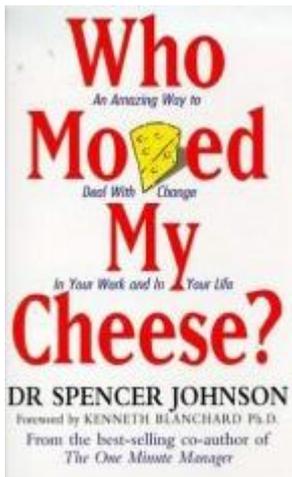


# Say Cheese

The characters in Spencer Johnson's book "Who Moved My Cheese?" look for cheese in a huge maze. The cheese represents things that give us a sense of happiness and fulfillment, and the maze itself is life.



Like that of those fictional characters, what we think of as "our cheese" has a tendency to move from time to time.

However, we often focus so intently on this cheese we haven't found in the maze, or that we have lost, that we don't see the cheese before our very eyes.

Every experience in life is much like cheese - some are mild, mellow ones you want to savour; others may be more potent, even unpleasant things you wish you hadn't tasted in the first place. It all feeds us one way or another.

When you think of it, how would you know what good cheese tasted like, if you'd never tasted

bad cheese before? And just how bad is "bad" cheese compared with the option of no cheese at all?

Not all the cheese we enjoy is necessarily good for us either; sometimes the opposite is true - cheese we find unpalatable might actually nurture us.

Ever eaten a meal and reached the last forkful of food, only to realise you hadn't stopped to appreciate the food as you ate it? Life can be like that; sometimes we let good times pass us by without pausing to really experience them, and only realise how positive they were when they're gone.

Did your parents ever tell you, you'd have to sit at the table until you'd eaten everything on your plate, even if it took you all night?

Maybe you'd been given vegetables that you weren't used to, and didn't even want to try them. That same thing may today be one of your favourite foods, or you can at least tolerate it.

Life can be like that too. Sometimes it's cheddar; sometimes it's parmesan. Sometimes you may not want it to end; sometimes you know you've just got to hold your nose and eat it even if you don't like it, just so you can leave the table and move on.

Whatever life feeds us, it's healthy to take some time out to just look at the cheese we already have, and may take for

granted. Mindfulness can be an effective tool in situations like this, because it helps us really see and pay greater attention to things we may not otherwise notice.

It's still important to have goals; to have that metaphorical cheese somewhere, to inspire us to explore the maze of life. No matter where we are on that journey however, we still possess the *capacity* to feel that sense of accomplishment we'd get from attaining that goal.

This capacity of experience is something that mindfulness celebrates, and encourages us to use every day.

It doesn't matter what you're doing - you may be going for a walk, listening to music or even just breathing.

"Who Moved My Cheese?" tells the story of a group of characters looking for cheese in a maze, but mindfulness offers us a gift of perspective that allows us to see what may be a surprising truth: the *entire maze* is made out of cheese.



Tony Spencer

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