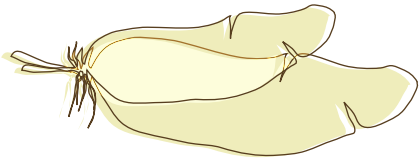


# Spiritual Teachings

by Margaret Ann Lembo



## Don Miguel Ruiz and don Miguel Ruiz Jr. discuss the four principles that can transform your business and your life.

Over the years, my continuing study of the Toltec teachings made me want to integrate these spiritual practices into all areas of my life, including my business life. For help and guidance, I turned to don Miguel Ruiz, author of the best-selling book *The Four Agreements*, and his son, don Miguel Ruiz, Jr. The following conversation highlights the Toltec teachings and The Four Agreements as they might be applied to enhance your business and achieve greater harmony and success. The principles apply to all businesses; in fact, they apply to everything—personal relationships, family, community, and relations with yourself. It doesn't matter what you do—what matters is how you do it and with what conscious-

ness you are doing it. Each of the points central to The Four Agreements (see sidebar below) can be easily applied in your interactions with people you deal with on a regular basis, including customers, employees, sales reps, and vendors. As you integrate these principles into your business, the transformation that takes place echoes out beyond the walls of your store. You'll see a change not only at work, but in your personal life, even in how you interact with your community. While the teachings are extremely simple and can be applied on many levels, they also can have a profound impact. I invite you to use the simple teachings of don Miguel Ruiz Sr. and don Miguel Ruiz Jr. Put them into action and watch you and your business thrive.

### THE FOUR AGREEMENTS

#### **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.

#### **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.

#### **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.

#### **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.

From *The Four Agreements* by don Miguel Ruiz.  
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## An agreeable conversation

**Margaret Ann Lembo:** From a business standpoint, how can a retailer apply the Toltec teachings of The Four Agreements with customers, vendors, staff, and community?

**Don Miguel Sr:** It is important to understand that the word Toltec means artist. Every human is an artist. A creation of an organization is a piece of art. The Toltec Way is the artist's way. The business created is an entity based on the person who created it. In art, we have great imagination, everything is possible. The same is true in creating businesses and organizations.

Everyone who works within an organization works for each other. Each person has a place. The manager or owner needs to listen to each person within the organization with respect. From the person who cleans the floor to the CEO, everyone must respect each other's roles.

**Don Miguel Jr:** A business is a living being. It is people interacting with each other. There must be an intention and a goal. Success comes by knowing the goal. That is where the passion for creating a successful business comes from.

If everybody in a business has a belief system based on The Four Agreements, they don't gossip, they never take anything personally, they do what they should do, and instead of creating problems, they don't assume anything. If one piece of the agreement starts failing, it affects the whole system and chaos ensues.

Naturally, because of the diverse group of people involved in a workplace, several belief systems are being combined. When you learn to listen and not take anything personally, you can create a new belief system. As a business owner, you are the one creating a new environment, a new identity, and therefore, the new belief system in your workplace. In learning how to respect others' belief systems, you can respect all your customers, vendors, and staff.

A company where everyone knows the roles, rules, and direction will run well. Be open to allowing compassion within the interactions of the organization. The work is the way we interact with each other. If an individual grows up where they used their word against others, then they will bring those ways into the workplace.

**Lembo:** There are times a person within an organization will create drama or won't let something go. How can this be handled?

**Don Miguel Sr:** Everyone has their own story and everyone wants to be right. Personal importance gets bigger and bigger. Most of the time the drama is a misunderstanding and people jump to conclusions. They make assumptions. To resolve the drama, uncover the issue. Go to each person involved and listen to their story and put it together. Listen with respect, and justice will come.

The key word is respect. Respect is so important in an organization. It is what will make every piece work in harmony. With respect, you can interact with others even when you don't agree. Respect begins with each person, but mainly with the person

**“Respect is so important in an organization. It is what will make every piece work in harmony. With respect, you can interact with others even when you don't agree.” — don Miguel Ruiz Sr.**



don Miguel Ruiz



don Miguel Ruiz Jr.

in the place of power, the owner or manager who organizes the whole thing. The owner or the manager must respect everyone in the company. When we honor each person's opinions and are fair, everyone will love being part of the organization. Success is immediate.

Using The Four Agreements leads you to respect yourself and everybody else. A drama is a signal that an employee is no longer happy in the job, and they create a drama to find a way out. But the employee may have fear about losing their income or the change in their lives if they quit. In this case, they create more problems because they no longer like to work in the company. You can try to recover their love for the company, but if they don't want it, then it's time to say goodbye and let them go. Then they can find someplace where they can be happy. So often, drama is their way of saying, "I want my freedom."

