

“Agreements to Personal Freedom”

**Versions of this
presented in 2015, 2019, and 2022**

(based on ‘The Four Agreements’ by don Miguel Ruiz)

by

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INTRODUCTION

Today's topic, AGREEMENTS TO PERSONAL FREEDOM ...is based on the book "THE FOUR AGREEMENTS" by don Miguel Ruiz, published in 1997 !

As I was reading through this book again, I was reminded of the spiritual principles in this Toltec wisdom that are common to many of the world religions.

Here is a description that describes the Toltec wisdom in general terms:

"Toltec knowledge arises from the same essential unity of truth as all the sacred esoteric traditions found around the world. Though it is not a religion, it honors all the spiritual masters who have taught on the earth. While it does embrace spirit, it is most accurately described as a way of life, distinguished by the ready accessibility of happiness and love."

Ruiz then offers a framework of understanding before jumping into the Four Agreements. First, he talks about the SMOKEY MIRROR... and defines it this way...

... matter is a mirror and the smoke is what is between you and me...it is what keeps us from knowing what we are....an expression of God ... a child of God...[and that].. we don't recognize each other because of the "smoke" in-between us. That smoke is the DREAM, and the mirror is you, the dreamer. (p.xix.2)

To explain it another way... you are matter... or form... both the mirror and the dreamer. The smoke is the dream... the smoke is what we have been taught as the way life should be. In New Thought, it is often

referred to as “race consciousness.”

Ruiz tells us that everything in existence is a manifestation of the One living being we call God. Everything is God. ...and that Everything is made of light.

When you know this to be true for you, deep down in your soul, you radiate light to the world. You truly shine as a living incarnation of God, of the Divine. You can be a mirror of God as long as you have such a consciousness, belief, or agreement.

And this is our challenge. We may not always hold this higher consciousness in the forefront of our minds. Doubt may creep in. We may start trusting more in what we have been told by others in our life, in our family, in the world... than what our soul is telling us. Those messages are the smoke.

And this smoke rises up between the mirror of God that is you ... and the mirror of God that is meand we no longer see each other clearly as the Light. We become Smoky Mirrors living in a dream created by humanity.

Ruiz explains that: ***“The dream of the planet includes all of society's rules, its beliefs, its laws, its religions, its different cultures and ways to be, its governments, schools, social events, and holidays.”***

This dream of the planet is reinforced and taught to us through repetition, through our attention to it. This “outside dream” (as Ruiz calls it) starts with mom and dad, the schools, and religions in telling us how we are to live, in what we are supposed to believe, how to behave, how to fit into society, what is acceptable and not acceptable, what is good and

bad, what is right and wrong. **Through repetition we learn everything we know.** That is the way we are taught the dream and the Word.

Through this repetition, through our attention to what we're being taught, we learn a language. We learn to make agreements.

That is how we learn. And that's how we learn to believe. Children believe their parents and what's being taught. There's agreement between child and parent. We have faith in them and what we're learning. And initially we may not rebel against this faith.

Even if we wanted to, would we be strong enough to rebel?

Maybe, maybe not! So we surrender... we surrender to the beliefs we are taught through our agreements to "what is." Ruiz calls this the ***domestication of humans.***

Day by day, one agreement at a time, through our parents, our schools, television, society... whatever the source is... this outside dream teaches us how to be human. And these lessons also include how to judge. We determine what is good and bad. We learn concepts about what is a man and what makes a woman. We are judged by others, and we judge ourselves.

We learn that there are rules to follow. When we go against the rules, we are punished... we find out there is a system in place based on reward and punishment. We learn that reward feels good... punishment not so much. We discover ways to please people... our parents, teachers at school, maybe the church, or our bosses at work. We know how to act.

We pretend to be what we are not because we are afraid of being rejected. And that fear of being rejected can eventually become a fear

of not being good enough.

This **domestication process** becomes so engrained, that after awhile, we don't need mom and dad, or the schools, or the churches to domesticate us. We become our **own domesticator** through the belief system we have been provided and taken as our own.

We reward ourselves. We punish ourselves.

Ruiz tells us that ***“this belief system is like a Book of Law that rules our mind.”*** (p.9.2) and that whatever is in that Book of Law becomes our truth and we believe it without question. We develop an inner judge that uses this Book of Law AND everything else in the dream of the planet that has come our way. We may live for many years under the rules of our own Book of Law, under these old belief systems... given to us by the race consciousness of our planet forefathers. We may feel like a victim. Our self-worth may deteriorate to feelings of blame, guilt, and shame. We become both judge and victim!

