



The Four Agreements A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom

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Author's Bio: Don Miguel Ruiz was born into a family of healers, and raised in rural Mexico by a *curandera* (healer) mother and a *Nagual* (shaman) grandfather. The family anticipated that Miguel would embrace their century –old legacy of healing and teaching, and carry forth the esoteric Toltec knowledge. Instead, distracted by modern life, Miguel instead chose to attend medical school and become a surgeon. A near death experience changed his life and sunned by his experience, he began an intensive practice of self-inquiry. Don Miguel Ruiz, a *nagual* from the Eagle Knight lineage, has dedicated his life to sharing the wisdom of the ancient Toltec.

Author's big thought: In the Four Agreements, don Miguel Ruiz reveals the source of self-limiting beliefs that rob us of joy and create needless suffering. Based on ancient Toltec wisdom, the four Agreements offer a powerful code of conduct that can rapidly transform our lives to a new experience of freedom, true happiness, and love.

The Toltec

- Thousands of years ago, the Toltec were known throughout Southern Mexico as “women and men of knowledge”. They were scientists and artists who formed a society to explore and conserve the spiritual knowledge and practices of the ancient ones.
- They came together as masters (*naguals*) and students at Teotihuacán, the ancient city of pyramids outside Mexico City known as the place where “Man Becomes God.”
- Over the millennia, the *naguals* were forced to conceal the ancestral wisdom and maintain its existence in obscurity.
- The esoteric Toltec knowledge as embodied and passed on though generations by different lineages of *naguals*. Though it remained veiled in secrecy for hundreds of years, ancient prophecies foretold the coming of an age when it would be necessary to return the wisdom to the people.
- Don Miguel Ruiz, a *nagual* from the Eagle Night lineage, has been guided to share with us the powerful teachings of the Toltec.

Domestication and the Dream of the Planet

- Dreaming is the main function of the mind, and the mind dreams twenty-four hours a day.
- Before we were born the humans before us created a big outside dream that we will call society's dream or the *dream of the planet*.
- The dream of the planet is the collective dream of billions of smaller, personal dreams. This includes all of society's rules, its beliefs, its religions, its different cultures and way to be, its governments, schools, social events, and holidays.
- The outside dream has so many rules that when a new human is born, we hook the child's attention and introduce these rules to his or her mind.
- *Attention* is the ability we have to discriminate and to focus only on that which we want to perceive. The adults around us hooked our attention and put information into our minds through repetition. That is the way we learned everything we know.
- We learned how to behave in society: what to believe and what not to believe; what is acceptable and what is not acceptable; what is good and what is bad; what is beautiful and what is ugly; what is right and what is wrong.
- Our parents, teachers, and siblings were all trying to hook your attention. We also learn to hook the attention of other humans, and we develop a need for attention, which can become competitive. The need for attention becomes very strong and continues into adulthood.
- The outside dream hooks our attention and teaches us what to believe, beginning with the language we speak. Language is the code for understanding and communication between humans. Every letter, every word in each language is an agreement. Once we understand the code, our attention is hooked and the energy is transferred from one person to another.
- As children, we didn't have the opportunity to choose our beliefs, but we *agreed* with the information that was passed to us from the dream of the planet through other humans. The only way to store information is by agreement. As soon as we agree, we *believe* it, and this is called faith. To have faith is to believe unconditionally.
- That's how we learn as children. Children believe everything adults say. The result is surrender to the beliefs with our agreement.
- Don Miguel Ruiz calls this process the *domestication of humans*. And through this domestication we learn to live and how to dream. And we also learn to judge: We judge ourselves, judge other people, and judge the neighbors.
- We train our children whom we love so much the same way we train any domesticated animal: with a system of punishment and reward. When we went against the rules we were punished; when we went along with the rules we got a reward. Soon we became afraid of being punished and also afraid of not receiving the reward. The reward is the attention that we got from others. We soon develop a need to hook other people's attention in order to get the reward.
- With that fear of being punished and that fear of not getting the reward, we start pretending to be what we are not, just to please others, just to be good enough for someone else. We are afraid of being rejected. The fear of being rejected becomes the fear of not being good enough. Eventually we become someone that we are not.
- All our normal tendencies are lost in the process of domestication.
- The domestication is so strong that at a certain point in our life we no longer need anyone to domesticate us. We are so well trained that we are our own domesticator. We can now domesticate ourselves according to the same belief system we were given, and using the same

punishment and reward. The belief system is like a Book of Law that rules our mind. We base all of our judgments according to the book of Law.

