

# Susan Hampton

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In 2018, I found out I had thyroid cancer. I was literally sitting at work talking to a coworker one day and I kind of rested my hand on my throat and said, "Oh my gosh, there's something that wasn't there a few days ago." I went to get it all checked out, and a month later, I was having a thyroidectomy. I went through radiation and got through it, and said, "I beat it. I'm good." But then, less than a year later I was told I had a recurrence, and had to go in for a bigger surgery. They opened up my throat and took out 18 more lymph nodes.

**I knew I was a tough woman, but having the cancer come back a year later made me second guess myself.**

I got down in the dumps for a while. I was in a dark place. But I had the surgery and did the radiation, and then on my birthday I was declared "no evidence of disease." Today, I still have to get my blood work done every six months, but I was so happy to have the treatments behind me.

**One day I was sitting in the break room at work, and I had a realization.**

I have an amazing husband, Wade, a 26-year-old daughter, and a dog, and I love all of them. And I was reading about the Thrive Challenge, and I just said to myself, "You know what? If I want to live longer than expected, I need to start making some lifestyle changes." I had become pretty overweight and I knew it was time to make a change if I wanted to be around for my family.

**When I got home that day, instead of sitting on the couch, I took my dog for a walk.**

We walked around our cul-de-sac, which is about a mile. It felt great! I also remembered I have a friend in Little Rock, and her daughter Hillary started a business that helps you track your food so I tried it out and I really liked it.

**My husband, Wade, was jazzed about the changes I was making.**

He just retired from Walmart after 25 years, and he's a bigger guy. I don't think he ever really knew how down I was during the second bout of cancer because I tried to hide it. I didn't want to make the people around me sad.



But once he saw how happy I was making these changes to my diet, he joined me. I remember one day I said to him, "Yeah, I think I'm going to be around for a little bit longer." We've almost all but stopped eating out, and we feel a lot better. It's just us at home since our daughter lives in Memphis, so this is kind of what we're focused on right now.

**I've started reminding myself what I want out of life.**

I keep a gratitude journal, and I write down what I want. I want to be around for my husband, I want to be around for my daughter, and of course my little dog. I can get into that darker place sometimes but I'm trying to stay grateful. I'm so grateful for my job. I've been there 32 years, and besides my dad and my brother, it's the longest I've had something in my life. When I write that I want to be around for a long time for my daughter, that I want to be around for my husband, that I want to be a good wife and a good mom, that just reiterates what I'm trying to do.

**After everything I've gone through, I'm focusing on feeling good.**

I was recently talking to a coworker who had to get open-heart surgery and wanted to delay it. I told him to handle it right away. I said, "When I found out I had cancer, I just wanted the stuff out of my body as soon as possible." He ended up coming back to me and saying he's going to go in for surgery about 20 days earlier than he had planned. I think knowing what we need is important. I'm so grateful that I'm walking, I'm feeling better, and I'm living a better quality of life. Most importantly, I am proving to my small family that I want to be around as long as possible.



THRIVE