

## *This iBelieve Essays*

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### **Choice and Control**

by **Hanna Manansala**

I have been called weird, annoying, and bitchy. I do not believe in convincing anyone that I am not these things, and neither do I believe in receiving pity because of these things. Strangers, friends, and even family members gave names to me. That is exactly what I believe in, choosing and controlling what affects me. I learned that this is important from reading a book. Specifically, *The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom* by Don Miguel Ruiz.

Ruiz explains in this self-help book that “Death is not the biggest fear we have; our biggest fear is taking the risk to be alive—the risk to be alive and express who we really are.” What I took away from this quote was that although death is the end of our lives and adventures, it’s the fear that we won’t have any exciting or noteworthy experiences. He mentions expression and the significance of living, and although this is a normality for everyone, he meant this in a deeper, more meaningful way in which we experience instead of observe. Therefore, when people spit out insults and other crude things, I would rather focus on what I think of myself than dwell on the comments of other people. Who obviously don’t understand me as well as I understand myself.

When I had read Ruiz’s book I had just graduated middle school and was attempting to leave behind all the drama. During middle school, when students were gossiping and judging everything they saw, I had been drawn into the chaos myself. I let anything people said about me get into my head. I allowed the frivolous words of immature teens get to me. All the while, my father had been waving the solution at me, convincing me to read it seeing that I was going through a tough time. My stubbornness kept me from realizing that I had the authority over myself and how I felt. There was two options for me; either I could’ve let the naive remarks continue to bother me or I could read the book and set myself free.

A few months ago, I had to fly to Chicago to see my sister who was in Indiana. I was excited to see my sister and my Lola who I hadn’t seen in awhile. I didn’t feel too well with all the traveling since we flew, drove, and sat in a bus with a driver who was obsessed with announcing puns on the loudspeaker.

I was relieved to finally be in one place. However, while I waited for my mom and sister to get back from her dorm, in which they were getting water for our grandma, she said, “So your mother told me about your identity crisis.” Right away I knew what she was talking about. I had recently came out to my mom, and she got so excited and told other family members.

In this situation I instantly panicked and replied with, “Oh yeah, I don’t know what she was talking about,” in fear of discrimination and not being accepted. I then was given a lecture about how I needed a man to have a family. The time spent there was dreadful because of that conversation. Although she is family, I shouldn’t have let her words affect me so much. I know who I am, and as long as I am happy with it I’ll be okay.

Even if I was weird, annoying, ugly, or any other insults people have decided to shoot out at me, it shouldn’t matter anyway. I will be whomever I want. Barbie Girl.