- The inner Judge uses what is in our Book of Law to judge everything we do and don't do, everything we think and don't think, and everything we feel and don't feel. Everything lives under the tyranny of this judge.
- There is another part of us that receives the judgments, and this part is called the Victim. The Victim carries the blame, the guilt, and the shame.
- Our childhood beliefs are based on a belief system that we never chose to believe. These beliefs are so strong, that even years later when we are exposed to new concepts and try to make our own decisions, we find that these beliefs still control our lives.
- Breaking the rules in the Book of Law opens your emotional wounds. Even if the Book of Law is wrong, it makes you feel *safe*. Our belief system is the Book of Laws that rules our personal dream. All these laws exist in our mind, we believe them, and the Judge inside us bases everything on these rules.
- True justice is paying only once for each mistake. True *injustice* is paying more than once for each mistake. The human is the only animal on earth that pays a thousand times for the same mistake. Every time we remember a mistake, we judge ourselves again, we are guilty again, and we punish ourselves again, and again, and again.
- How many times do we make our spouse, our children, or our parents pay for the same mistake?
- The Judge in the mind is wrong because the belief system, the Book of Law, is wrong. Ninety-five percent of the beliefs we have stored in our minds are nothing but lies, and we suffer because we believe all these lies.
- Every human has his or her personal dream, and just like the society dream, it is often ruled by fear. The same fears manifest in different ways for each person but we experience anger, jealousy, hate, envy, and other negative emotions.
- All of humanity is searching for truth, justice, and beauty. We don't see the truth because we are blind. What blinds us are all those false beliefs we have in our mind. We have the need to be right and to make others wrong. Our beliefs set us up for suffering.
- To be alive is the biggest fear humans have. Death is not the biggest fear we have; the biggest fear is taking the risk to be alive – the risk to be alive and express what we really are. We have learned to live our life trying to satisfy other people's demands. We have learned to live by other people's points of view because of the fear of not being accepted and of not being good enough for someone else.
- During the process of domestication we create an image of how we should be in order to be accepted by everybody. We create this image, but this image is not real. We are never going to be perfect from this point of view.
- Not being perfect, we reject ourselves. We are not good enough for ourselves because we don't fit with our own image of perfection. We feel false, frustrated, and dishonest. The result is that we feel unauthentic and wear social masks to keep others from noticing this. We are so afraid that somebody else will notice that we are not what we pretend to be. We judge others according to our image of perfection as well, and they naturally fall short of our expectations.

- Humans punish themselves endlessly for not being what they believe they should be. Nobody ever abuses us more than we abuse ourselves, and it is the Judge, the Victim, and the belief systems that make us do this.
- We have the need to be accepted and loved by others, but we cannot accept and love ourselves. The more self-love we have, the less we will experience self-abuse. Self-abuse comes from self-rejection, and self-rejection comes from having an image of what it means to be perfect and never measuring up to that ideal.
- There are thousands of agreements you have made with yourself, with other people, with your dream of life, with God, with society, with your parents, with your spouse, with your children. But the most important agreements are the ones you made with yourself. In these agreements you tell yourself who you are, what you feel, what you believe, and how to behave.
- If you want to live a life of joy and fulfillment, you have to find the courage to break those agreements that are fear-based and claim your personal power. Our personal power is dissipated by all the agreements we have created, and the result is that we feel powerless.
- If we can see it is our agreements, which rule our life, and we don't like the dream of our life, we need to change the agreements. When we are finally ready to change our agreements, there are four very powerful agreements that will help us break those agreements that come from fear and deplete our energy.
- If you adopt these four new agreements, they will create enough personal power for you to change the entire system of your old agreements.
- If you can begin to live your life with these agreements, the transformation in your life will be amazing.

