

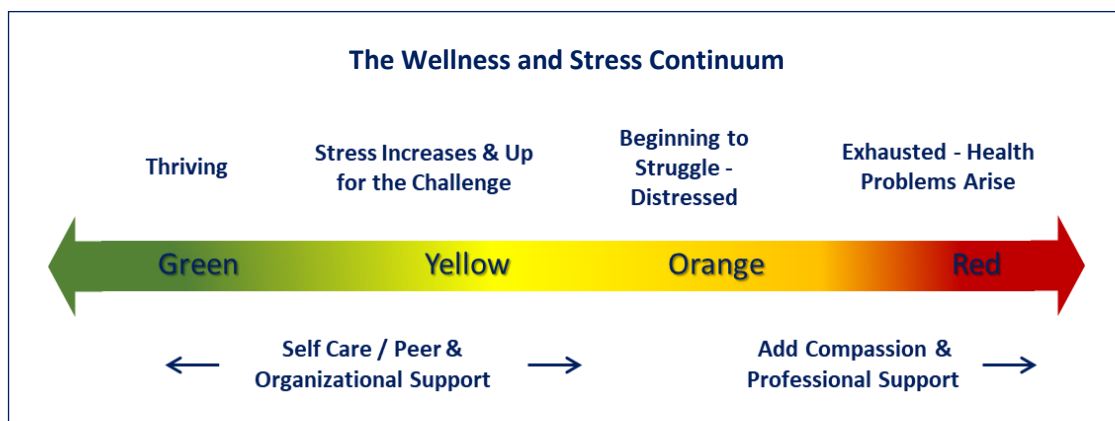
The COVID-19 pandemic is unfamiliar territory, with many compounding stresses. It is normal to feel stressed or worried. During hard times, well-being and resilience are more lasting when we are part of mutually caring relationships. The research on this is solid — the quality of our social connections mitigates the harm of adversity and fosters long term well-being.

A great way to cultivate connection with others during this time is to “Buddy Up.” A buddy system can help you support one another’s welfare and safety. It helps make sure no one is left to handle things all alone.

How it works:

1. Pairs or trios formally identify themselves as a buddy system. Teams, clinics and departments are asked to ensure that everyone has a buddy.
2. Establish the platform you are going to use to connect with each other. (e.g., text, FaceTime, WhatsApp, email, phone, Zoom or in-person at work as appropriate).
3. Set a time to check in with your buddies so it becomes a regular part of your daily routine. You can create your own check-in system using an emoji or refer to the wellness continuum below, e.g., “today I am feeling green or yellow, may be some orange...”
4. Offer support and listening from a place of understanding and care by asking each other questions to take an emotional pulse, for example:
 - How are you managing the basics, such as sleeping, eating or exercise?
 - Are you taking time to unwind and recharge?
 - How are things at home or work? Is there something you felt grateful for or moved by? A challenging moment?
5. Support each other by sharing coping tips and resources.

One helpful resource is the OMA Physician Health Program: 1-800-851-6606 or email php@oma.org



¹ Physician Health Program, OMA, as adapted from Dr Mary Elliot, University Health Network, Toronto and Nash et.al, 2010