

**Figure 32. Changing the Rules:
Written Summary – Rajiv**

- *My old Rule is:*

Unless I get it right, I will never get anywhere in life.

- *This Rule has had the following impact on my life:*

I have always felt inadequate, not good enough. This has made me work tremendously hard, to the extent that I have been constantly under pressure, tense and stressed. This has affected my relationships. I have not had enough time for people, and I have lost out because of it. At times, it has made me quite ill.

And I have sometimes run away from opportunities because I didn't think I would measure up.

- *I know the Rule is in operation because:*

I get anxious about failing and put myself under more and more pressure. I go over the top in how I go about things – try to dot every 'i' and cross every 't'. I feel sick with anxiety. And if I think I've broken the Rule, I become very self-critical, get depressed, and give up altogether.

- *It is understandable that I have this Rule because:*

When I was young, my father's disappointment with how his life has turned out made him very keen that we should all make the most of ourselves. Instead of encouraging and praising us, he gave us all the message that we were not up to it if we did not perform the way he wanted us to. That message sank in, and I have tried to compensate by being a perfectionist.

- *However, the Rule is unreasonable because:*

It simply is not humanly possible to get it right all the time. Making mistakes and getting things wrong are all part of learning and growth.

- *The payoffs of obeying the Rule are:*

Sometimes I do really good work, and get praise for it. This is partly why I have done so well in my career. People respect me. When I do get it right, I feel great.

- *But the disadvantages are:*

I am constantly tense. Sometimes my work is not as good as it could be, because I get in such a state about it. I can't learn from my mistakes, because they upset me so much, nor can I learn from constructive criticism. When things do not work out, I feel dreadful and it takes me ages to get over it. I avoid anything that I might not be able to get right, and miss all kinds of opportunities because of that. People may respect me, but it keeps them at a distance. They see me as a bit inhuman, unapproachable – even arrogant. The pressure I place on myself is bad for my health. Plus all my time and attention goes on my work – I don't allow myself to relax or do things I enjoy. In short, the Rule leads to stress, misery and fear on all fronts.

- *A more realistic and helpful new Rule would be:*

Good enough is good enough – I don't have to be great, to be great. I enjoy doing well – there's nothing wrong with that. But I'm only human and I will get it wrong sometimes. Getting it wrong is the route to growth.

- *In order to test-drive the new rule, I need to:*

- Keep reading this summary
- Put my new rule on a flashcard and on my mobile phone and read it several times a day
- Cut my working hours and plan pleasures and social contact
- Take time for myself
- Revise my standards and give myself credit for less-than-perfect performance
- Experiment with getting it wrong and observe the outcome. For example, practise saying 'I don't know' when people ask me questions
- Plan my day in advance, and always plan less than I think I can do
- Focus on what I achieve, not on what I failed to do. Tomorrow is another day
- Remember: criticism can be useful – it doesn't mean I am a complete failure
- Watch out for signs of stress – they mean I am going back to my old ways
- Deal with the old pattern, when it comes up, using what I have learned to tackle anxious predictions and self-criticism