

The Four Agreements & **Finding Success as a Music Major**

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Many are familiar with Miguel Ruiz's *The Four Agreements*. It is seen as a way of promoting love and happiness in your life. Who wouldn't want that? Those of you who know me, know that I enjoy working on personal growth. I often find myself reading a book that has nothing to do with music and thinking, "I bet I can apply this to playing trombone or teaching my students!"

BE IMPECCABLE WITH YOUR WORD

Do what you say you are going to do—for others and for yourself. This can be difficult because as a music major, you are pulled in many directions. Organization is key. If you don't have a method of keeping track of your classes, assignments, rehearsals, gigs, etc. then you must find a method that works for you. Whether it is digital or analog, or a combination of both, have a way of organizing your crazy life so that you can devote time to what matters most to you. Know yourself and how you work best.

Are you in any ensembles? Can you play your part perfectly? Can others count on you to play your part well? Do you arrive early to rehearsal with all of your music, equipment, and a pencil? Be a role model that others admire. Take professional gigs seriously. If you commit to a gig, then make sure that you are able to make it. Arrive early and act professionally. Communicate effectively.

Tip / Tool: Agenda, bullet journal, online calendar, practice journal

DON'T TAKE ANYTHING PERSONALLY

As a music major, you will constantly be receiving feedback about how to improve your craft. You must learn to develop a thick skin and take criticism as an opportunity to get better. Getting defensive or angry will not put yourself in a place to get better.

Remember this when you give constructive feedback to others as well. Also, learn to separate your sense of self from your grades and your performance. You are not a bad person if you get a bad grade or have a bad lesson. You probably just need to study more or devote more time to practicing to achieve the outcome that you desire.

Tip / Tool: Recorder, meditation, journal

DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS

Communicate clearly and effectively in order to avoid miscommunications. Don't assume that others can read your mind—you must communicate your thoughts. This is an honest way of communicating and thinking.

Don't assume that it will be easy. It's not. Music is an art that takes dedication, hard work, passion, and above all grit.

Tip / Tool: Take the time to think before you speak. Check your email, and practice good email etiquette.

ALWAYS TRY YOUR BEST

Why would you put forth anything less than your best? You can compare yourself to others, but the person you should be comparing yourself to is your past self. Are you better than you were yesterday? By trying your best at all times you will surely make improvements that will stack up over time. Sometimes our best varies at times, and that's OK. Whether you are playing long tones, working on a technical passage, or practicing sight singing, ask yourself, "Am I trying my best?" Do not accept anything less than your best, and you can always be proud of your efforts.

Tip / Tool: Keep track of goals. List your accomplishments, and be proud of the smallest success.