

Maja Ainsworth

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\$5,000 WINNER
Walmart Supercenter #1907
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I lived in Serbia most of my life, and I was always healthy and weighed around 130 pounds. Then I got married in 2018 and moved to the US, and it was a huge change for me. My three daughters still live in Serbia, and it's really painful to be away from them. I miss them every day. I started gaining weight once I moved here, and I ended up getting to 210 pounds. I started having pain in my back and my joints because of all the extra weight. I knew something had to change, but the real turning point was when my husband, David, bought us two bicycles to ride together and I couldn't even ride the bike. I ended up crying because I felt like my muscles didn't even work anymore. That scared me so much that I decided to make a change.

I was first told about the Thrive Challenge around three years ago, but I wasn't ready to commit to it yet.

But after the bike incident, I decided I could only help myself by doing something differently. I called a nutritionist to ask for advice about changing my diet. She taught me about adding more green vegetables into my meals and portioning my meat to the size of the palm of my hand. I downloaded an app that helped me scan foods to see their nutritional information, which helped me decide what to eat. It was really hard at first, but I'm a fighter and I knew I had to keep pushing.

My husband, David, bought me an indoor bike, and I started with five minutes a day.

Even that was really hard at the beginning. It was a struggle! But I worked my way up and now I ride for half an hour, and then do half an hour on the treadmill, too. My energy really started getting better so some days I feel like I can do even more. David used to be in the military, so we've been working out together and he bought me mats and other things that help me work out at home.



One day we walked by a martial arts studio in our neighborhood, and I got the idea to sign up for a class.

I've always wanted to learn self-defense and David has always told me about martial arts, and how it could help me protect myself if there was ever an attack. And it's also an amazing workout! I started going a couple times a week and it's amazing. You're sweating the whole class, and you get so much energy when you're doing it! It's tiring but I feel so energetic when I'm done. I try to go whenever I'm not working! I could go five or six times a week and not get bored of it.

We're saving up so we can spend more time as a family.

I've stopped buying unnecessary clothing and cut back on junk food, so we're saving \$500 a month. I try to go to Serbia twice a year to see my girls and my dad and brother, and I also have a new blue-eyed nephew! It's important for me to save up to go see them. My daughters will move here once they turn 18, but until then it's a struggle.

Losing weight has made the biggest difference on my legs, my back, and my whole body.

I have more energy now and even my shifts at work feel less tiring. Work can be pretty busy, especially around the holidays, and now I just don't have a problem doing it. I feel great and I'm just reminding myself how much joy it brings me to improve my lifestyle and feel good again.



THRIVE