Book Report

The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom
(A Toltec Wisdom Book)

by Don Miguel Ruiz

Amber Bishop
Speech 120, Interpersonal Communication
Section# 3177
Summer Session 2007
Introduction

In *The Four Agreements*, author Don Miguel Ruiz introduces the idea that we all, as individuals, have the power to live out our own dream by following four simple rules or agreements. In a world where we behave in ways that were taught to us, we learn to inhabit specific rituals and feelings that don’t always feel comfortable or right. Ruiz speaks of agreements as a code or rule that are often more times negative than positive. These agreements usually are instilled into us at birth and it is hard to recognize them as anything other than the truth. Ruiz insists that we all have the power to reclaim our lives and transform into the creatures that we desire to be by following the four agreements. Throughout the book, some of the agreements appear to be quite simple, *Be Impeccable With Your Word*, *Don’t Take Anything Personally*, *Don’t Make Assumptions* and *Always Do Your Best*. However, it is more difficult to practice these agreements than to speak them because they all require hard work, dedication and the willingness to stand-alone from the rest of the group and shine or fail as we all were meant to. The four agreements are not meant to be easy. In fact they are intended to challenge and inspire us because the difficult journey we experience will only make us stronger in the end.

Don Miguel Ruiz is no stranger to hardships, especially when it comes to the demons that terrorize us internally. He credits his success in life to following the four agreements and insists that the journey doesn’t come easy and it is never ending. The way of living that Ruiz introduces in the book is available to everyone if they are willing to be embrace and accept new behaviors into their world. However, I think that Ruiz wrote this book to inspire people to live, love and recognize life’s many lessons and to not be afraid
of failure or the unknown. Life is one big unknown and each day manifests from the last
only to reveal the many gifts that we hold inside of all of us. Whether we are being
impeccable with our word or trying not to take anything personally, our awareness to
these ideas will bring us closer to things we need, thanks to the lesson of Don Miguel
Ruiz.
Book Introduction: The Smokey Mirror

Don Miguel Ruiz begins his book with a story that illustrates how everyone studies and learns throughout their lives only to realize that not everything that has been taught is the truth. Ruiz talks about an ancient man, alive three thousand years ago who is on a quest to learn about his ancestors. Throughout his travels, he begins to not agree with certain things and he questions their creditability. One night, as the man slept he dreamt a truth. He realized that everything created was just a manifestation of God, or the one we hold in the highest respect and he was a part of that life. The way each person perceives life is done through a mirror and many times there are interferences that cause each one of us to see ourselves in the wrong light. “Everything is a mirror that reflects light and creates images of that light—and the world of illusion is just like smoke which doesn’t allow us to see what we really are” (pg xvii, Ruiz). The smokey mirror is a symbol for how many things throughout our lives can alter the way we see ourselves and how others perceive us. This story is very appropriate for the book because it prepares us for the idea that our lives have become difficult simply because we haven’t’ had the tools to look completely at ourselves; our internal and external mirror has been covered by smoke.

As I began this book, I soon realized that I was going to learn a lot because I related to the story of the man who named himself, “Smokey Mirror.” I think that many times my behavior, attitude or unwillingness to pay attention to my own life, has caused me to believe that I was a certain way and I was okay with it. However, by ignoring who
I really was, I don’t think I have ever known and my life has suffered because of it. Naturally, it is very hard to look at yourself, especially for me because I am afraid to see who I am. I’m afraid that I won’t like myself and other people will neglect, ignore or judge me because they can’t possibly see through the smoke, if I can’t. Understanding and accepting oneself is the only thing that matters and as long as we learn to do so, the smoke will clear, revealing a side that we never knew existed.

Chapter One: Domestication and the Dream of the Planet

“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” (pg 2, Ruiz). This chapter introduces the idea that society has told us who we will be and how we will behave by the agreements or rules that have been taught. The author states that the reason it is so difficult for many to dream outside of the box is because we haven’t realized that there is anything wrong. Our rules, laws, feelings and behaviors are nothing more than passed down agreements that we have agreed to without even knowing it. Ruiz believes, that people are domesticated just as animals are and that our beliefs are decided for us. For example, when we are babies, we are told which words to use to describe certain things and which words we must never use. I never came up with my own word for brush or dog because I was told that one already existed. The domestication process began early, especially with children in order to place society’s beliefs and rules onto people who didn’t realize that they had a choice.

