stressed.**

And I take an hour's nap after work. In the evening, I turn my phone off earlier, and I'm asleep by 9:30. I used to only get about four hours of sleep. I'm more alert and have more motivation, so I feel happier. And at work, I'm grateful to be around supportive people who understand my issues.

## **I'm spending time with friends.**

There are two sisters at work, Alex and Jasmine, that I consider sisters to me. Everyone needs support and we're together constantly. I'll go over to their house and we'll chit chat and play video games. Baking's a bit of a hobby and I made them apple honey challah bread; I learned the recipe from my great grandma. They're always there for me, and I'm always there for them.

## **My neurologist says the changes I've made have had a positive impact.**

The seizures have decreased, I'm just having one or two a month because I'm not as stressed. When I had them every day, I'd get sluggish and now I have more energy. He said, "Whatever you're doing, keep doing it."

## **I'm saving money because I'm not buying fast food.**

I'd love to own my own house one day, just a normal house with a front and back yard, and maybe I'll have a pet. It will be lovely to have peace and quiet and freedom; I want to be independent. And I think I'd like to become a foster mom one day.



THRIVE