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\$5,000 WINNER
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After retiring from the Marine Corps, I committed to making my family my number one priority. But I lost sight of that commitment. I'm an HR manager and I was a workaholic. I was heading towards burnout. My husband, Reginald, and I have five kids of our own and a 7-year-old foster son, Drew. I'm 42, and I love having a large family, but I was taking on too much — I said yes to everything anyone asked me to do.

In June 2021 I got started on the Thrive Challenge because I wanted my life back.

I began establishing boundaries at work and leaving on time. If everything isn't completed for the day, I know it will all get done. I've empowered my management team to handle any problems, and I've learned to ask for support.

Creating a schedule helps me carve out special time with Drew.

The older kids are all athletic. When they're at sports practice, Drew and I go outside and play tag or basketball. I'll take him to his therapy and take him for a treat, like ice cream. We'll have his three siblings over to our house — they're with foster parents who live close to us. He loves spending time with me and getting attention, and I love being with him.

Reginald has taken over doing homework with Drew.

I get frustrated and stressed, so I'm relieved I'm not doing it. All my kids are good students, and they're good role models for Drew. He wants to be like his "big brothers." All the kids love Drew and he's been fully integrated into our family.

With good time management, I'm able to give each of my kids individual attention.

I go shopping with our 12-year-old daughter, Avri. She's a girly girl and loves buying clothes and accessories. And on Sunday after church, we go for lunch together, which is our special time. My boys are teenagers so they don't crave one on one time, unless it's related to sports. Zavien, who's 15, is very good at basketball and I'm his team's photographer; that's my hobby. Tre, who's 17, got a college scholarship to play football, and I had the time to help him navigate the recruitment process. We're very excited.

Reginald and I split the chores.

The kids do their own laundry and help with cleaning and vacuuming. And the older kids help me cook. We all like baked salmon and asparagus or shrimp with broccoli and rice. Two or three nights a week we sit down for family dinners after the boys are home from practice.



I've learned now to say no, which has made a huge difference.

Friends and neighbors often ask me to watch their kids or pick them up from practice. I used to say yes all the time, but now I have better boundaries. I take a breath and sometimes say no; I remember I need to take care of myself too, so I can be there for my family and myself. One day a month, I'll treat myself to a pedicure or a massage. And at home, I'll have a nice bubble bath. I'll light a candle, put on R&B music, like Mariah Carey, and just relax. Nobody is allowed to ask me anything! It's my time.

I feel less stressed, and I'm sleeping better.

I used Microsteps to create an evening routine. I'll watch a Thrive Reset with mountains and lakes, or do a breathing exercise. When it's close to 10:30 p.m., it's time to wind down and put my phone away. Then I read the Bible and a prayer before turning off the light. I'm getting seven to eight hours of sleep instead of four or five.

Putting myself first makes me a better mom.

Recently, Reginald and I went on a real vacation to Jamaica — just the two of us. My mom looked after the kids. We hiked to a waterfall, swam, and ate delicious spicy Jamaican food. It was such fun. I came home fully recharged.



THRIVE