

"For anyone with a big dream to transform the world, this book will show you how to get it done." — **SIR RICHARD BRANSON**

THE PROMISE OF A PENCIL

**How an Ordinary Person Can Create
Extraordinary Change**

ADAM BRAUN


A photograph of Adam Braun, a man with short dark hair and a light blue button-down shirt, kneeling on the ground and smiling. He is surrounded by a group of children in a dry, outdoor setting. A young girl in a pink shirt is in the foreground, looking at the camera. Other children are visible in the background, some standing and some walking. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

LEADERSHIP CURRICULUM

Developed by Ellen Kolonoski

Kittatinny Regional High School

2015




This past spring, I read Adam Braun's The Promise of a Pencil. Within an hour of finishing the book, I knew what I wanted to do. My passion as a veteran teacher is lesson development. I decided to develop a leadership curriculum unit for my students to use alongside this text.

It is with great joy that I share it with Adam Braun, Pencils of Promise and interested teachers around the globe. I hope your students will be as encouraged and motivated by the experience as mine were.

Ellen Kolonoski

Fall 2015



Rationale

In our ever-changing world, nothing is more paramount than the development of thinkers and leaders. As we prepare students for careers that don't yet exist, their future success will depend on adaptability, collaboration and innovation. By infusing leadership skills into classroom lessons and other learning experiences, we strengthen our students' knowledge base and help students discover their passions and purpose. By highlighting the qualities of leadership, decision-making skills and problem solving, we provide lasting models to guide our students in their lives.

Adam Braun's book, *The Promise of a Pencil*, provides a wealth of material for teachers to use to promote leadership. Each chapter holds valuable lessons for the reader. Through his mantras, he offers a pathway for defining one's passion and becoming a positive influence for change in the world.

Unit Structure

These lessons are intended to be used in conjunction with Adam Braun's book *The Promise of a Pencil*. These activities can be used during or after reading with the intention of promoting student thinking about the text and about themselves.

Initially developed for middle school gifted and talented learners, the lessons are appropriate for all middle school and high school learners and can be easily adapted for younger audiences.

As with any outside resource, teachers should read the book for themselves prior to using in the classroom. There are a few chapters with instances of inappropriate language; the words could be blacked out within those chapters to make them classroom friendly.

Adding elements of classroom discussion and collaboration will enhance these experiences as well. Technological elements, such as blogging or discussion boards, can be added depending upon teacher preferences.

This curriculum unit was developed to be flexible in nature. The book can be read in its entirety with coordinating tasks for each chapter. The lessons can also stand alone, allowing teachers to select individual sections to teach. Most activities contain a short prompt and a visual organizer for students to complete. Each assignment can be completed independently or collaboratively in either small or large group formats.



Goals and Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Explore qualities that enhance leadership abilities
- Evaluate leadership actions in others and assess their own leadership qualities
- Develop a deeper understanding of one's own values and attitudes, building confidence to take action in leadership roles
- Cultivate problem solving and decision making strategies

Alignment to National Standards

Beyond its strong basis in social and emotional learning, this unit can be correlated with a variety of subject area standards. It supports the Common Core English Language Arts Anchor Standards for College and Career Readiness and Grade Specific Standards (especially within Grades 6-12) in Reading, Writing and Speaking and Listening. These activities relate to themes within the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies, including Individual Development and Identity and Civic Ideals and Practices. In addition, it connects with National Health Education Standards 2, 5, and 6, which emphasize decision making, goal setting and the influence of outside factors on healthy behaviors.

Student Materials

These activities can be used during or after reading chapters in *The Promise of Pencil* with the intention of promoting student thinking about the text and about themselves. You may chose to use some or all of these activities. Each is independent, so they are viable if you are only using particular sections or can be combined to create a workbook if you are teaching the entire book. The pages are frameworks that may need to be modified to suit your particular age group, content area or teaching style. Many are arranged as graphic organizers, providing guidance to students developing their thinking.

What is the power of a pencil? Web Creation

Get students thinking about what a pencil can do and what it represents. You may want students to brainstorm independently first, collaborate with a partner and then combine partner groups. This allows for maximum student participation and engagement. This activity encourages students to think concretely as well as abstractly.

Sixty Second Skim and Scan

Before starting to read, allow students the opportunity to preview the material. By analyzing book features and making predictions for the text, students activate their schema. This provides an opportunity to review elements of nonfiction books as well as provide a preview of the book for students.

Introduction

Using this short selection, students begin to focus in on the leadership qualities Adam Braun possesses, providing textual evidence to support each quality. Defining the term mantra will be helpful for student understanding as the remaining chapters each begin with a mantra.

1. Why be normal

After reading chapter 1, students complete the T-chart identifying influences on Adam Braun and considering those that influence them. I suggest a minimum of 2 influences for each column, but depending on your students you may want to consider increasing that number.

2. Get out of your comfort zone

For this Gist Grid, students select key words and phrases that are critical in this section. They must explain why they chose each word or phrase so that someone reading this summary would get the gist of the chapter. This style of summary page could be used for any chapter and is useful if you are reading the novel as a “tear-apart” book, having students read each other’s grids to find out about different chapters.

3. Know that you have a purpose

This graphic organizer allows students to list the events of the chapter, considering the emotions it sparks and the greater understandings that come out of the circumstances.

4. Every pencil holds a promise

This assignment asks students to reflect on the significance of two elements within the chapter: the interaction with the boy and Adam Braun's desire to go into the Ganges River. Depending on your students and your personal preferences, the task could be completed independently, in pairs, small groups or as a class.

5. Do the small things that make others feel big

This chapter allows students to examine the impact of "key" experiences on Adam Braun. Students must draw from the text and then assess the significance of each event.

6. Tourists see, travelers seek

The word "will" holds great importance in this chapter. After identifying how "will" matters, students can reflect on its importance within their own lives.

7. Asking for permission is asking for denial

Decision making is a critical role for leaders. This activity aims to develop student insight into the consequences that come from each decision.

8. Embrace the lightning moments

This chapter highlights Adam Braun's lightning moment. The organizer allows students to consider the factors that led to that moment and lends itself to class discussion about the development of ideas.

9. Big dreams start with small, unreasonable acts

This activity utilizes the metaphor of a puzzle coming together to represent the events of the chapter. Students will be able to see the variety of episodes that merge in the development of Pencils of Promise.

10. Practice humility over hubris

The chart asks students to predict additional consequences that could have happened from the circumstances explored in this section. The mantra itself can steer students to think about the importance of humility and pride within leaders.

11. Speak the language of the person you want to become

Strong communication skills are critical for leaders. This chapter has students explain several of the conversations that inspire Adam Braun and the results of those interactions. A lesson focusing on communication styles would correspond well with this section.

12. Walk with a purpose

Another essential quality for leaders is determination. Students are asked to provide textual evidence of Adam Braun's determination within this chapter. Brainstorming other qualities that make leaders successful fits well here as well.

13. Happiness is found in celebrating others

This is one of the most moving chapters as Adam Braun shares his dedication of the first school with Ma. Students can build their emotional understanding as they consider the feelings Adam and Ma experience, strengthening their awareness of their own feelings and their ability to read the feelings of others.

14. Find the impossible ones

Risk taking is exemplified in this chapter. After identifying the two hypotheses Adam Braun bet on, students reflect on important considerations to make when taking a gamble. This can lead to discussions regarding risk taking.

15. Focus on one person in every room

As Adam Braun takes the message of Pencils of Promise on the road, his expectations and reality clash. By describing what happened and the resulting discoveries, students can see a model of how to transform situations when expectations are not met into learning opportunities.

16. Read the signs along the path

Leaders will inevitably face tough choices as Adam Braun does in this chapter. Looking closely at Adam's experience and the signs he sees provides students the opportunity to consider the factors that influence difficult decisions. This could lead to an analysis of one of their own difficult decisions either in a reflective essay or as a class discussion.

17. Create separation to build connection

In this section, Adam Braun's skills in connecting with others are highlighted. After identifying his methods, students reflect on a way they connect with others, building greater self-awareness.

18. Never take no from someone who can't say yes

This writing exercise asks students to connect this mantra to their everyday life. Students can gain additional insights by sharing these pieces with one another.

19. Stay guided by your values, not your necessities

Considering the pros and cons of a decision is one method students can utilize when facing choices. The analysis of Adam Braun's decision provides a model for this approach.

20. You cannot fake authenticity

As integral parts of teams, leaders need to develop an awareness of the personal traits they seek in others. This mantra allows students to consider the qualities Adam Braun was looking for in additional team members and then to focus on essential characteristics of personal teammates.

21. There is only one chance at a first impression

Everyone can learn from positive and negative examples. This mantra reminds students the critical importance of first impressions. By providing their own examples of strong versus weak first impressions, students will continue to shape their own presence when dealing with others.

22. Fess up to your failures

This activity allows students to further clarify their definition of leadership, strengthening their conceptual understanding and building an awareness of multiple perspectives on leadership.

23. Learn to close the loop

Studies have shown the value of an attitude of gratitude. This chapter reinforces that idea. With this self-reflective activity, students identify personal qualities, possessions, influential people and intangibles that they are grateful for.

24. Change your words to change your worth

Words have great power. Using this word connotation exercise, students can consider the impact that words can have on people. It lends itself to a follow-up discussion regarding put-downs and bullying.

25. A goal realized is a goal defined

This activity provides guidance for students to explore on one of their long-term goals by breaking it into several short-term goals. Developing a “to-do” list for one short-term goal will help them see the many small steps that are needed to accomplish that long-term goal.

