

Josh Faulkner

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\$5,000 WINNER
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I've struggled with weight since I was a kid. My parents divorced when I was eight, and it was difficult for me going back and forth between their houses, and sharing holidays. Food felt like something I could control — it was comforting. My mom was a single parent and I had to help raise my younger brother. I was cooking three meals a day at 10 years old. That was a lot of responsibility.

I'm 35 now, and last year I was stuck in a rut.

I was either on my phone, or eating fast food to deal with my emotions. My wife, Stephanie, and I have a 14-month-old baby, Isabella. But I wasn't spending time with my family. I'd go to work, go home, do chores around the house, and go to bed. I had high blood pressure and high cholesterol, and I weighed 360 pounds.

At work, I was promoted. That meant a lot more responsibility and more stress,

I was trying to juggle my job with being a good dad and husband. A co-worker, Pele, was talking about the Thrive Challenge in the break room. She'd been a winner. I also read inspiring stories on the Thrive app, and I said, "You know what? I'm going to give this a shot."

First, I cut out pop and energy drinks.

That was hard, but after a while, I stopped feeling sluggish and had more energy. Then I cut out junk food and sweets, and I started making green juices with cucumber, apple, and celery. I'm meal prepping, and Stephanie and I share the cooking. We make ground chicken patties with steamed broccoli and green beans. Cooking has become a hobby and I really enjoy it. Stephanie's from Guatemala and we're making delicious Guatemalan food, like Milanese — pan-seared flank steak with garlic and onion cooked in a sauce with coconut oil. We serve it with rice. The baby's eating real food with us, and we're setting a good example for her.

Most days I work out on my stationary bike.

My wife and I walk around the neighborhood with our daughter. And at work, I'm moving more. I walk between 12 and 14 thousand steps a day. At home, I'm stretching and doing resistance exercises.

I've lost 32 pounds — I look and I feel better.

I want to get off the high cholesterol and blood pressure medications. I'm trying to lose as much weight as I can on my own and prepare for bariatric weight loss surgery. Now that I'm healthier, my doctor says I'm a great candidate.



I'm feeling less stressed.

Every morning I set aside 15 minutes for reflection and prayer. I don't look at my phone and I read my daily devotional. It eases my anxiety and helps me to be more positive throughout the day. I also do the Microstep of changing the photos on the lock screen of my phone every day. Choosing different family photos makes me smile and brightens my day.

Our living room has become a playground for Bella.

I love playing with her. She has a new slide and a ball pit. Her favorite toys are her linkable animals — she has a sloth, a monkey and a polar bear that move and sing together. At bedtime, we read Dr. Seuss books to her, like Oh, the Places You'll Go! This little girl can change your entire mood, even when she wakes us up crying at 2:30 in the morning! As soon as I walk in the room, she stands up in her crib and smiles, and goes "Dadda," and it melts my heart.

At work, I'm more positive.

An associate's niece passed away at 12 years old. I stayed in contact with her, making sure she was okay, and I wanted to find out whether there was anything we could do to help. I turned up at the funeral with a bouquet. I wanted to give her a hug and let her know that her work family supports her. I'm a people person and I want people to know I'm there for them.

My attitude has changed — I feel a lot more optimistic.

You wouldn't believe what a difference the Thrive Challenge has made to my life. It's helping me create better habits. I've taken the first steps towards a better me.



THRIVE