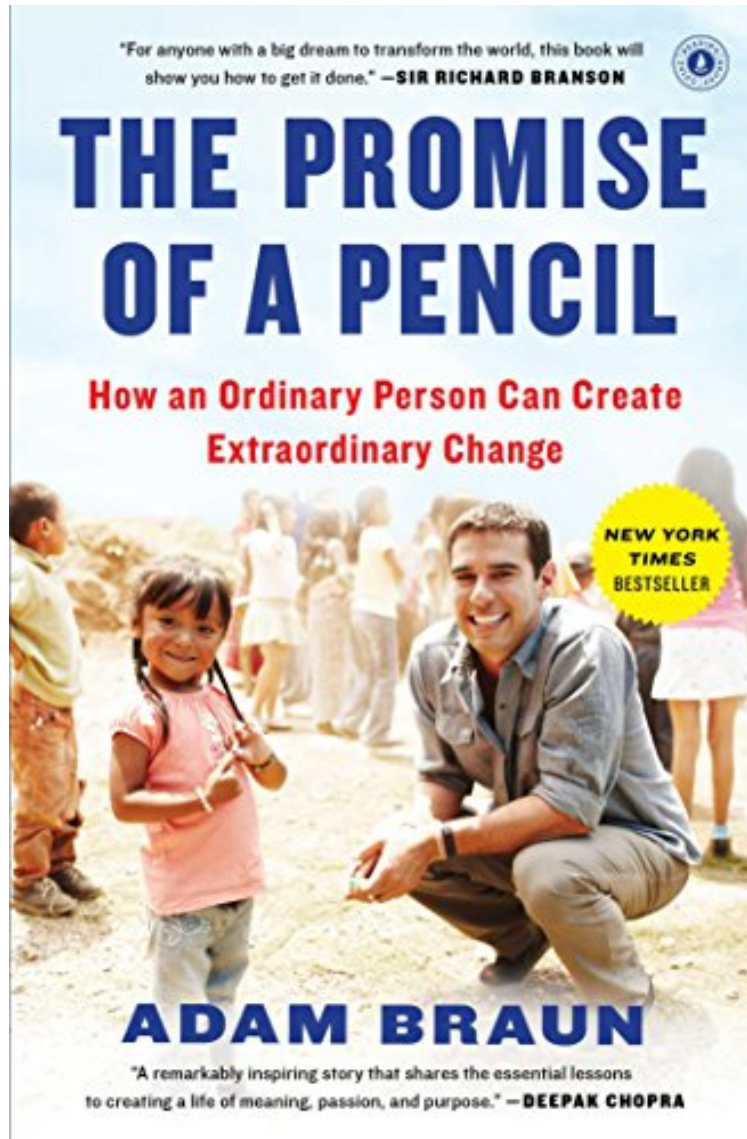


# The Promise of a Pencil: How an Ordinary Person Can Create Extraordinary Change

Adam Braun

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**Adam Braun : The Promise of a Pencil: How an Ordinary Person Can Create Extraordinary Change** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Promise of a Pencil: How an Ordinary Person Can Create Extraordinary Change:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Fantastic RealisticBy Meg McKinnonThe Promise of a Pencil was actually a really incredible book to read. Adam Braun writes it in a way that really focuses on his development and his

reactions or feelings in situations which helps you connect with him and his story. It is interesting because it follows the creation and development of his non-profit organization Pencils of Promise and gives great insight on how to build a successful non-profit and yet while you're reading you feel like you are reading a story. By that I mean- you feel like you are simply reading about Adam's life rather than a How-To. As I said The Promise of a Pencil gives great insight on how to build a successful non-profit because Adam Braun doesn't simply focus on his call to help people. He focuses on fundraising, building a board, making connections, etc- all of the business and finance things that are glossed over in other books that I have read. He really focuses on the reality of building a non-profit. I have only one negative thing to say about this book and it should definitely NOT stop anyone from buying this book but while reading this book I kept thinking to myself that he seemed extremely self-absorbed- the situations he was in were always about his thoughts, his feelings, his reaction and I kept wanting him to place himself in their shoes or comment on their pain. I kept reading and I am so glad that I did. I think it was written like this to show the massive changes that he undergoes and because this is a book about a guy who didn't ever think he would start a non-profit. It is about his story, his development into the man who created an incredible non-profit which makes education possible for even the most impoverished. Whether you want to open a non-profit yourself or you are just interested in philanthropy- this is a book I would recommend for everyone.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. I also felt like you were sharing my own personal narrative

