

DON'T TAKE ANYTHING PERSONALLY

Week #2 of a 4-Week Series, "The Four Agreements"

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We are in Week #2 in a four-week series, "The Four Agreements," this wonderful little book that came out in 1997 by don Miguel Ruiz. He says that these four agreements -- here's his quote: *"There four agreements help us return power back to ourselves and therefore to new personal belief systems."*

These four agreements can help us get back to our own personal belief systems! So important right now.

So, the four agreements that we are exploring and practicing together -- right? We're going to be practicing all week. You all were practicing to be impeccable with your word last week -- yes? So was I. Was it challenging? Just for me? No, it was challenging. Yeah, it still is. We're still working on it.

So, last week, yes: "Be Impeccable with Your Word." Tonight we're looking at "Don't Take Anything Personally." And then next week will be: "Don't Make Assumptions." Ooh, another good one! And then Week #4 we have "Always Do Your Best."

And then I mentioned last week that they did add a fifth agreement. He added a fifth agreement with his son, Don Jose Ruiz. And that really is all about being kind and respectful, open-hearted with other people's opinions and beliefs. To remain open to other ideas and perspectives. And then use your spiritual discernment -- listen to your own inner voice -- to make a decision for yourself. And that one really gets interwoven through all these other four. So, we'll be weaving them in as we go along.

I also shared last week that he gives a great story in the introduction of the book. He describes the human experience. And he summarizes it this way; here it is on your slide. He says:

"Everything in existence is a manifestation of the one living being we call God. Everything is God."

And then he later writes:

"The real us is pure love. pure light."

That's the book's philosophy. That's the foundation from which we're jumping off -- is this knowing that we are manifestations of God, which is pure love and pure light. Therefore, you are pure love and pure light. The person next to you -- go ahead and look at them. They're pure love and pure light. The person behind you: a manifestation of God. Yeah.

So, with that in mind, tonight we're exploring the second agreement, "Don't Take Anything Personally." How many of you find it hard to take things not personally? Like, every hand. [Laughs] That's why you're all here tonight, right? Yeah; it's easy to take things personally, in other words, isn't it? Yeah.

The challenge is that it's even these little interactions. can trigger something in us. So maybe someone doesn't text back right away, and we start thinking, *"Oh, they must be mad at me."* Right? Or they walk past you in a hurry, and you think, *"Uh-oh; they don't want to talk to me."* Or someone has low energy or is looking sad, and we think, *"Oh, it must be because of me. I've done something."* Or maybe it's a comment someone says -- or doesn't say -- about our hair, our dress, our new car ... And we take that personally. So, there's a lot of things we can take personally. So, the

bottom line here -- here's the main lesson. Let's just cut right to it, okay? And then we're going to dive even deeper. The main lesson here in this second of the four agreements is this: **Nothing anyone does is because of you.** [Repeats] Nothing anyone does is because of you.

Take that in. Their reaction, their comment, their inaction is based on many things. It could be the emotions they have in that moment. It could be what came before that moment. It most likely is their own feelings about themselves. It's also about the opinions, the beliefs, the experience that they have gathered over their lifetime, which has created who they are.

We talked about that a little bit last week when we talked about being impeccable with your word. To know that beliefs are formed during those most important years -- the zero to five years, and even our teenage years -- by other people. Right? Our group that we hung out with and grew up with. Where we ... what town or city we grew up in. The culture at large. The time we grew up in. All of that affects us and it affects all of us differently.

And each of us also come in with our own life traumas that happen that then also form our opinions and our beliefs and our perspectives.

So, knowing this ... So, there's this great example. It's from the book and the class, "I of the Storm." I of the Storm being with a capital "I." And it's a book by Jane and Gary Simmons. And it really highlights this second agreement of not taking anything personally.

So, they give this example of if someone were to come up to you and say, "You're a frog. You're a frog." You would laugh, right? I heard some laughter. Because you know you're not a frog. "I'm not a frog. Why are they calling me a frog?"

Now, if the same person came up to you and said, "You're stupid." Now there's no laughter. Because now we start internalizing that. "Oh, my gosh; they called me stupid. Oh no; am I stupid? Maybe I'm stupid. What if I'm stupid? I think I'm stupid."

We take on their belief; their opinion. Why? Why do we act differently to those two statements? So, don Miguel Ruiz says it's because we assume what he calls "personal importance," meaning we think it's all about us. And it can be. Because what happens is that these statements take you to somewhere in the past where you're still not healed. There's an unhealed part of the past within you there. So, you've made what the other person has said -- their opinion, their belief -- about yourself. Because it's touching upon your own unhealed part of yourself.

So, here's an example -- my own personal example of this. And I think I've shared it before. I'll share it again. So, someone could come up to me right now and say, "You're stupid." And I would actually laugh that off; the same as if you were to call me a frog. Not from a place of ego, but because all of my teachers and parents, my certificates, my degrees, my entire experience tells me -- although I'm not the smartest person in the room -- but I know I'm not stupid.

