

Audrey Cannata:

Absolutely nothing that other people do or say to you is about you. It is a projection of their own reality. We're all living in our own worlds, in our own perceptions, with our own truths.

James Robert Lay:

Greetings and hello. I am James Robert Lay and welcome to episode 230 of the Banking on Digital Growth Podcast. Today's episode is part of the Behind the Cover Series, where today we are going to be taking you, the dear listener, behind the cover of *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz. Joining me for today's conversation is Audrey Cannata, operations lead here at the Digital Growth Institute and fellow reader who will be providing some perspective around why *The Four Agreements* is such an important read, both personally as well as professionally. And this is a book, *The Four Agreements*, it is a book we often recommend to individuals as well as the teams who are on a journey to level up their future digital growth potential at their financial brand or FinTech. Welcome to the show, Audrey. It is always, always good to share time with you and go behind the cover together.

Audrey Cannata:

Thank you so much, James Robert. I am really excited for this episode today.

James Robert Lay:

It is going to be a good conversation. I know it's one that we are both passionate about, it is a book that we're passionate about. And before we get into talking with *The Four Agreements*, what's going well for you right now? What's good in your world? Personally or professionally, it's your pick to get started on a positive note.

Audrey Cannata:

Well, I just finished reading *Personality isn't Permanent* by Dr. Benjamin Hardy. He talks about setting goals and creating habits. One of his recommendations, believe it or not, is to wake up two hours earlier, start your day two hours earlier. And then end, go to sleep one hour earlier. I'm not going to lie. At first I thought it was quite a challenge. But once I gave it a try and got into the routine, it has gotten easier and easier. I don't feel like I'm chasing the day anymore. I'm sort of addicted now to that sense of accomplishment and that pride for doing this. And so, yeah, I'm really grateful for that book. Definitely check it out. It's a great read.

James Robert Lay:

I think there's so much truth. And I think when we get into today's conversation, it's this idea of ancient wisdom and applying ancient wisdom in the age of AI, because these are truths that have... They've stood the test of time. And when you think of sleep cycles and circadian rhythm, and I am horrible at this so I'm just going to go ahead and put my confession out there for everyone to hear, I am a night owl. My brain finally turns on about 10 o'clock at night. It's when I do some of my best deep thinking and my writing. I can easily push until 2, 3, 4 o'clock in the morning. And then I'll sleep for six hours, but it's just I have a different cycle. Although I'm curious how much of that is being driven by digital technologies, because if we disconnect from technology and we reconnect back with nature and we follow the natural patterns of circadian rhythm, how much more productive might we all be? So it's just a philosophical question that I have right now, but maybe what's your take on that?

Audrey Cannata:

Absolutely. I think back, I used to teach history and we talked a lot about farming and ranching. Their day started when the sun came up and their day ended when the sun went down. And so if you think about how we operate now, the sun goes down and the night is still young for many people.

James Robert Lay:

Yeah. And that could be taking a toll on just... I think getting into another conversation that we've been having a lot around is flow state and almost how you need to be in tune. You need to be in touch with more of the natural cycles of rhythm. We'll call them the seasons of life. And seasons can be on a macro level. You have spring, summer, fall winter, but it also can be on a micro level to where you have sunrise and you have sunset. The more that we can, I say, tap into ancient wisdom and how ancient wisdom can be applied in the age of AI, this is how we maximize our exponential growth potential where we are continuously growing personally as well as professionally. And that's why today we're going to go behind the cover of *The Four Agreements*, which is a practical guide to personal freedom by Don Miguel Ruiz.

As I mentioned before, we're very passionate about this book. We often recommend it to individuals. We recommend it to teams who are on a journey to level up their future digital growth potential. You were the one who introduced me to this book. I don't think I've ever asked you this. How did you come across *The Four Agreements*? Because I always feel like there's an interesting story of connection. And there was that story of connection that you made too with this book of someone else online. So what's the story here of how this... Because it's like a gift. I mean, it is like a treasure to be hold and it's already sold 6 million copies. It's not a new book, but I mean, it's definitely out there for sure.

