Who Moved my Cheese?

Authors: Dr Spencer Johnson

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Who Moved My Cheese? is a story about change that takes place in a Maze where four characters look for “cheese” (cheese being a metaphor for what we want to have in life, whether it is a job, a relationship, money, a big house, freedom, health, recognition, spiritual peace or even an activity like jogging or golf).

Each of us has our own idea of what cheese is, and we pursue it because we believe it makes us happy. If we get it, we often become attached to it. And if we lose it, or it’s taken away, it can be traumatic. “The Maze” in the story represents where you spend time looking for what you want. It can be the organization you work in, the community you live in, or the relationships you have in your life.

There are four imaginary characters depicted in this story; the mice: “Sniff” and “Scurry,” and the Littlepeople: “Hem” and “Haw.” These characters are intended to represent the simple and the complex parts of ourselves, regardless of our age, gender, race or nationality.

Sometimes we may act like

Sniff
Who sniffs out change early, or

Scurry
Who scurries into action, or

Hem
Who denies and resists change as he fears it will lead to something worse, or

Haw
Who learns to adapt in time when he sees changing can lead to something
Every day the mice and the Littlepeople would spend some time searching the maze for their special cheese. Sniff and Scurry searched for their cheese with their simple brains and good instincts. Meanwhile Hem and Haw would use their complex brains, which are filled with many beliefs and emotions, to search for their very own special cheese.

The mice used a very simple trial and error approach to finding cheese. They would run down a corridor, and if it was empty, they turned and ran down another. They would remember the corridors that had no cheese and would quickly move to new areas of the maze. Sure they often got lost, but eventually they found their way. Meanwhile the Littlepeople, Hem and Haw, also used their ability to think and learn from their past experiences, although they used their complex brains to develop more sophisticated methods of finding cheese. The Littlepeople did well most times in the maze, but at times their powerful human beliefs and emotions took over and clouded the way they looked at things. Even so, they each discovered in their own way what they were looking for. Each of them found their own kind of cheese one day at the end of one of the corridors in Cheese Station C.

Every morning after that, the mice and the Littlepeople would head over to Cheese Station C. They eventually established their own routines. The mice would wake rather early and race through the maze always following the same route. Upon arrival they would take off their running shoes, tie them together and hang them around their necks in case they were needed again. They would then enjoy the cheese.

Hem and Haw would also race to the Cheese Station every morning to enjoy their newfound cheese. Eventually Hem and Haw awoke a little later and slowly made their way to the Cheese Station, as they knew where the cheese was now and how to get there. Upon arrival they would put away their jogging shoes and get comfortable.

Cheese Station C held a lot of cheese and Hem and Haw thought it would last forever so they built their homes and social lives around it. They decorated the walls with sayings and drew pictures of cheese which read:

> Having cheese makes you happy.

Hem and Haw thought they worked really hard to find their cheese and even showed off their cheese to their friends with pride. They became so comfortable that they didn’t even notice what was happening.

As time went on Sniff and Scurry continued their routine of arriving early to inspect Cheese Station C to see if there had been any changes from the day before. They would then sit down to nibble their cheese. One morning arrived when the mice arrived at Cheese Station C and discovered there was no cheese. They weren’t surprised as they noticed the supply of cheese getting smaller each day. They were prepared for the inevitable and knew instinctively what to do.
To the mice the problem and answer were both simple. The situation at Cheese Station C had changed. So Sniff and Scurry decided to change. They put on their running shoes, which were conveniently hung around their necks and headed out into the maze in search of new cheese.

Hem and Haw arrived later that same day. They did not pay any attention to the small changes that happened each day and took for granted their cheese would be there. They weren’t prepared for what they found. No cheese. The Littlepeople couldn’t believe it. No one had warned them. Hem and Haw went home hungry that night, discouraged. Hem wrote on the wall:

The more important your cheese is to you the more you want to hold on to it.

Hem and Haw returned to the Cheese Station the very next day, expecting somehow to find their cheese. The situation hadn’t changed; the cheese was no longer there. Hem analyzed the situation over and over and found it unfair that someone did this to him, while Haw just realized that Sniff and Scurry weren’t there.

