

Victoria Hood

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\$5,000 WINNER
Walmart Supercenter #2663
Ebensburg, PA

All my life I've had a difficult relationship with food. I was raised by a single mom who was obese — pushing 600 pounds. She passed away at 68. As a pre-teen, I was anorexic. I wanted to do everything I could so I wouldn't end up like my mom. I became a mom myself at 16, and now I'm 52 with three grown children and three grandkids. I went from being a child to being a mother to being a grandmother, and somewhere along the line, I forgot to take care of myself.

When I married my third husband, Curtis, 12 years ago, he did all the cooking.

There was a lot of processed food and cheesecake, and I'd eat whatever he put on my plate. I was raised to clean my plate and no matter how many times I told Curtis I wasn't hungry he always would fill my plate. I'd get out of breath walking and felt terrible. Curtis and I have separated but we're working on getting back together. And my son, Blade, lives with me.

A girl who works in a nursing home told me her back hurts from lifting old people.

They're heavy and can't move and I thought: "I don't want to do that to anyone." Then Danielle, my Team Lead, encouraged me to start the Thrive Challenge. She was a winner, and at her award ceremony, they gave her a cake. But she doesn't eat sugar anymore and asked for fruit as well. And that day I said: "You know what? I'm not having cake either. I'm going to have an orange with you." That's how I got started.

At home, I dumped all my sodas down the sink.

I started drinking water and meal prepping. One of my favorite recipes is chicken and sweet potato bake with broccoli, onion, and cranberries. It's delicious. I don't put nearly as much food on my plate anymore. And Blade is loving my cooking.

I joined a gym.

I've signed up to work with a great fitness coach, Krista, who's given me exercises to strengthen my arms and legs. She helps me track what I'm eating which gives me accountability. I've lost 19 pounds, I feel much lighter and I have more energy.



A few of us at work bought weighted hula hoops and we all encourage each other.

Mine is purple, my favorite color. I'll watch T.V. while I'm hula hooping. I really enjoy it and it takes me back to teenage fun. My next thing is going to be roller skating because that was something else I enjoyed as a child.

I'm spending my lunch breaks reading.

I was raised to believe that if you're not doing something useful, you're wasting your day. So I'd spend my breaks making lists. Now, I'm off the "list-track" and I'm reading the Virgin River series by Robyn Carr. At first, I felt guilty reading, but now I realize everything else is still going to get done. This is "me time."

Once a week, I light candles and take a bubble bath with aromatherapy oils.

It helps me relax. Also, a Microstep I love is putting my phone away an hour before I go to bed. I give myself that time to unwind. I lie in bed, stretch, and breathe deeply.

Curtis and I are working on better communication.

We went out for dinner the other evening to one of our favorite restaurants. I got dressed up in a jeans skirt, a nice blouse and a pair of sandals and we had a good time. We're spending quality time going for walks together and he finally understands how important this well-being journey is to me.

It means a lot to me to get healthy — it actually makes me tearful.

I've struggled my whole life. And now my goal is to be a spunky little Grandma — and an active Great Grandma one day — who can take the kids to theme parks. And I know I'll do it. I feel grateful and accomplished.



THRIVE