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I was feeling very anxious. My wife, Violeta, and I have four children, and I was stressed at home and at work. One day last October, I was at work and I started to experience vertigo. It was very scary and I went home early feeling sick. The next day I saw my doctor and I was diagnosed with hypertension, high cholesterol, and anxiety. He prescribed medication, which I've been taking. I'm only 43 and I never imagined I would have these serious medical conditions. It was a big wake-up call. I realized I needed to make some changes.

My manager, Gabino Suarez, inspired me to take the Thrive Challenge.

He told me how much Thrive had helped him. So I began making better food choices. For breakfast, I'll have oatmeal with peanut butter, cinnamon, and raisins. I never liked oatmeal before, but the way my wife makes it, it's very tasty. We cut way back on fast food like burgers and wings. Instead we'll make baked chicken with rice and broccoli or asparagus.

Making time for exercise was challenging, but I began walking every day.

And once I was moving consistently, it got easier. I started hitting the gym, and now I'm enjoying getting stronger and gaining muscle. I've been making friends with other gym members who are much older than me, and they're great role models. I now have a personal goal of being as healthy as they are in my 70s.

I'm more active with my family.

After supper we'll go out and play with our two dogs and run around the yard, or we'll go to the park. Violeta also works at Walmart and has joined me on the Challenge, and we cheer each other on. We're trying different activities like zumba. We're not very coordinated, but we have fun and laugh a lot! Violeta is now way better than me.

My kids and I are spending time together.

We like to play chess, and I do virtual work-outs with my 11-year-old son, Isaac. The girls are very musical. I listen to Valerie, my 18-year-old, practice her clarinet. Jade, who's 14, is in the school choir so I listen to her sing. We're having good conversations about their friends and their school projects. Valerie has enlisted in the U.S. Navy; she's planning to become a nuclear engineer and she talks about her ambitions. I'm so proud of her and all my kids.



I'm connecting with my wife and helping out more at home.

On Saturdays, Violeta works, so I cook and clean the house so she can relax when she gets home. Violeta and I are also watching meditation videos and Thrive Resets together to help with stress management.

At work I was dealing with a lot of panic and fear of failure.

But by stepping away for a moment and breathing when things trigger my anxiety, I find I'm more calm and less stressed. I realize I can slow down and let a situation run its course without focusing on the worst case scenario. I do my best to leave my work thoughts behind when I go home, so I can be fully present with my family.

Violeta and I have started volunteering at our church.

I play bass guitar and she plays keyboards for our services. I don't like being in front of the congregation because of my anxiety, so I sometimes stand behind my wife, but I'm becoming a little more confident. Giving back makes me feel like a positive role model; I'm teaching my kids good values.

I'm becoming a better father and I've started to feel like myself again.

When I was younger, I always saw myself as an energetic, strong person. Now I feel more like I did 10 years ago. My cholesterol is lower and so is my blood pressure. My doctor is pleased and he wants me to keep up with my new healthy habits. And I'm hopeful about the future. I'm looking forward to seeing my kids have families of their own, and to see my grandkids grow up.



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