Haw asked Hem if the mice knew something they didn’t. Hem replied that they were only mice and couldn’t possibly know more than them. Haw suggested that since things had changed at Cheese Station C that they should change. To which Hem replied that they should change, as this is something that happened to them. Haw suggested to simply stop analyzing the situation and going out to find new cheese. Hem refused and argued that he would find out what happened to their cheese.

Meanwhile Sniff and Scurry were already well on their way. They searched deeper into the maze and while they didn’t find any for some time they eventually found Cheese Station N. Cheese Station N was the largest store of cheese they had ever seen.

Hem and Haw were still back at Cheese Station C evaluating their situation. They became frustrated and angry as a result of no cheese and were constantly blaming each other for the situation they were in. Haw would often imagine how his mice friends were doing and wonder if they had found new cheese. He imagined himself eating new cheese and whilst he knew the maze involved uncertainty it would only be temporary. The more clearly Haw saw himself enjoying the New Cheese, the more he saw himself leaving Cheese Station C.

Haw tried to convince Hem to join him in the maze in search of new cheese. Haw refused. He was comfortable at the Cheese station and said that the maze was dangerous. With that Haw’s fear of failing returned and his hope of finding new cheese faded.

Everyday Hem and Haw returned to Cheese Station C hoping to find their cheese. Hem assumed that the cheese had just been moved and eventually it would just show up. Time passed by and Haw was getting fed up with just waiting for their situation to improve. Haw realized that the longer they stayed in their cheeseless situation, the worse off they would be. It took a long time to find their
running shoes as they had put everything away when they found their cheese at Cheese Station C, thinking that they wouldn’t need them anymore.

Hem was shocked to learn that Haw was going out in the maze in search of new cheese. As Haw prepared to leave he wrote a serious thought for Hem to think about:

*If you do not change, you can become extinct.*

Haw knew that Hem would be wondering, “Who moved my cheese?” but Haw was wondering, “why didn’t I get up and move with the cheese sooner?” Haw wrote a saying on the wall to encourage him into the maze:

*What would you do if you weren’t afraid?*

Haw found it took him longer and was more painful than usual to get through the maze. He became worried that he may have spent too long waiting at Cheese Station C, and he felt weak, as it had been such a long time since he’s had cheese.

Haw stumbled across a little cheese here and there, but nothing that lasted very long. He also wanted to find enough cheese to take back to Hem to encourage him back into the maze.

Haw found the maze confusing as so much had changed since he was last there. Each time he got discouraged he reminded himself that he was taking control, rather than simply letting things happen to him. If Sniff and Scurry could move on, so could he.

Haw realized that the Cheese at Cheese Station C had not just disappeared overnight, as he once believed. Rather the cheese supply was getting smaller, and what was left had grown old and didn’t taste as good. He realized that he didn’t notice the cheese getting old, but if he had wanted to, he probably could have. Haw also realized that the change probably would not have surprised him if he had been watching what was happening all along and if he had anticipated change. To remind himself of this Haw wrote:

*Smell the cheese often so you know when it is getting old.*

Haw did not find cheese for what seemed like a long time. He felt like giving up and returning to Cheese Station C. Haw thought he was past his fear, but he was more afraid than he would admit to himself. Haw remembered his best days that were spent in the maze and this encouraged him to move forward. Haw wrote a message to encourage him further into the maze:

*Movement in a new direction helps you find new cheese.*
As Haw wandered through the dark corridors in the maze he was aware of his fear. What lay ahead? Was it empty? He was scared to death. He realized his fear was only making matters worse. So he did what he would do if he wasn’t afraid. He moved in a new direction. Before long, he knew why he felt good:

**When you stop being afraid, you feel good!**

Moving in a new direction had freed Haw. He hadn’t felt this good for some time. He had forgotten how much fun it was to go for it. Haw imagined how wonderful it would be sitting in the middle of a pile of his favourite cheeses. He imagined how wonderful it would be to enjoy all their great tastes. The clearer he saw the image of himself enjoying the New Cheese, the more he sensed he was going to find it. He wrote:

**Imagining yourself enjoying your new cheese leads you to it.**

Haw continued to think positively about what he could gain rather than what he was losing. He always assumed that a change would lead him to something worse. Haw realized now that change could lead him to something better.

