

Steven Carls

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For most of my life I've been overweight. I had arthritis and I'd get tired easily. In 2011, I had a heart attack. My weight's been up and down since then — at one point I was up to almost 400 pounds. I was on three blood pressure medications as well as medications for diabetes. I'm 56 and I generally didn't feel well. I thought, "Man, it'd be nice if I didn't have to be in pain all the time."

Looking back, I think my weight problems go back to childhood.

I was adopted and eventually found out who my natural parents were but by then they'd passed away. My adoptive parents were fantastic but I always felt like there was a little piece missing in my life. Maybe the way I am today is because of some of that. Growing up, I was told you had to eat everything on your plate. In my family we call dinner time "The Clean Plate Club."

I started to eat better and lose weight at the start of 2022.

My partner, Deborah and I began cooking more chicken and veggies and cut down on carbs like pasta and sandwiches. Then I heard about the Thrive Challenge and thought it would help me be even more successful and accountable. At work we have a support group and we want each other to succeed. People say, "Did you reach your goal this month? Man, you look better."

For lunch, I'll have a veggie tray with cheddar cheese and reduced sodium turkey breast.

Our roommate makes great baked tilapia. Sometimes we'll have spaghetti but we'll use ground turkey for the sauce instead of beef. I had been drinking five diet sodas a day but the doctors say that's a "no-no" and I'm down to five a week. I drink natural flavored water instead.

I work out on my treadmill and with weights, and I bought a stationary bike.

I'm also walking over 20 thousand steps a day. I have energy for Debbie and for our pets! We have four chihuahuas and a cat — they're the loves of our lives. Debbie has two kids and three grandkids and we're spending more quality time with them. We're also making time for each other, going on road trips.



We like going to thrift stores, finding bargains, and re-selling them online.

We have had a couple surprising finds, like little ornament frames we bought for 69 cents a piece. The company didn't make them anymore and we sold them on eBay and made \$300.

I'm an avid gardener and I'm growing roses again.

I used to work for my dad, who had a landscaping company and was a well-known local expert. I'm known for my roses and I've got a little bit of everything: a coral rose called Sedona, a multicolored one called Sentimental, and a rose called Perfect Moment that's an orange and yellow blend and was my mom's favorite. My dad was a big red rose fan and I have a lot of them for his memory. I'll enter some into rose shows when they get more mature. I'm also judging rose shows. Going out in the garden to prune and feed my roses is very relaxing and peaceful.

I am feeling great. These lifestyle changes are making an astounding difference.

A month and a half ago, I looked in the mirror and I almost didn't recognize myself. Altogether I've lost over 100 pounds, 30 since starting the Thrive Challenge. It's easier for me to get around and I'm not in as much pain. My cardiologist has reduced my medications. She said, "Your weight loss is amazing. Keep it up." Debbie's proud of me and I'm pretty proud of myself. I want to be around for my family and my girlfriend for as long as possible. We're planning to take an Alaskan cruise someday and one of my goals is to hit every state in the union.



THRIVE