

Stop Guessing What They Really Meant

English learning resource · EN

Full episode script · English

181 lines

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

Have you ever come home, seen someone's quiet face, and instantly decided you knew exactly what they were thinking?

Or worked yourself into complete exhaustion, trying to prove to yourself that you were "trying hard enough"?

Today, we are opening an old, deceptively simple book that quietly rewires how you communicate, and how hard you push yourself.

Welcome to Your English Toolbox, where we train your ears step by step.

I am Martin.

And I am Julia.

Friends, we are so happy you are here today.

Before we begin, remember this episode has a home online.

Your English Toolbox... dot... com.

The interactive transcript of this episode, translations in Farsi, Spanish, German and French, vocabulary cards, flashcards, games and downloadable PDFs.

All completely free.

Today's episode comes from a real book, one that has sold more than ten million copies worldwide.

It is called The Four Agreements, written by the Mexican author and healer Don Miguel Ruiz.

Martin, this is the one that finally explained why I kept getting into arguments with my sister over absolutely nothing.

I know that feeling.

My partner Claire used to go quiet for one evening, and by bedtime I had built an entire theory about what I had done wrong.

And you were always wrong.

Always.

Every single time.

That is exactly where we are taking you today, friends.



By the end of this episode, you will have two more of Ruiz's agreements: one that ends most unnecessary arguments before they even start, and one that finally lets you stop punishing yourself for not being perfect.

Plus, eight brand new English expressions, so you can talk about both, with real confidence.

Let's begin.

Ruiz calls this one the third agreement: don't make assumptions.

And friends, once you see this pattern, you cannot unsee it.

Here is the mechanism.

We have a habit of trying to predict reality.

When we don't know something... we fill in the blank ourselves.

And then, quietly, we start believing our own guess is a fact.

We read someone's face, their silence, their tone... and we decide we know exactly what is going on inside their head.

Ruiz has a simple, brutal line about this.

Go on.

He says most of the suffering people create for themselves comes from assuming they know what someone else is thinking, wanting, or feeling.

And most of the time... we are simply wrong.

Here is how the drama actually builds, step by step.

Tell them, Julia.

Step one: you make an assumption.

Step two: you react to the assumption, not to reality.

Step three: the other person reacts to your strange new behavior, confused, because nothing has actually happened yet.

Step four: you use their confused reaction as "proof" that your original assumption was correct.

And step five: a full conflict has now erupted, entirely out of a story your own mind invented.

That is exactly what happened to me, actually, with Claire.

Tell them.

A few months ago, I came home from a long day, and Claire was completely silent at dinner.

Barely said ten words.

Old me would have spent the whole night in my head.

"She's angry.

I must have forgotten something.



Did I say something wrong on the phone this morning?"

You actually did do that, once.

I did.

For an entire evening, over nothing.

But this time, I remembered the third agreement.

So instead of spiraling, I just asked her.

Radical, I know.

I said, "You've been quiet tonight.

Is everything okay?"

And?

And it turned out she had a brutal call with her boss that afternoon, and it had absolutely nothing to do with me.

Nothing at all.

Ruiz says the antidote to almost all of this is embarrassingly simple: ask.

Have the courage to ask the question, instead of writing the whole story yourself.

And have the courage to say what you need, too, instead of assuming people can read your mind.

Because friends, nobody can read your mind.

Not your partner.

Not your boss.

Not your best friend.

If you don't ask... you don't get the truth.

And if you don't say it... they will never know.

Now, let's talk about the fourth agreement, because this one might be the most freeing of all.

Always do your best.

Simple enough, right?

Except Ruiz adds a twist most people miss completely.

Your best is not one fixed number.

It changes, day by day, hour by hour.

Your best on a healthy, well-rested morning is a completely different thing from your best when you are sick, exhausted, or heartbroken.

And judging today's effort by yesterday's energy is exactly where so much of our guilt comes from.

There are two ways people usually fail this agreement, and they are opposite mistakes.



Tell them, Julia.

The first is doing less than your best. Being lazy, holding back, not really trying.

That one creates guilt.

The Judge in your head has a field day.

But the second mistake is sneakier.

Doing more than your best. Pushing far past your limit, again and again.

That one looks like virtue from the outside.

But it is not sustainable.

It leads straight to burnout.