Audrey Cannata:

It truly is a treasure. So I was introduced to this book about a year or so ago during a Colby Workshop. I was getting my Colby certification and just talking about mindsets and how we operate. It just naturally came up. I think someone had it on their desk and just said, 'oh, this is a great book. You should check out.' I looked into it. Immediately, I was drawn into it just by reading the blurb. Ordered it right away and just, I fell in love with it. And then not too long ago, I shared a post on LinkedIn. One of the ladies, she commented and said she's been thinking about reading it. Saw the post, decided to go ahead and read it. She ended up bringing the book on vacation. She's sitting by the pool, reading the book, the waitress walks by, notices the book and says, "Oh my gosh, that's my mom's favorite book. She's in getting me, asking me to read it, telling me I should read it. I just haven't got a chance to, but you know what? I think I will now."

James Robert Lay:

Yes. Those small stories, they make connections. They make connections at a deeper level. Some call them synchronicities. I think the more that we can look for those synchronicities, those connections in our life, that's where we find, I say, the true magic of everything. Because as I wrote about in *Banking on Digital Growth*, digital growth comes from connections. It comes from relationship. It comes from communication. And before we break down each one of these four agreements and how they can empower teams to connect, to communicate even better and move beyond a lot of the conflict and the chaos that holds them back, that goes back to their early almost environments, why? Why take the time to read this book? And I would say specifically for this book, why take the time to not just read it, but think about it? Write through your thinking and then have some really good dialogue, discussion and discourse with others on your team into how what you're reading can be applied to maximize your exponential growth potential both where you're growing personally and professionally.

Audrey Cannata:

I think a lot of times when we read a book, we close it, we finish it. We think we're done. We get it. Let's move on. But every time you revisit a book, whether it's through your writing, through sharing it with others and having conversations, new insights are gained that you didn't have before, especially when you're hearing the perspectives of others. That's my favorite thing is to talk about, "Oh, that's what you took from that? Well, that's the way I interpreted it." And it really opens up so many more opportunities for learning and understanding and growing.

James Robert Lay:

And that idea of the dialogue discussion, once again, if we're going to stay on this theme of applying ancient wisdom in the age of AI, that dialogue discussion, that's rooted in the Socratic method developed by Socrates, to where you're not just reading something and putting it away. You're learning more through the dialogue discussion and discourse with others.

And it's what Napoleon Hill has written about and I've talked about on this podcast, the idea of the mastermind to where you're bringing more than one mind, two minds, three minds, five minds together and you get an exponential factor of ideation. And it's that ideation where you're seeing things just a little bit differently than how you saw them before. Because if you think about what leads to transformation, what leads to future growth, is it is a very defined process that we have codified here to where you see different, you think different, you feel different, then and only then will you then act different going forward. Because when you see things differently, you're transforming your beliefs. Your beliefs then drive your thoughts. Your thoughts then influence your feelings. Your feelings then get transformed into reality through your behaviors and actions. And then your actions when repeated, well, that just becomes the predictable future.

I think it's interesting to me when I read The Four Agreements was that the insights were rooted in the long tradition of the Toltecs. They were an ancient indigenous people of Mexico. I do find it interesting because when thinking about all of the ancient wisdom and applying it through the lens of the modern period that were in in the age of AI, what's your take on this? You're a big history buff. Why study? Why learn from the writings of the past to compliment what we're doing in the present moment?

Audrey Cannata:

Well, anytime you have historical evidence around something, it just makes that concept that much more credible. I think it comes down to identifying patterns from the past, connecting them with the present. And when it comes to mindset, especially many of the ideas and concepts that we learned today really aren't anything new. Especially when we're talking with others or sharing or teaching others who might be a little bit resistant, we can say, "Hey, look, this has been around for centuries. This is not a new idea, a new concept." So I think it's a little bit easier to adopt having that past that we can pull and connect from.

James Robert Lay:

You're right. A lot of the writings of the past, they're not new when reading them in the present. But are we forgetting or are we missing something? Because I know a lot of times when we have some of these more, I would call them philosophical conversations with financial brands in the Digital Growth University, they're like, "Ah, you helped me remember or you're helping me see something different." And they're like, "I already knew this, but I forgot." Why do you think that we might forget these basic truths, these basic principles that have such a profound impact on our future exponential growth?