Ruiz also introduces the idea that through the attention of an individual this is one of the ways people were able to domesticate children. Parents have control over their
children and usually choose for them. For example, if a mother wants her child to be a follower of the Roman Catholic faith, then that mother will probably take her child to church regularly, read to him/her from the Bible, and have this child baptized. At an early age, the child is taught to believe in his/her parent’s faith and others of the planet because the child is too young to perceive anything different. We are not given a choice and therefore, according to Ruiz, we make agreements to not question anything differently.

Another way people have been domesticated is by observing those around us. We learn how to behave, speak and act by observing the public, whether they are strangers or family. And we learn at an early age if we behave in an unacceptable way, then we will have consequences. For example, we learn in school to behave in a manner where we listen to the teacher and don’t speak up unless indicated to. However, if a child does speak in class when the teacher is lecturing, then he/she might get a “time out” or a call home to their parents. Punishment is used as a tool to ensure that we stay on the path that was taught, which keeps us safe in society’s bubble.

Finally, Ruiz discusses just how dangerous many agreements are because they poison our thoughts and keep us prisoner in our own lives. Many times the way we were told to behave and think can cause us to fail because society places unfair standards on everyone, especially to be perfect. “Not being perfect, we reject ourselves. We cannot forgive ourselves for not being what we wish to be” (pg 18, Ruiz). Perfection is an agreement that Ruiz says is unfair because we will never be perfect, failing at our own expectations and eventually causing us to pretend to be something that we are not. The agreement of perfection and others have the ability to cause us to doubt ourselves and use punishment as a way to make up for our short comings. Many times when we don’t
execute an agreement, such as perfection, we want to punish ourselves with self-abuse or we tolerate abuse from others. An example of this is allowing a partner to physically abuse you because you feel you deserve it.

I definitely think that agreements can be very dangerous, especially when trying to follow ones that will never be. Ever since I was a young girl, I believed in society’s standards that I had to be perfect. Whether I was getting straight A’s in school, never getting in trouble or following the rules, I appeared to be perfect. However, by trying to be perfect, I soon realized that I wasn’t and I became so depressed with trying to keep up with appearances that began to act out. I allowed myself to believe that if I weren’t perfect, then I shouldn’t be allowed to be happy either. I sabotaged myself on purpose and soon began failing classes, picking fights and making my family miserable. It took years for me to realize that I deserved to be happy and some days I still don’t believe it because of the agreements that I made for myself. But Ruiz, insists, that this is the first step in creating your own world, a *Prelude To A New Dream*. By following his steps, we can create new agreements for ourselves, change the way we think and have our belief system evolve and ensure us to a beautiful and successful life, which we all deserve.

**Chapter Two: The First Agreement, Be Impeccable with Your Word**

*Be Impeccable With Your Word*, the first agreement, is considered the most important agreement out of the four, but is also the hardest one to practice according to Ruiz because our words hold the most power. “The word is a force; it is the power you have to express and communicate, to think, and thereby create the events in your life” (pg
26, Ruiz). To illustrate just how powerful a word can be, Ruiz gives an example about Hitler, the man who transformed one word into mass destruction during World War II. Through his words, he was able to scare a whole country and convince them that his words were the truth and many followed by killing thousands of innocent people. However, to be impeccable with your word has many positive outcomes, not just negative. Another example, Ruiz uses in the chapter is using words to reinforce an affirmation to another. For example, when I try to tell myself that I am smart I have trouble believing it because I have believed an agreement that has told me that I wasn’t smart. But when someone else tells me I’m smart, I believe him or her because of the word that that person uses and I now create a new agreement.

According to the book, to be impeccable means, “without sin” and Ruiz says that, “Being impeccable with your word is not using the word against yourself” (pg32, Ruiz). I think this means not to go against your own feelings, your beliefs or your truths because you recognize the importance of self-responsibility. However, many times society has taught us the agreement to lie, which can interfere with this new agreement. We are taught to lie because it is more acceptable, especially when one tries to avoid hurting someone else’s feelings. By lying, we have put all of the power in that one little lie and we no longer can control the outcome or the conflict that may arise.

Opinions, gossip and lies are all components of black magic, according to Ruiz simply because these agreements have all been practiced with ease for most of our lives. When we talk bad about someone behind his/her back or give someone an opinion that wasn’t asked for, we are not speaking truth, but only adding more sin to the word. Not only are we going against another person, we are going against ourselves often times
without realizing it. Ruiz feels that gossip is the worst type of black magic because, “gossip has become the main form of communication because it makes us feel better to see someone else feel as badly as we do” (pg 38, Ruiz). When we gossip, we are not being impeccable with our words because we are sending negativity out instead.

