

Healthy strategies key to dealing with stress

By Kathryn Reed

Getting rid of stress might not be possible, but how one deals with it can lead to a healthier outcome.

Money, work, health and relationships are the top stressors for people in the United States.

Identifying the stressors is the first step to being able to get rid of them.

Sonia Rupp with Barton Psychiatry last week shared ideas about how to cope with stress. Nearly 70 people gathered at Lake Tahoe Community College to hear the talk.

One of the problems is people often choose ways to cope with the stress that compound the problem. It could be chilling in front of the TV, overeating or choosing unhealthy food, or drinking alcohol.

Rupp said a drink at the end of the day to take the edge off is probably one of the worst things someone can do. This is because alcohol is a depressant. The booze also can lead to a poor night's sleep.

"More and more women are using alcohol as an unhealthy strategy," Rupp said.

Lack of sleep comes with its own set of issues, which can exacerbate the stress.

Bed is not the place to be reading, watching TV or working on a computer. Sleep and intimacy, Rupp said, are the only activities that should occur in bed.

Being active, getting quality sleep and not drinking are the better ways to handle the stress.

“When you can’t control the stress, it’s important to have healthy coping habits,” Rupp said.

She suggested taking a few minutes every day to breathe. It doesn’t have to be full-on meditation, but just enough time to let the brain turn off and not have the worrisome thoughts be all consuming.

Rupp also suggested mental exercises to divert attention to something other than what is causing the stress. Creative outlets are also encouraged, especially because they tend to provide a sense of accomplishment.