

# Suicide prevention at Lake Tahoe: Turning distress into eustress

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**Lisa Stekert**  
**Suicide Prevention**



**Make it your goal to live a well-balanced life and transform your stress into positive energy.**

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## WHAT TO DO

If someone you know exhibits warning signs of suicide:

- Do not leave the person alone.
- Remove any firearms, alcohol, drugs or sharp objects that could be used in a suicide attempt.
- Call the U.S. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255).
- Take the person to an emergency room or seek help from a medical or mental health professional.

Learn more: Visit [tahoelifeline.org](http://tahoelifeline.org) for more information about the Tahoe Truckee Suicide Prevention Coalition.

TAHOE-TRUCKEE — Stress is a natural part of living, and people experience some form of stress almost every day. While many people believe that all stress is bad for you, this is not necessarily true.

Instead of trying to rid your life of all stress, make it your goal to live a well-balanced life and transform your stress into positive energy.

When we experience stress, the human body's response is to release a surge of adrenaline, cortisol and norepinephrine.

These changes set off our response to "fight" or "flight," which increases blood flow to the heart and large muscles in our arms and legs.

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This response to stress is meant to only last a short period of time, and then our hormones and chemicals should return to their normal levels.

Healthy stress, called “eustress,” has positive effects on the body, such as increasing alertness and cognitive performance.

Experiencing positive stress can improve overall performance and productivity, self-esteem, and health by stimulating our immune system.

Stress causes the release of adrenaline stress and increases your heart rate, which can increase your physical performance and endurance.

An example of experiencing good stress is when studying and cramming for exams in school or preparing for a presentation.

“Distress” is the term used to describe the negative side of stressful situations. The threat to our health occurs when stress becomes long-term or chronic.

When we feel stressed, we are more likely to exercise less and overeat which interferes with healthy living.

If the stress doesn't go away or we can't calm down, it can contribute to negative health consequences, such as depression, anxiety, sleep interference, decreased concentration and an unhealthy lifestyle.

Turning distress into eustress is the first step in creating a positive impact on wellbeing.

Practice taking the time to process what is happening. This helps calm down the body before rushing to address the situation. Turn the stress around by seeing the challenge as an opportunity for personal growth.

Here are things you can do to decrease your distress and turn it into eustress:

#### **REFRAME THE EVENT**

What is the purpose of this challenge you are experiencing? What are the personal benefits you gained? If you can find some meaning or growth potential in the challenging situation it can change the experience from negative to positive. Think about how the challenge can make you a stronger person or teach you about what is ultimately important in life.

#### **FIND SUPPORT**

Reaching out to friends and family is one of the most effective ways to decrease stress. Spend time with others who lift you up and remind you of your strengths and lovability.

Connect with others who have experienced a similar issue. Sharing experiences with others may help find new meaning, coping skills and support. Consider if you need to enlist outside resources to help you through the experience.

#### **PRACTICE MINDFULNESS**

When we experience stress over a prolonged period of time, our minds tend to drift back to the stressor, replaying scenes in our mind. Mindfulness is a skill that brings our mind back to the present moment creates a calm and accepting attitude.

When you find yourself in the cycle of worrying, stop what you are doing, take a deep breath and notice how your body feels at that moment. Taking a break to ground yourself can stop the cycle of constantly thinking about the stressor.

#### **AVOID UNNECESSARY STRESS**

Take an inventory of who and what contributes to your stress. Do you feel stress when commuting to work? If possible allow more time to get to work or shift your work hours to avoid the time crunch.

Is there someone in your life that causes you stress? Try to limit your time with this person or end the relationship. Whether in your personal or professional life, know your limits and learn to say “no” when asked to take on additional projects.

*Lisa Stekert is the facilitator for the Tahoe Truckee Suicide Prevention Coalition and Outreach Coordinator for the Tahoe Truckee Prevention Task Force. Contact her at [lstekert@tfhd.org](mailto:lstekert@tfhd.org) or by calling 530-582-6733.*

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 2



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 1