Audrey Cannata:

Well, I think it comes down to a very simple old teacher saying, "If you don't use it, you lose it." It goes back to our conversation or your question just a minute ago about once you read, you don't just put it down and you stop and set it away. Don't sit it and forget it. Keep it top of mind. Keep revisiting it. Otherwise, you're not going to be consistently living those ideas and those values because something else is going to come up and distract you and take away your mental energy. So the more you can revisit, get reminders, surround yourself with people who will hold you accountable, who share this common language to keep these conversations and ideas going, I think that's where you're going to find the success.

James Robert Lay:

That's a great point. And you're coming back to the... You mentioned pattern matching before. I think when you start studying the past, history, whether it be actual linear history, which to be honest I'm not that much of a fan of, although I'll grin and bear it to get the pattern matching. I found that very helpful when thinking about the COVID experience and what we could probably expect and maybe even predict. I'll grin and bear it. I'm very intrigued by the humanity of history. There's the old proverbial ancient wisdom, "There's nothing new under the sun." It's like we have these patterns and these cycles. We were talking about this yesterday in a 3D workshop for a financial brand in the Digital Growth University. I shared the perspective around data. What is data? I think we forget. It's easy to think data's like 1s and 0s, but no data is there's people, like that's-

Audrey Cannata:

What's behind those 1s and 0s?

James Robert Lay:

That's their digital fingerprint. That's their digital footprint, if you will. When you can look at data like that through an empathetic lens thinking that that's an actual person or that is a group of people and you can begin to identify the common patterns that are causing common people pain, they're causing common people problems, look for that because that is the whole essence of applying the ancient wisdom through the age of AI. Because it's really, if you think about the ancient wisdom whether it comes from the Greeks, the Romans, the Toltecs as we're talking about here today with The Four Agreements, it's all rooted in human behavior, right?

Audrey Cannata:

Absolutely. It's pattern matching. And human behavior when you think about it over a macro level, there's a lot of patterns. It hasn't changed over time. We still operate the same. Of course our environment has changed. But our behaviors, these are things that have been around for a while.

James Robert Lay:

Let's keep this idea of just the environment and the impact the environment can have on each and every one of us, particularly around our relationship with money as we progress through this conversation. Because what I want to do is I want to break down each one of The Four Agreements for the dear listener for context and how these agreements can be applied as individuals, as teams, as organizations, and maybe even externally through what we'll call a culture of coaching at financial brands and FinTech. And so The Four Agreements shared in the book are number one, be impeccable with your word. Number two, don't take anything personally. Number three, don't make assumptions. And then number four, always do your best. So let's start off with the first agreement, be impeccable with your word. Break this down, Audrey. Why is this important to think about, to reflect on for a moment?

Audrey Cannata:

Okay. So my English teacher is going to come out here, but the word impeccable by definition means without sin. A sin is anything that goes against yourself or others. And when you think about the word, our word is our most powerful tool that we have as a human. There is no other being or animal on the planet that can speak, that can talk about their thoughts. So I think this one is really probably the most difficult to honor because in order to be impeccable with your word, you must first be impeccable with your thoughts, because your thoughts, the way Don Miguel Ruiz says, your thoughts, your intent manifests through the word. What you dream, what you feel and what you really are will all be manifested through the word. So your word can really be a double edged sword. It can create the most beautiful dream or it can destroy everything around you.

James Robert Lay:

Yeah. There's two thoughts on that. One is another... It's not as I would say as ancient as the wisdom of what is being shared in The Four Agreements, but this book was written almost 100 years ago in 1928. The book title is Your Word Is Your Wand by Florence Scovel Shinn. I think how we talk, and this is idea to connect it back to what I was sharing before about digital growth, this is communication. How we talk, how we communicate, the words that we use either to ourselves, our self talk, or how we communicate with others will either build up, create, growth will be the result of that, or they can tear down and destroy.

