

## Lesson 73: When Life Moves Your Cheese

Back in 1998, Spencer Johnson, M.D. published the book: *Who Moved My Cheese?* Although the book was very popular in the business sect, the author also addressed changes that occur in everyday life. Spencer described change as an issue that makes us all nervous and uncomfortable. There is no doubt that when it comes to the business of life, one thing is for certain, it is that nothing is as certain as change itself. Change is unavoidable and it is the result of every single choice and decision we make, whether individually or collectively, and as we make choices and decisions, an infinite number of possibilities and probabilities shift in and out of place in a relative way. Plato quoted the universal doctrine of change from Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher (c535 BC – 475 BC), stating that “everything flows, nothing stands still” which truly applies to the matters of day to day life. This lesson will focus on the changes that occur along the path of life, whether anticipated or abrupt, how change impacts your reality, especially when it is sudden, what to expect and how to rise up from the ashes, and of course to describe the metaphor of the cheese and its symbolic relationship to how life is navigated through a series of mazes.

The changes that occur in your personal life are not just limited to the choices and decisions you make but include the words you speak. Your words are choices that are verbally communicated, and because words are a form of energy, they have the same effect as if you mentally, emotionally or even physically acted on them. In addition to the words you speak, you create changes in your environment by your actions, and your behaviors. Your actions and behaviors are prompted by your own thoughts and feelings, by your beliefs and perceptions and by your own expectations. The problem does not lie in the act of expecting, the problem lies in what you expect in terms of how realistic your expectations are or how they are being hindered by your own doubts and fears. Taking risks in life is a necessary function, otherwise you are without a means to know if you are on the right path or not. When you find yourself having gone astray, drifted out into stormy seas, you can find your way back to a safe harbor. But finding your way back is not always an easy feat because there are many truths that present, sometimes, as life-changing lessons. If you do not take the time to process the truths that are revealed, you end up stalling the process of recovery and healing, consequently you forfeit a more solid basis from which to rebuild on.

Change can be a very painful experience, especially when it arrives abruptly, is unexpected and unanticipated, as it so often does. These are the times when you have to reach as far down within yourself as is possible and then reach down even a little further in order to pull yourself back up. But the pulling up process is just that, it is a process and is not something that can be accomplished in the heat of a rush. Heraclitus taught that good character is not formed in a week or month. It is created little by little, day by day. It is a process that requires endurance, patience and effort. And so when, by the

action of your own choices and decisions, and all that this implies as described above, that you must allow yourself time to process the change that has occurred, especially when it has altered the course of your life. Such changes, undesirable at best, are learning tools if they are utilized as such, as opposed to being negatively viewed which is a self-defeating mindset that hinders personal growth. Change has a way of bringing you to the fork in your road where upon arriving there, sometimes against your will, you find that there are two choices waiting to be made. One will be to pursue the path of personal growth; the other is to remain stuck in the rut of a negative mentality, where you can spend your days feeling sorry for yourself and where your only escape is to blame others for your misfortune, rather than to make a concentrated effort to see where the truth really does lie and to take from it lessons well-learned.

When you choose the path that will lead to personal growth, the journey there will not be an easy one, but eventually you will find your way out of the darkened forest and back into the light of day. But while you are there wandering around in the desert of your mind, it will be necessary to re-evaluate the course of events that got you where you suddenly, and without warning, find yourself. And even though it feels as though you arrived there without a fair warning, if you look close enough you will see that the sign posts were there all along, you just didn't see them. But that's okay, so do not beat yourself up because the most important aspect of this experience is that you do come to see the truth, even though the cost might be high, but not to the extent that you blame yourself for each and every little thing that occurred, which inevitably contributed to the change itself. Processing the change does not imply blame but rather it is the act of taking responsibility for the contributing role you played in your experience. You cannot and should not ever attempt to blame yourself for actions taken by someone else; you are only responsible for yourself; nor should you place your focus anywhere but on yourself. The need or justification to place your focus on someone else is dangerous territory that will, by its own energy, produce circumstances you will not like. However, it gets very tricky here because the lenses you are looking through, at the time, may be blurred, making it hard for you to discern what is and what is not real as it pertains to the role you played in affecting the change that came to bear upon you. This is precisely why you must give yourself adequate time for the truths to be revealed. These truths do not surface overnight, they surface over a period of time, and sometimes just enough to help pull you through, to get you back on your feet. Anything else you need to know or learn about your experience will reveal itself in due time, as the conditions of your reality are conducive for them to surface. But in order for these truths to continue to reveal themselves, they cannot penetrate through the thickness of skewed perceptions, disabling beliefs and limiting thought patterns, as well as strong emotions that continually range along the lower end of the emotional scale that you act on, along with very unrealistic expectations of yourself or others. Each of these will function so much better when the channel that leads to the truth is not psychically blocked.

