

Jesus Manuel Ramos Marrero

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\$5,000 WINNER

Walmart Supercenter #2346

Toa Baja, PR

Before starting the Thrive Challenge, I was in a state of depression and anxiety due to my separation from my ex-partner. He was my first boyfriend since I had come out of the closet, and he was the first to be accepted by my family. We were together for five years, so when we broke up, it wasn't easy. It really affected me. I felt like I had no desire to keep going. I just wanted to sleep and sleep. I didn't want to go to work or progress in my career. I just wanted to stay locked up. I dropped from 185 pounds to 120 pounds in just a few months without diet or exercise, and my family and friends were getting really worried about me.

I decided to seek help and talk to someone.

I had reached a point where I would wake up and not want to go to work, and on top of that, I was in a bad economic situation and had to move. Just knowing I had to leave my home, which had become my comfort zone with my three puppies, was really hard. I was starting from scratch, and I needed help. I spoke to the Department Lead, my co-manager Mirelys, and also the head of HR. I knew my depression was affecting my work, and they encouraged me to see a psychologist. They also told me about the Thrive Challenge, and how it could help me get back into a healthy rhythm. I found the Microsteps really interesting and I liked the idea of finding a way to focus on my future. I remember saying to myself, "This is my opportunity."

I signed up for the gym, and that was my starting point.

I wanted to tone up and feel healthier. I had lost a lot of weight, so I started eating foods that would make me stronger, like chicken breast, fish, turkey, mashed potatoes, brown rice, and vegetables. I started really liking fish with brown rice and broccoli for dinner. My relatives started worrying less about me since I was finally taking care of myself again. I was slowly feeling like myself again.



The Microsteps even became part of my consultations with my therapist.

I would watch the videos on the Thrive app, and they helped calm me down and get me out of the circle of anxiety that was affecting me so much. I'd talk to my therapist about the changes I was making, and we would talk about my goals — to enroll in college and become a cosmetologist, makeup artist, actor, model, and photographer. I want to walk among the best cosmetologists and makeup artists in the country. That's what a lot of education and practice is for — and I was finally feeling motivated to do that.

I decided to move into my parents' house temporarily to save some money.

I am currently in debt of 7000 dollars. I've started to cook more at home and not spend as much money on food, and I'm trying to only spend when it's necessary. I know I'm not in a good economic situation but my mindset has changed completely. I'm ready to change my life because I know that I have been able to overcome my traumas and finally love and value myself.

Today, I feel like a different person.

I feel renewed. I have better health and a better lifestyle, and I'm working on fixing my economic situation. But most importantly, I'm working on my mental and physical health. Instead of waking up with anxiety, I wake up with a sense of encouragement. And when I do feel the anxiety creep in, I play rain music to reset. It helps me relax. I'm so thankful for my friends at work who were my first resource at my worst moment. And I'm continuing to tell myself to never stop fighting for your dreams.



THRIVE