26. Surround yourself by those who make you better

This section guides students to consider their own circle of friends and contemplate why they are friends and how those people make them better. It coordinates well with Mantra 20; do the qualities they look for in teammates match the reasons they have certain people as friends?

27. Vulnerability is vital

Students are asked to consider the things that are hard for them and what they might be able to do to improve on those things. This is probably the most personal reflection for students within this unit and teachers need to exercise great care with the information students share in this task.

28. Listen to your echoes

In this chapter, Adam Braun shared stories of unique fundraising for Pencils of Promise. Students are asked to dream big, picturing an unusual way they could promote or fundraise for a cause. Who knows, this might spark an event in your school or community.

29. If your dreams don't scare you, they're not big enough

What do your students envision for their future? In this crystal ball, students imagine what life will hold. This could lead to students developing new personal goals or solidify an existing one.

30. Make your life a story worth telling

As a culminating activity for the book, students engage in a real-world writing task composing a mock email to Adam Braun. They are encouraged to comment on his leadership abilities and ask questions that they might still have after reading the book.

Leadership Lessons

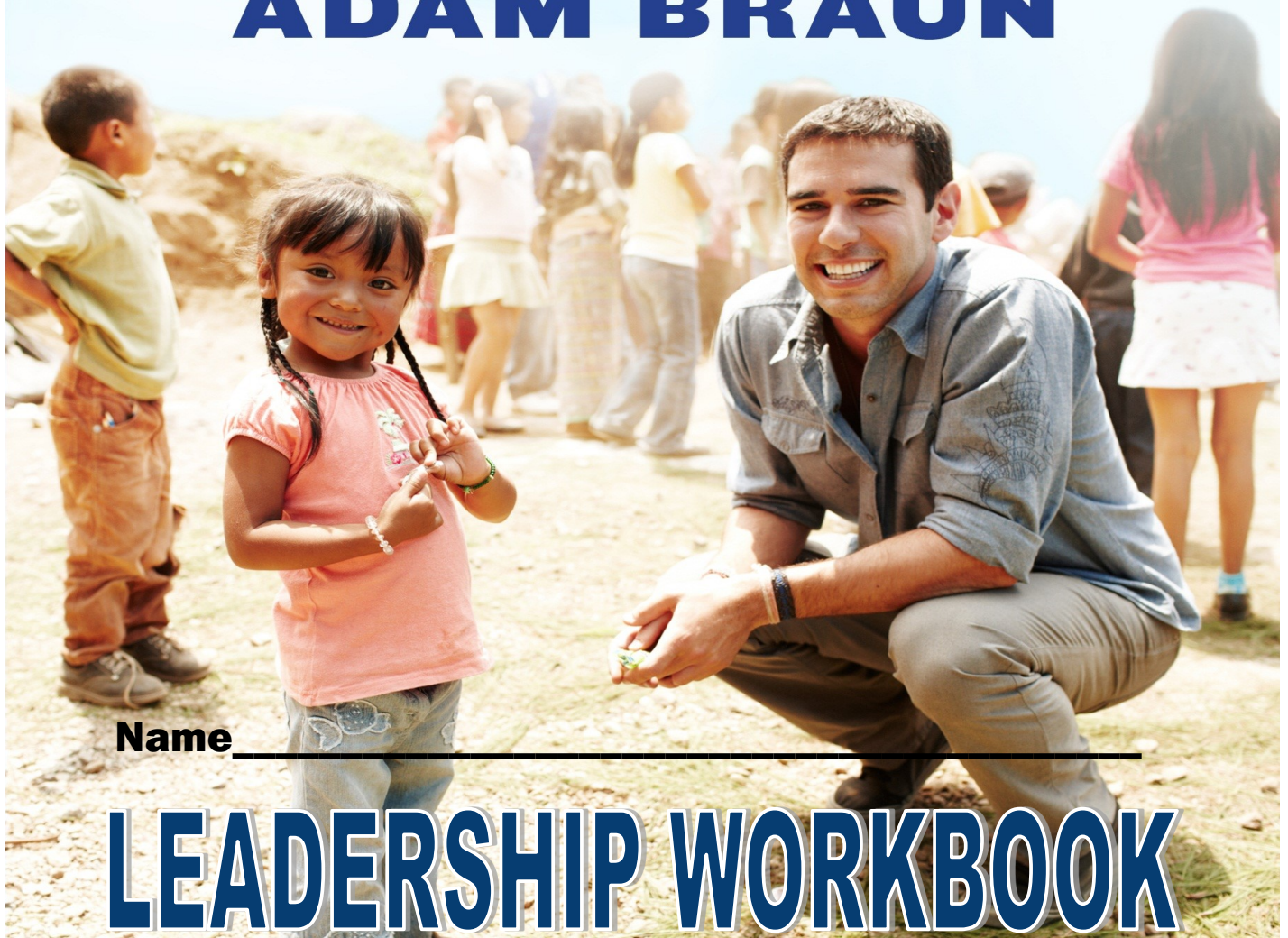
This page can be used to journal ideas throughout the book or as a reflection after multiple chapters.

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THE PROMISE OF A PENCIL

**How an Ordinary Person Can Create
Extraordinary Change**

ADAM BRAUN

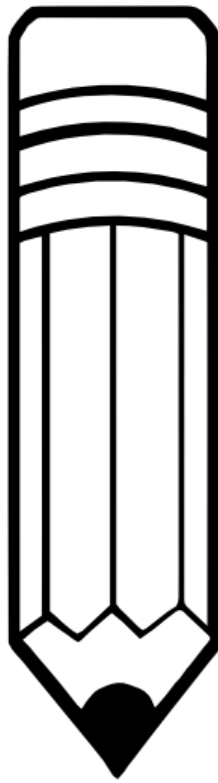


Name _____

LEADERSHIP WORKBOOK

What is the power of a pencil?

Create a web of your ideas.



Sixty Second Skim and Scan

Read the front cover of the book. What do you think the book will be about based on the cover?

Read the back cover. What details do you now know?

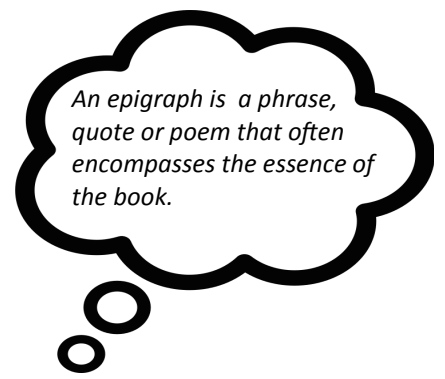
Flip through the pages of the book. What did skimming make you think about?

Predictions for this text:

My hopes for this book:

The Epigraph

Read the quote Adam Braun selected for the beginning of his book.



What does this quote mean to you?



What makes you come alive?

Table of Contents

Skim the table of contents.



What chapter title speaks to you the most?



Why?

Introduction

Read pages 1-3. What personal leadership qualities do you feel Adam Braun demonstrates? Use textual evidence to support your choices.

Leadership Quality	Textual Evidence

What is a mantra?

1. Why be normal

Consider who Adam Braun identifies as influences on his life. Explain who they are and how they impact him. Think about your own life. Who influences you?

Adam Braun's Influences

Who & How?

My Influences

Who & How?

2. Get out of your comfort zone

Fill each square with a word or phrase that helps capture the “gist” of the chapter. Explain why you chose each word or phrase so that someone who hasn’t read your chapter will understand what it was about.

Gist Grid

3. Know that you have a purpose

Jot down what happens in the Action column, how Adam Braun and the others felt in the Emotions column, and what he learns in the Understandings column.

Action	Emotions	Understandings

4. Every pencil holds a promise

Explain the importance of the boy (page 35) and the river in this chapter.

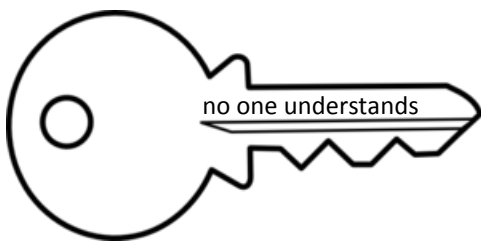
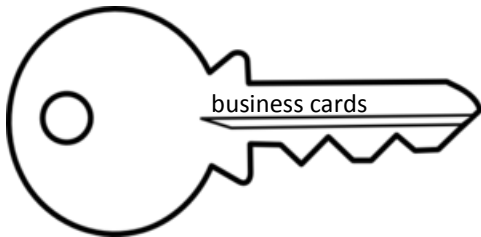
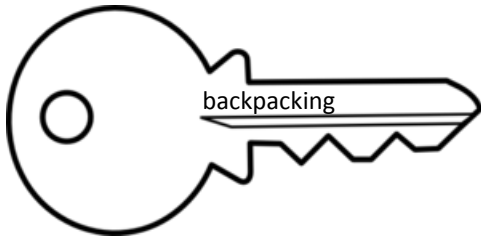
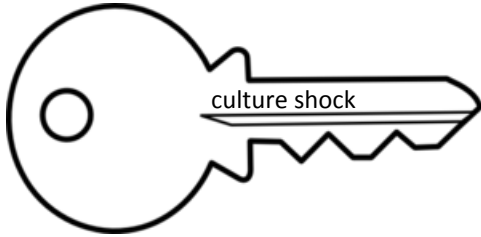
The boy