SO. How can we break free of this Book of Law? ...these beliefs and agreements that no longer serve our soul? ...this way of life ruled by fear? We don't have to live in this mental state of fear or hell. We can take what we like and leave the rest.

We know that much of humanity is searching for truth, justice, beauty, and love. We keep searching and searching when everything is already within us. It has been within us from the very beginning of our lives, from the very beginning of creation.

Yet it is hard to see the truth of this because we have been blinded by the false beliefs in our mind... provided through the dream of the

planet. We have trusted these agreements of the planet and it has set us up for suffering. We live in a fog that is not even real. Ruiz says:

"This fog is a dream, your personal dream of life -- what you believe, all the concepts you have about what you are, all the agreements you have made with others, with yourself, and even with God."

Ruiz tells us that ***"to be alive is the biggest fear humans have. Death is not the biggest fear -- our biggest fear is taking the risk to be alive... the risk to be alive and express what we really are. Just being ourselves is the biggest fear of humans."*** Said another way, our biggest fear is to live as our authentic self.

Do you think that's true? Is your biggest fear to express as your authentic self – no matter the situation?

For many people it is. We put on masks to be included in social circles, in our careers, and in many other life relationships. We are afraid to be our authentic selves ... due to a lack of love.

Whether it is the Toltec tradition, New Thought, Unitarian Universalist, or any of the other major world religions, LOVE is the basic truth on which we can depend.

With Love as the guiding light in your life, you can find courage to break those agreements that are fear-based. You CAN claim your personal power. Agreements that come from love give us more energy to live as authentic beings, to utilize our personal power every day, to build a life that is full and rich and happy and peaceful.... To create your personal dream of heaven... to experience freedom as YOU!

And how do you do this?

Through your **Word**.

We know this!!!! Many of the world's religions teach about the creative power of the Word, which includes your thoughts. And Ruiz tells us that your **word** is the gift that comes directly from God.

He writes:

“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.”

No. 1: Be Impeccable with Your Word

This is why it is so important that we learn well the 1st Agreement: **“BE IMPECCABLE WITH YOUR WORD.”** Because your word can create the most beautiful dream.... or your word can destroy everything around you. It is like a two-edged sword... and depending on how you use it, it can either set you free or it can enslave you.

According to Ruiz and the Toltec tradition, each word we speak is like casting a spell. For example, he tells us that we can cast **black magic**: words of fear, doubt, hatred, destruction -- whether we direct them towards ourselves or others. ... OR ... we can use words in the way of **pure magic**, words of love, peace, joy, and the like.

The 1st Agreement, **BE IMPECCABLE WITH YOUR WORD**, is about paying attention to what you say and what you think. We create our worlds in our minds first, with our thoughts. We cast a spell on ourselves, so to speak, by what we think repeatedly in our minds. And, then, in what we say to others.

Impeccability means “without sin” or “having no flaws.” Ruiz defines **sin** as anything you do which goes against yourself. (p31.1) So if you are judging yourself or blaming yourself for anything, you are sinning against yourself. Sin begins with rejection of yourself. And Ruiz says that self-rejection is the biggest sin you commit.

However, when you are being impeccable, you take responsibility for your actions. You do what is right and true, to the best of your ability, but you do not judge or blame yourself.

Impeccability leads to life... an authentic life. Being impeccable with your word means you use your energy in the direction of truth and love for yourself. This is the most powerful gift you can give yourself!

The power of your word is what Ruiz calls “**very strong magic.**” And he advises that you need to be careful about what you accept as agreements from others.

You have to use that God power within you to break those spells, cast unknowingly or intentionally, by the people around you, and you can create new agreements with yourself based on absolute Truth. Only the Truth will set you free (from John 8:32)... free from the spells, from the negative words of others, such as gossip or opinions – which are the worst forms of human communication and interaction.

Forgive them and let the words go. You may even need to let go of those people in your life or create firm boundaries to protect yourself from their unkind words.

But there is hope! Ruiz says that:

“...if we adopt this first agreement, to become impeccable with our

word, then any emotional poison will eventually be cleaned from our mind and from our communication, and our interpersonal relationships, including with our pet dog or cat.”

He also assures us that as you become more impeccable with your word... you'll be able to notice negativity more easily and to counteract it with your own positive thoughts. As you practice this first agreement through the impeccability of your word, your self-love will grow, your courage will expand, you will feel good and happy and at peace... and you will start experiencing the heaven you were meant to live.