And that, friends, is exactly where I lived for most of last year.

Go on, Julia.

When we were building this podcast, I had this idea that "doing my best" meant working every single evening, every weekend, no exceptions.

Fourteen-hour days, back to back, for months.

I remember.

You looked exhausted.

I thought that was what commitment looked like.

Then, one week, I genuinely could not get out of bed.

My body just... stopped negotiating.

And lying there, I finally understood this agreement properly.

My best on that sick, exhausted week was getting up, drinking some water, and answering one email.

And that was enough.

That was actually my best, that week.

Because the goal was never to perform for an imaginary judge.

It was to act, and then let go of the outcome completely.

Ruiz compares it to something from the Bhagavad Gita, actually, doing your duty without being attached to the fruit of your action.

You give a talk, you prepare, you show up honestly, and then whether people applaud or stay silent is simply not your business anymore.

You did your best. That is the whole contract.

Nothing more is owed.

And here is where all of this quietly comes together, friends.



When you stop assuming, and you simply do your best without needing anyone's applause, something shifts.

Ruiz calls the person who lives this way a "Toltec warrior."

Not someone who fights everyone.

Someone who has simply stopped fighting themselves.

A warrior like this is aware that life is short, and strangely, that awareness does not make them anxious.

It makes them present.

They forgive quickly, themselves most of all.

Because Ruiz says something we both needed to hear: you are already perfect exactly as you are.

The only reason you don't feel that way is because somewhere, you agreed that you weren't.

And you can simply... unagree.

One honest conversation at a time.

One kept promise to yourself at a time.

That is the whole of it, friends.

Nothing mystical.

Nothing complicated.

Just two very old habits, finally broken: guessing, and punishing.

And there is one more piece to this warrior mindset, quietly powerful.

Ruiz talks about accepting that none of us are here forever.

Not in a heavy way, friends.

In a freeing way.

When you truly accept that your time is limited, you stop wasting it on manufactured drama.

You stop rehearsing arguments that haven't happened yet.

You stop performing for people who were never watching that closely anyway.

You just live the conversation you are actually in, right now.

That is it.

That is the whole shift.

Before we go further, let's collect the tools from today's stories.

Eight expressions, straight from our own lives.

Number one: to jump to conclusions.

It means to decide something is true without enough information.



"I jumped to conclusions about Claire's silence, and I was completely wrong."

Number two: to give someone the benefit of the doubt.

It means to assume the best about someone, rather than the worst, when you are not sure.

"Instead of assuming, give your partner the benefit of the doubt."

Number three: to read too much into something.

It means to find a meaning that probably was not really there.

"I read way too much into one quiet dinner."

Number four: to speak your mind.

It means to say honestly what you think or need, instead of expecting people to guess.

"If something's wrong, speak your mind instead of waiting for them to notice."

Number five: to give it your best shot.

It means to try as hard as you genuinely can, with no guarantee of the result.

"I gave it my best shot, even on the days I felt terrible."

Number six: to burn out.

It means to become completely exhausted from working too hard for too long.

"Julia burned out after months of fourteen-hour days."

Number seven: to be hard on yourself.

It means to judge or criticize yourself more harshly than you deserve.

"Don't be so hard on yourself."

You did your best."

And number eight: to let something go.

It means to stop holding onto a feeling, a grudge, or an expectation.

"Once she understood the truth, she let the whole thing go."

Eight new tools for your toolbox, friends.

Jump to conclusions... give the benefit of the doubt... read too much into something... speak your mind... give it your best shot... burn out... be hard on yourself... and let something go.

Now, friends, it is time for our sentence of the day.

Here it is.

I ask instead of assume, and I try without needing to be perfect.

Let's say it one more time, slowly.

I ask instead of assume, and I try without needing to be perfect.



Say it out loud with us, right now, wherever you are.

Let's close the loop, friends.

Don't make assumptions, because most of the story in your head was never real.

Just ask.

And always do your best, because your best changes every single day, and that is completely okay.

Claire's silence was never about Martin.

And my fourteen-hour days were never actually love.

They were fear, wearing a very convincing disguise.

Everything from today, the vocabulary, the transcript, and the translations, is waiting for you at Your English Toolbox... dot... com.

All completely free.

Thank you for being here with us, friends.

See you next time.

Bye for now.

Take care, friends.

