

\$5,000 WINNER

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**Walmar Supercenter #2027
Lavale, MD****Focus****Microstep**

Once I complete a task, I take a 10-minute break for a mental reset.

**Outcome**

"I'm more focused and doing better in school."

I'm 37 and I recently decided to go back to school to pursue my master's degree in Geographic Information System Management. I have a lot of career goals, and after completing my degree, I plan to work as a GIS analyst and aspire to advance to a leadership position where I can manage and lead a dedicated team, contributing to meaningful projects and making a positive impact.

I wanted to start the Thrive Challenge to help me focus and give everything the attention it deserves.

The hardest part about getting my degree has been eliminating distractions around me. It's so easy to get sidetracked by notifications, emails, and random thoughts. I've found it easy to lose my train of thought and end up procrastinating, and then I feel stressed about having work to catch up on. I also have a 1-year-old, Eleanor, at home, so I want to spend time with her too.

I started by writing a to-do list at the beginning of each day.

This Microstep really helped me stay on task and get my work done. Once I complete a task, I take a 10-minute break for a mental reset. I used to try to get everything done without a break, but I've realized that taking some time to reset helps me be more productive when I get back to work. I set a timer on my watch so I don't get carried away, and then I either take a stroll around the neighborhood or a short hike in one of the local parks. The combination of fresh air, serene surroundings, and physical activity is so good for my mind. It's a precious moment to center myself, release built-up tension, and gain a fresh perspective.

Being active during the day helps me parent better, too.

My daughter started walking recently, and I had felt like I didn't have the energy to keep up with her. After work and my schoolwork, I was so lethargic and really fell prey to sedentary habits. My movement breaks during the day have enabled me to keep up with my toddler..

I'm teaching my daughter the importance of getting outdoors.

I have always been an outdoor type of person, whether fishing, hunting, hiking, or just walking around the park. Since I'm able to finish my school work earlier, I have more time to spend with my family, and my daughter pushes me to go outside more.. I like to push Eleanor around town in her stroller or go to a local water park with her.

By being more organized and focused, I can manage my time better.

I can now spend quality time with my loved ones without feeling stressed or preoccupied with work, which was never the case beforehand. It has also helped me be more present and engaged. I wish I could go back a few years and tell myself how powerful it is just to do one thing that helps your well-being, like taking a few minutes in the morning to write out a to-do list. My grades have even improved!