So, you could say, "Stacy, you're stupid." I'd laugh it off. "Stacy, you're a frog." I'd laugh it off. Because it doesn't touch upon any part of my own experience. There's no trigger; there's no emotional pain there for me.

Now, you can make a comment about my weight, about my appearance, and whoa! As my co-workers know, it could be good or bad, and there's a trigger there. Now, I could go on a whole soapbox just of that subject alone, but For me, it's because I've worked through a lot of body image issues of how to really dissect my worth from what my body or my appearance looks like. Because we all know our worth doesn't equal our appearance. There's a lot more interesting things about ourselves than our body and our weight. It's taken me a while to get there.

So, when people focus on my weight, there's a trigger there for me, because I'm still healing. I've healed it and I continue to heal.

For you, it might be something different. Maybe it's if someone says you're stupid, but maybe it's something else. Maybe just ask yourself: What would it be -- if someone were to give their opinion or a comment to me -- what would it be that would bring that up -- that emotional pain trigger for me? Because then that's telling you something. It's telling you there's something still there, a strong emotion there that still needs to be healed.

Whatever it is that you would take personally is calling forth for you to look at to heal. Whenever we have a strong reaction to something that someone says to us about us, that's for us to heal. And what our author says is that, when you have that strong reaction, you're essentially, he says, agreeing with what was said. Ooh!

So, when we react -- when something in us gets upset or angry -- it means there's, again, something there that needs to be healed, but it also means I must be agreeing with that. So, it's an opportunity to notice: *"Hey, there's something inside of me that still needs to be healed around this. There's still some growth needed in this area of my life, in this whatever is going on within me."*

So, it's about our healing. And it's also about what the other person needs to heal. Because, again, they're coming from their own experiences and unhealed pieces and parts of themselves.

So, here's what Ruiz writes; It's on your screen so you can follow along. He says:

"Even when a situation seems so personal, even if others insult you directly, it has nothing to do with you. What they say, what they do, and their opinions they give, are according to the agreements that they have in their own minds."

Meaning about themselves.

"Their point of view comes from all the programming that they've received."

Again, the programming from family, from society, from friends. That's where they're coming from. What others say and do is a reflection of their own fears, beliefs, wounds, perceptions. It's not a measure of your worth.

So, when we feel the need to react to what's said, he says there's a couple things that happen. One is, he says: we've eaten the emotional garbage. We've eaten their emotional garbage when we react and take it on as our own. We digest it. We believe what they say, and then we create a new, untrue belief about ourself.

The second thing is that we feel the need ... Maybe, if you recall, if someone has said something to you, then suddenly we feel the need to defend ourselves and make someone right and someone wrong, which allows us then to forget our oneness. Because now we're seeing our separateness. As we get defensive, one needs to be right and wrong. Now I'm separate from you. I forget that we're all connected and one.

Don't take anything personally. Don't get offended. Don't create conflict or harm.

And let's be honest with ourselves, because a lot of times we think, *"Well, that person is saying this,"* or *"I'm upset when these folks are saying that."* And we know that when we point, what is happening? You got three fingers pointing back at you, right?

So, it's not just about what they're doing. It's also about being aware of: I've got three fingers pointing back; let me become more aware. What judgments am I making? What am I thinking or writing or saying about others that is poison. That is garbage.

And, again, to be impeccable with our word: not to shame ourselves or beat ourselves up about it, but to just notice. Because the noticing is where the growth is at.

You know, I think about our political climate. And we're all in our own little information silos. This is what's making it hard for us to talk to one another. But we're in our silos -- a big part -- because our egos need validation and safety. Safety in who I am and who my identity is. Emotionally safe so I don't have to question what I believe or who I am.

And so that's true for that group. And it's also true for you and your group. Right? We're all trying to stay emotionally safe.

So, if we realize that we're all trying to keep our brains -- our central nervous system -- safe, it means not forgetting our oneness. That we're all one: connected, energetic beings.

And there's times that we forget that we're all manifestations of God -- of love itself. We are pure love and pure light.

This brings in that fifth agreement: to be kind; to be respectful; to be open to other points of views and perspectives. To discern, then, what is true and best for you. But there's no power struggle in that. There's no right and wrong in that.

Now, hurting people is right and wrong, so we're not talking about that. Let's make sure we get that clear, right? So, hurting another person is hurting an expression/a manifestation of God. So, that's never okay. We're not talking about any kind of harm. That's a non-negotiable. We need to stay respectful to honor everyone's actions and beliefs.

But to come back to: We're here on earth to be the living, loving spirit of the Divine in human form.

So, our opinions -- and it's interesting he writes this in 1997 -- our opinions, he reminds us, are just your viewpoint and their viewpoint. So, you can have yours; they can have theirs. And it's based on our life and life events, and it's also based on the unhealed parts of ourselves.

I saw a post the other day that said, *"I can always tell if someone is mad at me by making it up in my head and believing it."* [Congregants laugh] Anyone?

And that's the main reason for not taking it personally. And he talks about: Don't take it personally if it's good. And don't take it personally if it's bad. But here's what he writes. He says, *"You create an entire picture or movie in your mind and, in that picture, you are the director; you are the producer; you are the main actor or actress. Everyone else is a secondary character in your movie. Therefore, the way you tell that movie is based on your past beliefs and experiences and those healed and unhealed parts of yourself."* It's true for you. It's true for everyone else.