As he continued through the maze he spotted a Cheese Station and raced towards it as he saw little pieces of Cheese near the entrance. Haw stumbled across cheeses he had never seen before, but nonetheless they tasted great. He kept some in his pocket for later and perhaps to share with Hem. As he proceeded inside the Cheese Station, Haw found it empty. Somebody had already been there and had left only a few bits of New Cheese. He realized that if he had moved sooner, he would have found a large supply of New Cheese there. Haw decided to go back and see if Hem was ready to join him into the maze in search of new cheese. He wrote:

**The quicker you let go of old cheese, the sooner you find new cheese.**

Haw returned to Cheese Station C and found Hem still there waiting for his cheese to be returned. He didn’t like the new cheese Haw offered him. Hem didn’t think he would like new cheese and wanted his own Cheese back.

Haw returned into the maze without Hem. Haw missed Hem but he also realized that he was happier now, as he wasn’t being run by his fear. He realized:

**It is safer to search in the maze, than remain in a cheeseless situation.**
Haw remembered how he was so afraid of never finding new cheese that he didn’t even want to start looking. But during his time in the maze he had found some new cheese here and there, and he was sure the future was more promising. He once believed that Cheese should never be moved and that change wasn’t right. Haw now realized that it was natural for change to continually occur, whether you expect it or not, and that change is only a surprise if you didn’t expect it. Haw realized that:

**Old beliefs do not lead you to new cheese.**

Although Haw hadn’t found any cheese yet, he was realizing that his new beliefs were encouraging new behaviours. He could either believe that change will harm you and resist it, or he could believe that change will help you and you should embrace it. He wrote:

**When you see that you can find and enjoy new cheese, you change course.**

Haw reminded himself that if he had left Cheese Station C earlier, he might have coped better with the challenge of finding new cheese. If he had expected change to happen he may now have already found his new cheese, rather than having wasted time denying change had occurred.

As Haw found some trails of cheese here and there he only hoped his friend Hem would leave Cheese Station C, and hoped his messages would help Hem through the maze as they had helped him in tough times. Haw wrote:

**Noticing small changes early helps you adapt to the bigger changes that are to come.**

Haw had let go of the past and was adapting to the present. His journey through the maze felt like forever, and before long he found New Cheese at Cheese Station N. There was a great supply of cheese there and some cheeses he had never seen before. He noticed his old friends Sniff and Scurry therefore confirming that it was for real and no dream.

Before he enjoyed his new cheese, Haw took off his shoes, tied them together and hung them around his neck in case he needed them again. As Haw enjoyed the New Cheese he reflected on what he had learnt.

Haw realized that his friends Sniff and Scurry kept life simple and never overanalyzed things. He realized that when the situation changed and the cheese had been moved, they changed and moved with the cheese. Haw made sure that the mistakes he made in the past will help him plan his future.

Haw realized that there was no need to overcomplicate matters or confuse yourself with fearful beliefs. Or when you notice little changes happening, you will be better prepared for the big change that might be coming. Haw also realized that he needed to adapt faster as if he didn’t adapt in time,
he might as well not adapt at all. Most importantly Haw realized that there is always new cheese out
there whether you realize it at the time or not, and that you will be rewarded with it when you go past
your fear and enjoy the adventure.

Haw thought about his friend Hem and wondered if he had found his way into the maze yet or if Hem
had been hemmed in because he wouldn’t change. Haw realizes that he offered to help his friend
previously and if Hem was to change he must do so on his own. Haw only hoped that Hem would find
his messages.

Haw is aware of how far he has come since he had been with Hem in Cheese Station C but he also
knew how quickly he could slip if he got too comfortable. With this in mind Haw continually inspected
Cheese Station N for any changes. He was determined to avoid being surprised by unexpected
change.

To remind himself of his experience Haw decided to write down what he learnt:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change Happens</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They keep moving the cheese</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipate Change</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get ready for the cheese to move</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monitor Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smell the cheese often so you know when it’s getting old</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adapt to Change Quickly</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The quicker you let go of old cheese, the sooner you can enjoy new cheese</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Move with the change</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enjoy Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Savour the adventure and enjoy the taste of new cheese</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Be Ready to Change Quickly and Enjoy it Again and Again</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They keep moving the Cheese.</td>
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