Processing change, whether anticipated or not, at first may appear to be very undesirable, but as time moves forward you will find that there really is a rainbow on the other side, even though it is nearly impossible to believe when you are in the midst of such changes, when the black clouds are looming over your head, when the experience is so painful that it cuts right through to the core of your being. But no matter how bad you feel, you must move forward, if for no other reason than for the sake of your own well-being, which incidentally, is priceless. This is not about the value of your worth being measured or gauged in accordance with the standards of others, it is about knowing that no matter what choices or decisions you made along the path of your life, your self-worth is always valid; that validity is carved in stone, permanently recorded in the Akashic Records . You are so much more than your outer skin or how anyone perceives you worthiness and your value. Your physical body is merely the outer cloaking that covers the real you, that develops from within, not from without. Therefore, this should be proof enough that every change that comes your way is a temporary state in your reality, which will run its course in due time. The strength you need to get through that period of time, even though you feel it closing in all around, comes by way of actually allowing yourself to feel every feeling and emotion that wells up within you. However, the trick to being successful in processing your feelings and emotions is that you do not act on them, outside of perhaps crying enough tears to fill an ocean and/or punching your pillow, but that you work them out in private, in the quiet confines of your mind and in your journal or whatever safe and suitable means appeals to you, just as long as you do not suppress your feelings and emotions by avoiding interaction with them. Avoidance will be far more damaging, it will result in accumulating that much more self-inflicted internal pain that you will have to recover and heal from as well. It is okay to share some of your feelings with those who love you and are supportive of you, but you must be alert to the fact that their human nature tends to lean toward the need to advise you of what they always think is best for you. You must take into consider that everyone is walking along their own path of life and often do not know what is best for them, let alone to really know what is best for you. This is why it is said that the path of the Questor is best traveled alone. Many milestones can be reached and successes achieved in the quiet confines of your mind, in a meditative state where your personal reality takes on a whole different shape and form as opposed to the murkiness of your reality when viewed externally or influenced by others.

So as you process your feelings and emotions, this is an excellent time to reassess where you are now and where you would like to go, as a future endeavor. The Serenity Prayer is a very valuable asset when correctly applied. Accepting the things you cannot change does not imply that you slam doors of opportunity closed, but at the same time it does imply accepting that certain conditions in your environment are what they are and cannot be instantly changed or altered. So again, a re-evaluation of your personal

situation is necessary as the means to discern what you realistically can and cannot change, short-term and long-term. In all cases, the Serenity Prayer is not intended to be a convenient scapegoat or a means of avoidance; it is meant to help you to actually see the forest for the trees so that you can make better choices as you discern what you can and cannot realistically change and to acquire the wisdom to know the difference. However, there is a potential to fall into ditches of error when attempting to discern what you actually can and cannot change about yourself or your personal environment. Self-defeating contributing factors such as fear, insecurity, and lack of self-worth, confidence and courage are internal obstacles that will work against you, thereby tripping you up, causing you to erroneously believe that certain of your conditions cannot be changed, even over the course of time. Many people have found their successes by means of their failures. James Allen said, "He who has conquered doubt and fear has conquered failure." And even at that, failure is not really a failure, but rather it is a lack of knowing the right information at the right time which makes it possible to make good choices and smart decisions that ultimately lead toward your personal successes. However, if life was just that easy there would never be strife, and likewise, there would be no need for beliefs, perceptions or emotions. But as humans, existing in the current state of evolution, life requires perceptions to experience third dimensional reality, even those illusions of reality. Emotions are a necessary ingredient too because they provide you with an internal measuring system that alerts you when there is danger. Emotions gauge the degree of your feelings so that you have a way of know when something is amiss in your reality, even if nothing is really amiss but just feels like it. Emotions give you an opportunity to discover things about yourself as opposed to acting on them with thoughtless, knee-jerk responses that in the end result in bringing more of what you do not want to experience in your reality.

