



# Mental Wealth For W.O.C

Speaker: Dionne Williams, MSc

# Introduction

## What Is Mental Wealth?

- Mental wealth is having an abundance of resources that can help increase your self-worth and expand your sense of self beyond your current mental activities, including negative biases, anxiety and obsessive thoughts.
- These resources are readily available to improve your own and others' mental wealth.
- The aim is to raise awareness of issues surrounding mental health in a compassionate way that allows individual's culture, spirituality and differences to be valued and used to build their own positive wellbeing.

# My Story

## **Mental Wealth for W.O.C matters to me because:**

- I have two degrees in psychology
- Worked with disproportionately high percentage of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women in my career
- I had an awesome job and great life
- BUT THEN....
- I lost my job to redundancy
- My relationship with the person I held dear broke down
- Spent 1 year in a women's refuge
- I had to check my own mental health as a result!
- *MY STORY IS NOT UNIQUE AND HOW I FELT ABOUT BEING A MINORITY AND A WOMAN AND QUEER WHILST HOMELESS WAS FAMILIAR WITH OTHER WOMEN LIKE ME!*

# Overview

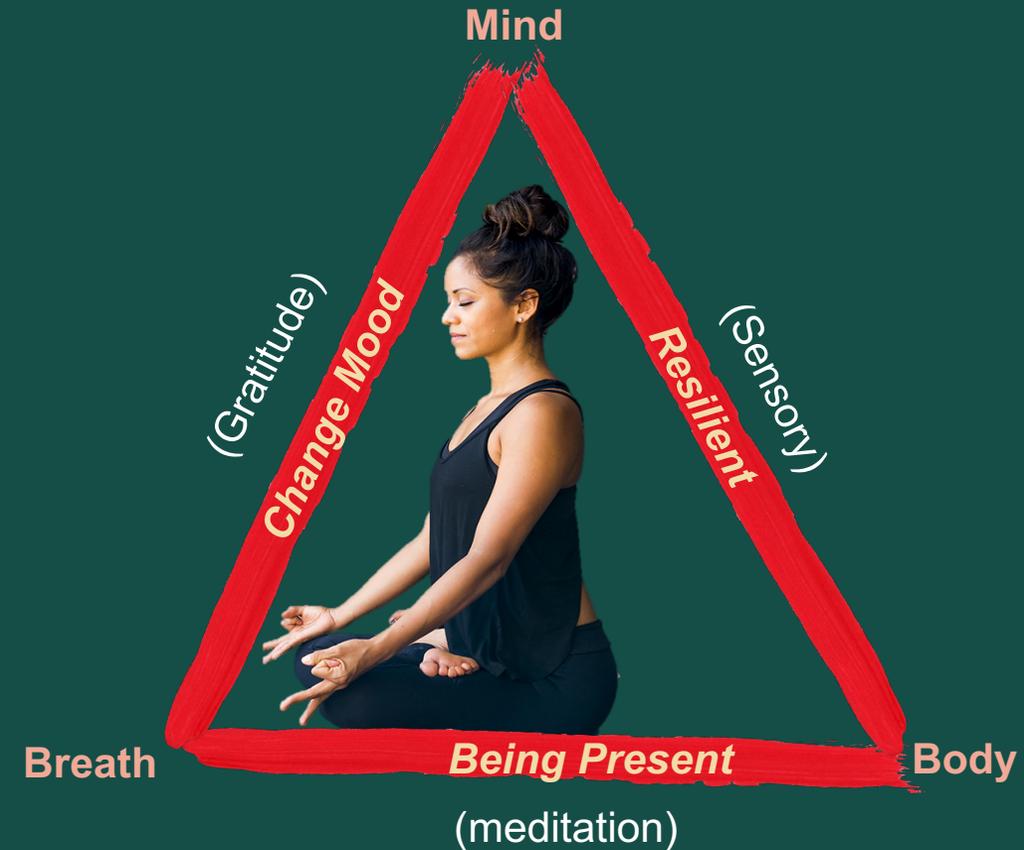
Today, I will introduce and demonstrate my own **Mental Wealth Triangle** using 3 very basic tools:

- **5 Minutes Grounding Meditation** – The mind connecting with the body in the present moment.
- **5 Gratitude Statements** – Instantly switches low mood to a more balanced or positive mood.
- **5 Sensory Soothing Tools** – Soothes intense emotions through the 5 senses (to signal to the limbic system, it is okay to be relaxed).

# Mental Wealth Triangle (Model)

Mental Wealth Triangle Model is **important**:

- Just like a triangle form is one of the most basic forms in existence, so are the exercises, **basic in nature and costs the participant nothing**.
- In the same way the triangle is the strongest shape with minimum structure but gives maximum strength, so is this model that involves **the mind, the breath and the body** to be used to expand one's inner strength to become **resilient, present and change mood**. These are achieved with the minimal social constructs (i.e. race, gender, economics and social norms) getting in the way of **one's own narrative of being mentally well**.
- Most people around the world use a triangular shape as a dwelling with the two walls and the earth as a base. This model can be used in the same way as a **safe mental space to feel grounded and protected**.
- Each tool relates to each other to enrich one's mental wealth.