No. 2: Don't Take ANYTHING Personally

A few years ago I heard the following statement and wrote it down: ***"Nothing other people do is because of you. It is because of themselves."*** And that brings us to Toltec wisdom **#2: Don't Take ANYTHING Personally."**

Ruiz tells us that ***"[the reason] you take it personally [is] because you agree with whatever was said."*** Which means... You break the first agreement!

Lao Tzu said: ***"Care about what other people think and you will always be their prisoner."*** That is certainly no way to grow or be authentic!

When we allow someone else's word to become part of our Book of Law... it means we have made an agreement with what they are saying, and we become trapped in hell, in someone else's world, and not our own.

If you can avoid or stop taking other people's negative comments personally, you can become immune to their poison or this "hell." And

that is the gift of this 2nd agreement...being immune or not needing to react in every situation or to every comment.

One way to stop reacting in this manner is through replacing such offensive thoughts with more positive, uplifting, self-affirming ones.

For example, you might consider this statement, **"It is not important to me what you think about me."** You don't have to say it out loud to the person... you only need to say it to yourself. YOU are the one who needs convincing to change your reactive behavior! It is your ego that needs to be convinced.

And that applies to both negative comments and positive ones, such as compliments. WHATEVER someone else tells you ABOUT YOU... is their opinion or judgment of you... and you can simply tell YOURSELF: **"It is not important to me what you think [or say] about me."**

In the book, Creative Mind, by Ernest Holmes, he writes:

"The Bible also tells us that the word is not afar off but in our own mouth. It is neither here nor there; it is within every living soul. We must take the responsibility for our own lives.

"All must awake to the facts that they have absolute control over their lives, and that nothing can happen by chance. Then they have a broader concept of God, a greater tolerance for their neighbor, a greater realization of their own Divine Nature."

So not only are we to listen to what our own soul is telling us... in how to live, and the words or agreements to live by or to use, ...but to take responsibility in doing so.

A quote from Eleanor Roosevelt states:

“No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.”

When you let someone make you feel inferior or you say they have hurt your feelings, you are allowing them to control your world. There is some type of fear within you that is allowing that emotion, that agreement, to be made. Thus, the best thing we could do for ourselves, is to have the courage to look fear in the face and change it! To replace it with love and joy and goodness.

You know how wonderful you are! You have all the attributes of God in you and expressing as you. While our ego may like to be told how wonderful we are and hear all those compliments, Ruiz tells us others are not saying such compliments because of you ... so don't take anything personally! Not the bad stuff and not the good stuff.

Ruiz advises: ***“If someone is not treating you with love and respect, it is a gift if they walk away from you. If that person doesn't walk away, you will surely endure many years of suffering with him or her. Walking away may hurt for a while, but your heart will eventually heal. Then you can choose what you really want. You will find that you don't need to trust others as much as you need to trust yourself to make the right choices.”***

And I would add... you always have a choice to walk away first, rather than wait for the other person to do so.

No. 3: Don't Make Assumptions

The 3rd Agreement – **DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS** – is, for me, an expansion of the first two Agreements.

I like that it all ties together ...and also that it gives me “permission”

to go further with my word, in conversation, with asking for clarification, asking respectful questions in those times when I don't understand something or especially IF I'm about to take something personally.

ASSUMING is an arrogant behavior. The way I look at it, ASSUMING anything about another person basically means that you have gotten inside someone's heart and mind, and that you believe you know their thoughts, words, and behaviors WITHOUT even asking them about it ... basically you are judging without clarifying a single thing. I'd call that arrogant... wouldn't you?

The act of "Assuming" what a person is going to say or do takes away that person's freedom to be them... to express as them. YOU are acting for them and, generally, without their permission. You are literally robbing them of their freedom to be authentic. And it can be something as seemingly insignificant as...Finishing their sentences for them.

How many of you have had other people finish your sentences for you? How many of you like it?

Me, neither. I learned how to do this kind of assuming in my birth family. It's the way we talked to and for each other most of the time when I was growing up.

I had to unlearn it in adulthood. And it took longer to "unlearn" it ...so I recommend you just don't start.

It's written in Matthew 18:3 that Jesus said: "**Except ye ... become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.**"

So I interpret this as... Except ye let go of assumptions and preconceived judgments... except ye humble yourself as a little child...

and come from innocence and love ... you won't find peace. And woe unto the offences that come your way.

When any person starts assuming... thinking they know better what is going on in the mind of someone else ... that's just ego behavior taking control.