Be Impeccable With Your Word

- *Speak with integrity. Say only what you mean. Avoid using the word to speak against yourself or to gossip about others. Use the power of the word in the direction of truth and love.*
- The first agreement is the most important one and also the most difficult one to honor. It is very, very powerful.
- Through the word you express your creative power. It is through the word that you manifest everything. What you dream, what you feel, and what you really are.
- The word is a force; it is the power you have to express and communicate, to think, and thereby to create the events in your life. But like a sword with two edges, your word can create the most beautiful dream, or your word can destroy everything around you.
- The word is so powerful that one word can change a life or destroy the lives of millions of people. Hitler's word, based on fear-generated beliefs and agreements, will be remembered for centuries.
- During our domestication, our parents and siblings gave their opinions about us without even thinking. We believed these opinions and we lived in fear over these opinions, like not being good at swimming or writing.
- By hooking our attention, the word can enter our mind and change a whole belief for better or worse. For example: You may believe you are stupid. And you may have believed this for as long as you can remember. This belief may cause you to do a lot of things just to ensure that

you are stupid. Then one day, someone hooks your attention and using the word, let's you know that you are not stupid. You believe what the person says and make a new agreement. As a result you no longer feel or act, and someone hooks your attention and says, "Yes, you are really the most stupid person I have ever met," the agreement will be reinforced and become even stronger.

- Impeccability means "without sin". A sin is anything that you do which goes against yourself. You go against yourself when you judge or blame yourself for anything. Being without sin is exactly the opposite. Being impeccable is not going against yourself. You take responsibility for your actions, but you do not judge or blame yourself.
- Sin begins with rejection of yourself. Self-rejection is the biggest sin that you can commit.
- If I love myself I will express that love in my interactions with you, and then I am being impeccable with the word, because that action will produce a like reaction. If I love you, then you will love me.
- Being impeccable with your word is the correct use of your energy; it means to use your energy in the direction of truth and love for yourself. If you make an agreement with yourself to be impeccable with your word, just with that intention, the truth will manifest through you and clean all the emotional poison that exists within you. But making this agreement is difficult because we have learned to do precisely the opposite.
- We must begin to understand what the word *is* and what the word *does*. If you understand the first agreement, *be impeccable with your word*, you begin to see all the changes that can happen in your life. Changes first in the way you deal with yourself, and later in the way you deal with other people, especially those you love the most.
- If we adopt the first agreement, and become impeccable with our word, any emotional poison will eventually be cleaned from our mind and from our communication in our personal relationships.
- Impeccability of the word will also give you immunity from anyone putting a negative spell on you. You will receive a negative idea if your mind is fertile ground for that idea.
- You can measure the impeccability of your word by your level of self-love. How much you love yourself and how you feel about yourself is directly proportionate to the quality and integrity of your word. When you are impeccable with your word, you feel good; you feel happy and at peace.
- It is up to you to make this agreement with yourself: I am impeccable with my word. Nurture this seed, as it grows in your mind, it will generate more seeds of love to replace the seeds of fear. This first agreement will change the kind of seeds your mind is fertile for.
- *Be impeccable with your word*. This is the first agreement that you should make if you want to be free, if you want to be happy.
- Use the word to share your love, beginning with yourself. Use the word to break all those teeny, tiny agreements that make you suffer.
- Impeccability of the word can lead you to personal freedom, to huge success and abundance; it can take away all fear and transform it into joy and love.

Don't Take Anything Personally

- *Nothing others do is because of you. What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won't be the victim of needless suffering.*
- The next three agreements are really born from the first agreement. The second agreement is *don't take anything personally*.
- Personal importance, or taking things personally, is the maximum expression of selfishness because we make the assumption that everything is about "me". During the period of our domestication, we learn to take everything personally. We think we are responsible for everything.
- Nothing other people do is because of you. It is because of themselves. Even when a situation seems so personal, even if others insult you directly, it has nothing to do with you. The opinions they give are according to the agreements they have in their own minds. Their point of view comes from all the programming they received during domestication.
- When you take things personally, then you feel offended, and your reaction is to defend your beliefs and create conflicts. You make something big out of something so little, because you have the need to be right and make everybody else wrong. You also try hard to be right by giving them your own opinions. Whatever you feel and do is just a projection of your own personal dream, a reflection of your own agreements.
- It is not important to me what you think about, and I don't take what you think personally. I know what I am. I don't have the need to be accepted. Others are going to have their own opinion according to their belief system, so nothing they think about me is really about me, but it is about them.
- Whatever people do, feel, think, or say, don't take it personally. If they tell you how wonderful you are, they are not saying that because of you. You know you are wonderful. It is not necessary to believe other people who tell you that you are wonderful.
- Even the opinions you have about yourself are not necessarily true; therefore, you don't need to take whatever you hear in your own mind personally.
- There may be times when you have ideas that don't originate in your mind, but you are perceiving them with your mind. We have a choice whether or not to believe the voices we hear within our own minds, just as we have a choice of what to believe and agree with in the dream of the planet.
- When you make it a strong habit not to take anything personally, you avoid many aspects in your life. Your anger, jealousy, and envy will disappear, and even your sadness will simply disappear if you don't take things personally.
- You can see how important this agreement is. Taking nothing personally helps you to break many habits and routines that trap you in the dream of hell and cause needless suffering. Just by practicing this second agreement you begin to break dozens of teeny, tiny, agreements that cause you to suffer. And if you practice the first two agreements, you will break seventy-five percent of the teeny, tiny agreements that keep you trapped.
- As you make a habit of not taking anything personally, you will only need to place your trust in what others say or do. You will only need to trust your-self to make responsible choices.