Fear and doubt enters strongly into the picture the moment a significant change is brought to bear upon you because these self-defeating attributes have the power to stop you dead in your tracks, frozen and unable to move forward. Being jerked out of your set environment is a confounding and confusing time of very difficult adjustment and readjustment in which fear and doubt plays a big role. There is often a period of transition during which time you feel as though you are neither here nor there but just somewhere in the middle, in limbo, riding out the storm, hoping to make it through to the other side safely and intact. This can be a pivotal moment because the beliefs you hold at this very moment will either serve you well or they will be your worst enemy. You cannot afford to hold onto beliefs that are disabling, and that in turn, are going to act as obstacles, hindering your recovery. It is during this time that you must keep the door to future opportunities wide open so that you do not leave the business of your life to chance. You are empowered, even in the midst of your crisis to move forward which begins by processing your feelings and emotions, as was described above, while taking tiny little baby steps forward, which equates to doing something that implies a desire to

rebuild; resting when your body tells you to and then starting the process all over again. This is precisely where so many people get hung up and cannot even get out of the starting gate. Rather than to make any attempts to move forward they remain stuck in a perpetual rut, always needing to lay blame somewhere or on someone, believing that as the result of the consequence that befell them, life is simply not worth the effort it takes to move forward as opposed to looking deep inside themselves where the answers that will lead them to mental and emotional freedom are to be found. It is one thing to allow yourself time to sit on your pity pot or to host a private pity party, short-term, but it is another thing to continue to wallow in a long term pit of disparity which will get you absolutely nowhere, but will indeed afford you every opportunity to continue feeling sorry for yourself and for others to feel sorry for you as well. Like always attracts like, so feeling sorry for yourself will be the catalyst to the continuation of feeling sorry for yourself as opposed to examining the role you played in effecting the change that occurred. The things you encounter along the path of your life do not just happen by chance or accident; they are the affect of a cause of which you unknowingly brought to bear upon yourself or allowed to occur because of external influences.

In addition to the mountains you may see before you, your identity is also at stake, if you have built your identity around someone or something external to yourself including your own needs, wants and desires. So, when the walls of change come crashing down around you, the identity you built externally goes down with the walls. Rebuilding your identity is, without a doubt, a challenging experience but it can also be a most rewarding experience if you make an effort to view yourself and your environment through very different lenses. But once again, there are potential ditches of error if you cling to the promise of hope that ultimately is not in your best interest. Here is where the opportunity arises for you to carefully think through your situation, in fact, it is better that you don't think it through because your thoughts are likely to be clouded in the midst of a crisis. The best means to discerning your future path is to allow it to be shown to you rather than to go chasing after it. This is not about compromise or accepting the mindset that what is meant to be is meant to be, because this mindset is limiting at best, and in of itself erects cognitive fences that threaten to close in possibilities that are far more suited to your real needs. And speaking of, it is right in this moment of unexpected or even expected change that you should spend some quality time assessing your needs and examining your priorities. As cause and effect bring about the consequences that you find yourself enduring, it is all too likely that your own priorities contributed to the change that befell you. In addition to your priorities are your own needs, wants and desires and the affect they are having in your reality. As you are processing everything already discussed in the course of this lesson, you are likely to discover that what you believed were indeed your needs, wants and desires are not really true about yourself but are a distorted picture, that over time, was painted on the canvas of your life in response to many influences, some personal and some external and have,