Be impeccable with your word, is the first agreement introduced in the book and is the most valuable one, because if you practice and use your word correctly with yourself and others you can live in world of beauty and happiness among others who appear to suffer. One word and the way it is used has more power than we can imagine unless we acknowledge just how much weight a word can have.

I never realized just how one word could effect a situation, especially when using the word in a negative way. For example, I often use the phrase, “I hate,” in front of fifty percent of my conversations. Whether I’m talking about a film, a situation or a person, saying that I hate something always seems to have a stronger meaning when I use the little word. By using the word, I’m trying to show my dislike for something only to have negative consequences. After reading this book, I realized that by saying hate, I’m not being impeccable with my word because I’m convincing myself that all of these things are horrible and I’m giving a negative association to something that might be great. Last night I told myself that I hated this girl that I worked with because she always had to be right. By using that word, I may act differently towards her and ignore her when I’m at work or say things I may regret. By doing so, I’m closing myself off to having a relationship with this girl that might bring positive contributions in my life.
I am very eager to follow the agreement Ruiz considers to be the most important because I feel I have used my words in a negative way, which has brought me unnecessary unhappiness. I think my words, especially “hate” have grown to be a large part of my vocabulary because no one has ever questioned my use of it. By using the same word over and over again, it became a negative agreement that interfered with having a successful life.

**Chapter 3: The Second Agreement, Don’t Take Anything Personally**

The second agreement may be more difficult to follow because trying not to take things personally is something that we were not trained to do. Ruiz says in order to follow this agreement we must not take anything personally, whether it be a word, a situation or an action. By taking something personally, we agree with what has been said or done to us and eternalize it, which causes more damage. For example, if someone said that I were fat, I may take it personally and either do nothing about it or I might obsess and try to lose weight in an unhealthy way.

Ruiz explains that, “personal importance” is the reason so many people adopt the agreement of taking things personally because they can’t accept things not being about them. Ruiz says, “personal importance, or taking things personally, is the assumption that everything is about me” (pg 48, Ruiz). This way of thinking has come from the way we were brought up. However, Ruiz explains that in order to accept this new agreement we must realize that the things people do and say have nothing to do with us. We must not take it personally because other peoples’ actions and words are a reflection of what they are going through, which sometimes we interpret as personal.
If we learn to follow this agreement, we will be able to avoid life suffering. According to Ruiz, “Humans are addicted to suffering, and we support each other in maintaining these addictions” (pg 57, Ruiz). But why are so many people addicted? Why do we like to feel bad about ourselves? In a way, taking things personally reflects the way we see ourselves and any suffering the might come from words or conflict helps to justify our feelings. However, if we accept this new agreement then we have to learn to see ourselves for who we are and try not to believe anyone else. People will say things about me or you and they are only opinions that hold no true meaning. It is the opinion that we have for ourselves that matters because we have the power to change it.

“Taking nothing personally helps you to break many habits and routines that trap you in the dream of hell and cause needless suffering” (pg 59, Ruiz). Since the day we were born we have created many agreements that have caused us to suffer. However, if we practice this new agreement and accept it into our lives, all the other agreements that have only interfered will soon disappear. By accepting this agreement, we will experience a new way of living, free from emotional garbage that will lead us into a peaceful existence among a world of chaos.

Sometimes we forget who we are because we have listened, for too long, to the ones around us, who are often always wrong. Telling me to not take anything personally is like telling me to not breathe. Over the years, I have created agreements for myself that have let people control my feelings, emotions and actions. I have never practiced the second agreement because I’ve never been able to separate myself from the people who come into my life, whether they are just there for a second or a lifetime. For example, one
day when I was at work, a client complained about my work. She said that I had hurt her and she didn’t feel comfortable working with me in the future. This upset me so much that I was afraid to work with other clients and I replayed what I had done over and over again in my mind. I decided from this one client’s opinion of me that I was a horrible employee, good for nothing person who couldn’t do anything right. I let this woman control my opinion of myself because I believed what she had said to be true. Now looking back, she could have been having a bad day, or I could’ve hurt her, but that shouldn’t effect the way I continue to do my job or live my life. I have many memories of how taking something personally caused me to suffer because I didn’t have the strength to recognize that I had the power to be different. For me, the idea of this agreement is terrifying because I don’t know if I can not take anything personally because I rely heavily on the opinions of other to justify who I am.