And when you think about the importance of being impeccable with your word, I think a lot of that comes from what we call is the three Ts for transformation. The very first one is telling the truth. Telling the truth to yourself about where you as an individual have been, you as a team have been, you as an organization have been, where you're at today in the present moment and then where you want to go next. Because I think it's so easy to lie to ourselves and to lie to each other if we're not truthful at first and foremost with ourself.

And when we lie, and I understand a lot of us tell a lot of little white lies here and there, but I heard a great analogy about telling a white lie. Don't think of it as a white lie. Think of it as just a splotch of mud, and you have relationships in your life personally and professionally. And when you tell just a little white lie, it's not a white lie, it's just a splotch of mud. You're just putting a little splotch of mud on a glass, on a piece of glass between you and someone else. And over time, those little white lies, they begin to add up. So you can no longer see through the glass. Or if that glass is an actual mirror, you can no longer see your true self. And so being impeccable with your word, how do we practically apply this in our day to day as an individual, maybe even as a team, as an organization who is on a journey to level up their digital growth potential and maybe their exponential growth potential where they're growing personally and professionally.

Audrey Cannata:

Yeah. So like you said, being impeccable with your word is all about telling the truth, speaking with integrity. When you do that, you're able to create a trusting, a safe place, a safe environment, a respectful environment where we can have conversations. We can share ideas without feeling judged, without feeling insecure. So I think it's really all about creating this safe place where people have the freedom to express themselves, again, respectfully.

I think one of the areas that we talk a lot about in our coaching is giving yourself the freedom to say no. And that is a big concept for I think a lot of us to understand because many of us by nature, we're team players, we want to come in and be the hero. We want to help everybody out. But I think not saying no and taking on more than we can because we want to please others, that is not being impeccable with your word. That is not telling the truth to yourself what are you truly and honestly capable of. And it's not being honest to those that you're saying yes to. So I think remembering that it's okay to say no to certain tasks, to certain responsibilities and just keeping that top of mind.

James Robert Lay:

Yeah. I also think about... And this is more of a modern philosophical perspective of this, but now we're connecting the past with the present, it's Ray Dalio who runs the Bridgewater hedge fund. And he's had such a unique past few years through him sharing more of his... He's a very private man, but he wrote the book Principles and he's sharing more about his philosophy. One of his philosophies or his principles, if you will, is around radical transparency. It's around radical honesty. That can create some confrontation, that can create some conflict. But when you approach it saying, "Hey, this is how we're going to get better together," that's what Ray is talking about, about creating an idea meritocracy. To create an idea meritocracy, you have to be impeccable with your word. You have to tell the truth, but you're doing it from a place of kindness. You're doing it from how we end every podcast, by wishing people well. You're doing it from even a place of love. As St. Thomas Aquinas has written, "Love is to will the good of another person."

I was not always this way. I was not a truth teller. I'm still learning how to tell the truth to myself probably more than anyone else now at this stage in my own life. But I am so grateful and fortunate that I live with a truth teller, and as you know, lean in. And it was so funny that we were talking before we hit record, John Crane, who will be the episode after this, he has a new book out. The reason he has a new book out is because he called me up one day. We're in an executive coaching group together over at strategic coach with Dan Sullivan. He called me up one day and he said, "Hey, I'm thinking about writing a book. I need to get your take on it." I was like, "Ah, I'm working on my second one" if that's that's a good enough answer.

My wife literally took the phone out of my hand, has never spoken to this guy once before, but she knew the context of the conversation. She goes, "You think you want to write a book, huh?" And he said, "Yeah." And I cannot say what her answer was to keep this PG friendly, to keep this family friendly, but it was a bit of a harsh truth. I think it caught him off guard. But he sent me a message last week and he said, "This is what happens when your wife says this to me." And it inspired action. And so I think, yeah, it takes practice to become a truth teller for sure and it requires a group who is willing and open to tell the truth together, right?

Audrey Cannata:

Absolutely. I think we're all trying to be impeccable with our word, but all we can do is just keep reminding ourselves, keep it top of mind, just keep trying to improve day in and day out. But it is probably the hardest to control. Controlling your thoughts which then inform your words, it's a big challenge.