**Don Miguel Jr:** You have to have employees who want to be there and not feel or act as if they have to be there. Letting someone go is one of the hardest things to do. An analogy is when we have an organ that isn't functioning. Sometimes we have to heal the organ, replace it, or cut it out. It is sometimes extremely important to remove it to prevent the spread of infection. We may think we can't function without the organ or the employee, but as humans we are very adaptable and flexible. We will survive and thrive without the employee. When you have a company with employees who no longer want to be there, it's time to find staff who do want to be part of the company.

**Lembo:** What if it's a customer creating the drama? What if a client is very self-absorbed and abuses our employees?

**Don Miguel Jr:** With what is going on in the economy now, some managers have forgotten what service is and have gone beyond a reasonable limit. Sometimes the phrase "the customer is always right" creates a misunderstanding. You may have a customer who is really into their self-importance. Limits have to be set regard-

ing acceptable behavior. Rules must be in place so the staff knows when they should refer the customer to a manager or owner. If there are no rules, the employee suffers because the customer is not always right.

**Don Miguel Sr:** If I see injustice and I lose a customer, then I lose a customer; I will protect my employee. I listen to the customer and make a decision. The customer may decide not to come back to the store. Customers have rights, too—they have the right to leave. Sometimes it is for the best, as we discussed earlier regarding an employee who is no longer happy. Sometimes we also have to let the customer go.

**Don Miguel Jr:** Sometimes these things happen, and it's no one's fault. [But] if they happen over and over again, there has to be a shift.

**Lembo:** What is personal importance and how does it affect the overall success of a business? How can someone overcome self-importance?

**Don Miguel Sr:** We have big personal importance when we think we are so smart. Personal importance is "I am right and everyone else is wrong." To make ourselves right and everyone else wrong creates a disturbance.

To overcome the feelings of personal importance you must remember everyone within the business is in service. The one who should have the least personal importance is the person in the place of power, because he serves everyone. His decisions will affect the rest of the business. The owner or manager is representing the whole company. The key is to respect others and have humility. The business owner, managers, and supervisors must recognize they are the ones in service to all—the staff, the customers, the vendors, everyone.

**Don Miguel Jr:** When we learn to listen, we allow our ego to quiet down. People are talking, and you're already thinking of what you are going to say. If you observe this in yourself, it's a good indicator of how strong your personal importance is. Observe how long you can have a conversation without interrupting the other person in your own mind. If you learn to listen, you can hear

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what the person's needs are. As a businessperson or salesperson, that is a great tool. How can you provide services if you don't know what the other person needs?

**Lembo:** Earlier you spoke of several belief systems coexisting in the workplace. I've noticed in my business that personal beliefs based upon the clothes someone is wearing, the color of their skin, or their accent can change how you interact with them. How would you advise a store owner and staff to overcome these assumptions and socialized belief systems?

**Don Miguel Jr:** When we make those kinds of judgments, we make them based on personal beliefs. Everyone is a potential client. If we detach from our personal beliefs we can see clients, co-workers, or vendors as people who are there to help the business in some way. Make a special effort and learn to listen to what the customer needs.

If a customer comes in grungy and you give them great service, you have the potential to make a great sale. They could be a high-end customer who may not have dressed that day. Our beliefs get in the way. We forget what is important. The customer's needs are the company's needs, and that is what is important.

**Lembo:** I personally tried an experiment at an upscale depart-

ment store. One day I visited the store dressed in diamond rings, a name-brand purse, and nice clothes and makeup. On that day I received the ultimate personal shopper experience. Weeks later, same store, but I dressed in old jeans, no makeup or jewelry, and the result was distinctly different. No salesperson was "available" to help me that day. Clearly, it wasn't a coincidence, as the store was much busier on the day I dressed up to give the impression that I had money. So it's very true. Socialized belief systems can prevent sales.

In closing, are there any final words of wisdom you wish to share with the readers of the *New Age Retailer*?

**Don Miguel Sr:** Enjoy what you are doing! It's your imagination coming alive. And when it's time to let go, let go. Sometimes we're in a business that doesn't make us happy. If that is true for you, then let it go.

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Margaret Ann Lembo is the owner of The Crystal Garden in Boynton Beach, Fla., and author of seven meditation CDs, including her latest, *Think Good Thoughts*. Visit her at [www.thecrystalgarden.com](http://www.thecrystalgarden.com) or [www.margaretannlembo.com](http://www.margaretannlembo.com).



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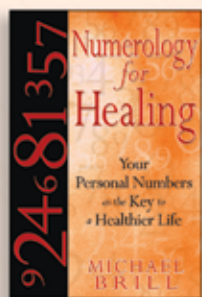
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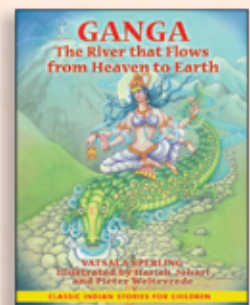
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