

**Intended for Grades:** 6-8

**Estimated Time:** 45-60 min.

**Lesson Title: THE FOUR AGREEMENTS**

**Lesson Purpose:** Students will:

- \* Learn about personal agreements we make that help shape who we are
- \* Relate ‘*Ōlelo No’eau* on the power of words to the *Four Agreements*
- \* Use the “The Four Agreements” to practice *pono* communication skills

**Materials & Preparation:**

- \* Four Agreements handout (See below)
- \* Swimmer picture (See below; projected or hard copies - 1 per group)
- \* Pens to take notes about scenarios
- \* Optional: Student Handout (See Lesson Resource)
- \* Consider preplanning groups

**Background Information:**

This lesson is based on the teachings of the Toltec people as shared by Don Miguel Ruiz. Toltec philosophy provides four agreements that can help people make positive choices in what they think, say, and do.

In the book *The Four Agreements*, don Miguel Ruiz shares his belief that many children are trained with a system of punishment and reward, which he calls domestication. We are told, “You’re a good boy” or “You’re a good girl” when we do what Mom and Dad wants us to do. When we don’t, we are a “bad girl” or a “bad boy”.

People develop the desire to avoid punishment and crave external reward, and so we continue independently to work toward what we perceive is right, based on the views of our parents, religion, culture, friends, the media, teachers, society, and more.

Ruiz states that this belief system is usually created without our conscious control, and that it can become a discrepancy with who we really are. Ruiz calls these personal beliefs and agreements our own personal ‘Book of Law’, which becomes what we base our truth upon.

This author explains, “Whatever goes against (your own) ‘Book of Law’ will make you feel a funny sensation in your solar plexus, and it’s called fear. Any challenges to what you believe are going to make you feel unsafe. Even if the ‘Book of Law’ is wrong, it makes you feel safe,” Ruiz explains.

The Four Agreements that don Miguel Ruiz shares can help individuals improve their ability to accept themselves as well as others. Participants can learn to communicate with positive results each day. Background information about Toltec philosophy and tradition is not necessary to adopt these Four Agreements.

**Steps:**

1. Create small teams of 4-6 and have groups sit together. Introduce that they are going to work together on positive communication skills.

2. Share the following ‘*Ōlelo No’eau* and ask students what they think this means:

**I ka 'ōlelo no ke ola, I ka 'ōlelo no ka make.**  
In speech is life, In speech is death.

Discuss whether students think this *Ōlelo No'ea* still holds true today, and why they think what they do. Share your own understanding (personal to global examples) of how words can hold positive or negative power over people.

3. Tell students that groups will be working on positive communication skills as they create a scenario about someone.

4. Show “The Swimmer” picture (project image below or share some printed copies). Discuss how we read body language of other people. Question prompts can include:

\**What is his body expressing?* (Take multiple interpretations)

\**Can we really know how he feels by just looking?*

Discuss that our guesses are only assumptions based on what we observe.

5. Ask students to imagine that this person is either a close friend or family member, and they want to help him move from feeling like he currently is to feeling better.

6. Tell groups that to help them communicate in a *pono* and helpful way, they are asked to follow these four agreements. Share overhead (below) or the student handout (see lesson resource) and discuss each of the four agreements to clarify what they mean:

- a. **Be impeccable with your words.** (*Impeccable = perfect; being pono with words*)
- b. **Don't take things personally.** (*What we think and feel is all about us, not others.*)
- c. **Don't make assumptions.** (*Thinking your guess is right can cause problems.*)
- d. **Do your best.** (*Your best varies, depending on how you feel (well or sick, etc.)*)

7. Instruct groups that:

- \* They are to figure out what they would do and what they would say to this person
- \* They have 5-8 minutes to plan this out
- \* Each group will present their scenario in 1-2 min.
- \* They can talk about what they would do or act it out

8. Facilitate group sharing. Debrief presentations as time allows and discuss reflection questions.

9. Students can take home optional Student Handouts or save them for future reference. Revisit these agreements when the timing is appropriate.

#### **Reflection Questions:**

- What was the most important information you learned from today's lesson?
- How can you use this information in the future?

