

Kathryn Marks

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\$5,000 WINNER
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My husband, Joe, passed away eight years ago. I have an eight-year-old daughter, Hannah, who never met her dad. I'm 46 now, and I help to take care of my mom who has early stage dementia. I have a wonderful boyfriend, Ron, who's amazing with my mom and with Hannah. But it's been very stressful, and I put on weight. I was having a lot of soda and fast food.

The turning point came when I found out my A1C was absolutely out of control.

My doctor's supportive but she said, "You've got to lose weight." I was already on medication, and she had to add another pill and a weekly injection.

Brandi Taylor, our store manager, got us all excited about the Thrive Challenge.

I downloaded the app and my first Mircrostep was meal prepping. It's one of the easiest things to do and has a huge impact. I'll pack chicken with broccoli or chicken salad for lunch. One of the things I love is using my portion controlled containers from Walmart. I know it seems silly but it's so satisfying. I take a picture of the table with all the containers for the week full of good food. The old me would've had a burger and fries and pop for lunch!

A group of us at work encourage each other.

My friend, Hannah Gomez, and I check in on each other. We'll say, "Hey, what's for lunch?" And for meetings, instead of grabbing cookies and chips, we'll bring in veggie trays and dips, like hummus.

After work, I decompress.

We have what we call the '5 to 10 Rule' in my house, which means everyone gets five to 10 minutes to come home and relax. I'm not going on at Hannah to get her homework done right away. I change out of my work clothes, I do some deep breathing, and I watch a couple of Thrive Resets. I don't let work come home with me. Our rule helps us all switch over to home life with a good attitude.

Hannah loves to cook with me.

We make turkey burgers and salad. Hannah loves pasta and we've switched to whole wheat and chickpea noodles. We make delicious ground turkey meatballs with rigatoni, and I'll sneak in shredded carrots. Hannah and I love to have a kitchen dance-off. It's goofy and silly and we laugh and have a great time. We'll listen to Taylor Swift, or old-school 90s hip hop like Salt-N-Pepa, and she likes Kidz Bop. Dancing with Hannah makes me 100 percent happy.



We're in this together and we're doing more as a family.

We go on bike rides around the neighborhood. We have a basketball hoop in our driveway, and we shoot hoops.

Niagara Falls is my favorite place on earth; it's gorgeous, and it's only 15 minutes away.

We go hiking there and it's the one place I feel totally peaceful. There are different falls and walking paths, and you can see straight across to Canada. I love seeing people from all around the world who are visiting.

My mom and I have always been close, and we're communicating better.

She lives with us and it's been a struggle going from daughter to caregiver, and she feels it too. But now, we tell each other how we're feeling. I enjoy caring for her. I take her to doctors' appointments. And we love to craft together. We made hand prints of all our hands with paint. And my mom has been teaching me to crochet.

I'm pampering myself.

For my birthday, Ron bought me a gift card for a massage and facial. I was worried about being on a massage bed, and being embarrassed, but the therapist was amazing and it was so relaxing. Now I'm going to have a facial once a month.

I've lost 20 pounds and kept it off, and I've lowered my blood pressure.

The doctor has reduced my medication by half. I feel proud of myself and accomplished. We're going on vacation to Las Vegas, and I have the confidence to be in front of the camera. I want photos of me with my family and friends.

When I wake up in the morning, I say, "You've got this."

After losing my husband I was in a very dark place. I miss him every single day, but I know he'd be happy that I'm happy again. Things are falling into place and I'm at peace.



THRIVE