

On Impeccable Word

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A self-help book I found useful and recommend is *The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom* (Amber-Allen, 1997). One of the four agreements is to be immaculate with words, with language. Ruiz calls it Impeccable Word. I can't remember exactly what Ruiz writes about Impeccable Word, but the basic concept hit home and got me thinking about how people use language to depict and make sense of reality.

As I define it for my purposes, Impeccable Word is cherishing language, acknowledging its vital importance, and employing it with utmost care--as flawlessly, as completely, as perfectly, as possible--in naming the world. The result of this process is your Word. *Your* Word, not *the* Word, you aren't omniscient, but invaluable nevertheless because it contributes to deep understanding, insight, creative ideas, and wisdom, and it supports personal autonomy and going in the right and true direction in your life.

Impeccable Word contrasts with Shallow Word, Reactive Word, Parrot Word, Disingenuous Word, and Silent Word: easy, terse touchdowns on phenomena; uninformed, casual reactions, conclusions, commentaries, and opinions; reiterations and endorsements of whatever happens to be in the wind at the moment; not being straightforward and candid; and keeping quiet.

Three main dimensions of Impeccable Word:

Know Your Word. Knowing your Word is the outcome of a focused, rigorous, and exacting examination of phenomena, both external to you and within yourself

Express Your Word. Speak up. Level with people. Participate in the private and public dialogue or discourse.

Keep Your Word. When you tell others you are going to do something that grows out of your Word, do it. When you tell yourself you are going to do something that grows out of your Word, honor that agreement.

Let's you and I make a commitment to Impeccable Word for the next three months and see what difference it makes.