The river



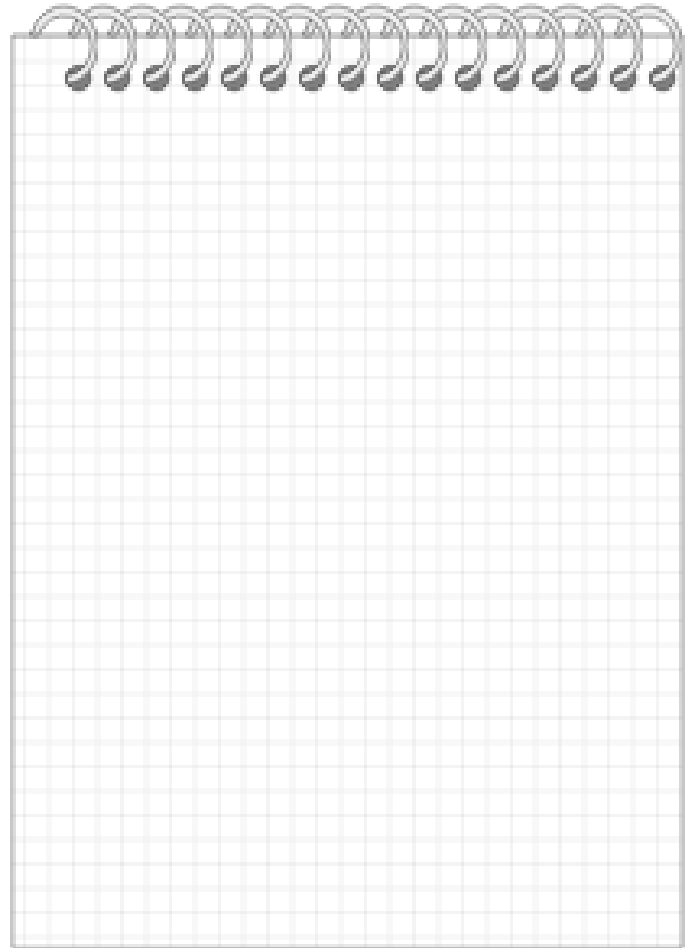
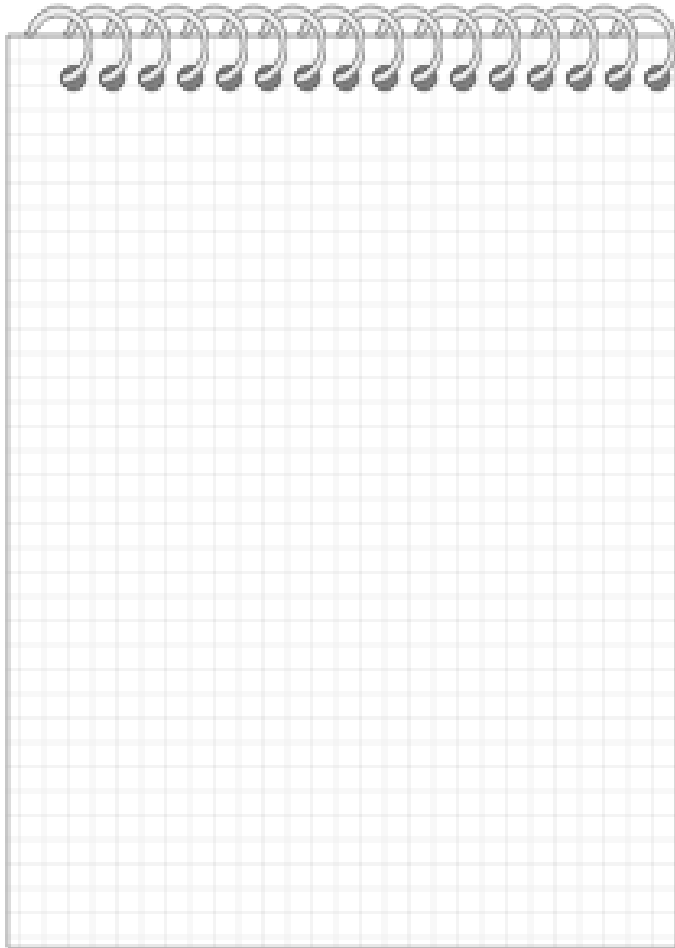
5. Do the small things that make others feel big

Identify the following keys from this chapter. How are they important?



6. Tourists see, travelers seek

“Will,” as both a noun and a verb, is significant in this section. Explain how “will” matters in at least two different ways.



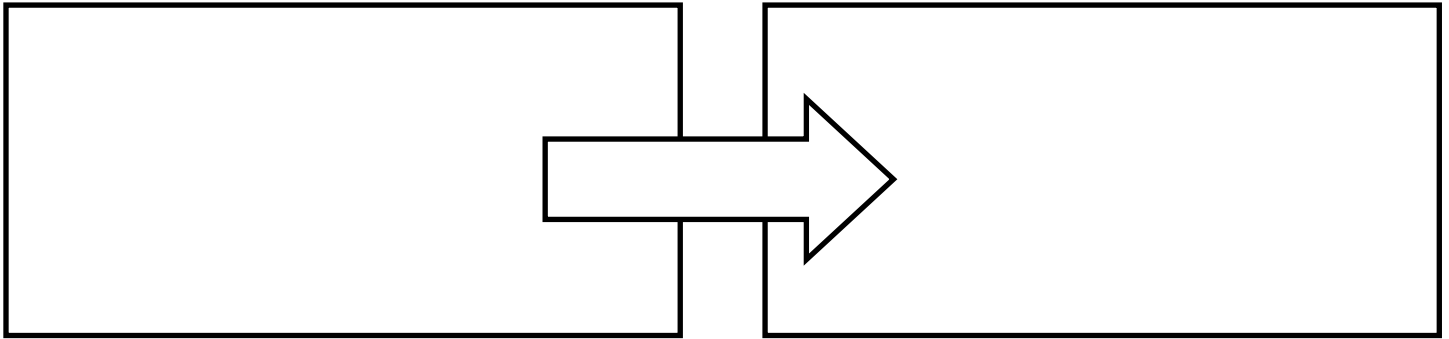
How does “will” play a role in your own life?

7. Asking permission is asking for denial

Adam Braun makes a number of decisions in this chapter. Identify three of his decisions and examine the consequences that result.