It takes an incredible amount of courage and patience ... lots of patience... and respect... and love... to allow others to speak, act, and live what is right for them ... how they choose to express... WITHOUT interference from you and me...without assuming we know better about someone else or their situation.

This can be particularly challenging when it comes to our children – for, as parents, we oftentimes DO think or know more and better... simply from having more experiences.

Being clear (impeccable) with your words... being patient and forgiving... allowing others to be them while you get to be you ... letting them learn the consequences of their decisions (at least when it's not life threatening) ... minimizes misunderstandings and dramas ... and helps create what it is you truly want... the best Life you can imagine... the best relationships to be involved in... the best possibilities to explore... which leads us to the 4th Agreement: **ALWAYS DO YOUR BEST.**

No. 4: Always Do Your Best

don Miguel Ruiz tells us that our "best" can change from moment to moment... whether we're sick or healthy ... in a positive state of mind or a negative one.

Whether it's pulling weeds or writing a sermon or cleaning the house... my best varies from time to time. I'll bet yours does, too.

"Always Doing Your Best" is not about perfectionism ... it's about being and doing what I (or you) can be and do in the moment – to the level of acceptance of the ME that I'm okay with. I KNOW I can always be better in some way. I'll bet each of us can think of at least one thing in which you can be or do better in some way.

We might strive for "perfectionism" in various aspects of our lives, - a standard set by our own ego – and yet that's different than demonstrating the "perfection" of God or Life through us.

I found this quote from Ernest Holmes that fits so well with this idea:
(SOM, p.130.3)

"The Law has done all it can automatically do for man. It has evolved him to a point of individuality and must now let him alone to discover the secrets of life for himself. Man[kind] is potentially perfect, but free-will and self-choice cause him to appear imperfect.... The Divine Spark is always intact in potential man."

This tells me that we are potentially perfect. The Divine Spark within us is never tarnished... never goes out ... is never diminished no matter what we tell ourselves or what others assume about us. Doesn't matter. Our Inner Light keeps shining.

It shines as we use our free-will and explore the secrets of life, what we can do and be, what we're capable of becoming, making choices, some of which may not turn out the way we originally think they will, while others are better than we planned...

...It's still shining in those choice moments of what we think of ourselves, whether we let ego either diminish our lives or Spirit expand them.

... The Divine Spark is still there even when we make a perhaps poor choice to try and dominate others in word or deed, to exert some type of superiority over them, but it shines more brightly when we choose to demonstrate compassion and allow others the freedom to express authentically ... their best... their Divine Light.

...Our best can change depending on what we tell ourselves most often, whether we listen to the critical voice of ego... or to the still small voice of Divine Guidance. We are often capable of so much more than we give ourselves credit for.

CONCLUSION

Using "The Four Agreements" – your BOOK OF LAW – as your RULES OF LIFE, could completely transform YOU, your life, and your relationships. There's tremendous freedom in their implementation.

Start with yourself. Tell yourself how much you love yourself. 1st: **Be impeccable with Your Word.** The word creates. Use your word to break all those negative belief systems that no longer serve you, and create a positive life experience. Start tearing out the pages from that old Book of Law that was handed to you from generations past. You can transcend the dream of fear and live a different life.

When you truly understand the 2nd agreement, **Don't Take Anything Personally**, you can travel anywhere with your heart completely open

and no one can hurt you.

You can say, "I love you," without fear of being ridiculed or rejected. You're saying it for you, first of all, expressing your feelings about someone or something. You can ask for what you need. You can choose to say "yes" or "no" without guilt or self-judgment. You can choose to follow your heart. You can experience inner peace, happiness and a state of bliss... no matter what is going on around you.

This can lead you to find the courage to ask questions and express what you really want as you implement #3 – **Don't Make Assumptions**. Just be direct in your communication. Ask for what you desire – whether that's clarification, options for your life, desires of the heart, or whatever.

Finally, #4 – in all things **Do Your Best**. Whatever that YOU is – be authentic, creative, loving, and constantly growing. You will change. Change is inevitable. Make it the best change you know how to do.... And know that even your efforts to change will change and become better as you continue to apply all 4 Agreements.

While I believe there are only TWO Commandments in life, under which all others fall: 1) Love God; and 2) Love your Neighbor as yourself ... In addition, I've found that adding these FOUR AGREEMENTS to my own **Book of Law** is the simplest plan for creating an authentic, creative, and positive life... and gives me the Freedom to Grow in whatever direction I choose.

I invite you to consider this way of life as well.

Blessings to each of you. Namaste'.