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\$5,000 WINNER
Fulfillment Center #6253
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My family came to Florida from Cuba when I was seven. We were political refugees. A couple of years later, my father passed away from cancer. My mom raised me and my sister, Ana. Then Ana got pregnant at 18. I was 11 and I had to grow up very quickly, helping out with the baby and trying to do my homework. I never had time for myself.

Now I'm 26 and I live with my fiancé, Maxine, but I wasn't taking care of myself.

I was eating fast food like McDonald's and Taco Bell and drinking soda and juice. I felt exhausted. I was the kind of girl who got off work and munched out, playing video games. I had stomach problems. I went to the doctor and she said I needed to change what I was eating.

Maxine and I started cooking together. I'll make salmon, and Maxine will do the rice.

She's always been healthy and got me excited about home cooking. The other day we made mushroom and chicken pasta with tomatoes and spinach and it was absolutely delicious. We'll have salads with romaine lettuce and lots of veggies and we've made a deal to stay away from sodas. The way we're eating is much better for my digestive system. I've lost seven pounds and I am more comfortable in my body. I feel more energetic and I'm not bloated anymore.

Instead of eating in front of the TV, we sit at the table to eat — strictly no phones.

We'll sit at the table and have a glass of wine, and we talk about our lives and what went on at work. Maxine's at school to become a pharmacist — I'm very proud of her. And I'm taking HR classes through Walmart.

I'm riding my bike around the neighborhood.

I hear the birds sing and see the kids playing and having a good time. I'm getting exercise without even knowing it — I enjoy it so much. Being outdoors is one of my favorite things. It helps me clear my mind.

Maxine and I take our dog Peanut Butter for walks.

There are great beaches and piers near us. We like heading down to St. Petersburg to people watch. It's much better than being on our phones and playing video games. We make time for each other now and we're more united, more "together."



As a kid I loved art and it's my way to relax.

I never used to make time to paint, but Maxine and I are both very artsy, so we bought canvases and paints. We had a picnic art date at the park, and we brought strawberries. I painted trees and grass; she painted a strawberry. We're also doing some crocheting but she is much better than me.

I go over to my sister's house and play with my niece and nephew.

They live three minutes away so I see them a lot. My mom lives with them so I see her, too. Amy is 14 now and Alejandro, who is three, makes me chase him around. He likes to play hide and seek and I hide in the closet.

Working can be stressful and deep breathing helps.

If an associate loses a family member, as HR clerks, we often hear first and have to call the person to our office and let them know what happened. And that never gets easier. I have to take a moment and breathe before I tell them and then another moment afterwards. I try to be as kind and helpful as I can and that's a priority for me because at the end of the day we're all people, we have lives, we have families.

My goals are to get my degree and to buy my own home.

I want a good income and I want to feel stable and safe, which I've never experienced before. I'd also love to travel. I've always wanted to go to Germany — it looks beautiful.

Wow, this planet is so beautiful.

When I'm outdoors, I notice that the clouds are pretty, the sun is shining, the waves are hitting the shore. You see people walking their dogs, riding bikes, cars driving by. Wow it feels surreal and I am grateful to be alive.



THRIVE