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I wasn't feeling good about myself during COVID. I'm a pharmacy technician and it was a very difficult time for us. We were on the front lines, getting people's medications filled. I was stressed and I'd eat donuts in the morning, then fast food in the evening. I was always drained after work. I'm 50 and divorced with three adult kids and four grandkids. I was spending all my time caring for other people — our patients and my family — without devoting time to myself. I've never been a fan of working out and I wasn't getting any exercise. I'm only 5'3" and I weighed 200 pounds. I'd get short of breath walking and I'd spend my days off watching Netflix. My cholesterol was too high, and I found out that I was at risk for a stroke, so I downloaded the Thrive app and decided to get healthy.

To get started, I bought work-out clothes so there'd be no excuses!

I wanted to do things the right way. I bought a stepper, which only cost \$30 and some light weights. They were simple things to keep me motivated.

After work, I exercise for 30 minutes.

I listen to upbeat music while I'm working out. I love "Fighter" by Christina Aguilera, "Wake Me Up" by Avicii, and anything by Lady Gaga. Right away I found that moving and stretching gets rid of my stress 100%.

I cut out sugary drinks.

I started brewing green tea instead, and I add fruit like blackberries and a little honey. I make smoothies with apples, bananas, soy milk, and protein powder, and for dinner, I'll have veggie stir fries. I get excited about picking out healthy options to cook. It's also lighter on my budget. I used to spend \$40 a day on food — that's a lot of money.

My pain's gone, I've lowered my cholesterol without taking drugs, and I've lost 20 pounds.

I feel proud of myself. And now when I'm out, I notice that I feel really good. I'm not huffing and puffing. When I used to go to the movies with my son, my legs were sore and it was hard to walk when I got up. Now nothing hurts.



I decided to go on my own to the state fair.

I've never done that before and it was a big adventure. I said to myself, "Let me just hop on the train to Dallas." It made me feel so independent. There were rides, photography and art shows, an aquarium, and an amazing butterfly museum. I would usually eat the fried food they sell, but I was proud of myself because all I had was a tuna sandwich. I had the energy to walk everywhere, I felt really strong, and I had a great day.

My mood is better at work; I have a lot more compassion.

The other day a lady came in with her elderly mother to pick up a prescription. I asked them how they were feeling and they said they'd been at the hospital all day. I said I was really sorry, we had a nice conversation and I was very patient. No one else had asked them how they were feeling that day. I think sometimes when we're stressed in the pharmacy, we don't realize how that affects other people. My view is that you have to see people as people.

I'm getting back to being creative.

I love art and I bought adult coloring books and little pencils. My favorites are fantasy-themed books with dragons and forests, and I have one with mandalas. I really love doing the shading. I've always enjoyed writing and I'm writing YA (young adult) stories. I'm also keeping a gratitude journal, writing down what I'm grateful for like my family and my health.

I'm feeling great.

I used to think changes had to be made in a big way, but with Thrive I've learned that you just have to get started and take small steps which will make a big difference. Because I'm feeling better and doing something good for myself, I'm more helpful to everyone else. Before they were getting "stressed out me." Now they're getting the best me, someone who's in a good mood, and is a lot happier.



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