



**"Out of the Maze"**  
**An A-mazing Way to get Unstuck**

Book Review: "Who Moved My Cheese", Spencer Johnson

1. Review of "Who Moved My Cheese"

a. 4 characters in the book...two are mice, two are humans (Hem and Haw)  
They live in a maze and are always looking to find cheese to survive.

Strategy: to test each pathway until they find cheese.

b. Strategy backfires: they find a lot of cheese in one spot, decide to stay there for a long time. They get arrogant, brag about it, stuck in their old ways. Their cheese one day runs out. The mice foresaw this and went to looking; the humans did not. They are

- 1) fearful of what is out there
- 2) gotten used to their old habits
- 3) started to believe they are entitled to the cheese..."we worked hard and are entitled to the cheese"

They get bitter and blame everything...but themselves.

c. They get exhausted of complaining and one starts digging walls to find food, until he (Haw) finally leaves to look throughout the maze...tried to convince his friend (Hem) to no avail.

When Haw finds tiny pieces of cheese and brings it back to Hem, Hem refuses because he only wants the other kind of cheese.

Haw finally leaves meets up with the two mice, and they find another great deposit of cheese, including different types.

d. Lessons:

- 1) Change happens
- 2) Anticipate change
- 3) Monitor change
- 4) Adapt to change quickly
- 5) Change
- 6) Enjoy change
- 7) Be ready to change quickly

Addtl Lessons:

- 8) Don't get bitter and blame anyone or anything else for where you are in life.
- 9) Humans tend to get lazy, and used to old habits
- 10) Don't over-complicate things.

What does the "cheese" represent? anything a human strives for...money, fame, reputation, happiness, success, achievements, or anything else.

2. This book is about "What happened to Hem?"

a. Hem paced and wondered why Haw never came back, coming up with many reasons including

- 1) questioning how such a friend could abandon him.
- 2) "IT'S NOT FAIR."

Finally, he reasoned, "why did I not go with my friend?"

b. He reviewed the facts:

- 1) He needed to find more cheese or he would die.
- 2) The maze was a dangerous place, so he had to be careful.
- 3) It was now solely up to him.

He wrote these on a paper and put them in his pocket.

Then, loaded up his tools and entered the Maze to search.

c. His thoughts as he tired:

- 1) Maybe this is punishment for my past
- 2) Maybe it is my destiny

d. He begins to find messages written on rocks in the maze by Haw:

*Old beliefs do not lead you to New Cheese.*

e. Then Hem comes across another "Littleperson" who offered him a little red "non-rock," "non-cheese to eat. "I only eat cheese." Finally, Hem gave in, ate it after much fuss, and it was actually nourishing. Her name was Hope. They soon ran out of these Apples.

f. Hope gives some good advice:

- 1) "I'll bet you can do more than you think you can..."
- 2) When Hem was saying "I can't believe it," she says "Sure you can. It's not hard, if you just let go and try."

g. Hem also started wishing for "simpler times." Times had changed, he felt less sure, his usual confidence was gone. *"He had never really noticed his own thoughts before or taken a step back to consider how he looked at things."*

g. Every day they went out in the Maze he carried his bag of tools...finally Hope asked "Why?" as they were really heavy and "did you ever get any food by breaking through a wall?"

Notice how we keep doing the same thing over and over by habit...not sense.

*"I wish things would go back the way they were."* To which Hope said

*"Maybe they can turn out better than they were."*

Trying harder wasn't working so maybe they needed a new strategy. Hem did not want to let go of his beliefs because he felt they were what made him who he was.

h. Hem then drew his own message on the wall: "A belief is a thought that I trust is true." His beliefs were what kept him from going with Haw...they had been trapping him, holding him prisoner.

i. So, he added another one on the wall: "An old belief can hold you prisoner." And when he thought about what Hope had taught him he wrote "Some beliefs can hold you down. Other beliefs can lift you up."

j. Hem was feeling empowered now...in the past when he was challenged he fought back. He resisted changing his mind. He liked his beliefs. Now, he realized he could choose new ones! "You can change your mind. You can choose a new belief."

"You are not your belief. You are the person who chooses your beliefs."

"What would you believe if you believed it was possible?"

"There are no limits to what you can believe."

k. Hem knew what he'd been doing before was not working. He needed to do something completely different. Hope was questioning "where does the cheese come from?"

Hem finally decided "I wonder what's outside the maze?" After thinking for life, the Maze was all there was...

l. "Sometimes you have to believe it before you can see it." Hope then discussed why he was still carrying the old baggage (the hammer and chisel) to launch a new quest.

"You don't have to believe everything you think."

m. After going against the "normal thinking" they found their way out of the Maze, finding themselves in a beautiful green meadow. It occurred to Hem that getting out of the Maze felt "just like getting out of the prison of his old beliefs." Haw and the two mice were all there as well!

He pulled the paper out of his pocket...it said "The Facts of the Matter...I have to find more cheese and if I don't, I'll die."