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I used to be a workaholic. I was a store manager and I have an hour commute into work — I leave home at four in the morning. I was smoking a pack and a half of cigarettes a day, I'd pick up fast food for lunch, and when I got home, I was physically and emotionally shut down. I'm 44 and my wife, Mary, and I have four kids but I wasn't spending time with them. I'd sit in front of the T.V. with a bag of chips. Mom would say to the kids, "Hey, let your dad rest." I felt irritable and the whole family suffered.

One morning, a year ago, I was driving into work and felt pressure in my chest.

It got pretty intense, I made it to the hospital and it turned out I'd had a heart attack. They put me on four different medications and the doctor said, "If you make some lifestyle changes, you can go on to live a long, healthy life." My wife was tearing up.

When I got home, my kids pulled me into the living room for an intervention.

They said they didn't want to lose me and I had to stop smoking. That was the moment I decided to change. I'd encouraged associates to take the Thrive Challenge, but had never done it myself, so I downloaded the Thrive app.

I gave up smoking, and to start with, it was challenging.

I'd always used my breaks to go and smoke, and at home I'd go outside to smoke. But it got easier and now I find activities to do instead, like connecting with my kids or riding my bike.

I stopped eating fast food and I have a new passion for cooking.

I've always liked cooking but never found the time before. Now I watch tons of cooking shows for inspiration. One of my favorite new recipes is chicken baked in the oven with a honey maple garlic sauce which we have with brown rice. My mom's family is from Mexico and I make great turkey tamales with veggies.

I lift weights and I've taken up cycling.

A co-worker, Calvin, encouraged me to start and I'm cycling 10 miles a day. I am in the best shape I've been in for 15 years, I have much more energy, and my wife thinks I'm a different person.

I decided to truly start living my life.

I took a step down in my career. I'm earning a lot less but my wife went back to work. And I am loads happier at work, I have much less stress, and a different perspective. I love my job.



I challenged my team to cut the wait time for online pickups to two minutes or less.

Now, we're all waiting for our customers with a smile. I walk up to their car window and smile and say: "Hi I'm Stephen, where would you like me to put your groceries?" And I do it quickly. I care about our customers. One woman told me she was going to her son's baseball game. If she didn't get there on time, she might miss her kid hitting a home run. That two minutes matters.

I'm connecting with my heritage on my mom's side and learning Spanish.

I downloaded the Duolingo app. Three associates who recently moved to the U.S. from Guatemala speak to me in Spanish and I help them with their English.

After work, I'm enjoying family time.

We bought a pickleball net for the driveway and we all get out there and play together. I took part in a charity pickleball challenge for leukemia research with my three younger kids, I'd never have had the energy to do that before. I didn't have anything to give. We're playing basketball with the kids and my sons are lifting weights with me. In the evening we talk and joke rather than just watching T.V.

I used to tell people to take care of themselves, now I'm living my own words.

I feel so much gratitude towards my family, they inspire me to better myself everyday. The Thrive Challenge means another chance at life. It's going to sound odd but having a heart attack so young turned out to be a good thing. It led me to cherish the life I have. Now I know I'll be there for my wife, my kids, and one day my grandkids.



THRIVE