By CustomerDear Adam, Man, I couldn't wait to share with you the uncontrollable excitement that had been generated from reading your book (which I completed in two sittings). I sat down, propped up against the pillows on my bed on the final evening entirely immersed in the emotional ebb and flow of this piece of literature that you've graciously shared with the world. I barely wanted to pause, it was too riveting and mind blowing! I ran to the kitchen for snacks in between some chapters and I even convinced myself that it was time to shower but that clearly did not happen until I ended at the acknowledgements! Thank you for the journey- it evoked tears, laughter, thrill, hope, motivation and inspiration. As I "travelled" with you throughout your vast and dynamic adventures, not only did I experience your passionate outlook on humanity and your innate desire to problem solve, I also felt like you were sharing my own personal narrative. In other words, whilst I haven't seen all of this world in the ways that you have, I have had dreams of doing so my entire life and your detailed portrayal of a life lived by completely assimilating yourself in the cultures that you walked into, demonstrated to me your love for people and your overall seriousness to engage and understand. It's through your anecdotes that I was able to understand your character- you seemingly embody cross cultural acceptance and I want to thank you for being fearless and setting examples for others to emulate. You see, although our world has evolved tremendously and is considered globalized and therefore more "unified" and interconnected, we continue to struggle with divisiveness that is still apparent in many areas including the non acceptance of different cultural/racial/ethnic groups. You go against this harsh reality by letting us know that through your social good/social impact (for purpose) approach, you and your team are able to unite so many of us across the world to work towards a common goal-making a difference through the transformation of lives. This Adam is beyond amazing to me.

As a growing Social Entrepreneur, I could relate to your sentiments. In fact, at this stage of my journey I saw the need to dig deeper into social entrepreneurship and so, I begun actively searching for books on to assist with gaining clarity and insight when I stumbled upon "The Promise of a Pencil" immediately after I ordered People over Profit by Dale Partridge. This was when I learnt about your organization. My enthusiasm and excitement roared because I knew I was being led along the right path. Backpacking across the globe, living minimally and sharing in the cultures of others, caring deeply (so deeply that your core vibrates with no end) for the people who need opportunity and hope, education and accessibility to it. These are passions that reverberate within me daily and I've had this inherent desire to contribute in the same way that you've described... That made this sojourn through your book even more fascinating and relatable. I was moved and quite eager to share that you've inspired me thoroughly and I am more than happy that I chose to invest time to read about your journey throughout the world and the successes you amassed for social good. It makes me proud and even more confident of this path that I have undertaken to not only experience the world with purpose and passion, but to contribute to solving some of its problems. One day I will know, just like you did at the Philharmonic that 'everything is going to change.' I feel it coming, I just don't know what it looks like. I do know, however, that the tireless work you are doing comes pretty close and I do know I want to spend the rest of my life making people happy by letting them know that there is so much more to hope for and achieve. We will continue to provide tools for growth; we will continue to encourage and inspire men, women, boys and girls to believe that they are allowed to dream and excel regardless of where and who they are. Thank you for sharing your triumphs as well as your challenges and most of all, I appreciate the fact that you are inspired by your family. I am too. I am hardly me without them. In fact, when you dedicated your first school to your "Ma" and then eventually told her your story, her response sent tears rolling down my cheeks. Why? I could relate. My grandmother, affectionately called "Mama" was pulled out of school in Grade 3 to contribute to her household. Throughout the years she would describe quite emotionally, the effects of being denied access to educational opportunities. However, we would always remind her of the results of her dedication to hard work. She accumulated multiple successes in spite of not receiving formal education and her greatest achievement in my opinion, is the solid foundation she laid for all of the generations that followed. Nonetheless, I know it hurts her and therefore, if I were to erect a school some day, I