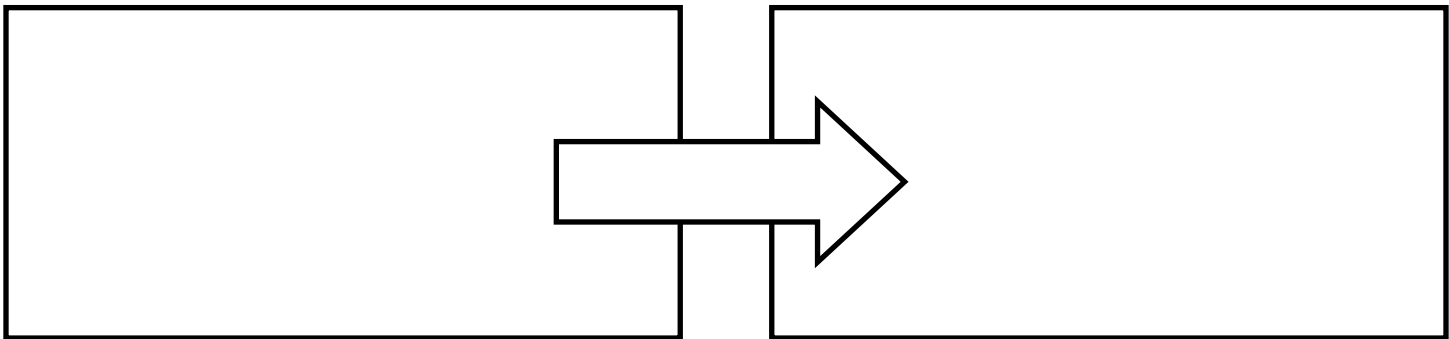
Decision

Consequences



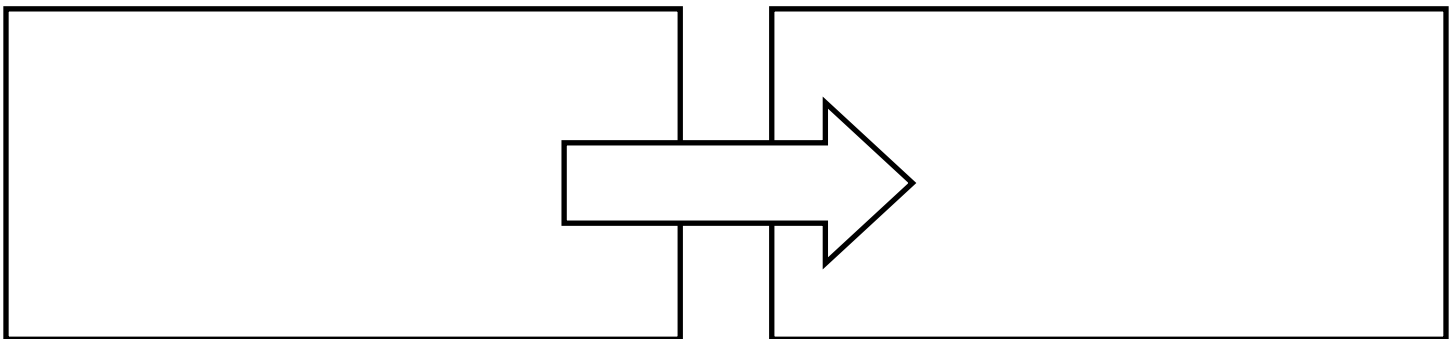
Decision

Consequences



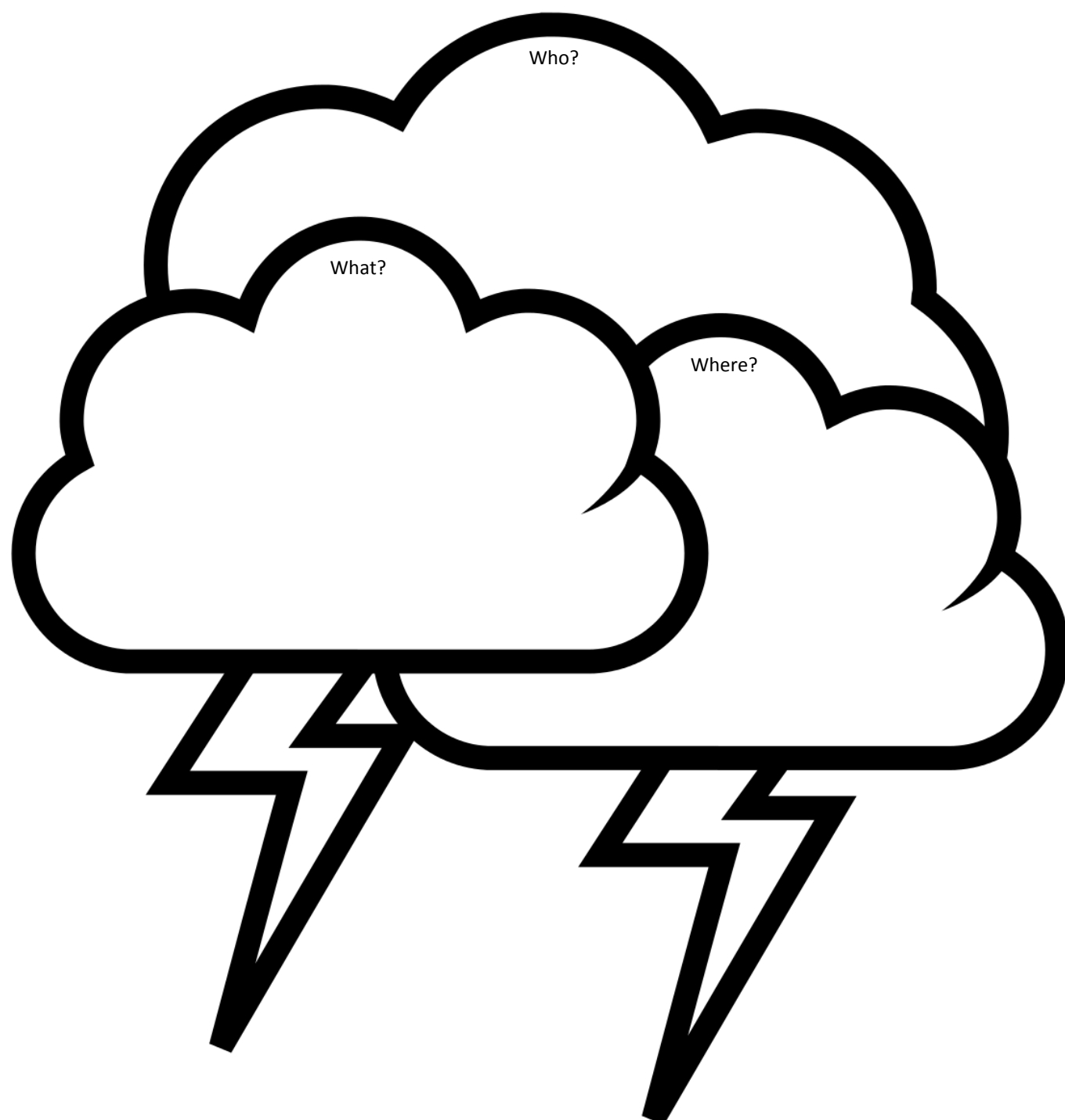
Decision

Consequences



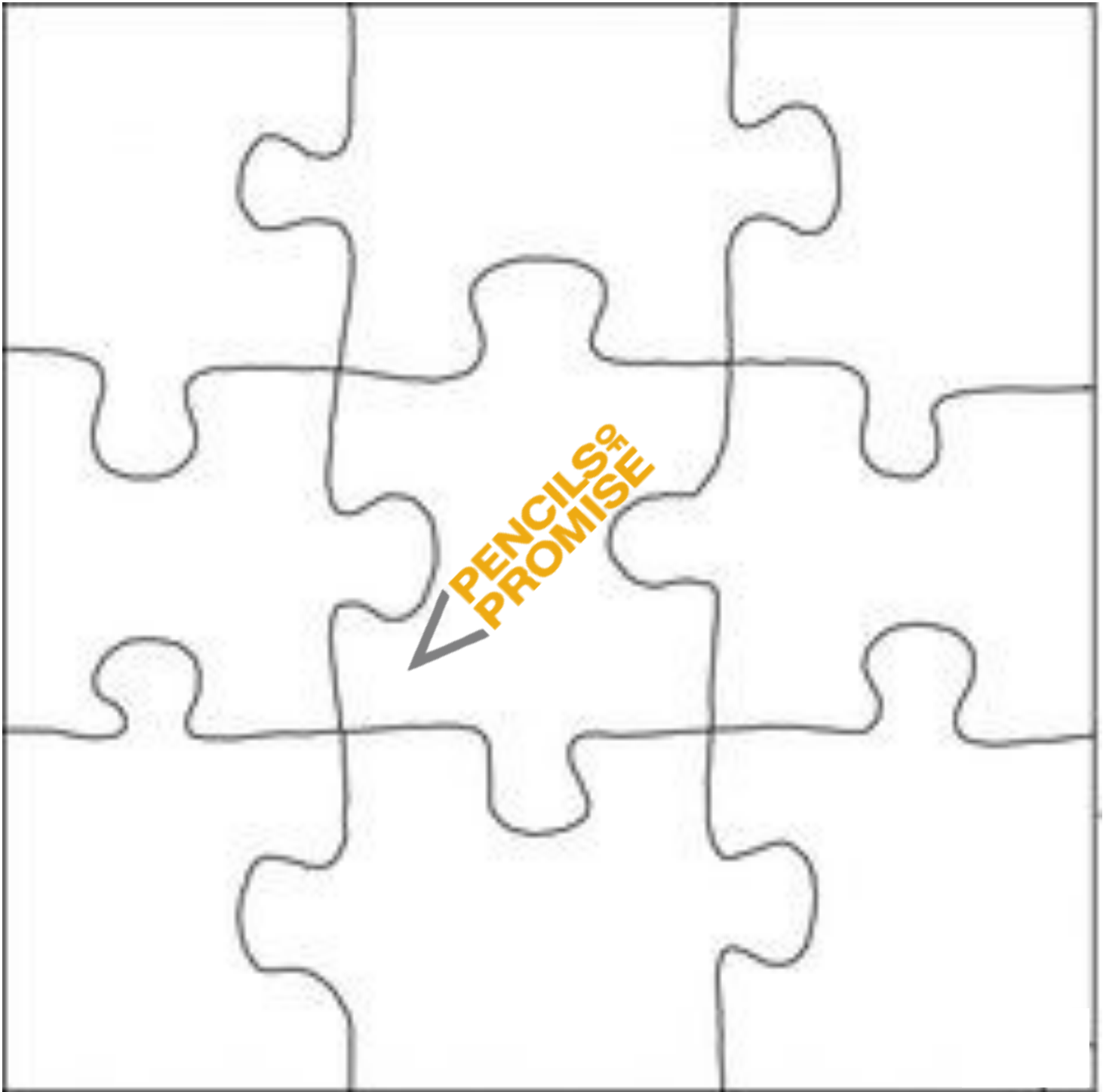
8. Embrace the lightning moments

Consider the events of this chapter. Complete the graphic organizer below with who helped contribute to Adam Braun's lightning moment, where he was when he had this lightning moment, and what he envisioned.



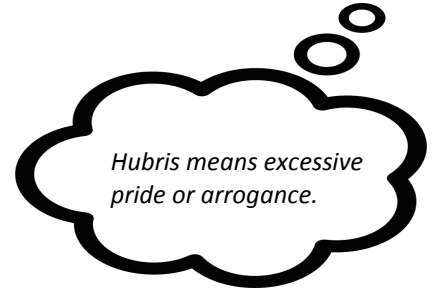
9. Big dreams start with small, unreasonable acts

Describe the pieces that begin to come together in this chapter.