So, he points out: don't take anything personally, like I just mentioned. That includes even positive feedback. Don't take positive feedback personally. Also, don't take negative feedback personally.

So, he shares a lot of times he'll go on the road and he gives talks, speeches, workshops. And then afterwards, one person comes up and says, *"You're the best!"* He doesn't take it personally. The next person comes up and says, *"You're the worst!"* He doesn't take it personally.

As a minister, I can totally relate to this, by the way. [Congregants laugh] *"It's too long."* *"It's too short."*

Don't take anything personally.

My grandma Liz, she always had this great story. Because she said ... So, my dad and my aunt were very well-behaved children. And she would always get compliments about how well-behaved: *"Oh, your children are so well-behaved."* And she said, *"Well, I can't take credit for their good behavior, because that would mean I'd have to take credit for their bad behavior, and I'm not going to do that."*

Don't take anything personally.

So, it comes down to two things:

1) Knowing who you are -- your spiritual truth;

2) Knowing how you choose to react. And your reaction, again, is based on old beliefs and those unhealed parts of yourself.

So, here's where we return to knowing who we are -- our divine identity. Remember: God said his name is I AM. God is I AM. God is. I AM.

Knowing who you are: a manifestation, an expression of the Divine. Pure love, pure light. Who are you? A manifestation of the Divine.

One of my favorite Unity authors/ministers, Rev. Eric Butterworth, had a big congregation in New York City. And he has this great funny little quote here. He says, *"You may not be able to keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building nests in your hair."*

So, you keep your own peace by not taking things personally, meaning not allowing the negative birds in your life to build a nest with their comments and destroy your whole world. To live in your head.

But Eric Butterworth also said this; here it is on the screen for you:

"The things that happen around you or to you can have little bearing on your well-being. What counts are the things that happen IN you?"

What's going on within you? What needs to be healed? How can you keep the peace there?

We have lots of tools. We have meditation. Movement. (Notice I didn't say exercise. Movement -- gentle movement.) Mindfulness. Therapy. Medication when needed. But we have lots of tools to help us keep that peace within us.

And always returning to your divine identity, which is: *"I am a manifestation of pure love and pure light."*

And don't just say it. This is where the boots come in. Don't just say, *"I am pure love and pure light."* **Be it. Be** the love. **Be** the light. Show up in every conversation, in every interaction -- whether it's at the grocery store or with your friend, whether it's through text or an email or a phone call. Does anyone do phone calls anymore? Well, if you do ...

But **be it. Be** the love. **Be** the light. It's nice and pretty when we sit here and affirm it. **Be it.**

Another important point: When you know who you are -- when you know your spiritual essence -- you don't need anyone to tell you that you're the worst or that you're the best. That's essentially what he's saying here.

Because you know what you are. You start to become aware of, with the comments, what their unresolved stuff is, and also what your unresolved stuff is. And that's an invitation to heal, heal your inner world. And, as you do, to remember that first agreement: to be impeccable with your words. So, as you start noticing, being kind with yourself; being compassionate, gentle with yourself.

But we get to produce our life movie. So, what kind of life movie do you want to write? What life movie do you want to produce?

You don't have to believe all the voices and thoughts and criticisms that are in your head. When they come, a lot of times what I'll do is say, *"Huh. Whose voice is that? It's not God's voice. It's not Love's voice."* It's probably an old teacher or a parent who didn't know better.

Whose voice is that? But you can write a new story at any time.

So, like our first agreement, it comes back to ourselves. Don't take anything personally that you say, even to your own self. It's best not to cause your own suffering. Extend kindness to our own selves first.

Here's what he writes: *"If you practice the first two agreements, you will break 75% of the teeny tiny agreements or old beliefs that keep you trapped in hell."*

Don't stay in hell, friends. Be impeccable with your word toward yourself and others. Don't take anything personally -- not what someone says to you or that you say to you.

Don't take anything personally. It doesn't mean that we stop caring. It means that we care from a place that's rooted in spiritual identity instead of ego reaction. And that is the real freedom of this agreement: no longer living as emotional hostages to the opinions, the moods, the projections of other people.

So, my invitation tonight is twofold:

One: **return to that quiet knowing within you**. Say to yourself, *"I know who I am."* Whisper it to yourself: *"I know who I am. I am pure love and pure light."* And then you say, *"I know I can heal by extending patience, compassion, and peace to myself."*

And then the second thing you do is: you **move forward with confidence**, and confidence that you're going to show up as that pure love and light that you are. And then, that's when we experience that inner peace and happiness.

So, this week, as we practice releasing the need to personalize every criticism, every comment, every misunderstanding, every judgment, we do so with grace. Because then we free ourselves to live more fully in peace and love, tranquility, and the truth of who we are.

And that becomes our soul work for this week as we practice our second agreement of the four agreements: Don't Take Anything Personally. That's our soul work.

Blessings, everyone.