believe she would be honoured if it were dedicated to her. Thanks Adam. My experience with the book in such a short space of time can be easily considered.... life altering..Continue to inspire and be inspired..With every good wish.Love from Jamaica, Jheanell 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. You NEED to read this. You won't regret it! By Sweetlouis This is a book everyone should read. It's inspiring, and makes you think about your own life and your own decisions. Specially for all those like me, who has a voice deep within that's been whispering about change and a real purpose, but I haven't listened. Now the voice is screaming out loud. To find my place, to reach my dreams and to fulfill my life. I'm finding a new strength to listen to this voice, and that is all thanks to this book. Even if I don't have Adam Brauns qualifications and even his intelligence, because it's not about that. It's about the passion, the drive and the will to walk your own path. So thank you Adam Braun. You taught me to start listen to the voice that speaks about my inner desires. Or, I've been hearing it for almost a year now, but you gave me the power to really take the voice seriously. So thank you, an interesting future ahead for me! :) And I urge you all to read this and I can accurately say that when you've finished this book, you will all find some way to give back to this world.

The riveting story of how a young man turned \$25 into more than 200 schools around the world and the guiding steps anyone can take to lead a successful and significant life. Adam Braun began working summers at hedge funds when he was just sixteen years old, sprinting down the path to a successful Wall Street career. But while traveling he met a young boy begging on the streets of India, who after being asked what he wanted most in the world, simply answered, "A pencil." This small request led to a staggering series of events that took Braun backpacking through dozens of countries before eventually leaving one of the world's most prestigious jobs to found Pencils of Promise, the organization he started with just \$25 that has since built more than 200 schools around the world. The Promise of a Pencil chronicles Brauns' journey to find his calling, as each chapter explains one clear step that every person can take to turn your biggest ambitions into reality, even if you start with as little as \$25. His story takes readers behind the scenes with business moguls and village chiefs, world-famous celebrities and hometown heroes. Driven by compelling stories and shareable insights, this is a vivid and inspiring book that will give you the tools to make your own life a story worth telling. \*All proceeds from this book will support Pencils of Promise.

"For anyone with a big dream to transform the world, this book will show you how to get it done." (Sir Richard Branson) "A compelling and singular story filled with universal truths everyone needs to hear." (United States Senator Cory Booker) "A remarkably inspiring story that shares the essential lessons to creating a life of meaning, passion and purpose." (Deepak Chopra, Founder of The Chopra Foundation) "A vivid, heartfelt account of the power of education and the ability of one person to impact the world." (Wendy Kopp, Founder of Teach For America and Co-Founder CEO of Teach For All) "Braun takes you on a mesmerizing round-the-world adventure, while sharing the concrete steps necessary to turn your own ideas into reality. He has his finger on the pulse of what's next and when he speaks you should be listening." (Keith Ferrazzi, #1 NY Times bestselling author of Never Eat Alone and Who's Got Your Back) "A perfect step-by-step guide to building the life you've always wanted on your own terms. . . Start reading and don't put the book down until you're finished." (Gary Vaynerchuk, CEO of VaynerMedia and New York Times bestselling author of Jab, Jab, Jab Right Hook and Crush It!) "Braun's lessons are memorable, accessible, and powerful. This is a must-read, and a must-re-read, and a must-keep-in-view-on-bookshelf kind of book." (Jessica Jackley, Co-Founder of Kiva) "[An] exuberant testimony to the power of idealism. . . Brauns' story forcefully presents the advantages of silencing the head and listening to the heart." (Publishers Weekly starred review) "[Braun] skillfully weaves together his personal memoir and the professional challenges he faced... Informative and inspiring." (Kirkus) "Braun combines his laid-back storytelling style with simple yet sage advice... The Promise of a Pencil is engaging, instructive and inspiring reading for anyone who wants to change his or her life, change the world, or simply feel better about humanity." (Success Magazine) "[Braun's] trailblazing story takes readers behind the scenes with business moguls and village chiefs, world-famous celebrities and hometown heroes. Driven by compelling stories and shareable insights, this is a vivid and inspiring book that will give readers the tools to unlock their own extraordinary journey of self-discovery." (FoxNews.com) "A playbook for aspiring social entrepreneurs, offering a vision for uniting business and philanthropy around a 'for-purposed' mission powered by social media." (LinkedIn's "Can't-Miss Business Books for Spring and Summer") "[An] exuberant testimony to the power of idealism." (Publishers Weekly Book of the Week) "Braun shares his story of how he started Pencils of Promise, what he learned from Wall Street that has helped him... how he leveraged social networks to generate donations, and his best career advice." (Forbes.com) "[A] page-turning debut." (MTV Act) About the Author Adam Braun is the Founder and CEO of Pencils of Promise, an award-winning nonprofit organization that has built more than 200 schools across Africa, Asia, and Latin America and delivered over 15 million educational hours to children in poverty. PoP was founded with just \$25 and has grown under Brauns' stewardship with his unique approach that blends nonprofit idealism with for-profit business principles. He has been featured as part of the Forbes 30 Under 30 and Wired Magazine's 50 People Changing the world. To learn more visit [pencilsofpromise.org](http://pencilsofpromise.org) and [adambraun.com](http://adambraun.com). Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights

