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I'm a veteran and I've been suffering from PTSD for a long time, after serving in the military for 17 years. When I left the military, I found it difficult to adapt. My family and I moved to Arkansas for my career at Walmart, and leaving behind my supportive friends who know what I went through was very hard. I'm 36, I was eating badly, and I wasn't exercising. I had a lot of anxiety because I didn't want to let my family down — my wife, Anais, our daughter, 9-year-old Lydia, and my stepdaughter, Amber, who's 20, as well as my mother who moved with us.

I felt like I was carrying the weight of the world on my shoulders.

Things got very bad and I became a suicide survivor two years ago. But somehow, I was given another opportunity to live. I had professional counseling and joined an immersive therapy program run by Sheep Dog Impact Assistance (SDIA), a wonderful nonprofit that provides post-traumatic support for veterans. Then, to support myself even more in my well-being, I downloaded the Thrive app. I knew I needed to care for myself so I could look after my loved ones.

The first Microstep I focused on was pausing to breathe.

The 4-7-8 breathing technique helps me stay calm. I use it whenever I'm overwhelmed, or when I'm triggered by trauma from my past. I lost good friends in combat situations and I've seen horrific things that I find it difficult to talk about. In the past, I've dealt with anger by expressing my feelings in a negative way, but now, taking time to breathe is really helping me lower my anxiety. I'm also watching calming Thrive Reset videos.

Instead of making excuses, I'm accepting responsibility for myself.

I began keeping a tally on my whiteboard every day charting my progress, whether it was moving or walking or doing my breathing exercises. At night I started taking a Microstep: writing down what I'm grateful for. Slowly, I found that I was more motivated and making consistent changes.

I never thought I'd be a yoga guy, but I found I love it!

I go to hot yoga classes and I've become more flexible; it helps with my breathing and does wonders for emotional and mental stress. I also go to other fitness classes, and to get me in the zone, I listen to reggae or hip-hop music. I've been on a Post Malone kick lately. I also started playing pickleball, where I've been making new friends. I finally have a sense of belonging and community. My friends motivate me and some of them are on similar journeys to mine.



My family and I are spending time together.

Anais and I walk the dogs in the morning and we work out together. We've registered to do the Spartan Race together in Colorado this June, just before our 10th anniversary. We're excited. And I'm a fully engaged dad. I'm helping Lydia practice the piano, which is fun because I played myself when I was younger. We're all going for hikes, we play games, and just appreciate each other.

I'm cooking good meals, which means I avoid snacking on junk food.

My wife bought me a smoker and I've been smoking seafood, turkey, and chicken. I also love to cook sweet potatoes and veggies like broccoli and cauliflower. I've found the key to eating well is exploring herbs and spices, which make everything more flavorful. Parsley, cilantro, coriander, and cumin are my favorites.

Now I'm recovering from my trauma, I'm giving back, which is very meaningful.

I've been working with veterans who are transitioning careers, and I'm supporting college students with career planning. I'm currently the spokesperson on behalf of Walmart for Sheep Dog (SDIA), which helped me get back on my feet. And I was the proud recipient of the Helen R. Walton Community Service Award two years in a row.

I'm learning to love myself and realize that I am worth it, and that I'm not alone.

I remember the number one leadership principle of the Marine Corps: "Know yourself and seek self-improvement." I also know that I want to grow old and see my grandkids and great grandkids! I feel hopeful now. There is a world to see, and I plan to travel to every corner of it.



THRIVE