James Robert Lay:

This is how agreement number two comes into play. Don't take anything personally, because when you are impeccable with your word, when you do commit to tell the truth and you're open to others telling

you the truth, agreement number two is perfect. Don't take anything personally, which once again if we're going to tell the truth here, this is the agreement that I probably have to work on the most in my own life. More so in my personal relationships than I would say professional. A lot of this comes back to just my environment, my upbringing, and how that shaped relationships or perceived relationships in my life. Why must we be mindful here with agreement number two, don't take anything personally?

Audrey Cannata:

So this agreement probably reached me more than any of the other agreements. It's something that I really, really took to heart and thought and reflected a lot about over the last year or so. It really has the power to transform your mindset, your relationships, and the amount of freedom, personal freedom you can experience if you really try to practice this agreement. It can be a challenge because it requires you to be really self-aware, really know who you are, what your truth is and stop seeking validation and acceptance from others. There's a really powerful statement that Ruiz makes and it has stuck with me since the first moment I read it. He says nothing, absolutely nothing that other people do or say to you is about you. It is a projection of their own reality. We're all living in our own worlds, in our own perceptions, with our own truths.

James Robert Lay:

Oh that is the hard part for me, more so personally once again, because I take on a lot of what people say about me. I think a lot of it is it's how it's said. It's the you statement. And then you have the indefinite of, "Well, you always do this" or, "You never do that." And for whatever reason, I get hyper triggered and I move into a defensive reactive posture instead of pausing, thinking, breathing, and then responding the other way around. So yeah, like I said, this is an area that I'm continuously working and growing in myself.

Audrey Cannata:

Yeah. Because when you take things personally, you're essentially agreeing with whatever that person has said. And so your natural response is to defend your beliefs, prove yourself, which then creates conflict, which then sometimes spirals into some unnecessary situation because you feel the need to make yourself right, make them wrong. But I think really trying to be immune to the opinions and actions of others, it's a challenge, but it is very rewarding. I think too it's important to note that this isn't just true with negative comments, even positive ones too. If someone tells you you're the greatest in the entire world, if you don't believe it, it's not true.

James Robert Lay:

Or if someone tells you that your greatest in the entire world and you take that to heart, that can totally inflate the ego.

Audrey Cannata:

Exactly.

James Robert Lay:

And then you get high on yourself. And then that creates its own... And this is why I'm such a big believer in, I would say student and practice the Stoic philosophies, because it's about essentially detachment. Probably for the last decade I've had this loop in my head and it gets louder sometimes and then it gets quieter other times. Attached to nothing, detached from everything. Attached to nothing, detached from everything. Because when you can detach yourself from what one says to you of you and you don't attach to it, you don't own that, because like you said that's their perspective, that's their belief. And if

you do agree with it, then you're validating the perspective. That leads us to number three here, agreement number three, don't make assumptions. I'm not going to get too meta here, but I don't want to make an assumption about what don't make assumptions really means for the dear listeners. So I'm going to let you share what agreement number three is. Don't make assumptions. Why is this important?

Audrey Cannata:

So this one's difficult because our assumptions happen so quickly. Subconsciously. I mean the process of guessing is just this part of our unconscious part of our brain. Like a conversation that you just had on the podcast with Nancy talks about how our brains are trying to take a shortcut to process information.

James Robert Lay:

Shortcuts. Yeah.

Audrey Cannata:

We crave answers. We feel uncomfortable when we don't know why something is the way it is or why something is happening or the reasons behind something. So our brain is going to move an overdrive to try to find a solution, find an answer whether or not it's valid, whether or not it's true, but we want to draw those quick conclusions to make ourselves more comfortable. But as we know by doing that, we can cause ourselves some really unnecessary stress and anxiety because we've decided something without knowing, without seeing it through, without asking questions and clarifying, and then we let ourselves react to it. So then we're physically, mentally, emotionally reacting to something that may or may not be true.

