

# Christi Jackson

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**\$5,000 WINNER**  
**Distribution Center #6042**  
**Pauls Valley, OK**

I lost my dad in 2021. I was eating a lot of junk food and struggling with low energy and depression. I gained weight because I was so sad. I'm 52, and I live alone with my beloved dachshunds, Jax and Zoey, but I wasn't feeling good. I just wanted to get my old self back, lose weight, and have more energy to do the things I love, like going for walks without getting out of breath. I was also stressed about finances. So a year ago, I started the Thrive Challenge.

## **I began with food Microsteps.**

I'm eating smaller portions and I cut down on red meat. My favorite dinner is grilled chicken and rice with green beans. I used to drink a lot of Diet Mountain Dew and I slowly replaced it with water. And I've cut down on going out to eat, so I'm saving money.

## **Microsteps have given me the motivation to exercise more.**

I'm making sure I move my body every day, at least a little. At work, I'm getting in more steps and walking outside during breaks. At home I'm playing with the dogs in the yard. I started going for walks in nature; I love seeing the squirrels and birds. My walks are getting longer and I don't get out of breath as much. I also have a treadmill, which I use when the weather's not good.

## **I've lost 35 pounds in the past year and I feel accomplished.**

My clothes are looser, I feel lighter, and I have more energy. When I look in the mirror I'm a little happier about the way I look, even if there's still a long way to go.

## **My mom and I are connecting more.**

We really listen to each other. We're both healing, and we're supporting each other. We'll meet and have lunch or dinner together, and we have good conversations. We're very close and we're also making the effort to do fun activities. For example, we went to a lavender festival at a vineyard in Fredericksburg. We bought lovely lavender soap, lotions, and lip balm — lots of self-care products made from the local lavender. It all smells amazing! It was a great way to spend the day.



## **I'm making time for other activities that bring me joy.**

My mom and I went to The Preserve, an elephant sanctuary. We learned so much and actually interacted with the rescued Asian elephants. It was very heartwarming and uplifting. Sports are also a passion. I love going to football, basketball, and baseball games with friends.

## **I was very worried about money, so I've been taking Microsteps to budget and save.**

I own my home, but it's old and I had to replace the furnace. There are other major repairs I need to do as there's been a lot of water damage, so I'm now being disciplined about what I spend. Every month I put money away in my savings account, and I have Walmart stock. Having an emergency fund is helping me to feel more secure, which is important because I'm single.

## **Thrive is helping my confidence.**

I'm practicing affirmations. One of the things I tell myself is "You can do this!" It sounds simple, but it really helps, especially on those days when I don't feel like getting up and moving. I also say "Don't give up." Having support from Thrive gives me accountability. I don't feel so depressed anymore. I still miss my dad a lot, but I'm starting to heal and I know he would want me to be happy. I'm starting to feel like myself again.



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