

Got a grudge? Get over it

Grudges are exhausting. The worst type of grudge is one that lasts for years — when it almost becomes a contest to see who will break the silence first.

In his book of Toltec wisdom, "The Four Agreements," author Don Miguel Ruiz offers this advice: Don't take it personally.

"Someone else's actions have nothing to do with you," Ruiz explains. "We have no idea what someone is going through.

They may be suffering a loss, or getting a divorce. If we think that someone's silence or rage is about us, then we are being run by our ego and not our spirit."

Born into a Mexican family of traditional healers, Ruiz originally abandoned his family's Toltec beliefs to become a surgeon. Then, a near-death experience forever

changed his perspective: "I saw that this is all a dream. Our realities are based on our beliefs. I knew I couldn't go back to the old way of thinking and being."

Though his "don't take it personally" approach may sound simple, it can be hard to stick to in today's world.

"Other people's opinions of us only have merit if we believe them," he says. "If you spread love and happiness, there is no

reason for someone to be hateful or angry with you. If they choose to be negative, it is their choice. It is not because you are doing anything wrong."

Other agreements to live by, per Ruiz:

Be impeccable with your word. This means speaking with integrity at all times. No lies. No gossip.

Never assume. "Communicate with others before you let your mind race with thoughts that are assumptions," he says. "This one agreement can transform your life."

Always do your best. Ruiz feels you should give every task your full attention. This means *no* multitasking.

These days, Ruiz is co-writing with his son Don Jose Ruiz. Their joint effort, "The Fifth Agreement," was released in December.

"We can break away from the misery in our minds by changing our thoughts," the elder Ruiz says. "Many days, this will not be easy. Just remember that inner peace and happiness (are) waiting for you."

— Jennifer Weigel

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