

David Van Dyne

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\$5,000 WINNER
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I've been through a lot of difficult transitions recently. I retired from the Marine Corps, which was a huge change for me, and hard for my self-identity. I'm 42, and my wife, Shannon and I have two sons, David who's five and Thomas who's two. We also have three older kids. We moved from San Diego to Washington and I wasn't sure whether I'd made good decisions for our family and our kids. David is on the autistic spectrum and we believe Thomas may also be autistic. So it's been challenging making sure they're settled. And I've been getting situated in my new job at Walmart.

I heard about the Thrive Challenge and downloaded the app.

I read stories about people who'd turned their lives around, sometimes in dire circumstances, and I found them inspiring.

I hadn't been working out and wanted to get back in the gym.

I began by getting a gym membership through Walmart. I'd always been in shape when I was in the Marine Corps, and I got back into my workout regimen — doing cardio and lifting weights. Soon I was feeling strong again, which helped me mentally and emotionally. I could think through things more clearly.

Then I started a high protein diet.

I have a protein shake after working out. For dinner, we'll cook simple meals like chicken or fish with good seasoning and steamed vegetables. Or we'll make shrimp tacos. I used to have a late night snack like cereal, and I'd be kicking myself the next day. Now, I don't do that. I lost a few pounds, which I wanted to do, and I've seen improvements in my energy.

When I get home from work, I focus on the boys.

The evening is Dad Time. We do coloring and drawing, and we make models with Play-Doh. David loves cartoons; he likes drawing crazy animals and characters with tentacles and spots. And we'll play with racing cars and legos. Then I'll get them ready for bed.

On the weekend, the boys know I'm always there for them.

We get outside in nature. There are great parks with playgrounds in the area. I love hanging out with the boys and playing. I wasn't as present with my two older kids, and with my younger ones I'm not going to miss those opportunities.

Shannon and I are bonding.

We'll play video games together and games like Date Night in a Box. We're also going for walks together. Last week we walked to pick up my son from school together and we were just hanging out. We'll drive around exploring the area, which is still new to us. We're finding great garden centers.



We're doing yard work together.

We're pulling weeds and planting flowers. We're making a beautiful English garden with roses, and I'm doing outdoor tiles. Now that the weather is good, it's nice to be outdoors getting our hands dirty, and being creative. We have a big back yard so there's a lot of work to do. We're also working inside, and buying furniture. We're making this house our own.

I'm finding financial Microsteps helpful, like writing down what we spend.

We're trying to budget while doing home improvements and at the same time stay positive. We're figuring out how to balance paying the bills and the mortgage and tally it all with our income. We're doing everything one step at a time.

Fishing helps me relax.

It's something I do for myself. Being out in nature is quiet and zen and gives me peace of mind. When I catch a fish, I reel that accomplishment in — no pun intended! I also love walking our two dogs, Lobo and Snow. They're almost like "therapy dogs" for me. It's good to know they will always be there to pet and be affectionate.

My work is a blessing and I'm really enjoying my job.

I'm a process engineer and it's a great fit for me. I think I'm making a difference and having a positive impact. My team and I determine how we can make things more efficient and easier for everyone.

Thrive has allowed me to work out my stressors.

I'm more focused, I'm happier, and I'm having fun with the boys. It's been a tough transition, but I know we're making the right choices for everyone. I know there's light at the end of the tunnel and I can achieve my goals.



THRIVE