

Jeneé Hensley



\$5,000 WINNER **Home Office** **Bentonville, AR**

Last year, my family and I went through a traumatic series of events that shook us to the core. I can't go into detail, but I was struggling and I went into a depression. That's very unlike me; I usually bounce back from things. My husband, Jesse, and I have two daughters, Layla, who's 12, and Zoey who's five. Jesse's a police officer, and we're both military veterans; we met in the Air Force. I'm 34 and I have a wonderful family, but we were having a hard time. I lost all my motivation. And I wasn't eating well — I was snacking on junk food.

My colleague at work, Debbie Mink, inspired me to start the Thrive Challenge.

Her energy is infectious — anytime you're in Debbie's presence you feel at least 10 percent better. My goal is to make other people better too. But first, I needed to make myself better.

I connected with a counselor through Walmart's Resources for Living.

She's very empathetic and helped me navigate everything I was going through. Sometimes, I'd just break down and cry, and she helped me understand what was behind the tears. She'd been a childcare advocate previously, so she could help me find positive ways to support my family. That was important because Layla was going through some big mental health challenges.

My husband and I are having couples counseling.

Jesse and I have always had great communication, but now we're having deeper conversations and our marriage is even stronger. We know we'll always be there to support each other.

Journaling helps me process my feelings.

Putting down on paper what I'm feeling helps me to find a release when I'm having a rough day, so I can be present — in the moment.

I started a morning routine.

I spend 30 minutes meditating and praying. I'll drop kids off at school, then I'll do a mini zumba workout and a kettlebell workout. I'll listen to Beyoncé's "Run the World (Girls)." I also love inspirational music. When you put on "Feel It" by TobyMac, you can't help but jam out and dance.

I'm eating well and incorporating vegetables into all my meals.

I'll have good fats like almonds and avocados. I love cooking; I'll make grilled lemon garlic chicken with roasted broccoli and red skin potatoes, or lasagne with homemade tomato sauce, fresh basil, and spinach. My little one, Zoey, loves helping me in the kitchen. And we're enjoying family dinners. There are no electronics at the dinner table — ever.



Instead of scrolling on social media, I'm listening to podcasts.

I absolutely love Melanie Mitro's Women Inspiring Women. She gives you the kick in the butt you need to get motivated. At work, Thrive Resets help me stay calm. I'll do deep breathing, and take a minute to loosen up my wrists. And after work, I take 25 minutes to go for a peaceful walk in nature.

I've started to feel like myself again.

Our faith supports us. We attend Keypoint Church here in Bentonville. It gives us community and fellowship. We know that if we have faith in God, everything will fall into place. Layla decided she wanted to get baptized and we wholeheartedly supported her. I got baptized at the same time.

We're spending time together as a family.

We have weekly game nights — we'll play Mancala or Clue. And we have picnics in our backyard; it's just good talking and connecting.

Gardening is my passion, and the kids help me.

They'll water the plants with the hose — and they'll water mommy too! Pink is Zoey's favorite color so we've been planting pink mandevillas, lilies, Knock Out roses, and hydrangeas.

Gardening is a beautiful metaphor for life.

It's a marvel seeing something grow, going from where you started to where you are now. When you take the time to nurture a plant and you see the beautiful outcome, it makes every bit of the work worth it. And it's the same with us, we need to take care of ourselves. I don't know why, but I'm literally tearing up talking about this.

I made the decision to forgive the person responsible for what we've been through.

It's the hardest thing I've ever done, but it means I can focus on being present for my family now, instead of focusing on what happened. That's in the past and I have faith that as a family, one day we'll speak about what we've experienced and inspire others.



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