Don't Make Assumptions

- *Find the courage to ask questions and to express what you really want. Communicate with others as clearly as you can to avoid misunderstandings, sadness, and drama. With just this one agreement, you can completely transform your life.*
- We have our tendency to make assumptions about everything. The problem with making assumptions is that we *believe* they are the truth.
- Whenever we make assumptions, we're asking for problems. We make an assumption, we misunderstand, we take it personally, and we end up creating a whole big drama for nothing.
- The whole world of control between humans is about making assumptions and taking things personally.
- Because we are afraid to ask for clarification, we make assumptions, and we believe we are right about the assumptions; then we defend our assumptions and try to make someone else wrong. It is always better to ask questions than to make an assumption, because assumptions set us up for suffering.
- It is always better to ask questions than to make an assumption. In any kind of relationship we can make the assumption that others know what we think, and we don't have to say what we want. They are going to do what we want because they know us so well. If they don't do what we want, what we assume they should do, we feel hurt. A whole drama is created because we make this assumption and then put more assumptions on top of it.
- The human mind needs to justify everything, to explain and understand everything, in order to feel safe. We have millions of questions that need answers because there are so many things that the reasoning mind can't explain. It is not important if the answer is correct; just the answer itself makes us feel safe. This is why we make assumptions.
- Even if we hear something and we don't understand, we make assumptions about what it means and then believe the assumptions. We make all sorts of assumptions because we don't have the courage to ask questions.
- These assumptions are made so fast and unconsciously most of the time because we have agreements to communicate this way. We have agreed that it is not safe to ask questions; we have agreed that if people love us, they should know what we want or how we feel. When we believe something, we assume we are right about it to the point that we will destroy relationships in order to defend our positions.
- We make the assumption that everyone sees life the way we do. We assume that others think the way we think, feel the way we feel, judge the way we judge, and abuse the way we abuse. This is the biggest assumption that humans make.
- We also make assumptions about ourselves, and this creates a lot of inner conflict.
- Just imagine the day you stop making assumptions with your partner and eventually with everyone else in your life. Your way of communicating will change completely, and your relationships will no longer suffer from conflicts by mistaken assumptions.
- The way to keep yourself from making assumptions is to ask questions. Make sure the communication is clear. Have the courage to ask the questions until you are clear as you can be, and then do not assume you know all there is to know about a given situation. Once you hear the answer, you will not have to make assumptions because you will know the truth.
- Without making assumptions your word becomes impeccable.
- With clear communications, all your relationships will change.

- Becoming aware of these habits and understanding the importance of this agreement is the first step. What will really make a difference is action. After many repetitions these new agreements will become second nature.
- By making this one agreement a habit, your whole life will be completely transformed.