Chapter Four: The Third Agreement, Don’t Make Assumptions

The Third agreement in the book is, Don’t Make Assumptions, which is something that people do with just about everything. According to Don Miguel Ruiz, “The problem with making assumptions is that we believe they are the truth” (pg 63, Ruiz). In a way, our assumptions manifest into something, whether it is what someone else is thinking or doing and we can convince ourselves that it is real. Assumptions may not appear to have any worth, but it is a very powerful tool, which end up causing many problems. For example, Ruiz explains that when we make assumptions, it usually consists of some misunderstanding that results in a huge conflict that could’ve been prevented. He gives an example of a person walking in a mall who sees another person that they are fond of. The
person smiles and walks away and now we have a situation where assumptions may arise. Perhaps, we assume that they person is interested in us romantically or not interested in us at all and we begin to create a fantasy world. Conflict can arise here because once we start believing our assumptions we might begin to take it personally when the person doesn’t act in the way we might desire, perhaps by asking us out on a date.

According to the author, making assumptions can also lead to confusion and problems when in a relationship. Often times the reason for making assumptions is because we do not want to admit any fault and ask for an explanation in situations where there clearly needs to be one. In this section, Ruiz uses a marriage as an example, explaining how many times one half of a relationship will assume that the other will want the same things, such as a lot of children or professional success. However, when reality sets in and we realize that we made an assumption, it is often difficult because we then expect each other to change to make our assumption real. This behavior, expecting the other to change, in order to fit your standard idea of a relationship, often ends in divorce.

“Making assumptions in relationships leads to a lot of fights, a lot of misunderstandings with the people we love” (pg 67, Ruiz). I think when we make assumptions and then discover that they are wrong, it causes us to judge other’s simply because they don’t think, feel and respond the same way we do and we don’t like to admit that we were wrong. This is why relationships end badly because one or both partners can’t admit that they made a mistake when they made an assumption.

Last, the worst type of assumption we often make is the ones we make with ourselves. Ruiz believes that when we make assumptions, it often causes “inner conflict” because we damage our thoughts when our assumptions are wrong. For example, imagine
that I made an assumption that I was going to pass an exam. However, I didn’t study as much as I should have and I failed. By making this assumption, I failed the exam, myself and will most likely interpret this action as not being smart enough. In order to stop making assumptions with ourselves we must ask questions, reflect on our situation and ask for clarification when there is doubt so that we can avoid judgment, even with ourselves.

I think out of all of the agreements, the third one, *Don’t Make Assumptions* is going to be the most difficult one to follow because I make the most assumptions in everyday life. I think that I make assumptions because just as Ruiz explained, I don’t ask for clarification in confusing situations and I judge people a lot, including myself. I agree with Ruiz, that by making assumptions we cause “inner conflict” amongst ourselves that allows us to believe the things that may not be true and once again make an assumption about something. For example, when I finished high school, I decided that I didn’t need to go to college because I knew everything, which is very common among naïve kids that age. As I hopped on a plane to Europe, despite my mother’s urging not to, I remember thinking that this was all that I would ever need and nothing more as I traveled from city to city enjoying the anonymity of my new life. What I didn’t stop to think about was that I wasn’t always going to be eighteen, free and stupid to make mistakes when they were acceptable. I never stopped to think about how I was going to make a living or raise a family when the time came. In fact, by making the assumption that I wouldn’t need college or an education, I believe that it made things a lot harder on myself as the years went by. Then, when I eventually came to the decision and realized that many of my
dread and ambitions would require me to go back to school I created an “inner conflict.” I convinced myself that it was too late in my life to dream and therefore couldn’t do the things that I desired to. Soon I began making other assumptions by thinking that I was too old to go to school, wasn’t smart enough and that people, including myself wouldn’t take me seriously. However, I’m grateful in a way that I did make an assumption because without I wouldn’t have had a life experience that led me to where I wanted to be and that was to the path that I am on now.