10. Practice humility over hubris

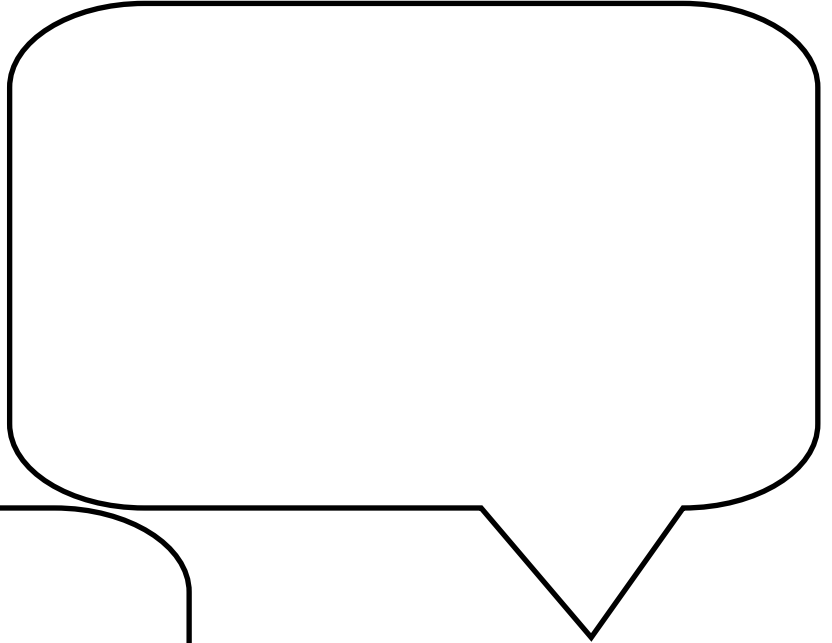
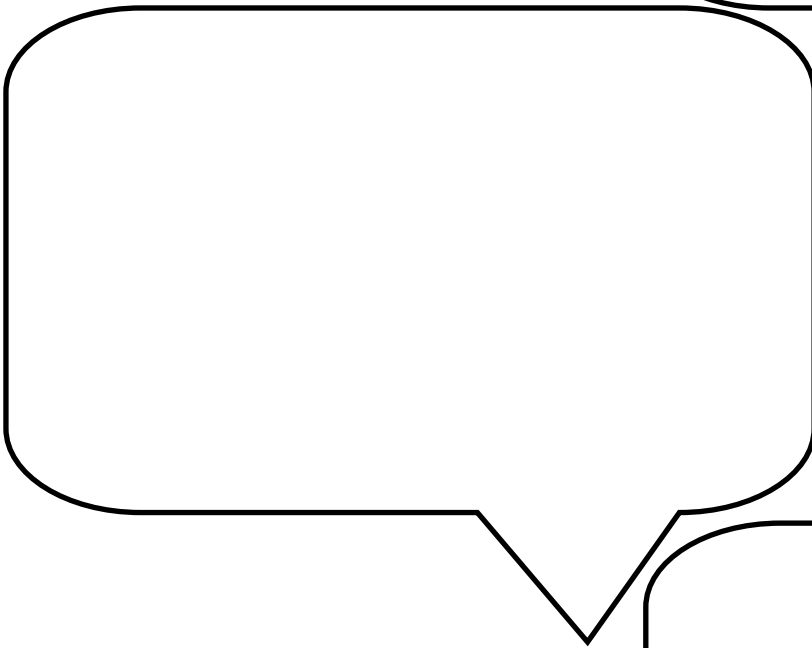
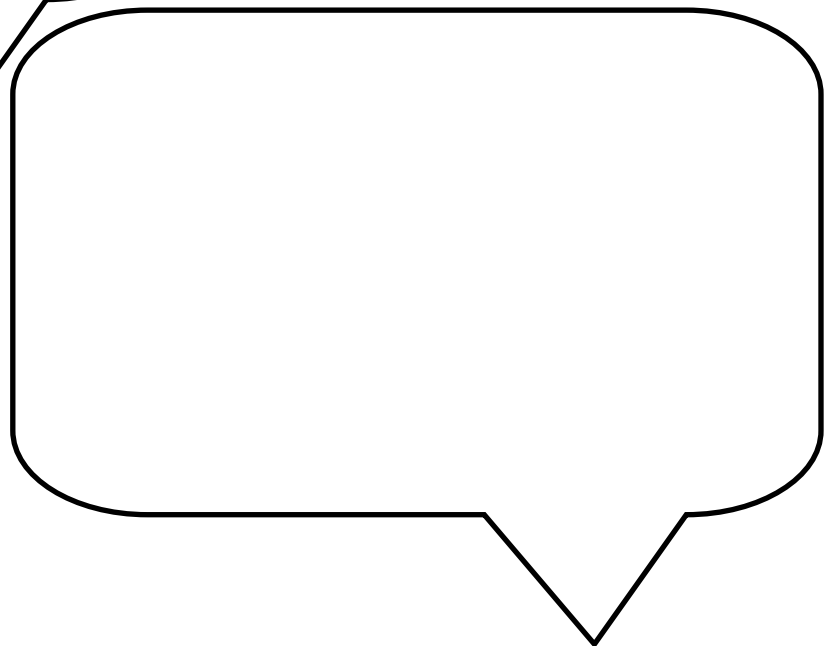
What does Adam Braun learn through these experiences? Create a chart showing what happened and what else could have happened.



What happened?	What else could have happened?

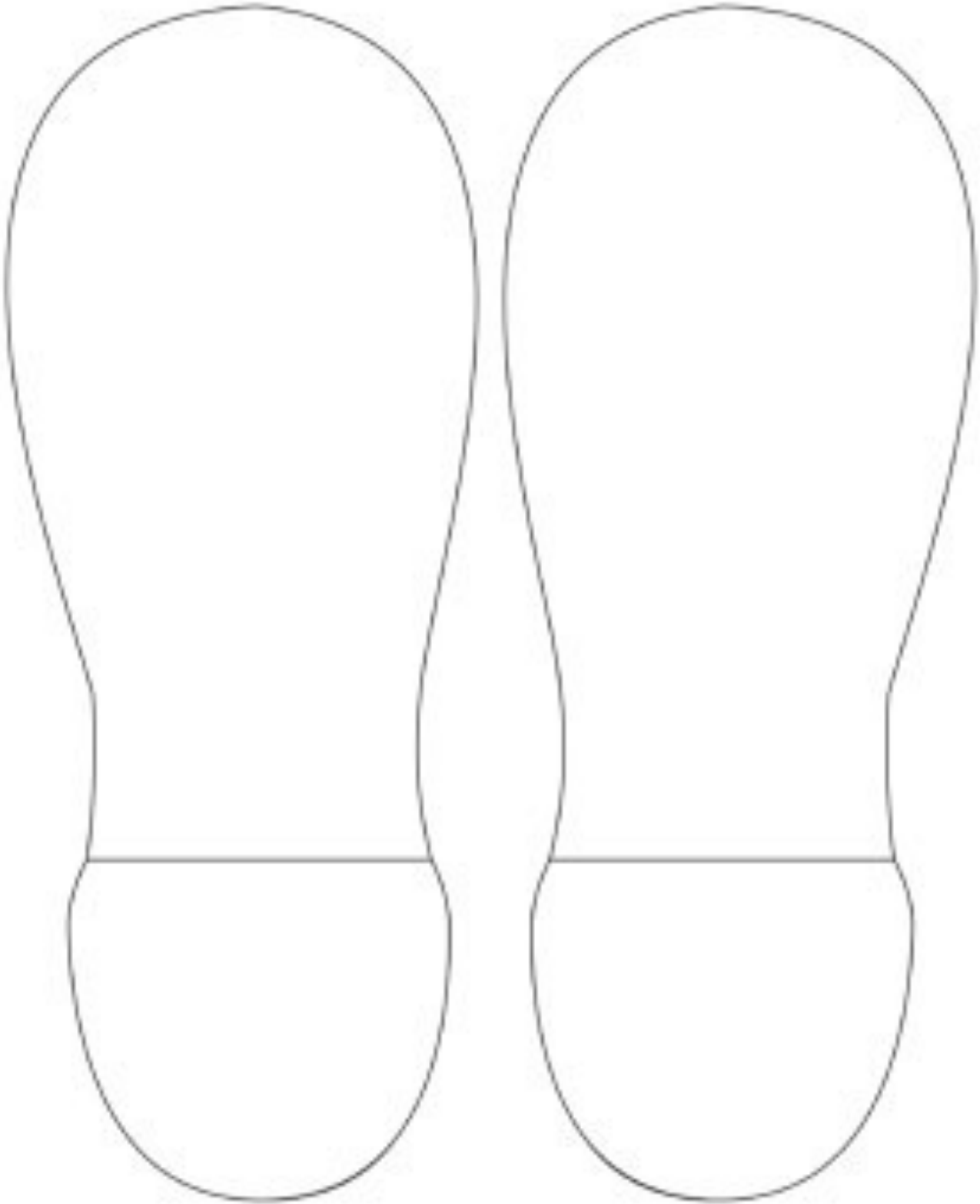
11. Speak the language of the person you want to become

Adam Braun has a number of conversations that inspire him. Explain three of those conversations and what results from each one.

A large, empty speech bubble with a black outline, intended for writing the first of three conversations.A large, empty speech bubble with a black outline, intended for writing the second of three conversations.A large, empty speech bubble with a black outline, intended for writing the third of three conversations.

12. Walk with a purpose

How do you see Adam Braun's determination in this chapter? Select textual evidence to support your answer.



