

# Christopher Velasco

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I grew up eating highly processed food and snacks. In my teens I was overweight, and three years ago I weighed 480 pounds. It was depressing and obviously a health hazard. And both my parents have diabetes. I had no motivation to do anything, and I felt worthless.

## **Two years ago I had weight loss surgery.**

Walmart made it possible because most of the cost was covered by insurance. I lost a lot of weight, but I reached a plateau and hit a brick wall. I'm 26 now and I really wanted more support. I was eating a lot less, but I wasn't focusing on nutrition. When I heard about the Thrive Challenge, something clicked and I got started.

## **I started to look at nutrition facts and read food labels,**

I wanted to get smarter. I read a lot of articles on the Thrive app and started doing Microsteps, like thinking about whether a food item is worthy of you before eating it. I cut out processed food and sugar, which was hard because I love sweets.

## **I'm meal prepping and eating more protein.**

For dinner, I'll have chicken or fish and seasoned rice, which I make in my rice cooker. Or I'll have tuna and broccoli with lentils. Instead of sweets, I eat tons of fruit, like oranges, apples, and bananas. Fruit has so many natural nutrients. For snacks, I have light trail mix, yogurt, or almonds. At work, I always have a jug of water next to me.

## **Working out has become a way of life.**

I run before work a few days a week, I go biking, and I lift weights at the gym. I'll do 5Ks at the park. I'm moving more easily, and there's a night and day difference in how I feel and my outlook on life.

## **I've lost 30 pounds in the last few months on the Challenge, and I feel amazing.**

In total, I've lost 294 pounds since the start of my weight-loss journey. I went from 46-inch waist pants to 26.

## **I'm much more confident — it still seems strange to me to feel attractive!**

I've been dating my girlfriend, Halle, for six months and we're very happy together. She knows about my Thrive journey and what I've been through. She supports me, she holds me accountable, and she's proud of me. Halle and I love to hike. I'm actually assisting her at the gym! I help her with form. And we both love being outdoors and going for hikes.



## **I'm studying for a degree in science and information technology, through Walmart.**

I feel more motivated to learn and move ahead in my career. And I'm focusing more because I have newfound energy. Next, I'm planning on doing a master's degree.

## **Volunteering for my church makes me feel good and puts a smile on my face.**

I help with technical support, running lights, and sound for our children's services twice a week. It's awesome. I have a good knowledge of technology so I can be really useful. And being with children gives me a mental break. I always have a good laugh.

## **Giving back and faith are important to me because I was raised in a Christian family.**

My parents came to the U.S. from Mexico, became citizens, and pulled themselves up in the face of years and years of challenges. Every Sunday after church, I spend time with my family. I have five brothers, five nieces, and five nephews, and hanging out with the kids is always joyful. We play on the swing, ride bicycles, and build legos. And we eat delicious food like pozole and tamales.

## **My family is tremendously proud of me.**

They're always telling their friends about what I've achieved and my hard work. And when I reflect back on where I was and the progress I've made, I feel proud of myself. I've put in so much effort and I look at how far I've come — I'm fit, I'm healthy, and I'm happy. The Challenge has given me a road map to bigger and better things, and now I know what other changes I can make in my life. Next, I'm going to start a money journey. I want to save money, become financially stable, and buy a house.



THRIVE