Not only am I guilty of making assumptions that have affected my life, but I have also made assumptions about others in the past that haven’t always been correct. I think making assumptions about others is very common because we have a need to be right, especially in situations when we first meet a person. For example, when I first met my current boyfriend, I immediately wrote him off for a slacker and didn’t think that he and I had anything in common for many reasons. When we met he appeared to be loud and all over the place and trying to talk to him was like trying to pull teeth. He told me that he was currently not working because he was on tour with this band that was traveling across the United States and he lived at home with his parents. Over the next few weeks he kept calling me, asking me to go out with him. I kept making up excuses why I couldn’t go out with him or I just didn’t answer my phone. However, a week after all of my excuses ran out, I agreed to have lunch with him, even though I thought of him as a loser who lived with his parents. On that first date, I learned that he did have a job, he lived with his parents because his father had just had a stroke and he needed help and that he was a very funny guy. In this case, I made a wrong assumption about someone by classifying him as something that he wasn’t simply based on a first impression. Luckily
for me this assumption was later cleared up when I was able to look at the person for who he really was, and that was a great guy.

Chapter 5: The Fourth Agreement, Always Do Your Best

The last agreement in the book is, Always Do Your Best, which embodies all of the new agreements in one. Ruiz says, “Always do your best, no more and no less” (pg 75, Ruiz) because all you can do is try and accept what the outcome is as your best. According to Ruiz, a person’s best changes from situation to situation because life is full of surprises and not every experience is going to be the same. In fact, this could be a positive thing because every day is a new day, a new experience or chance for us to be our best even in a way that was better than the day before. Also, in order to achieve the agreement of always doing our best, it is important to be in our healthiest state. For example, we can’t be our best in school if we drink and party all the time because we will miss class and exams. And we can’t do our best for our children if we are sick all of the time, especially if we are working all of the time. However, we can follow this fourth agreement to always do our best if we work hard, accept all of the new agreements and live in a happy and safe environment. Ruiz believes, “Your best will also change over time. As you build the habit of the four new agreements, your best will become better that it used to be” (pg 76, Ruiz).

In doing our best, a person must remember that going over your “best” limit or going below can have many negative effects. For example, sometimes a person will feel as if they have to try so hard to reach their goal that they end up pushing themselves too hard. This will eventually cause the person to fail because they spent too much of their
energy that there isn’t enough to do their best. And if we don’t do our best and go below
our limit, we will experience emotions of failure and self doubt that could be damaging to
our inner selves. However, Ruiz says, “Just do your best-in any circumstance in your
life” (pg 77, Ruiz) because if you do then you allow yourself to be free of judgment,
especially amongst ourselves. To illustrate this point, Ruiz tells a story about a man who
looks to a Master at a Buddhist temple for guidance. The man asks the master how long it
will take him to transcend and become superior in the universe if he meditates for four
hours every day? When the man hears that it will take him ten years to transcend he is not
happy and asks how long it will take if he meditates for eight hours instead. The master
replies by saying it will take double the time and happen in twenty years. Of course the
man is unhappy and confused by this, but the master explains that by mediating more, he
is jeopardizing his happiness on earth because he is over exceeding the level that is his
best. In other words, if we try to do more than we are capable of we will not be doing our
best because we will miss the point and life will pass us right by.

Another important point Ruiz brings up is, “Doing your best really doesn’t feel
like work because you enjoy whatever you are doing” (pg 81, Ruiz). He is saying here
that we can always do our best if we like what we are doing and trying to accomplish. If
ture happiness lies where our work is than regardless if we try very hard or not we are
always going to be doing our best because we want to. Wanting to do your best and
having to do your best are two completely different things. Ruiz feels that if we have to
do something than we will not do our best because our heart isn’t in it and we find no joy
in the task. For example, some people go to work every day because they “have to” in
order to get paid. However, many times employees do not do their best because they are
not happy with their job and don’t want to be there. In order to always do your best then we must incorporate into our lives where we are happy to do so.

Ruiz is a very religious man and he believes that by doing your best you are thanking God and telling him that, “you love him”. In this chapter, he explains about a ritual performed in India called, *puja*. This ritual involves taking dolls or idols that represent God and giving them food and bathing them. By doing this, the people are giving God their best by showing them their gratitude for everything he has made in their world. According to Ruiz, without God or whatever your higher power may be, we aren’t able to do our best because we aren’t able to surrender to something greater than ourselves. In order to do our best, we must believe that the things we do in the present moment are the things that are going to bring us to our moment of happiness and peace.

The point of this chapter is to guide us and allow us to say that we achieved our lives, with all that surrounds us because we had the vision and strength to try our best for the things we wanted.

