



Four Tips for Professional Writers– Based on The Four Agreements

By Jan Fishler

In the book, The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom, Don Miguel Ruiz states four simple agreements that, when applied, can change anyone's life. Although these agreements weren't written specifically to apply to writers and their clients, it occurred to me that contracts, work agreements, and the resulting work could be enhanced exponentially if everyone concerned followed these simple yet powerful rules.

1. Be impeccable with your word.

As writers, this should be a given. Words are powerful tools, so it's important and necessary to be as flawless in the use of them as you can be. When applied to the craft of writing, it means writing clear, concise, and relevant content and proofing and editing your work. If you're not good at editing, consider working with someone who can do it for you. This is especially true when it comes to proposals and work agreements. Taking care to specify the details such as timelines, deliverables, fees, and payment schedules before you begin working can eliminate problems and keep the project on target. When it comes to words, the goal should always be perfection.

2. Don't take anything personally.

If your client is in a bad mood, the idea is to understand that if you've been impeccable with your words, it probably has nothing to do with you. Thinking that you are the cause of someone's bad (undisciplined, unkind, thoughtless, etc.) behavior is counterproductive and a waste of energy. We've all heard the expression, "Let it go." If you happen to end up working with a difficult client, the message is to get the work done as expeditiously as possible and move on. That doesn't mean you have to continue your professional relationship with this person, but it helps to realize that it's not about you or your work.

3. Don't make assumptions.

How many times have you tried to guess why someone did or didn't do something, only to discover in the end that you were completely off base? Although some of us are better than others in reading body language and picking up behavioral clues from an individual's tone and inflection, we are not mind-readers. When we're unclear about some aspect of the project we're working on, or we inadvertently stumble upon a new methodology we think our client might like, it's always best to ask. Remember the Chinese Proverb, "He who asks a question is a fool for five minutes; he who does not ask a question remains a fool forever."

4. Do your best.

A freelance writer I know says that the faster she writes the more money she makes. I can't help but wonder if following the dollar is doing her clients a disservice. There are times when writing simply flows and our best work just pours out in record time, but this is the exception. Most writing, even when we're familiar with the topic, requires diligence, fortitude, and perseverance — characteristics that are well worth the time they take to cultivate. If we decide to always do our best, even if there is a slight negative impact on our bottom line, we'll never have to apologize for the content we deliver.

For 25 years Jan Fishler was a corporate scriptwriter, copywriter, video producer, and trainer, who also dabbled in marketing and public relations, mostly in the non-profit arena. In 2009 she self-published an adoption memoir, [Searching for Jane, Finding Myself](#) (An Adoption Memoir), [available at Amazon.com](#). Because Jan knows that everyone has a story to tell, she developed and presents a painless and inspiring method to help others write their story. Her [Write Your Story workshop](#)s tap into the power of the subconscious so that stories come to life and practically write themselves. Jan is also the producer of *The Path to Publication* DVD series, available from [Films for the Humanities and Sciences](#). Filmed at the Community of Writers Conference at Squaw Valley, the series contains advice from such well-known authors as [Amy Tan](#), [Anne Lamott](#), [Janet Fitch](#), and [Mark Childress](#).