

# Johnny Smart

.....  
**\$5,000 WINNER**  
**Home Office**  
**Bentonville, AR**

My wife, Larissa, and I have three great kids, but I was feeling depressed. I'd spend countless hours watching videos and I wasn't sleeping well. My dad died in April and it was traumatic. At school, everybody wanted to be Michael Jordan, but I wanted to be my dad. It wasn't like he was the most educated man, but he had wisdom that shaped my life. I cried and cried and found comfort in food. I'd eat rice and beans at two in the morning. I'm 37 and I weighed 397 pounds.

## **I said to myself, "Johnny, as you get older, the weight's going to be harder to take off."**

Then one day, I took my 13-year-old daughter, Lyaddie, to a theme park. She asked me to go on the roller coaster with her and we waited in line, but when it was our turn they told me I wouldn't fit — it was gut wrenching. Lyaddie said "It's okay Daddy, we can do something else." Thinking about it brings tears to my eyes. I was ashamed.

## **I got started on the Thrive Challenge and right away it was a godsend.**

I'd never been consistent before, but doing small steps really worked for me.

## **I started by drinking lots of water and I stopped eating after seven at night.**

I have oatmeal for breakfast and salad with protein for lunch. I'm snacking on raw vegetables. We looked up recipes online and for dinner now we might have grilled chicken and sweet potatoes. I'm opening up my palette to new food like quinoa. I have days when I say, "I really want a slice of pizza." But instead of eating half a pie by myself, I'll have half a slice just to get the taste.

## **Family dinners are exciting now; we're communicating with each other.**

Everybody puts their cell phones into the middle of the table. We play a game: the first one that picks up their phone has to wash the dishes. After dinner, instead of always watching T.V., we'll whip out Monopoly or Twister.

## **I'm taking walks with my family.**

We have little lakes near our house with wildlife like alligators and frogs. When my 11-year-old son, Jayden says, "Dad, I need five minutes," it's amazing to be able to walk that extra mile with him. The other day we got back home and I said, "Man, I'm not even out of breath, let's do it again!"



## **I've become the father I always wanted to be.**

I'm more engaged because I have more energy. Jayden and I are playing football together. And I help my daughter, Lyaddie, who's into karate. Our two-year-old, Mazikeen, is running all over the place and I'm able to chase her and flip her. I've lost 36 pounds so far. I'm changing my habits and my mindset.

## **We're saving to buy our own home to provide stability for our family.**

We're getting better at money management and we put money in our savings account, so there's enough for school supplies and everything we need. I'm even saving coins in a piggy bank.

## **At work, I've just been promoted to store project coach.**

I'm so excited and my goal is to move up in the company and inspire others.

## **I miss my dad but I've had a great realization.**

I will never be the man that my dad, John Smart, was, but I can become the best version of Johnny Smart and be happy. Next year I'm planning to take my kids to Universal Studios and ride the roller coaster with my daughter. I want to scream from the mountain top to everyone starting at the base that the view is great up here and the sense of accomplishment is amazing. But this is just the starting point.



THRIVE