Always do Your Best

- *Your best is going to change from moment to moment; it will be different when you are healthy as opposed to sick. Under any circumstances do your best, and you will avoid self-judgment, self-abuse, and regret.*
- This agreement allows the other three to become deeply ingrained habits. The fourth agreement is about the action of the first three: *Always do your best.*
- Keep in mind that your best is never going to be the same from one moment to the next. Your best will sometimes be high quality, and other times it will not be as good.
- Your best will also change over time. As you build the habit of the four agreements, your best will become better than it used to be.
- Just do your best – in any circumstance of your life. If you always do your best then there is no way you can judge yourself. And if you don't judge yourself there is no way you are going to suffer from guilt, blame, and self-punishment. By always doing your best, you will break a big spell that you have been under.
- Doing your best, you are going to live your life intensely. When you always do your best, you will take action. Doing your best is taking the action because you love it, not because you're expecting a reward. If you take action just for the sake of doing it, without expecting a reward, you will find that you enjoy every action you do. Rewards will come, but you are not attached to the reward. If we like what we do, if we always do our best, then we are really enjoying life. We are having fun, we don't get bored, and we don't have frustrations.
- It is not an easy agreement to keep, but this agreement is really going to set you free.
- When you do your best you learn to accept yourself. But you have to be aware and learn from your mistakes. Learning from your mistakes means you practice, look honestly at the results, and keep practicing. This increases your awareness.
- Taking action is being alive. It's taking the risk to go out and express your dream.
- The first three agreements will only work if you do your best. By doing your best, the habits of misusing your word, taking things personally, and making assumptions will become weaker and less frequent with time.
- If you do your best always, over and over again, you will become a master of transformation. Everything you have ever learned, you learned through repetition. Action is what makes the difference.
- If you break an agreement, begin again tomorrow, and again the next day. Some day you will discover that you are ruling your life with these Four Agreements. Just live one day at a time and stay in the present moment.

The Toltec path to Freedom

Breaking Old Agreements

- To be Toltec is a way of life. It is a way of life where there are no leaders and no followers, where you have your own truth and live your own truth.

- There are three masteries that lead people to become Toltec:
- First is the Mastery of Awareness. This is to be aware of who we really are, with all the possibilities.
- The second is the Mastery of Transformation – how to change, how to be free of domestication.
- The third is the Mastery of Intent. Intent from the Toltec point of view is that part of life that makes transformation of energy possible; it is the one living being that seamlessly encompasses all energy, or what we call “God”. Intent is life itself; it is unconditional love. The Mastery of Intent is therefore the Mastery of Love.
- When we talk about the Toltec path to freedom, we find that they have an entire map for breaking free of domestication. They compare the Judge, the victim, and the belief system to a parasite that invades the human mind. The food for the parasite is the negative emotions that come from fear.
- The Toltecs believe that the parasite has control of your mind.
- The freedom we seek is to use our own mind and body, to live our own life, instead of the life of the belief system.
- We have two choices. One is to keep living the way we are, to surrender to the Judge, and the victim, to keep living in the dream of the planet. The second choice is to do what we do as children when parents try to domesticate us. We can rebel and say “No!”
- If we want to be free, we have to destroy the parasite. One solution is to face each of our fears, one by one. This is a slow process but it works.
- The second approach is to stop feeding the parasite – to gain control of our emotions; we have to refrain from fueling the emotions that come from fear. The third solution is the initiation of the dead – a symbolic death which kills the parasite without harming our physical body.
- The process of domestication can be called the dream of the first attention because it was how your attention was used for the first time to create the first dream of your life.
- One way to change your beliefs is to focus your attention on all those agreements and beliefs, and change the agreements with yourself. In doing this you are using your attention for the second time, thus creating the dream of the second attention or the new dream.
- The difference is that you are no longer innocent. Now it’s up to you to choose what to believe and what not to believe, and that includes believing in your self.
- The first step is to come aware of the fig that is in your mind. Only with awareness do you have the possibility of transforming your dream. If you have the awareness that the whole drama of your life is the result of what you believe, and what you believe is not real, then you can begin to change it. You need to focus your attention on what it is that you want to change. You have to know which agreements you want to change before you can change them.
- So the next step is to develop awareness of all the self-limiting beliefs that make you unhappy. You take an inventory of all that you believe, all your agreements, and through this process you begin the transformation. The Toltecs call this the Art of Transformation. One of the ways to do this is to explore and adopt alternative beliefs such as the four Agreements.
- The four Agreements were created to assist you in the Art of Transformation, to help you break the limiting agreements, gain more personal power, and become stronger. The stronger you get, the more agreements you can break until the moment comes when you make it to the core of all those agreements.

Recommendation: This is a tiny little big that can make a big difference in how you view and treat yourself and others.

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About the reviewer: Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD

Many CEO's find themselves asking "What now?" to sensitive situations that only an experienced former CEO can understand. Frumi is brought in to solve problems and often remains to work with you, as your confidante and secret weapon. She has an uncanny knack of getting to the heart of your corporate climate and maximizing your team's performance, profitability and sustainability.

To schedule a free *Break From the Pack to Success* consultation email

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