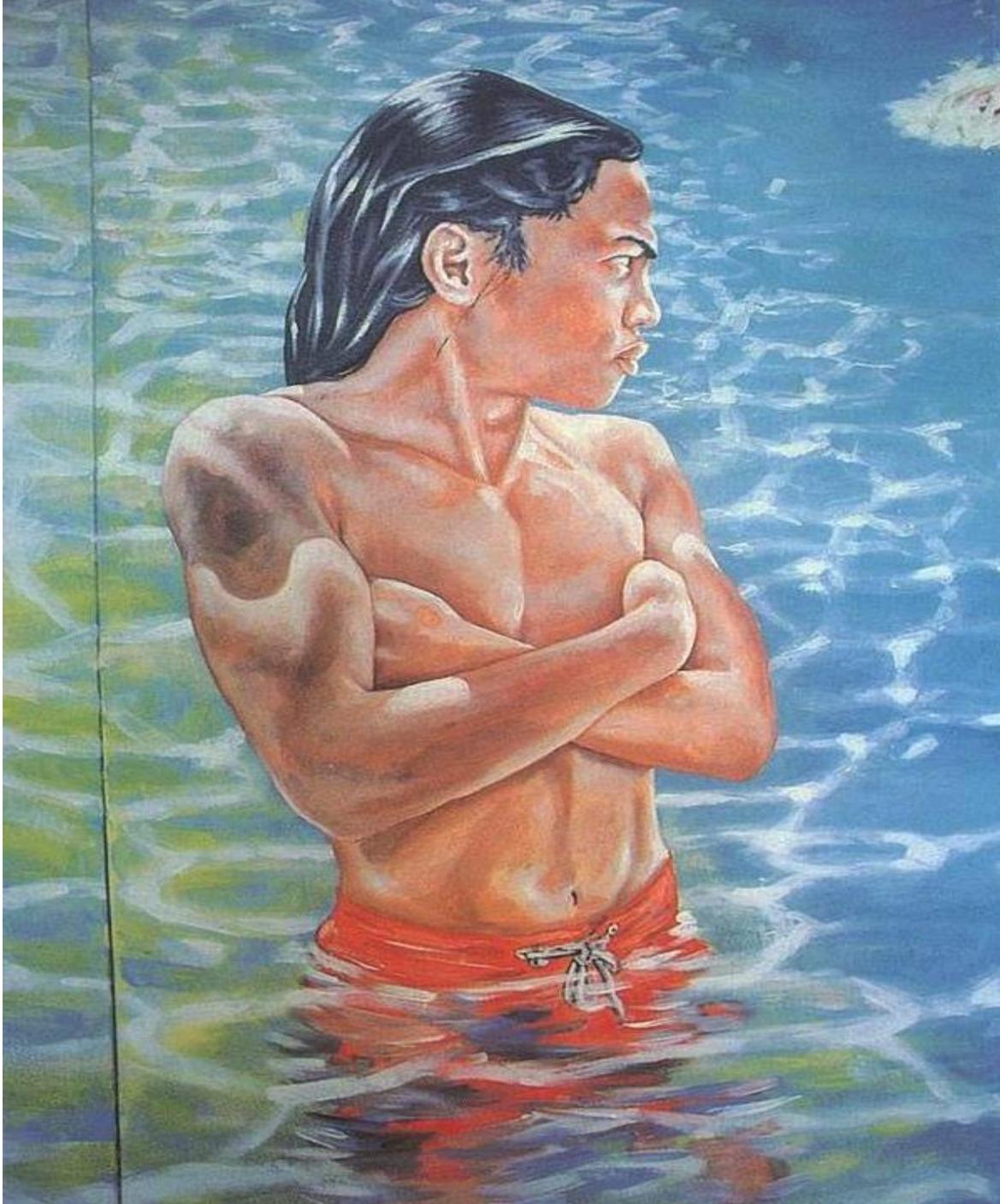
#### **Resources:**

<http://www.miguelruiz.com/> - further information from this Toltec teacher

## THE SWIMMER

An image by MARTIN CHARLOT  
(Reprinted with his permission)

Found in John Charlot's book "Chanting the Universe"



## **The Four Agreements**

By don Miguel Ruiz

### **1. BE IMPECCABLE WITH YOUR WORD**

Speak with integrity and say only what you mean. Avoid using words 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. When you are immune to actions and opinions of others, you won't become a victim.

### **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, drama, and sadness. *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 regret and self-judgment.

## The Four Agreements

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### 1. BE IMPECCABLE WITH YOUR WORD

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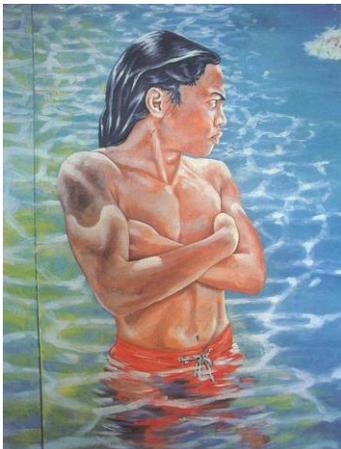
Nothing others do is because of you. What others say and do is because of their own reality and perceptions. When you are immune to the opinions and actions of others, you won't be the victim of needless suffering.

### 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.



*The Swimmer*  
by Martin Charlot

## The Power of the Word



**I ka 'ōlelo no ke ola,  
I ka 'ōlelo no ka make.**

*Translation:*

**In speech is life,  
In speech is death.**

'Ōlelo No'eau Hawaiian Proverbs & Poetical Sayings

*Mary Kawena Pukui*



This wise saying tells people that words can either be a source of healing or a source of destruction and pain.

***We need to be  
careful with our words.***

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### How To Help?

Imagine you are the Swimmer's friend or family. His body language makes you think something is wrong. You care and want to help.

- Create a scenario describing what you might do when you see him.
- \* Use the *Four Agreements* to help communicate well. (*Be pono with words; don't guess; know it's not about you, and do your best.*)
- Plan to share your ideas by talking about or acting out what you would do.