

**\$5,000 WINNER**

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Lebanon, TN****Connection****Microstep**

I look in the mirror and tell myself out loud, “I am beautiful, I am strong, I am worthy just as I am,”

**Outcome**

“I’m feeling happier and more confident.”

I went through a difficult breakup, which left me feeling terrible. I’m 25 and I had been very dependent on my ex partner, who cheated on me. I lost all love for myself and I’d sit at home. I wasn’t eating well or moving, I lost weight and I was unhappy with the way I looked. I felt stressed, and lonely. My parents and I are from Venezuela. We came to America three years ago, but they live far away from me in Texas, and I miss them. I decided to start the Thrive Challenge because I wanted to take care of myself and feel better about my life.

I began with a Microstep: repeating positive affirmations.

I look in the mirror and tell myself out loud, “I am beautiful, I am strong, I am worthy just as I am,” and “I have a bright future ahead of me.” They make a big difference to my confidence and self-esteem. Affirmations remind me that I am a valuable person who deserves love, and they help me become more resilient. Another great Microstep I do every day when I feel anxious is pausing for some deep, slow breathing.

My next step was getting support from a therapist.

I have a psychology degree so I knew that talking about my problems to a professional could help me move forward. It was good to vent about my feelings. I also took connection Microsteps to make friends at work. I’ll go for dinner to a nice Mexican restaurant with a few co-workers, and sometimes we go bowling. I really enjoy their company, and our outings distract me from my worries. I’m also studying English, and I’m communicating better with everyone.

It was hard to get moving, but I began going for short walks.

I walk for 20 or 30 minutes in the morning and in the evening after work. I try to stay present, without listening to music. I like listening to the sounds of nature, looking at everything going on around me, like families enjoying walking their dogs. I appreciate the flowers and birds. Walking clears my mind, and helps me to relax and recharge.

When I get home from work, I cook a healthy dinner.

I’m not much of a cook so I put on music to motivate me. My favorite singer is Justin Bieber and my favorite song of his is Intentions; it makes me feel hopeful. I love singing and dancing as I cook as if I were on stage with him! Mostly I cook simple meals like baked chicken with broccoli, rice, and salad. I’ve gained a few pounds and I have more energy.

When I feel anxious or sad, I call my parents.

I don’t like to worry them too much, but they’re always there to listen; they tell me jokes and we laugh together. It makes me happy to know that they love me and I’m not alone.

My goal is to bring my parents to live with me, so I’m doing my best to save money.

My parents and I are putting money away for a down payment on a house. I’ve been taking money Microsteps, including opening a savings account and cutting down on unnecessary expenses, like clothes I don’t need. To make extra money I do Uber driving on the weekend. Together, my parents and I have saved \$3,000 so far. We’re on our way to achieving our goal, which feels good. I would also love to take them on a vacation to Disney World.

Everything is slowly getting better.

I feel more confident, and I’m excited about sharing my story because I want women to know that we are worthy and no one has the power to make us feel bad. I’ve realized that we all deserve good things in life. My goals now are to focus on continuing to grow, and to enjoy my life.