In closing of this chapter, Ruiz explains the importance of adapting the four agreements into our lives because every day is nothing but choices and unknowns that can be easier just by having an awareness of the agreements. He stresses that in order to follow the agreements, we don’t have to be religious, rich or spiritual, we just need to accept the agreements and practice them in our present paths.

I can think of a time when I followed this agreement and even though I didn’t succeed the way I had hoped I feel good about myself because I did my best. For example, when I went to France I didn’t speak the language and knew nothing about the
culture. When I arrived, I was nothing short of shocked and began asking myself, “What did I get myself into?” I couldn’t understand anyone, couldn’t find my way around and I was so lonely without anyone to talk to. I decided that I was going to go home because I had made a huge mistake. I had this romantic idea that I was going to go to France, speak the language, be swept of my feet and become a “Frenchie” within seconds of landing in the country. The first couple of weeks of being there I began to feel sorry for myself, crying, sleeping all day and not wanting to leave my apartment. It was obvious that I wasn’t doing my best in the situation because all I could think of was going home. However, one morning I woke up, looked myself in the mirror and realized that I had an amazing opportunity at my hands and I would be crazy not to take advantage of it. From that day on I spoke and practiced my French to anyone who would listen, I traveled up and down the country, I made many friends and I learned something new about one of the most beautiful places in the world and something new about myself. At the end of the trip, I wasn’t as fluent in the language as I had hoped to be and I was far from being French, but I wasn’t the same girl I was nine months prior to arriving there. I think that in this situation I gave my best because even though I couldn’t have predicted what would happen, I left feeling happy and alive after having a tremendous experience. I’m sure that Don Miguel Ruiz would be happy with my successful usage of agreement four, and if not, at least I can say that I gave it my best.

Chapter 6: The Toltec Path To Freedom, Breaking Old Agreements

“Everyone talks about freedom,” is how this chapter begins and according to Ruiz he believes that no one is ever truly free to be who the are because we won’t allow
ourselves to be. Usually people blame others, the government, their families or their pasts for the reason why they can’t experience freedom. However, in order to be free we must be able to do as we please, and not have any restraints on our soul. Ruiz explains that children, under the age of four are free because they have the power to do as they please because they haven’t been exposed to the controlling real world. “The child human is completely wild. Just like a flower, a tree, or an animal that has not been domesticated-wild” (pg 94, Ruiz)! Each day a child experiences freedom because they aren’t afraid to explore the world for they might learn something new. However, somewhere along the road, children grow-up and they soon begin to forget what it is like to be free. Ruiz asks the question, “What has happened with the adult human?” because they have lost their will to be as they were when they were young. He believes that as we age, we learn more how to judge and accept others’ judgment as the truth, which causes us to be miserable. Each new child is taught, by society and their parents, how to play the victim as they grow older and this is why we can never feel free to be who we are.

According to Ruiz, he has now given us the gift of the four agreements that should be enough to break our old habits, stop playing the victim and experience life just as a child would. Ruiz says, “Sometimes that little child comes out when you are having fun or playing, when you feel happy-these are the happiest moments of your life-when the real you comes out” (pg 97, Ruiz). However, many times we don’t experience this happiness because we feel we have responsibilities and must conform to society standards. In this chapter, Ruiz discusses three main points that will help you on your journey of destroying old agreements and becoming the new you, with a little child leading the way.
The first point is called, *The Art of Transformation: The Dream of the Second Attention*, which says that, “*One way to change your beliefs is to focus your attention on all those agreements and beliefs, and change the agreements with yourself*” (pg 106, Ruiz). What he means here is in order to transform we need to destroy the agreements that have become habits in our lives and focus on the new ones, which will create our new dream. According to Ruiz, the first step in the transformation process is to become aware of the doubt we have in our head. Next, we must decide to become aware of all of the things, whether they are fears or beliefs, that don’t make us happy. In order to do this we need to make a list of all the agreements that we do believe in, which will allow us to become stronger and continue us on the path of transformation. It is said that if we can’t find the power to break our old agreements, then we cannot change because, “*We need the same amount of power to change an agreement*” (pg 110, Ruiz).

