

The Four Agreements

The key to harmony is balance. The key to balance is stability. The fragmented or chaotic self is the unbalanced, unstable form. The achievement of balance rests on the understanding of opposites, the self versus the environment (others). The following piece mirrors the teachings of Don Miguel Ruiz as he guides us to this realization.

1. Be Impeccable With Your Words

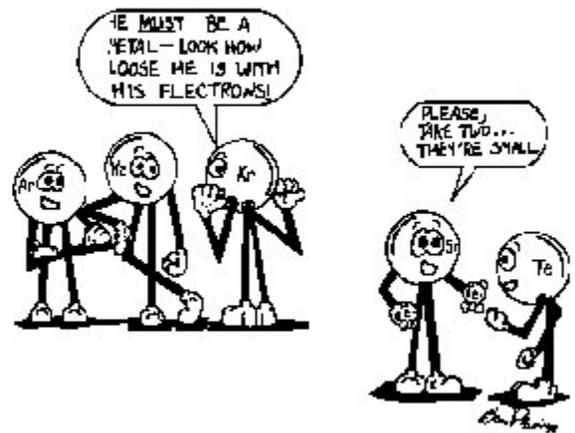
- ❖ Avoid self destruction or self harm by careful thinking.
- ❖ Avoid gossip, self deprecation, false truths and empty promises.
- ❖ Realize the harm inherent in aggressive speech.
- ❖ Realize that in hurting others, we hurt ourselves.
- ❖ Say what you mean, and mean what you say.
- ❖ Speak with integrity and conviction.
- ❖ Use the power of your words in the direction of truth and love.

Actions and words must remain consistent to avoid crimes against the self. Ruiz makes the point that our perceptions of others are really just reflections of ourselves. Therefore, to project negativity at another, to lash out or to put them down, is to demonstrate our own insecurities. Healthy communities are built on a solid foundation of communication and empathy. Gossip, false truths and self deprecation are the termites that destroy this foundation.

2. Don't Take Anything Personally

- ❖ Realize that nothing others do is because of you.
- ❖ Realize the cycle of negativity that results from assumed enemy action.
- ❖ Realize that others actions mirror their own reality and their own dream.
- ❖ Be honest with yourself about that for which you are responsible.
- ❖ Build and fortify your immunity to the actions and opinions of others.
- ❖ Let go of suffering and guilt that is attached to others.

At parties, the noble gases didn't mix with the elements, but that didn't stop them from being terrible gossips.

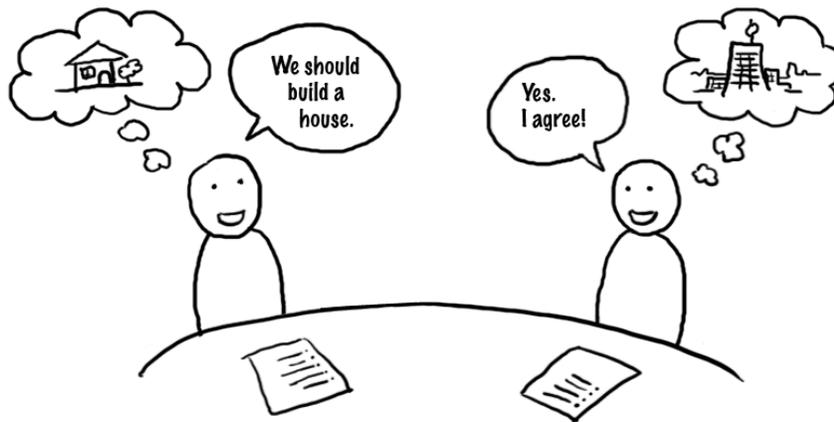


To take personally the poison of another's words is to fall out of agreement with the self. It is to deny the honesty inherent in one's own self-evaluation. To be truly and completely objective is nearly impossible. However, by realizing and becoming aware of the biases and judgments within the self ahead of time, one can strive for a pattern of more clear-sighted thinking. In this light, the stress of maintaining personal defenses is reduced and the energy left available to be utilized for positive progress.

3. Don't Make Assumptions

- ❖ Find the courage to ask questions and express what you really want.
- ❖ Communicate with others clearly and honestly.
- ❖ Avoid judgment of an action or situation before asking direct questions.
- ❖ Combine common sense with wisdom and insight to make informed distinctions.
- ❖ Avoid misunderstandings, sadness and drama.

What we think we understand about why others do what they do and what those actions mean may not reflect reality at all. Countless hours can be wasted generating theories as to the core roots of another's intentions, or a direct question can cut right to the chase. In that same respect, honest communication with others can reduce the likelihood that they will waste time making assumptions of their own. Whenever judgment is reserved until truth is found, the esteem of timeless wisdom is honored above temporary reductionism.



4. Strive To Do Your Best

- ❖ Accept that the "best you can do" will change from moment to moment.
- ❖ Accept that inaction is a denial of life, and that being in action is fully living.
- ❖ Realize that inaction finds its roots in fear, and action in courage and ambition.
- ❖ Utilize your energy and strength of will to solve conflicts without wasted negativity.
- ❖ Avoid self-judgment, self abuse and regret.

Paul Walker once said that "Self loathing is the only true sin. It is the act of negation," (*Das Energi*, 1973). To regret something is to admit to the self that there is shame, guilt or remorse inherent in an irreversible choice. However, if one always and truly does the best they can at a given moment, what chance is there to be ashamed or lose sleep over a less-than-stellar performance? Whether healthy or sick, exhausted or energized, your "best" is dynamic, personal to you and you alone, and always within reach.

To live with these agreements is to live with them simply, not fanatically. There is no never or always, there is only you, your life and the people you touch. Finding balance in a constantly changing universe requires flexibility and a willingness to constantly take perspective. Remember, judgment is the illusion, truth is the object unclouded by assumptions.