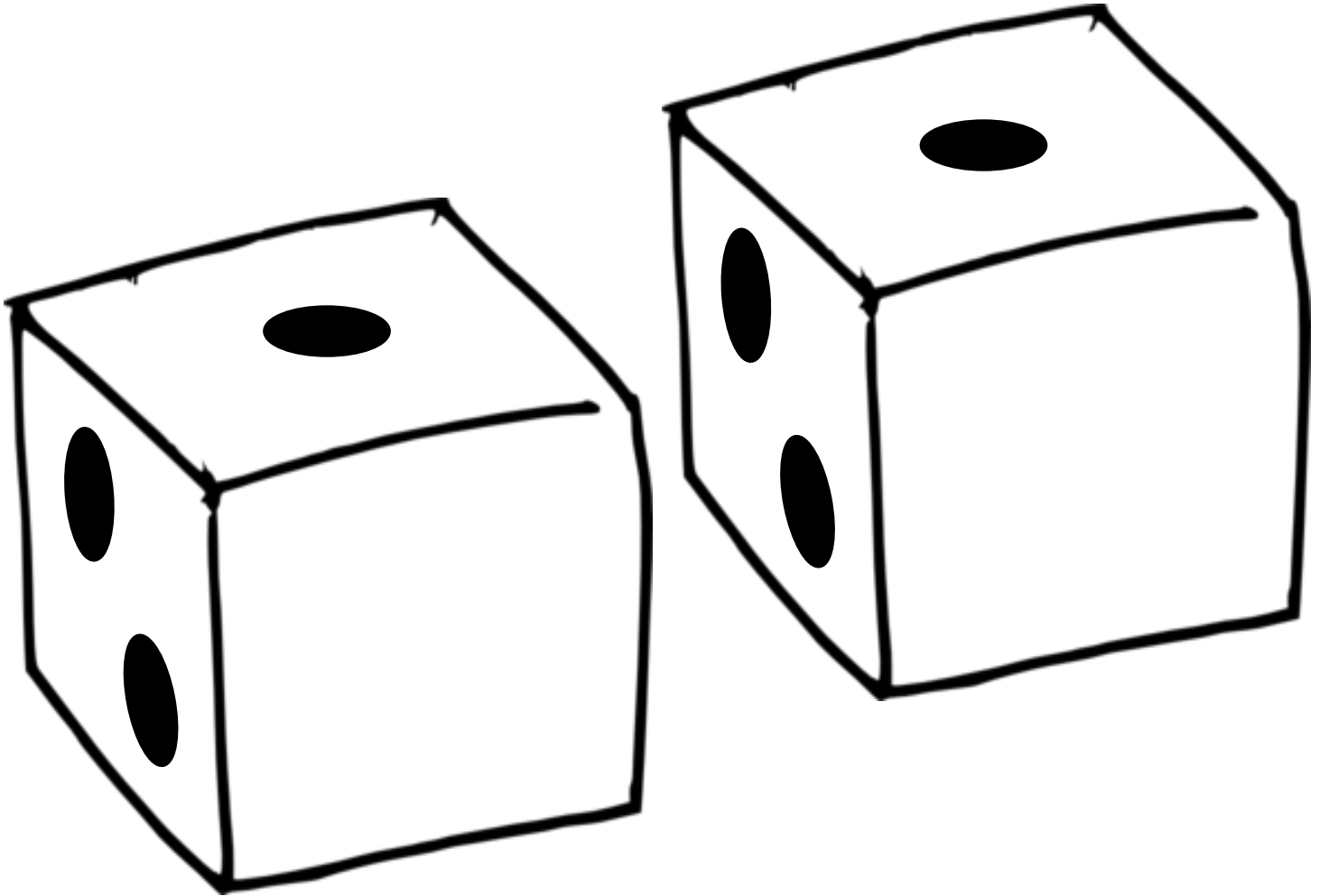
13. Happiness is found in celebrating others

Complete the graphic organizer below.

1 key word essential to the chapter	2 adjectives describing Ma
3 feelings Adam had	4 of Ma's emotions

14. Find the impossible ones

After George Stanton said to Adam Braun, “that’ll be impossible,” Adam gambled on two hypotheses. What were they? Write them on the blank dice sides.



What is important to consider when taking a gamble?

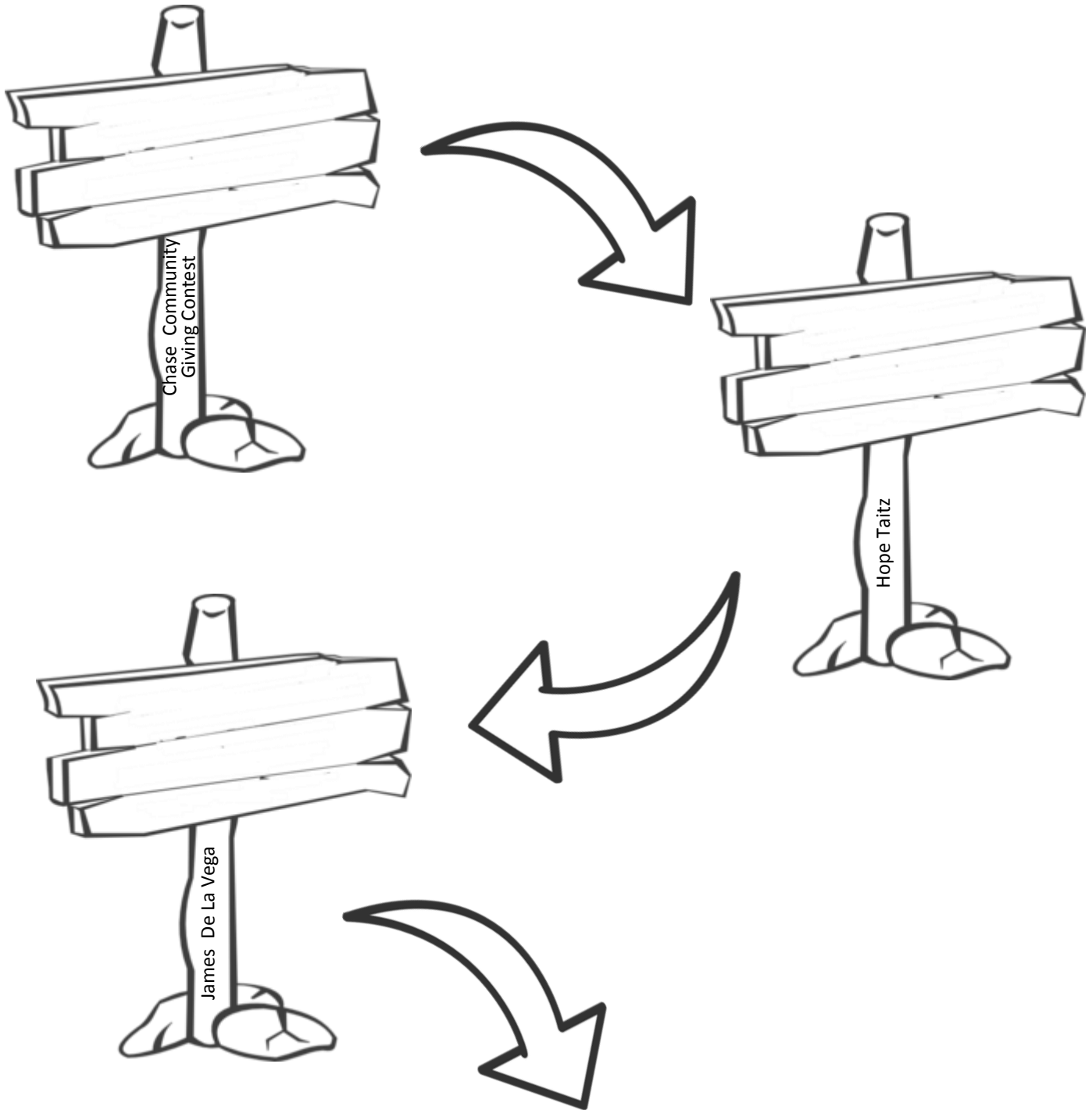
15. Focus on one person in every room

This chapter speaks about sharing the message of Pencils of Promise on the road. Describe what happened in each location and what resulted from the visit.

Location	What happened?	What happened as a result?
Oklahoma State University		
University of Texas		
Tulane		

16. Read the signs along the path

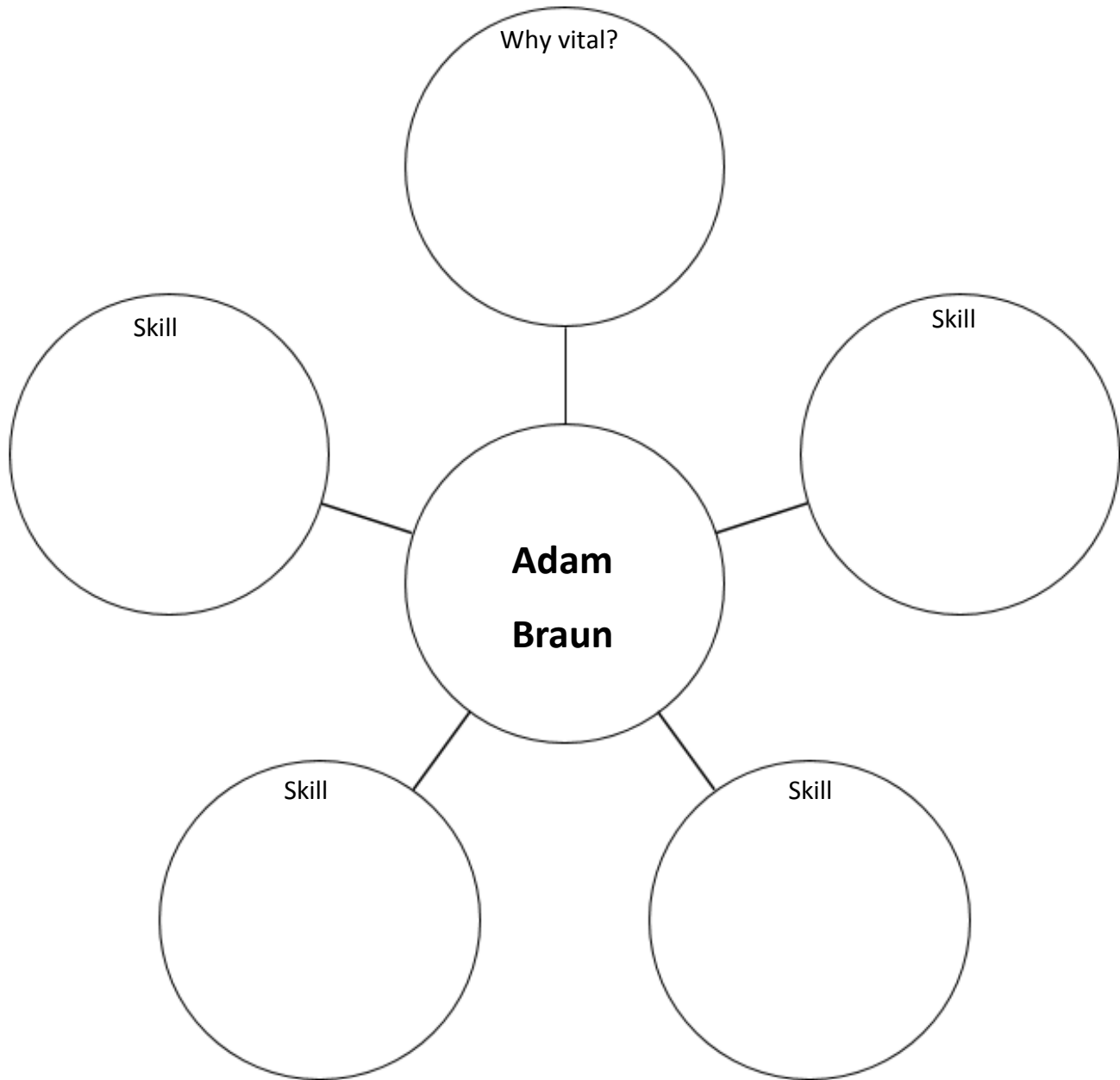
Adam Braun is facing tough choices balancing Pencils of Promise and his job at Bain. Explain how these three “signs” contributed to his decision to leave Bain.