James Robert Lay:

I think there's also some major practicality here as to why we continuously conduct digital secret shopping studies for financial brands quarter after quarter after quarter and then in some cases we'll repeat a study annually, because somewhere along the line, someone made an assumption about something when it came to a, we'll just call a digital consumer journey, or some copy on a landing page or an email or whatever. All of the different micro moments that matter most within that journey, someone made an assumption somewhere. And it wasn't with ill intent. It's just back to your point, the conversation with Nancy Harhut, our mind will create shortcuts. And so if we are approaching something as a subject matter expert, we might err on a shortcut that it makes sense in our own mind.

And I think this is where Colby comes back into play too. Because when we think about the idea of quick starting versus follow through, I'm being a three fact finder, two follow through, nine quick start, I'm naturally going to find ways to shortcut things. And that can create conflict with others, which is where I think coming back to being impeccable with your word, trying to communicate as clearly as possible to bridge the shortcuts because otherwise we're going to bridge those shortcuts with our own perspective, our own experience. And this is like, if you tell someone half a story, they're going to finish the story within their own mind versus you have to take them from start to finish.

Audrey Cannata:

Yeah, I think just thinking about especially with relationships, whether it's personal or professional, we oftentimes assume that other people know what we think or what we want. "Oh, they should know this. They should understand that. Why are they not doing this?" So I think it's important to also not assume that other people know what we're thinking, what we're wanting. I think it's important to note that a lot of times we make assumptions about ourselves, "Oh, I can't do that. Oh, I'm not good at that. I'm not

good at money. I can't do this task.' So before we've even tried something or attempted it, and I know I'm guilty of this 100% as I'll assume ahead of time that I'll not be good at something or I'll fail at something. And so that I won't even give myself the chance because I've already boxed myself into this behavior and then I'm believing it. And that goes back to not being impeccable with your word.

James Robert Lay:

Yeah. It's that idea of if you can create space to just pause and reflect and review the situation and the environment of the present moment, you have every possibility and every capability to position or to pivot in a new path, in a new direction. And that brings us to agreement number four, which is to always do your best. Where's the opportunity to apply this agreement personally, professionally, as an individual, as a team, as an organization?

Audrey Cannata:

So I love that this is number four because doing your best is going to really take those other three agreements that we talked about and really help make those deeply ingrained habits. Doing your best, for me, it's commit to being a lifelong learner. Set goals. I love the point that he makes and hear Ruiz about your best is going to change from moment to moment. Your best is going to be different on a day that you're sick or on a day that you're feeling healthy. I think it's important for a lot of us out there, and for me especially, I'm a little bit of a perfectionist, if I don't hit a certain goal or I don't do something perfectly, one day I get down on myself and I get frustrated. We don't consider the environment and the context of our situation.

Now I'm not saying this is an excuse to slack off, but just remember the situation that you're in and what your best is realistically at that time. When you're constantly doing your best, you don't have to... You can avoid that self judgment, that regret, that self abuse, which also puts us... That affects our mindset.

James Robert Lay:

And when you commit to do your best, and like you said, your best is going to be different at different points at different stages, I think of myself right now and had to do some work on this because I've been dealing with this shoulder issue for the past two months. That has impacted my ability to work out to where I was like, "Okay, I'm just not going to work out." And I'm like, "No, you can go do other things instead of lifting." And so it's like I had to reset what my best is right now based upon the present moment and be okay with that and continue to make progress against what this new best situation is.

I want to come back to how we started this conversation as we start to wrap up here and really invite the dear listener to just stay with us a bit longer because we've been talking about The Four Agreements through the lens of being an individual of a team or working together as a team or as teams coming together as an organization to be even better than what we were before so that we can achieve our exponential growth potential. But let's look at The Four Agreements as a tool for financial brands to coach and guide people beyond financial stress to get to a bigger, better brighter future.

That's because I think one of the key lessons when reading through The Four Agreements comes back to what we've talked about a couple times in our conversation, the role of the environment and how the environment around us in the present moment, but really more importantly, our environment of the past, how those environments influence us in the present moment. They influence our beliefs. They influence our thoughts, our feelings, our emotions, which then lead and then manifest themselves physically through our word, through the actions that we take, our behaviors, our habits.