nonetheless, been negatively affecting your reality. Because you did not know this about yourself, you clung to them as if they were etched in cement, all the while believing that they had to be met one way or the other, and sometimes acted on them without considering the cost or did not even anticipate a cost. Making the effort to remove your blind folders will be worth the time taken to examine your needs, wants and desires at close range. This exercise will most definitely require a great deal of honesty because many of your needs, wants and desires were, over the course of your life, founded on disabling beliefs and limited ways of thinking, and were environmentally and socially influenced. The one thing you can be sure of is that when you ask for something with strong intent, you will experience some aspect of that request manifested in your reality, perhaps right away or sometime in the future. And furthermore, when it enters into your reality, there is a very good chance that you will not recognize its appearance because you will not always know for certain that what has manifested as a circumstance or event in your life is actually associated with a particular request you made at some point and time in your life. And even when it first surfaces and you begin to experience your request, you may be quite surprised to find that getting what you asked for proves to be your worst nightmare. This is exactly why you should assess all your needs to be sure they really are valid and are going to serve you well in the long run, lest you find yourself traveling down the road of hard knocks, which is okay too because even there you will learn what you need to learn, but only if you desire to or you can remain in denial – the choice is yours to make.

Life is about taking risks, it's about stepping out in faith, not blind faith, as doing so leaves the details of your life to chance, and thereby negates your own built in empowerment to create your reality, as you see fit to do. The forewarning, of course, is in what you see fit to do. You must ask yourself if what you see fit to do is really what is best for you because if it's not, you will have to endure the consequences. What price will you have to pay and are you willing to pay that price when it comes down the pike and greets you at the most inopportune time – not that any time is ever a good time. So when you have taken those steps in faith, but have fallen along the way, made what appears to be mistakes, it is in the throes of these mistakes, the wrong turns along the highway of your life, that you can begin to rebuild again, this time on more solid ground.

If you are not familiar with the book *Who Moved My Cheese?*, by now you are probably wondering exactly how this discussion relates to the title of the lesson. The cheese is a metaphor that relates to what you are looking for in life and how well you can navigate the symbolic maze of life. It is likened to a mouse that is placed inside a maze in search of a delicious piece of cheese that awaits him if he is successful in running the maze. Given that there is more than one symbolic mouse in life, each mouse takes a different approach to reaching the cheese and therefore, has a different experience in the maze. With the focus on just one of the mice, for a time the cheese is repeatedly put in the same exact place, thus, the mouse learns how to successfully run the maze and reach the

cheese; he is rewarded every time. The mouse becomes so good at running the maze that he no longer has to give thought to which direction he should go in. He can quickly reach the cheese with very little effort because he is quite comfortable with the path that he learned will always lead him to his reward – the cheese. However, the mouse is immediately thrown off course in the maze when his beloved cheese is moved from the place where he learned, by habit, to find it each and every time, to now running helter-skelter in his attempt to find his cheese.

Just like the mouse you get very comfortable in what becomes your set environment and so many of your day to day experiences are habitually performed and expected to be exactly the same, day in and day out. You become nestled within the walls of your comfort zone and are all too happy and content to remain there, sometimes even if being there is limiting your own potentials. The very thought of being removed from your comfort zone is one that you push back into the farthest regions of your mind – your ego simply will not allow it because change is, after all, way to threatening. You become complacent as your habitual behaviors and expectations settle in for a long winter's nap. But then suddenly and seemingly out of the clear blue, some unforeseen, undetected, unnoticed, unanticipated and definitely undesired and not at all appreciated change occurs in your reality. Your cheese has been moved and you have no idea where to find it. You panic and in your panic, doubt and fear become a predominant factor, nearly paralyzing you, stopping you dead in your tracks and you run the maze as if you had blind folders on. You have been thrown into survival mode and all you can think about at first is how to get your cheese put right back in its safe place, which is in the confines of your comfort zone. Your success in relocating your cheese is first to accept that the cheese is no longer where you are used to finding it, that the same variety that you were accustomed to has changed and that it will change from time to time, thus affording you opportunities to have many different experiences; to sample different varieties.

It is our hope that we have brought to your awareness, using cheese as a metaphor, a means to help you make your way through the symbolic mazes of life; when the winds of change huff and puff and blow your symbolic house down – your comfort zone. That you will not crumble, but that you will make just the tiniest effort at first to rise up out of the ashes; to take from your experience the wealth of valuable lessons that are there to be learned, if you are willing and able to learn, even if it means barely being able to breathe. All it takes is one breath at a time, one tiny step at a time, and before you know it you will be up and running through a new maze that will lead you to a new piece of very tasty cheese. We encourage you to share your thoughts and personal experiences and we thank all those of you who have.

Many Blessings,

Linda, Z and the Collective We