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I've been struggling with my weight for almost my whole life, and I thought it was my problem to handle by myself. I felt alone. I'm 30 now, and last summer a family member had some serious challenges with diabetes. That was my wake-up call to take care of my own health because I don't want that to happen to me. I weighed 288 pounds and I thought the Thrive Challenge might help me.

At first I wondered why I was doing this.

I was asking myself questions like, "why am I running on this treadmill? Why can't I eat those fries?" But I began educating myself about nutrition. I'm a skeptical individual; I have to know why something works and how it works. I'm enjoying learning how food and exercise can help me create a new way of living. I've actually found it mind-blowing!

I began taking food-related Microsteps, like using olive oil instead of butter.

I've been learning about good fats and that whole foods, like grains and fruit and veggies, are good for our heart and every aspect of our health. They make me feel good, too. I'm eating fresh, whole food now instead of processed food. I realized I could do things gradually while being kind to myself. Choosing an apple or roasted nuts over that cookie has now become second nature. And if I do have a cookie, I'll just have one. Everything in moderation.

I began food prepping on Sunday and planning meals for the week ahead.

Now I'm not tempted to buy fast food. My meals are usually really simple because I'm not a cooking whiz. For breakfast, I'll have overnight oats with fruit and yogurt or kefir. Lunch might be salad with kale, spinach, and tuna. And for dinner I'll have tofu or chicken and veggies, always properly portioned. I've learned how adding spices and herbs like ginger and turmeric to food adds flavor. That's been a game changer. I'm always exploring the seasoning aisle when I'm grocery shopping.

I'm moving more and I've found I'm enjoying exercise.

One Microstep I like is rotating my arms at my desk. Another is taking a break, even just for a minute, to stretch my arms and neck or move around. It's wonderful to get the blood flowing. At home after work I ride my exercise bike. I started with 30 minutes and now I'm riding for 45 minutes a night, and I've added squats to my routine.



My clothes feel looser and I've bought some new ones.

I feel better in my body and I have more energy. I've lost 10 pounds so far and I know I'll continue to flourish in the future because I care about how my body and mind feel — it's not just about the weight.

Some co-workers are doing the Challenge with me, and my mom provides support too.

We compare notes and ideas about exercise and it's fun to hear how they're getting moving. We also encourage each other to eat a healthy lunch. And my mom is always telling me how great I'm doing and how good I look, and we're encouraging each other. She's diabetic and I'm sending her articles and tips. We're both making better food choices.

I've still got a way to go with my personal stress, which has been tied to my weight.

Thrive Resets are helping me relax. They calm me down and quiet the noise in my head. I like the calming voice of the narrator and the nature Resets.

Making time for myself is important.

I really enjoy drawing fantasy figures. I love to come up with new ideas; getting creative makes me excited and happy. Art has now become a passion that I want to pursue further.

I've learned to slow down the world, take a breath and give my mind some peace.

I'm more gentle with myself. I'm celebrating the small wins, because they add up, and I'm cultivating good habits that are sticking with me. My big goal: to go skydiving with my friend when I've lost a bit more weight. I know I'll get there soon.



THRIVE