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I grew up watching my mother struggle with schizophrenia, and it made for a really hard childhood. I remember being seven years old and taking care of my five-year-old sister when my father had to go to work. My mother ended up passing away from diabetes complications when I was only 19, and my father died from a heart attack eight years later. After that, I had trouble having children, and I sank into a depression. I went through panic attacks and I felt completely alone. I gained a lot of weight because I took refuge in eating and I neglected my health a lot. I ended up losing control of my thyroid, suffering from high blood pressure, and becoming pre-diabetic.

It got to a point where my legs swelled up and they hurt all the time.

It affected me at work because I couldn't stand for a long time, and it affected me at home because I had no desire to leave the house. I was always looking for excuses not to go out. I am very fortunate to finally have two beautiful children who are everything to me, and they need me to stay well. They both have autism, so I need to be around since they have special needs.

I started reading other peoples' stories who had done the Thrive Challenge.

I heard about the Thrive Challenge at work. Two of my co-workers, Yamil Cruz and Liliana Santiago, had done it and told me to try it out. When I started reading other peoples' stories, I was so inspired and wanted to make a change in my life. I chose Food and Move as my two focuses. My children and my family need me, and I want to live and enjoy them every day. I downloaded the Thrive app and I said to myself, "I'm going to do this."



My first step was looking at my diet.

I started cutting back on carbohydrates and sugars, and instead started consuming more vegetables, fruits, chicken, turkey, and fish. I focused on drinking more water to stay hydrated instead of drinking juice. I also started doing cardio on a stationary bike for fifteen minutes a day. I stayed consistent, and now I'm already doing 30 minutes a day!

The shift in my routine affected my sleep, too.

I was in the habit of going to bed at 12:30 a.m. or 1:00 a.m. beforehand. I was on social media for hours before bed, but now I've started going into bed at 9:00 p.m. and disconnecting from my devices. Every night, I drink a glass of water, put my phone away, and get into bed. I have so much more of a restorative sleep. I now wake up with new energy and I feel so much happier.

In three months, I have managed to lose 45 pounds and my blood pressure has improved.

I recently went to my doctor, and the doctor told me if I continue on this rhythm, I could overcome my pre-diabetes. I was so happy. I feel very good physically, mentally, and spiritually. My self-esteem has improved and I feel more energetic and agile -- and my legs don't hurt or swell anymore. We're spending more time as a family now that I have more energy, and we go to the park over the weekends or to the theater. I value every moment we spend as a family and I want to keep it up. I've learned that the sky's the limit.



THRIVE