

The Four Agreements

As you practice living these four practices your life will dramatically change. In the beginning these new habits will be challenging and you will lapse countless times. With practice these agreements become integrated into your being and every area of your life and become easy habits to keep.

The Four Agreements are:

- 1. 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 your Word in the direction of truth and love.
- 2. 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.
- 3. 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.
- 4. 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 circumstance, simply do your best, and you will avoid self-judgment, self-abuse, and regret.

Understanding How to Integrate and Live the Practices

Upon reading don Miguel's wisdom many people have their eyes opened to a new possibility for living life. They get excited when they see the potential for happiness, love, and respect with themselves and their relationships. What they fail to see is the challenges and resistance the mind will have to living just one of the agreements. Don Miguel briefly mentions these challenges in his book, but people fixate on the four chapters with the agreements and seem to miss these other important points. This is often the set up for expectations that lead to disappointment and frustration.

Domestication

During our early life we began making agreements. Our parents rewarded us when we did what they wanted and they punished us when we didn't. We also learned behaviors and habits in school, church, and from other adults and children on the playground. The tools of reward and punishment were often emotional and sometimes physical. The impact of other people's opinions

and reactions to us became a very strong force in the habits we created. In this process we created agreements in our mind of who we should be, what we shouldn't be, who we were, and who we were not. Over time we learned to live our life based on the agreements in our own mind. We learned to live according to the agreements that came from the opinion of others. In this process of domestication it turns out that the choices we make and the life we live is more driven by the opinions we learned from others than one we would choose on our own.

Why Living the Four Agreements Is Such a Challenge

We have out of years of habit not paid attention to how we express our self. The responses that come out of our mouth are often automatic. They were learned from years of habit living by the agreements we learned. We do not consciously choose our words, or the emotion, tone, and attitude that we express.

Over years our mind has filled with beliefs that generate incessant thinking. In all that thinking we have many assumptions that we are not aware of. We even make the assumption that what we think is true. We imagine and assume what others think of us and how they will react. We also assume that the judgments and self criticisms we have are true. We have learned to make so many assumptions that we aren't aware of. These assumptions are not the truth. These assumptions and the faith we express in them is just one way that we are not impeccable with our word.

Through our domestication we have also learned to take things personally. We assume that when someone has an opinion about us that their opinion is valid. Their opinion becomes our belief about our self. We end up having an emotional reaction to our own belief because we assumed their opinion it is true. We can also take personally our own opinions. We take personally our own self judgments. These self judgments are nothing more than an assumption. Over years the mind has developed many habits of making assumptions and taking them personally. Just because you adopt the Four Agreements doesn't mean that all these habits in the mind will stop with that commitment.

When you decide to change your life and adopt the Four Agreements you are challenging the beliefs you learned and the habits you practiced since your childhood domestication.

Adopting the Four Agreements creates a conflict in the mind between expressing yourself impeccably with love and your existing fear based beliefs.

Avoiding Double Jeopardy

One of the hidden assumptions that people often make when adopting the Four Agreements is about time. Without awareness the mind makes the assumption that they should immediately be able to keep the Four Agreements 100% of the time. The mind completely ignores that there are already existing agreements and habits of taking things personally that have been in place for years.

With the expectation of the new agreement that we will not break any of the Four Agreements we are set up for failure. We have an emotional reaction and take something personally which

feels bad. This is a completely normal part of our old habits, but then the inner judge reprimands us for failing to *not* take something personally. Now we feel twice as bad. The inner judge tells us that we failed and the voice of the victim in the mind accepts this proposal.

The result is that we are not only upset, but we also feel like a failure. If you just look at your emotional state at this point it will seem like things are getting worse instead of better. It can seem like attempting to keep the Four Agreements is causing more problems and making you feel worse.

If you are aware that you are judging yourself for taking something personally it can get worse. Your inner judge might use that awareness to judge and reject yourself for judging yourself for taking something personally. In the beginning of this process the myriad of voices in your head are likely to use your new found awareness as material for self judgment. This is when the fourth agreement, Always Do Your Best, is most important. It gives you immunity from self judgment. Your best isn't perfect practice of these agreements on day one. Your best will improve over time as you practice. Just like walking, learning a language, or playing a sport.

Awakening

In actuality the problem is not that you adopted the Four Agreements. Nor is the problem that you are a failure. What is really happening is that you are having an awakening. You are waking up to how your mind makes assumptions, has emotional reactions, and is so quick to make self judgments. These realizations about the belief system in your mind are not usually pleasant but are part of an awakening. It is usually uncomfortable realization but through it your awareness is growing.

With some more awareness and practice you can move beyond this uncomfortable awakening about the mind. You will come to see that it is not *you* that is judging yourself for failing. It is the inner judge. With practice you will see the ridiculous expectations and assumptions for what they are and not feel like a failure when you lapse in your journey to impeccability. This comes as you gain more awareness and gain more personal power over your agreements.

The Challenge of a Spiritual Warrior

Don Miguel refers to some of these challenges throughout the book. However, in the excitement of the Truth in what don Miguel writes, people often overlook where he points out that this endeavor is not easy. The agreements may be simple, but he never says they are easy to keep.

At the same time living the Four Agreements has taken me on the most rewarding and profound journey of happiness and fulfillment beyond anything I could have imagined. The hard work in the beginning is rewarded to me in every interaction every day of my life. This is a very big return for a small investment of time and effort.

Don Miguel refers to people who decide to adopt the Four Agreements and create love and happiness in their life Spiritual Warriors. It is Spiritual because it is about living your Life. It is also referred to as a war because you are challenging the old fear based beliefs in your mind. It will take more than a week and a half to break free of fear, the tyranny of the inner judge, and

old emotional habits. There will be some battles lost along the way, but that is of minor concern in the longer term strategy of creating happiness in your life.

The Quest for Personal Freedom

The quest of a Spiritual Warrior is for Personal Freedom. Personal Freedom means freedom from fear, illusions, and the fear based beliefs in the mind. In essence it means to win the war over the beliefs in the mind. It is with Personal Freedom that we are free of the human condition of emotional suffering. Spiritual traditions around the world have their own names for this state of awareness including nirvana and heaven. It is a state that is simply described as living your life with unconditional love, gratitude, and respect, for yourself, and for others.

The Opportunity

I've spent many years personally studying with don Miguel Ruiz. After my life and relationships were completely transformed I asked him if there was anything that I could do for him in return. He said, "If you want to, share with others what you have learned and how you live your life so they can be happy as well."

That help has taken the form of material on my web sites, personal coaching guidance, online audio course in Self Mastery, and Spiritual Intensive Journeys. I am also working on a book about my experiences.

There are many practical actions you can take to speed up changing your life and live more impeccably. In my years of study with don Miguel what he has written in his books is a small fraction of his teachings.

While don Miguel is no longer teaching, you can still learn the practices, process, wisdom and insights from those he trained. You are invited to take advantage of the material in my web sites, my personal coaching services, and the workshops and Power Journeys I lead.

I wish you much love, joy, and laughter in your journey,

Gary van Warmerdam

Gary van Warmerdam is a guide for individuals seeking a life of love, gratitude, and freedom from fear and judgments. He has spent over 15 years personally studying and learning from don Miguel Ruiz, author of The Four Agreements and other bestselling books. He is available for personal coaching. You can reach him at 805-742-4131.