The next point is called, *The Discipline of the Warrior: Controlling Your Own Behavior*, which says that we can not allow our emotions to control our days because if we do then we will not have the power to change. For example, Ruiz illustrates this point by talking about a woman who wakes up in the morning feeling great. During breakfast, she gets in a fight with her husband and spends the rest of the day crying and trying to pick herself back up. The woman was unable to change her situation because she spent the day being controlled by her behavior. According to Ruiz, humans lose control of themselves because we get taken over by our emotions. However, if we, the warrior become more aware of our world, our emotions and our heads then we can control our behavior that will lead us to happiness.
The last point in the chapter is called, “The Initiation of the Dead: Embracing The Angel of Death,” which says, “the final way to attain personal freedom is to prepare ourselves for the initiation of the dead, to take death itself as our teacher” (pg 118, Ruiz). This means that at any moment we could die so it is important to be present in every day so that we can know we experienced life, especially our own. The angel of death is a guide who watches over us and reminds us that we are never far from the end. We need to look at the past as death and only look at each day as our life because nothing behind or ahead of us matters. For example, if I were told that I had one day to live, I would try not to be sad because I still had today and I could make it the best day I had ever seen.

The other morning I woke up and became very overwhelmed because I realized that I was letting my life pass me by. It’s not that I don’t do a lot of things. In fact, I’m very busy with school, work and life in general. However, what I became aware of was that I wasn’t happy with all of my choices because I felt as if they were controlling me and I was missing out on some of the great things life has to offer. For example, I’m young, unmarried and free to explore, but I feel so tired and worn down. I don’t feel as if I have any experiences worth talking about and certainly I don’t feel happy in many aspects of my life. I want to travel to Central America, I want to swim in the oceans and I want to live each day the best that I can. I think that this book is very inspiring because it made me realize just how much I want my life to change. Yes, I work very hard to meet my personal goals, but I don’t want to wake up one day and realize that there were so many things that I missed out on because I was punishing myself. I believe that I punish myself in working so hard because I feel as if I wasted so much time when I was
younger. Today, I have a chance to become more aware and try to live each day, using the four agreements, to my best ability.

Chapter Seven: The New Dream, Heaven on Earth

“I want you to forget everything you have learned in your whole life. This is the beginning of a new understanding, a new dream” (pg 123, Ruiz). In this chapter, Ruiz discusses that the life we are living is created by our own perception and we have the power to change it if we want to. He asks us to use our imagination to create a new life because our thoughts have the power to bring happiness. He asks that we imagine our life in happiness, imagine living without fear, imagine living without judgment for ourselves and others and imagine having love for ourselves. Ruiz says, “The reason I ask you to imagine these things is because they are all entirely possible” (pg 126, Ruiz). This final chapter is the encouragement we all need to begin our new day by honoring and respecting the four agreements. Every person on this planet has the ability to create exactly what they want for themselves and to be the person they have dreamed about for so many years. Ruiz, acknowledge that following the agreements is a choice and we are all free to choose if we want to honor it. Some people like suffering in life because they aren’t able to look through the smoke to realize that something is wrong and others are afraid of what they might find. However, this chapter explains that there will always be difficulties in life, but each day will be easier because we have chosen to be happy instead of miserable.
At the end of chapter seven, Ruiz asks, “To live in hell, or to live in heaven. My choice is to live in heaven. What is yours” (pg 129, Ruiz)? I chose to live in heaven, to live my life because I don’t want to suffer I want to be happy. I often ask myself just what happiness is because I think it has different meanings for different people. For me, I want to experience happiness in a way where I’m accepting and loving of myself because then I can show others around me happiness. I think that Ruiz makes a good point in this chapter because he says that everyone has a choice to change or not to. My life is my own to do what I please with it and it can only change if I decide to do so. I think that following the four agreements will be difficult because I will have a hard time forgetting the agreements I have created for myself over the years. However, I make my choice here and I want to live in heaven instead of hell.
Conclusion

*The Four Agreements*, written by Don Miguel Ruiz is a journey that will teach you self-love, respect and transform you into the person you have always been. Ruiz believes that life wasn’t chosen for us but the way we live our life is a choice and we have many abilities to live in true happiness. Happiness is experienced by following four simple agreements, *Be Impeccable with Your Word, Don’t Take Anything Personal, Don’t Make Assumptions and Always Do Your Best*. Each agreement embodies the next so it is important that we destroy our old agreements and accept these new ones into our lives. Everyone has the power to create the life they want and the tools are here in the four agreements. However, adopting this new way of life may not come easy or fast but it will come in time if we are willing to try. Life is one big journey and no one can live our lives except for us, so it’s time to start living just as we would want. This book is a guide for happiness, which Ruiz believes is in everyone’s view if we can just learn to clear the smoke from our eyes.