We know when thinking about habit... And we've had some really good conversations on the podcast, Audrey. I mean, this has been a big area focus I think in just our own studies here. We just talked about tiny habits in our previous conversation. We know when it comes to money, people's money habits that they have, their relationship with money in the present moment are deeply influenced by their environments of the past growing up.

I'll be the first one to tell my story about that. I've shared this before on the podcast. And more often than that, unless we have a tool, I would say a framework, or maybe even more importantly, a helpful and empathetic guide to see things differently than how we saw things before, we tend to live a pretty unreflected life. Knowing what you know now through your studies on just a habit in human behavior, where might The Four Agreements open up coaching opportunities for financial brands and FinTechs when thinking about the environment of our past and how those past environments greatly influence our behaviors, our actions, our habits in the present moment around money?

Audrey Cannata:

Well, I think first and foremost, just the book alone, the thinking, it gives people the freedom and the outlet to start over. To blaze a new path, shift your mindset. It's never too late to take control of your situation, your financial situation, and flip things around. Dr. Benjamin Hardy talks about not letting your past dictate your future. And that can be a big challenge because that's a lot of learned behaviors, behaviors that have been so ingrained in you that you've come to believe that it's just who you are. And thinking back on the last agreement, part of being the best is holding yourself accountable. That's also being impeccable with your word. But we know that holding ourselves accountable can be a true challenge. There is no one easier to lie to, in my opinion, than yourself.

And someone like myself, who I don't have a spouse that I share money with or have these conversations with to kind of be the voice in my ear or looking over my shoulder, it is solely me and I am responsible. There is nobody watching me when I swipe my card, what I'm spending it on frivolous or not. And so this accountability piece is huge for a lot of people. I don't even know that people are aware yet that they might be their own roadblock. And it could be as simple as financial coaching having that person to be... And not breathing down your neck, but be that support, be that check-in, hold you accountable. Have those conversations so you don't feel like you're in it alone, you don't feel like you're lost and there's no one there to support you. So I think there's a huge opportunity around financial coaching.

James Robert Lay:

And as I hear that word, I think we need to be very careful with the word financial coaching, because I almost feel like that is too limiting of a growth opportunity for financial brands and for FinTechs to consider. And what I mean by that is so much of the conversation over the last decade or so has been around financial education and financial literacy. I'm going to say like, what good has that done in reality? How has that transformed people's behaviors? How has that transformed people's, even deeper, their habits? How has that transformed people's beliefs around money? And back to your point about freedom, I think about the subtitle of The Four Agreements. It is a practical guide to personal freedom. It would be very interesting to see a practical guide to financial freedom written through the lens of The Four Agreements. And you're right, it's the accountability piece.

I think the more that we can share openly and honestly, being impeccable with your word, what it is that we want and be okay wanting what you want because it's what you want. I think sometimes we want things and then we shut things down because of our environment, because we have something,

someone from our past in our head saying, "No, you can't do that. No, you can't be that." And it's like, if we want it, we're going to have to make some transformations of our habits, our actions, our behaviors, our feelings, our thoughts, and ultimately our beliefs. Everything comes back to that central theme and thesis of beliefs. Yeah, you can transform one's beliefs through doing some type of training, but the real transformation, as I think we've both have experienced and have seen with financial brands in the Digital Growth University, it's the training plus the coaching. That's where the real big transformations happen. Why is that? Why can't it not just be training alone? But we have to add another component, another layer to transformation.

Audrey Cannata:

What's that quote? Knowledge isn't power, it's applied knowledge that's power?

James Robert Lay:

Yep.

Audrey Cannata:

You can know everything. You can learn it all. "Hey, I know a lot about finances. I know a lot about budgeting. Does that mean I'm going to apply it in my personal life? My personal situation?" Not necessarily. I think there is a misconception. "Oh, let's teach, teach, teach, but then what do we do after that?" I felt that way in the classroom. You could teach all day, well then when they sit down and take the test, that it's up to them to apply those skills and that thinking and that learning. There's not anyone to sit there and hold your hand whenever you're making these purchases. So the training and the education piece is huge, but so is the accountability piece, or else you're just not going to do anything with it.