# Mediation Was My Mental Rest

Many women may feel re-traumatized whilst engaging in support and housing services (mostly designed for men by men). It may feel painful or feel unsafe having to re-tell their horrific stories or fear of not being believed. Many women from marginalized groups find it hard to trust strangers, especially when the person engaging with them have limited understanding of their culture, religion/spirituality, gender, race or sexual orientation.

I stayed cooped up in my room (at a temporary accommodation) due to COVID-19 but mostly because I did not feel safe or at peace living with so many different people. I felt uncertain about my future and my purpose whilst still having trauma and the preparator living in my mind.

Guided meditations helped me to feel safe and grounded. It gave my mind a break from the pain and anguish. My body was more relaxed and my mind became clearer as I practiced daily. I got to a point where I was able to start forming a plan as to how I was going to survive my situation until I move on and rebuild my life.

I even started bringing plants into my room to feel nature around me and aid my meditation. Other women started doing the same. We even planted and harvested potatoes with the children in our garden.



# 5 Minutes Grounding Meditation

## Instructions:

You can sit or stand. Close eyes. Breathe in for 3, out for 7 as you place one hand on top of your head. Feeling your hand's weight on your crown. You can massage your scalp here.

Draw your mind to the breath going in and out of your body. Breathe in deep through the nose and breath out slowly through your mouth.

Now place all of your awareness on the bottom of your feet. Pay attention to any sensations. Finish this meditation by saying out loud, "I am safe. I am calm", as many times until it feels true. Now open your eyes.

## Key Benefits:

- + Helpful during dissociation, panic, anxiety, strong impulsive urges, flashbacks, and intense emotional distress.
- + Produces lasting beneficial changes in immune-system and brain electrical activity.
- + Reduces persistent pain and stress.
- + Improves concentration and aid sleep.

# Gratitude Became My Attitude

I cried on my first night at the women's refuge. I was relieved and grateful but I woke up blaming myself for how I got there. I was afraid to tell my friends and family what happened to me and that I was homeless.

I started punishing myself for "allowing myself to be so "stupid"". Once negative thoughts got a whole of me, I did not want to get out of bed, speak to anyone and just stress about not having a home.

It was until I started meditation, a question popped into my head.... "what can you begin to be grateful for?"

I thought it was silly at first and I struggled to answer that question but it always circled back to me. After a few days, my answers started flowing. I started to look for things to be grateful for. It became habit to the point, I would ask the same question to my support worker and the other women in the refuge. Eventually, I started making positive relationships in the refuge. My new attitude started rubbing off on others. I started telling women what I did for living and they were shocked! They asked if I could help them become happier and we started a sister circle, speaking our truths, laughing, eating/cooking together, and sharing affirmations.

We began to be kinder to each other and collectively healing, all from this attitude of gratitude.



# 5 Gratitude Statements

## Instructions:

"List 5 things you are grateful for in this moment." For this event, I want you to type in the chat your 5 things.

Do not ask as a question as it gives space for brain to have rebuttals or say "I've got nothing to be grateful for." They can do this exercise anytime of the day. They can write, draw, stick pictures up or just say their answers.

## Key Benefits:

- + Gratitude helps contribute to an overall sense of well-being. Thus, it helps your body fight off illness.
- + Regularly practicing gratitude eases symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- + Improves your relationships as gratitude plays a key role in forming relationships, as well as in strengthening existing ones.
- + It takes only 10 weeks of regular gratitude practice to feel more optimistic and positive about your present lives and the future.



# Intense Emotions Being Released Helped Me To Thrive

As a woman of colour, I was taught that you could not show your emotions outwardly, it was a sign of weakness. I believed in the "Strong Black Woman" toxic troupe showcased to me by other Black women (who were sick, tired and fed up) and upheld more so by non-Black people.

I entered counselling with being okay to be able to take a hit, minimalising my traumas and proud to wear a badge of being a "survivor." My counsellor asked about showing anger and I realized like a lot of women, especially Black women have been conditioned by White Patriarchy that if I wanted to show anger then I was "belligerent, uneducated and aggressive." This silenced me about my assault, social injustices, experiences micro-aggression and discrimination. No one bothered to ask me, "why were you angry Dionne?"

I found strength in my anger, laughter, joy, sadness and other complex emotions to motivate myself to find solutions and holistic healing. I began to regulate my emotions more easily and embrace all sides of me regardless of what labels others wanted to place on me. I found emotional freedom.

# 5 Sensory Soothing Tools

## Benefits:

This exercise is powerful in turning off the limbic system (or emotional/mammalian brain) that is in charge of our stress response. Logical thinking do not play a role this part of the brain, it is emotion driven.

A sensory toolkit trains your brain to calm down through your body. It is a physical collection of objects that helps you to become centered.