Adam Braun leaving his job at Bain

17. Create separation to build connection

Name four specific skills Adam Braun uses to connect with others. Why is this so vital to his success?



What is one way you connect with others?

18. Never take no from someone who can't say yes

Connect this mantra to your everyday life.

[illegible]

19. Stay guided by your values, not your necessities

Adam Braun receives a job opportunity from John Nolan. What are the pros and cons of accepting this position?

Pros	Cons

20. You cannot fake authenticity

In this section, Adam Braun seeks to find additional team members. Write a list of qualities Adam Braun seeks and a list of qualities you want in teammates.

[illegible][illegible]

21. There is only one chance at a first impression

We learn from examples and non-examples. Above the line, describe someone making a strong first impression. Below the line, describe someone making a weak first impression.



Strong
Weak

22. Fess up to your failures

In this section, Adam Braun says, "Leadership isn't just telling people what to do." In your opinion, what else is leadership? Create a web of your ideas.



23. Learn to close the loop

Reflect on the importance of gratitude in your life. What are you grateful for?

A gratitude reflection worksheet. It features a large rounded rectangle divided into four quadrants by a horizontal and a vertical line. In the center of these lines is a smaller rounded rectangle containing the word "Gratitude". The quadrants are labeled as follows:

- Top-left: Personal Qualities
- Top-right: Possessions
- Bottom-left: Influential People
- Bottom-right: Intangibles

24. Change your words to change your worth

Adam Braun shifts from calling Pencils of Promise a non-profit to a for-purpose organization. Words can be associated with a positive or negative connotation. Which words in each pair is more positive? Explain why.

1. nosy or curious

Why? _____

2. self-confident or arrogant

Why? _____

3. intense or focused

Why? _____

4. bossy or leading

Why? _____

5. perfectionist or detail-oriented

Why? _____

6. energetic or hyperactive

Why? _____

7. impulsive or spontaneous

Why? _____

8. passionate or obsessive

Why? _____

9. compassionate or sensitive

Why? _____

10. knowledgeable or know-it-all

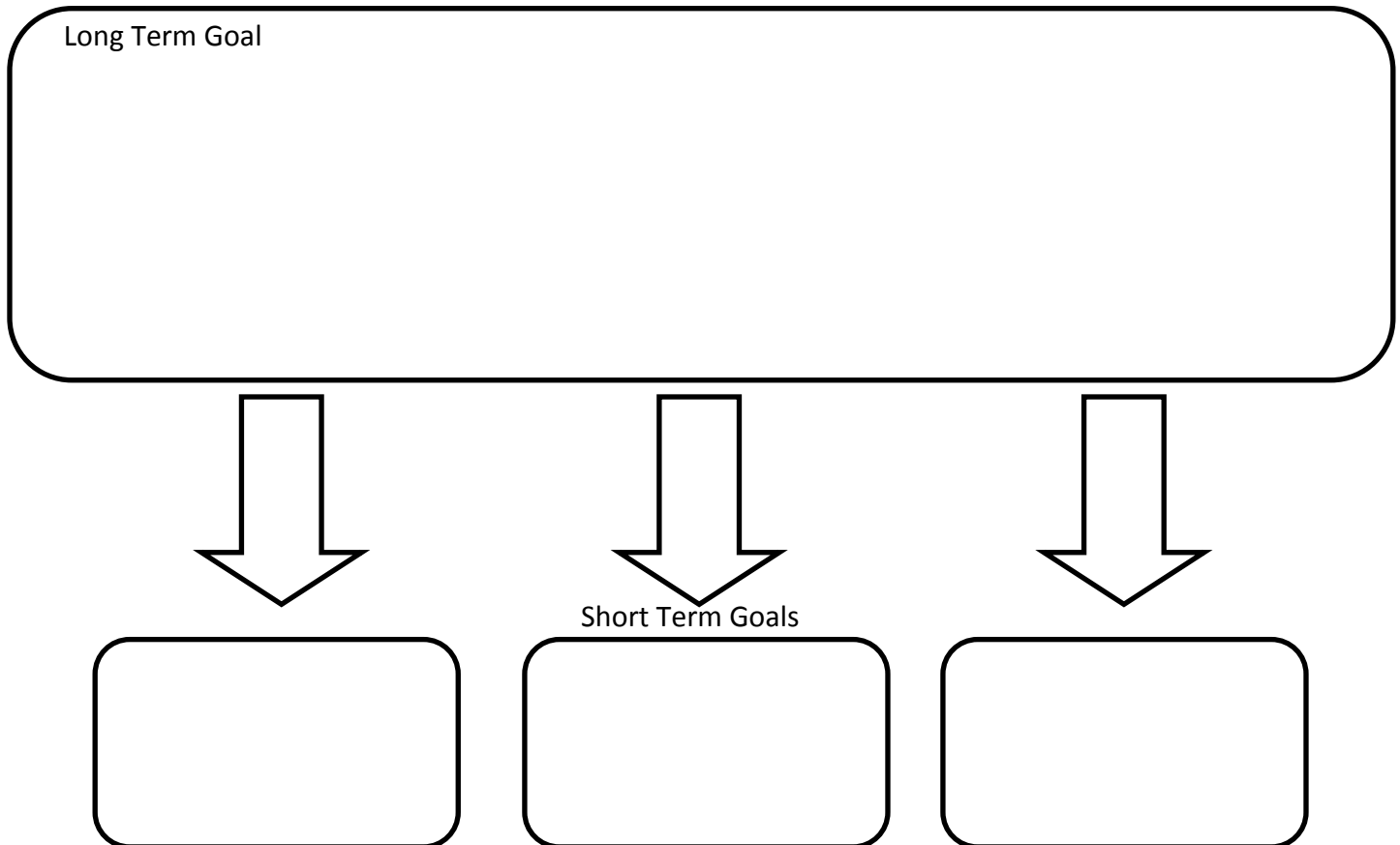
Why? _____

Name one other word pair that you view as positive and negative. _____

Explain why. _____

25. A goal realized is a goal defined

Think about goals you have for yourself. Complete the following graphic organizer about one of your long-term goals.



Choose one of your short-term goals and make a to-do list. Draw an arrow from the one you select.

26. Surround yourself by those who make you better

Think about who your friends are that surround you. Why are you friends? What personal qualities do they have that make you better?



