

Jennipher Garcia

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\$5,000 WINNER
Walmart Supercenter #470
Corpus Christi, TX

I was feeling tired and sluggish. I was eating a lot of flour tortillas, fried potatoes, and fast food and didn't feel good about myself. I'm 41 and my husband, Jose, and I have five children aged between 23 and two — I was 18 when we had our first child. Our little one, Juvia, wanted me to chase her around, but I had no energy.

My doctor told me my blood pressure was a little high and that my blood sugar was too high.

He said I'm still young and advised me to change my lifestyle. My motivation for starting the Thrive Challenge was my kids. I want to be around for them, and for my one-year-old granddaughter, Ellie Jalean, or "Ellie Jelly!"

I started baking chicken and seafood, and steaming vegetables, like broccoli and squash.

A recipe my kids love is bell peppers stuffed with ground turkey and a little cheese. And when we're making Mexican food, we substitute corn tortillas for flour tortillas. For snacks we have celery with peanut butter and raisins. The kids like them too — we call them "ants on a log." I have much more energy, and by not eating out, we're saving 200 dollars a month.

We're eating together and we're not in a hurry all the time.

We plan recipes and the kids tell us what they're doing. My 14-year-old son, Josiah, is learning to play the drums. He wants to join the school band. Mercedes, who's 21, works at a call center and she's been talking about her plans to go back to college next year and study psychology.

My husband is helping out.

When I'm working late, he'll start dinner and then he'll help wash the dishes. If I've had a really long day, he'll notice that I'm feeling overwhelmed and he'll jump in and start helping with Juvia. When she's in bed, Jose and I will sit down and watch T.V. together. We're catching up with The Walking Dead.

I'm spending time with my little one — she loves music, so we're dancing together.

That's how we get our day started, Juvia will jump up and down and say, "Let's dance." Right now, we're listening to Pitbull, Karol G, and Grupo Frontera.

We go outside and I'll chase her around the backyard.

We have a play house and we'll play games. She'll be inside pretending she has a store. I'll be at the window shopping for ice cream and she'll pretend to serve me! She looks up to me and it feels good to be doing something positive with her instead of being on the phone. I feel like I'm a good role model.



In the morning I take a little walk around the neighborhood.

I listen to nature, the birds chirping, and squirrels running up the trees. It clears my head. Then at work I get my steps in walking around the store, and I'll talk with customers about our vision center.

I've lost 30 pounds and I'm not tired anymore.

My doctor says my blood pressure is lower and my sugar is perfect, without taking any medications. I look in the mirror now and say "I love the way I look." I'll put on makeup and I like the way my clothes are fitting — I feel more youthful.

I volunteer at my daughter's preschool.

I'm a member of their policy council. We make recommendations like new activities for the children and vacation time for staff. I help with classroom decorations and assist the teachers with paperwork. It makes me feel good to help out, so the staff who work so hard have less on their plate.

At work I feel more jolly!

I'm bubbly and laughing and friendly. I'm an optician and a lady came in for new glasses who was having a rough day. I told her, "We can find a frame that makes you feel as beautiful as you are — even though you don't realize you are!" We found her brown cat-eye frames with gold on the sides that complement her eyes! I could see the excitement in her face, her eyes lit up and she went away happy. It made me feel satisfied knowing I'd made her day!

The Thrive Challenge has changed my perspective on life.

It's given me hope and motivation for the future. I know I can do this and I want people to know that anything is possible.



THRIVE