



Happy Staff = Happy School

Who Moved the Goal Posts?

Working in schools can be stressful!

These articles are intended to help the great people who work in schools reduce stress and increase satisfaction.

Key points

Dr Spencer Johnson's book **"Who Moved My Cheese?"** is essential reading

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

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

Movement in a new direction helps you find new cheese.

If you do not change you can become extinct.

It's not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but those most responsive to change.

Charles Darwin

To outsiders, working in a school probably seems simple enough! The aim or purpose won't have appeared to have changed. Schools and staff in schools work towards helping young people learn, achieve their potential and become citizens who contribute to society. The big picture remains the same.

However most who work in schools feel inundated with change. The 'goal posts' appear to be constantly moving. This constant state of flux can be stressful, unless people have a way of looking at change that helps them to understand it. I believe Dr Stephen Johnson's book **'Who Moved My Cheese?'** is essential reading for all who work in schools.

The story, a parable about change, involves four interesting characters looking for "Cheese" - cheese being a metaphor for what we want in life - success, satisfaction, relationships, money, health, recognition, a new car, a big house etc. Each of us has our own idea of what cheese is. We pursue it because we believe it makes us happy. The maze in the story represents where you spend your time and energy looking for what you want.

Change within society demands that schools are also constantly evolving, responding and changing. Along with this external pressure to change, schools not only want to survive, we want to remain competitive and be seen as relevant and worthwhile. By our very nature, most staff in schools are committed to continuous improvement. We see opportunities where we can refine our craft and make improvements. These additional factors also contribute to constant change. Change happens - our "Cheese" keeps moving!

Johnson's simple parable reveals profound truths about how people respond to change. The key messages are especially relevant to all who work in schools.

Anticipate change - get ready for the cheese to move

Monitor change - smell the cheese often so you know when it is getting old

Adapt to change quickly - the quicker you let go of old cheese, the sooner you can enjoy new cheese

Change - move with the cheese. When you see that you can find and enjoy new cheese, you change course.

Enjoy change! - savour the adventure and enjoy the taste of new cheese

Dr Spencer Johnson. 1998, p 74

The parable is helpful in seeing the changes that are constantly occurring in schools in a new light.

Whilst it is vital that we don't *'throw out the baby with the bath water'*, change in schools is inevitable. Our attitude to change is a key factor in the amount that we allow change to impact on our stress level. If you haven't read, **"Who Moved My Cheese?"**, I'd highly recommend it!

If you have read it, revisit this great parable as it is particularly relevant.

The goal of education hasn't changed but change is inevitable.

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