reserved. The Promise of a Pencil

## INTRODUCTION

On a sunny autumn afternoon just before my twenty-fifth birthday, I walked into a large bank in my hometown. At the time, I had everything I thought would make me happy—the job, the apartment, the life. My closet was full of impressive corporate clothing, and my business card carried the name of a prestigious company that garnered respect in every room I entered. I looked like a guy on the right path who was most likely walking into the bank to deposit his monthly paycheck. But deep down inside, I was no longer enamored with the life I’d created. The only purpose I was serving was self-interest. While I rarely showed it to outsiders, my happiness waned day after day. A restless voice kept me up at night, telling me that until I found meaning, the money wouldn’t matter. It told me that I’d find far more fulfillment if I measured my life in purpose, not profits. And that I didn’t have to keep waiting, that now was the perfect moment to start chasing my biggest dreams. It’s strange how you can sometimes feel a yearning that seems bigger than your actual body. That’s how I felt that day. I wanted to be a part of something that extended far beyond my two hands and the possessions they could hold. No matter how scared I was of getting off my safe path, I needed to see what would happen if I finally stepped into the uncharted territory where unbridled ambition and opportunity reside. The scariest part was that I wasn’t some successful businessman who’d built and sold companies. I didn’t have a lengthy career to prove I would succeed. Nor did I have millions of dollars in financial backing. I was just a regular guy with \$25 who wanted to prove that regardless of age, status, or location, every person has the capacity to change the world. So I used that small amount to open a new account in hopes of one day building a school. Everything that came after was a result of that first step. That leap of faith rippled outward, spanning cultures and continents. Since then I’ve immersed myself in the field of global education. I believe that where you start in life should not dictate where you finish. And that no tool can more profoundly unlock a person’s ability to change his or her place in life than access to quality education. The good news is that we have the ability to provide quality education to every child on earth right now. We are not looking for a miracle vaccine or drilling for a hidden resource that may not exist. We have all the tools necessary at this very moment. Yet we still have 57 million children out of school, and millions more who sit in classrooms each day but remain illiterate. Education is a complex issue, which requires a complex set of solutions. There is no silver-bullet answer to educating the children of the world, but the global education crisis remains the single most solvable and important human rights issue of our time. The knowledge that it can be solved gives me hope and purpose. But no individual can solve the world’s problems alone. A collective effort is required, and we each have a unique role to play. \* \* \* This is the story about what happens when you acknowledge that there’s more for you to become, and that you don’t have to have enormous resources to make a difference in the world. It’s a story about what can unfold when inspiration strikes and you realize that the rewards of living a purposeful life are rich and lasting. It’s the story of my life (although I have changed the names of several people at their request), but it’s a story that can belong to anyone. Each of the thirty chapters in this book is titled with a mantra. These mantras have served as my guideposts as I’ve faced decisions both large and small. They have become my essential truths. I’ve written them with the hope that they will be carried forward, shared with others, and adopted in ways that help you on your own journey as well. Each story stands on its own, but taken together they create a roadmap that I hope will enable you to turn your own dreams into reality. If one of these stories ignites something within you, listen to that restless feeling that your head may tell you to ignore but your heart will tell you to pursue. The biggest difference between the person who lives his or her dreams and the person who aspires is the decision to convert that first spark of motivation into immediate action. Take the first small step, then chase the footprints you aspire to leave behind. Every person has a revolution beating within his or her chest. I hope that this book helps you find yours.