James Robert Lay:

Yeah, I think one more sobering thought to end on here is coming back to The Four Agreements of the book. And I say sobering, because it's what Don Miguel writes, "The initiation of the dead creates profound clarity." Put another way, we got to live each day like it's our last day. I really connected with this because it compliments my own personal belief and practice around memento mori, which in Latin means, remember your death. And that's rooted back to ancient Stoic wisdom.

I get the idea that remembering, thinking about, reflecting on one's death might sound a bit morbid to in today's conversation, but I can't help but heed the words of William Wallace in the movie Braveheart, where he shares, "Every man dies," and I'll update this for modern times, "Every man, every woman dies. Not every man or every woman truly lives." Why thinking about The Four Agreements and the idea of transformation, whether that be personal, whether that be professional or as we're kind of shifting the conversation wrapping up, whether that even be financial, why is it important to reflect on our future death in the present moment? And how could that be inspiration to transform our behaviors, actions, and habits?

Audrey Cannata:

I think it's so easy to get consumed and caught up in the day. I think about being a parent, my oldest is seven. I know it's cliché, but it feels like just yesterday, she was born. Time passes quicker than we tend to realize. And if we don't take the time to be intentional and to reflect and really appreciate the present moment, practice gratitude, set goals, try to find happiness and even the most mundane activities, we're going to meet that time. James Robert, we're going to meet that death and have wasted time for lack of

better words, not really lived our lives to the fullest. And again, I know this sounds cliché, but it is so powerful to take the time to think about these agreements and practice them day in and day out and truly live a fulfilling, happy life.

James Robert Lay:

Yeah. And that's the whole essence of the four environments, the four seasons for exponential growth. We must create time to learn. We must create time to think. Of course we must create time to do. But when we get stuck in that rote, repeatable doing of whatever that is in life, whether that be personal or professional, time passes by. And that's why we must, probably most importantly, create time to just simply pause, review, reflect because it's through that review and reflection we can learn, we can think about what we have learned and then do even better going forward.

Let's wrap this up. Let's get real practical here. When you think about The Four Agreements, what is one small thing that the dear listener can do next to apply this thinking either for themselves, for their team, for their organization, or maybe even for people in the communities that their financial brand or FinTech is creating value for?

Audrey Cannata:

Pick one agreement that either you feel speaks to you, whether it's because it might be the hardest or you might think that achieving this might be the most rewarding. Just pick one agreement and really be intentional. Be intentional with it and think about it, write about it. Write it down every day for months. Do this for months until it becomes this more of a habit and more of a consistent way of thinking. But stick with just one. And then possibly move on to the next. I did this with don't take things personally. I didn't remember the other three agreements for the longest time because I just focused on this one. And then I got really good at it for a while. And so then I stopped and I said, "You know what? I'm going to move on to number three" and spend some time really being intentional with that one.

James Robert Lay:

Yeah, that's fantastic. Just pick one, focus on it. And I recommend the book. It's an easy read. It is a super easy read. And it's one that you probably can come back and read at least once a year, because I think as you journey through your own life, whether they'd be personal or professional, you're going to be at a different place. You're going to be at a different stage. And when you come back and read it a second time or a third time, because it is so easy and then you do some reflective writing, you do some dialogue discussion discourse with others on your team, I think you'll continuously unlock the magic and the treasure that is to be found within this book because that magic, that treasure, is ultimately within yourself.

Audrey, this has been a great conversation as always. I'm looking forward to the next one for sure. But until then, what's the best way for someone to reach out, say hello, connect with you and continue the conversation we've started here today/

Audrey Cannata:

You could reach out to me on LinkedIn, Audrey Cannata. Love to connect, love to talk books. Feel free to share me what you're reading, your favorite books, and maybe we'll have a conversation on another episode.

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James Robert Lay:

Absolutely. Connect with Audrey. Learn with Audrey. Read with Audrey. Ultimately, grow with Audrey as well. What's the next book we're discussing? Do we know?

Audrey Cannata:

We are going to be discussing a book that you got me, Eat that Frog.

James Robert Lay:

It's a great book, easy read, super practical about overcoming procrastination, another battle of mine. I'm looking forward to that. Until then, and as always, be well, do good, make your bed.