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\$5,000 WINNER
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My father's health started declining. He had a disease that affects the nervous system and he couldn't do anything for himself. I helped to take care of him. We were very close and when he passed away, it was hard. And now, I do a lot for my mom who isn't in the best health and recently had back surgery. I gained a lot of weight because I was stress eating. I lived at drive-throughs — fast food ruled my life. I put my own health on the back burner. I'm 33, I had high blood pressure, and I weighed 214 pounds. I had mental health struggles. I had to admit that I had anxiety and stress. And once I admitted that, I knew I needed to make some changes.

One morning two years ago, I looked at myself in the mirror and said, this isn't me.

My friend, Tammy Coday, inspired me to start the Thrive Challenge. She's been a huge encouragement for me and she showed me how Thrive helps keep her on track.

The first thing I did was to move more.

I bought a Peleton, which wasn't cheap, but I thought it would get my level of commitment up. I was nervous because of the price tag, but Tammy has one and loves it. I love mine too. I can hop on it anytime I want to, and it's not simply riding a bike; it's great for strength training and meditation. I also walk more. I park at the end of the parking lot to get in extra steps.

Instead of buying lunches, I'll bring food into work.

I'll have a turkey sandwich on low-carb bread, or a salad. I bought a food scale and weigh out my food in portions. I love pizza — I could probably eat it every day of my life — but I found a healthier way of making it by using lavash bread with marinara sauce, mozzarella, black olives and turkey pepperoni. It's fantastic. I've lost 31 pounds and I feel great. My blood pressure is back to normal.

I dedicate time to myself.

It's my quiet time which can even be in the car on my commute to work. Sometimes I'm just completely silent; sometimes I listen to my favorite R&B music by Usher or Summer Walker. And before I go to bed, I watch something lighthearted to wind down, like "Abbot Elementary."



I bought my own house and I enjoy yard work — making everything look neat and pretty.

I like green, green grass that looks like a carpet. I threw 60 bags of mulch around my flower beds! It was a lot of work, but it felt good knowing I had the strength and energy to do that. I don't have a green thumb but I went to "Google University" and learned a lot. I want to make my home like a vacation getaway. I'm making it welcoming and beautiful for friends and family to come over.

Basketball is a passion.

Because I'm not buying fast food, I'm saving money and spending it on tickets to see the Memphis Grizzlies. I've seen three home games. I took my mom to one game and it was awesome.

My co-workers and I did a 5K.

It was for the Family Therapy and Learning Center in Jackson. We all had a blast, hanging out together for a good cause! Two Thrive Challenge winners, Ricky Biggs and Tammy Coday, were there.

I love checklists so I can check off what I've completed.

I also like having accountability buddies like Tammy. We're pretty much best friends. We keep each other on track and give each other grace. We'll often do live rides on the Peleton. She'll be at her house and I'll be at mine. And sometimes we'll go out for lunch to catch up.

I'm dealing with my anxiety and have less stress.

I take the time to think before reacting. I miss my dad a lot, but I'm glad he's not in pain. I know he's in a better place. I'm in a better place too. My dad worked out a lot, so every time I get on that bike, I think about him. I know he'd be proud of me. I have a more positive attitude, and I feel so much better.



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