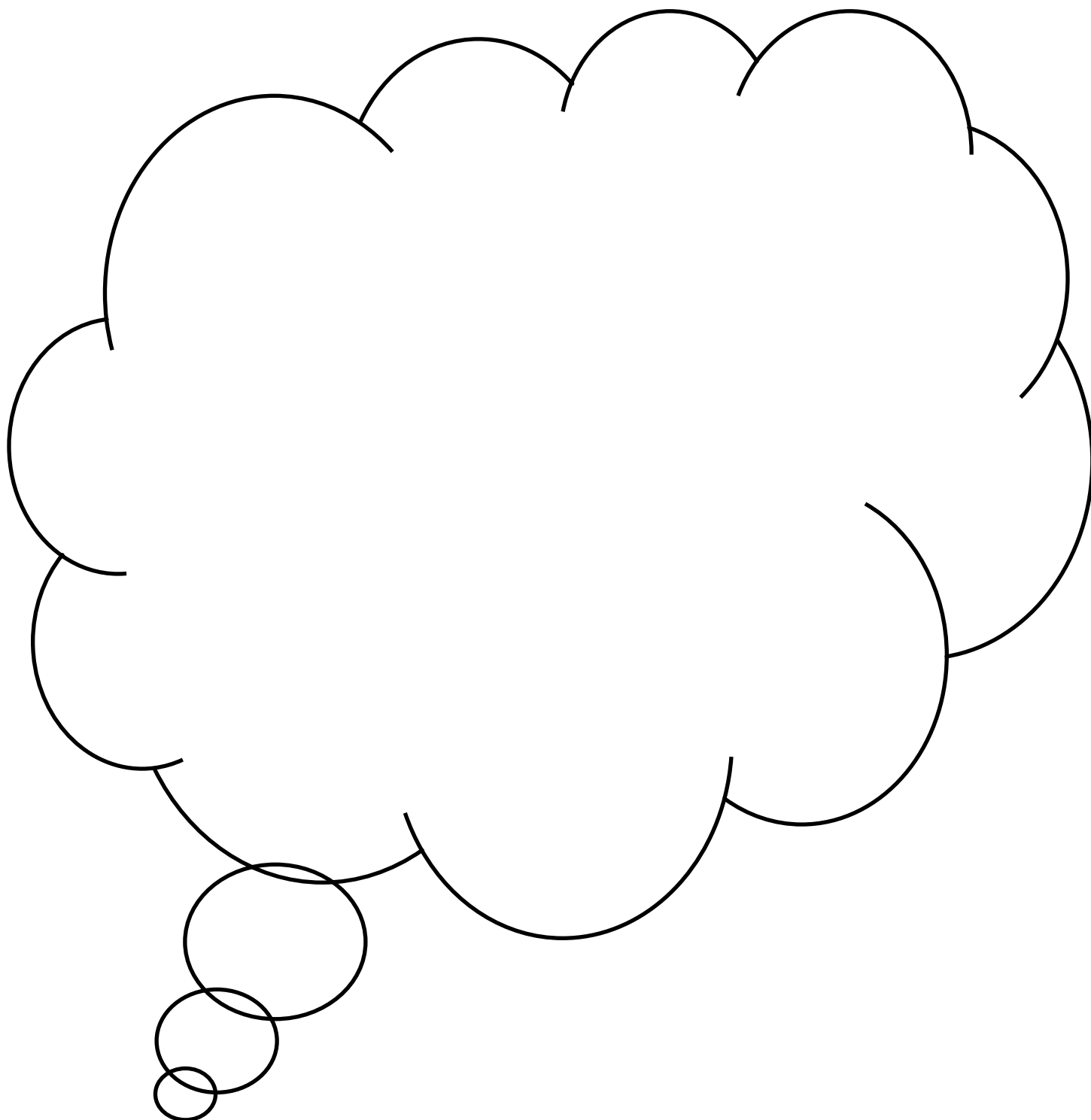
27. Vulnerability is vital

“...I learned that the hardest climbs are the ones that yield the most reward.” What are some of the things that are hard for you to do? Why? How could you improve those areas?

Things that are hard for me to do	Why?	How to improve

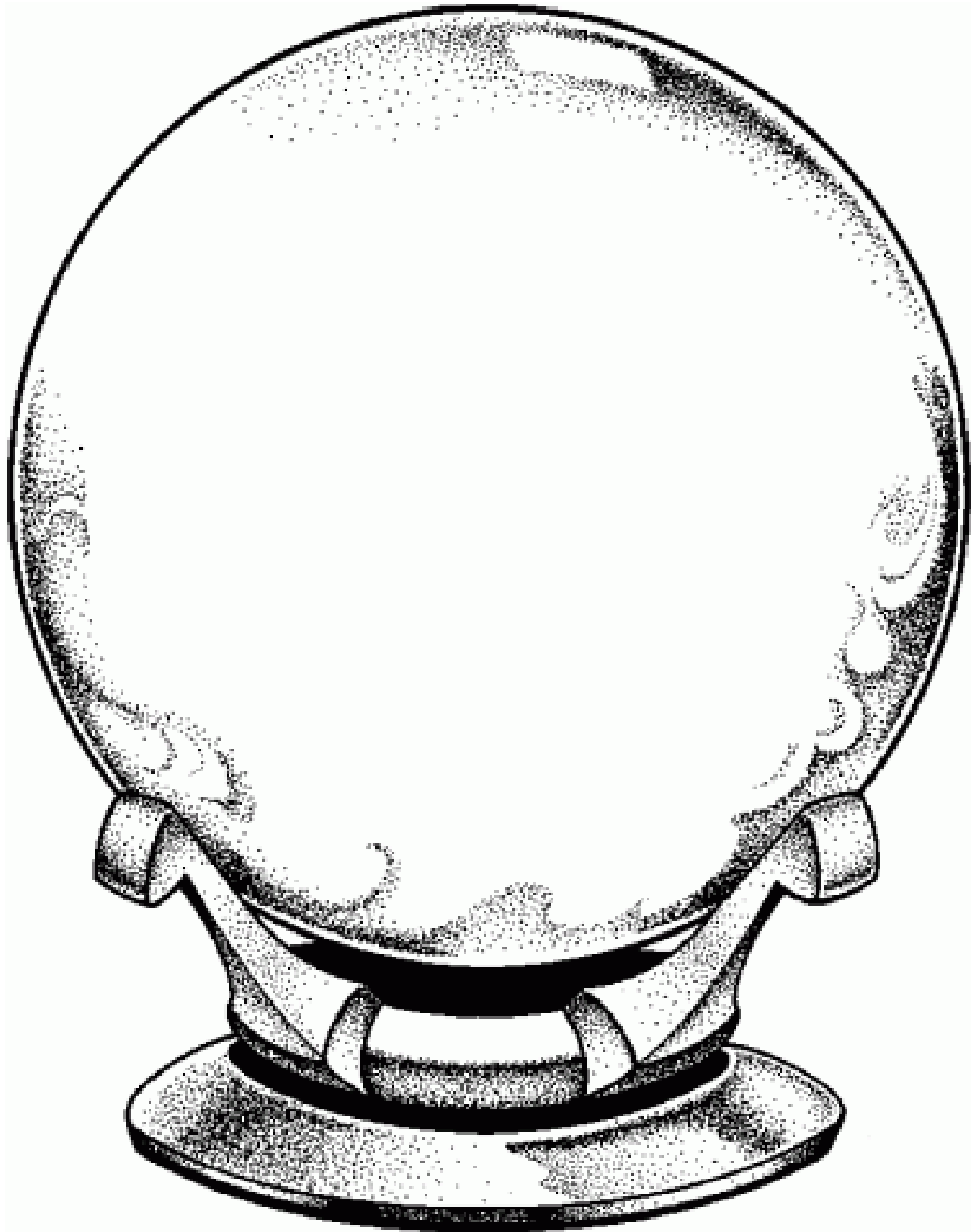
28. Listen to your echoes

Stories of the Impossible Ones shared unique ways people used their talents and interests to support Pencils of Promise. Use your imagination to picture an unusual way you could promote and/or fundraise for a cause you are passionate about. Since we are imagining, time and money are no obstacle. Dream big!



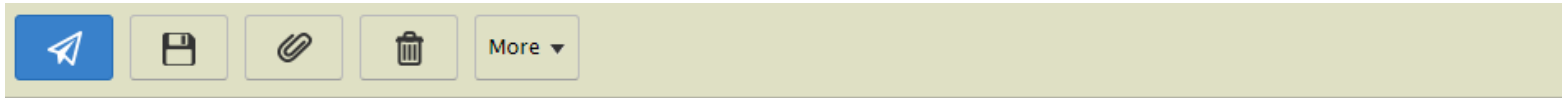
29. If your dreams don't scare you, they're not big enough

What do you envision for your future?



30. Make your life a story worth telling

Compose a mock email to Adam Braun. What impresses you about him as a leader? Cite specific examples from *The Promise of a Pencil*. What questions would you like to ask him about his journey?




To: adam@ipromise.org

Cc:

Bcc:

Add a Subject

Aa ▼ AA ▼ B I U S         A ▼  ▼ Tt 

Leadership Lessons

Extension Opportunities

Service Learning Projects

As a class, find ways to serve others, near or far. Over the years, my students have sent care packages to our graduates serving the military, organized a soap drive for Clean the World, raised money for supplies for Ginnie's House (a local children's advocacy center), and sewed critter hammocks and facilitated a supply drive for Wild Baby Rescue Center (a nearby wildlife rehabilitation center). Let students have a voice in the project development and watch their confidence and leadership skills soar. A great resource for learning more about service learning is *The Complete Guide to Service Learning* by Cathryn Berger Kaye (Free Spirit Publishing).

PoP Clubs

Extend the learning to an extracurricular club that supports the mission of Pencils of Promise through campaigns and events. For more information, explore <https://pencilsofpromise.org/take-action/clubs/>.

Additional Resources For Inspiration

Videos:

Book trailer from Simon and Schuster: <http://videos.simonandschuster.com/Adam-Braun-on-THE-PROMISE-OF-A-PENCIL/3018929741001> (3:04)

Google Zeitgeist talk: <https://pencilsofpromise.org/about/founders-story/> (13:00)

TEDx Talk “The Five Phrases that Can Change Your Life” from Columbia College: <http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/The-Five-Phrases-That-Can-Chang> (19:26)

Appearance on CBS This Morning, March 2014: <http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/pencils-of-promise-philanthropist-adam-braun-of-finding-purpose-creating-change/> (4:32)

“Superhero Secrets: Adam Braun”: <http://superheroyou.com/secrets-by-adam/> (5:09)

Websites:

Adam Braun website: adambraun.com

Pencils of Promise <https://pencilsofpromise.org/>



About the Author

Ellen Kolonoski has been an educator for 22 years at Kittatinny Regional High School in New Jersey. She began her career as a social studies teacher and is now Gifted Education Services Coordinator and teacher. She earned her Bachelor's degree from Alfred University, a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Scranton and completed a graduate certificate in Gifted Education at Rutgers University. She was the Kittatinny Regional High School Teacher of the Year in 2006-2007, went on to be named as Sussex County Teacher of the Year and was a finalist for New Jersey State Teacher of the Year.