## Instructions:

1. Start with smell (strongly associated with emotions and memory). Find a sense that you love or is calming. E.g. scented lotion, scented candles, diffusers, incense, perfume, oils, flowers, etc.
2. Next is touch. Find a piece of fabric that you love to carry it with you, or an object like shells, bead or stones that you an rub and keep in your purse or pocket. Alternatively, it could be your hair, brooch, a pet, etc.
3. Let's move on to taste. It is important to be careful not to encourage emotional/binge eating. Also aware of eating disorder triggers. Find a flavoured lip balm, your favourite tea, or a mint, seeds, or a piece of fruit to taste. This can be used to associate joy with a task they find not pleasant like counselling or chores.
4. Next is sight. Find something you can look at that calms you. It could be noticing the room you are in, a view outside your window, a painting or a picture on your phone that feels loving. Anything that makes you feel safe. You can also close your eyes to conjure a mental image that you can make up as your happy place.
5. Now for sound. Find/record sounds that makes you feel safe. It could be water running, birds chirping, your favourite upbeat music tracks, white noise, a chant, prayer, humming, singing, or even silence.

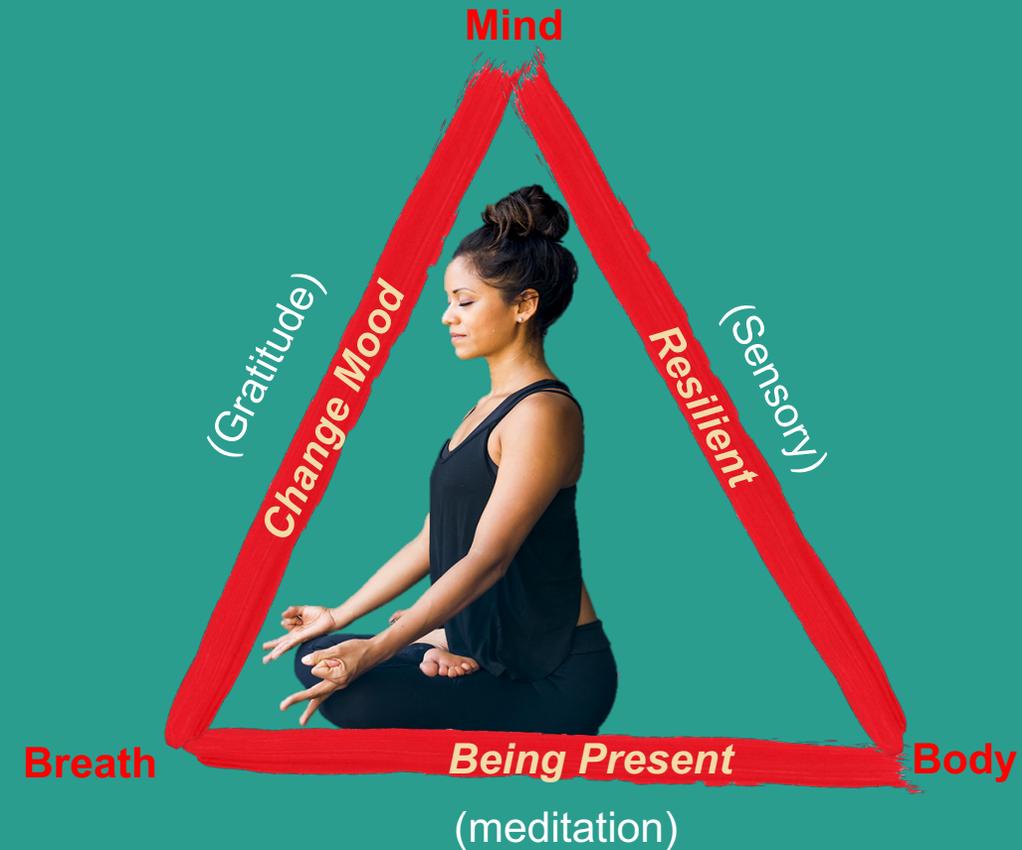
Take a minute and write down your 5 sensory soothing objects. Then after this event, collect them and place your sensory tools in a special place in your home or work bag. Each day you can explore your tools and take notice of its effects.

# Conclusion

Today, we explored:

- ✓ The meaning of Mental Wealth - It is having an **abundance of resources** that can help **increase your self-worth and expand your sense of self** beyond your current mental activities, including negative biases, anxiety and obsessive thoughts.
- ✓ The basics of the **Mental Wealth Triangle**
- ✓ 3 basic tools you can use and share with your service users:
  - **5 Minutes Grounding Meditation** – The mind connecting with the body in the present moment.
  - **5 Gratitude Statements** – Instantly switches low mood to a more balanced or positive mood.
  - **5 Sensory Soothing Tools** – Soothes intense emotions through the 5 senses (to signal to the limbic system, it is okay to be relaxed).

These tools are **readily available, free, easy to follow**, allows the individual to **be in control** and **connected** to their own narrative of **being mentally well**.



# Stay Connected

- Feel free to message me in the chat
- You can email me at: [DionneWilliams2010@gmail.com](mailto:DionneWilliams2010@gmail.com)
- Check out my coaching and consulting practice:

**[DionneWilliamsCoaching.com](http://DionneWilliamsCoaching.com)**

