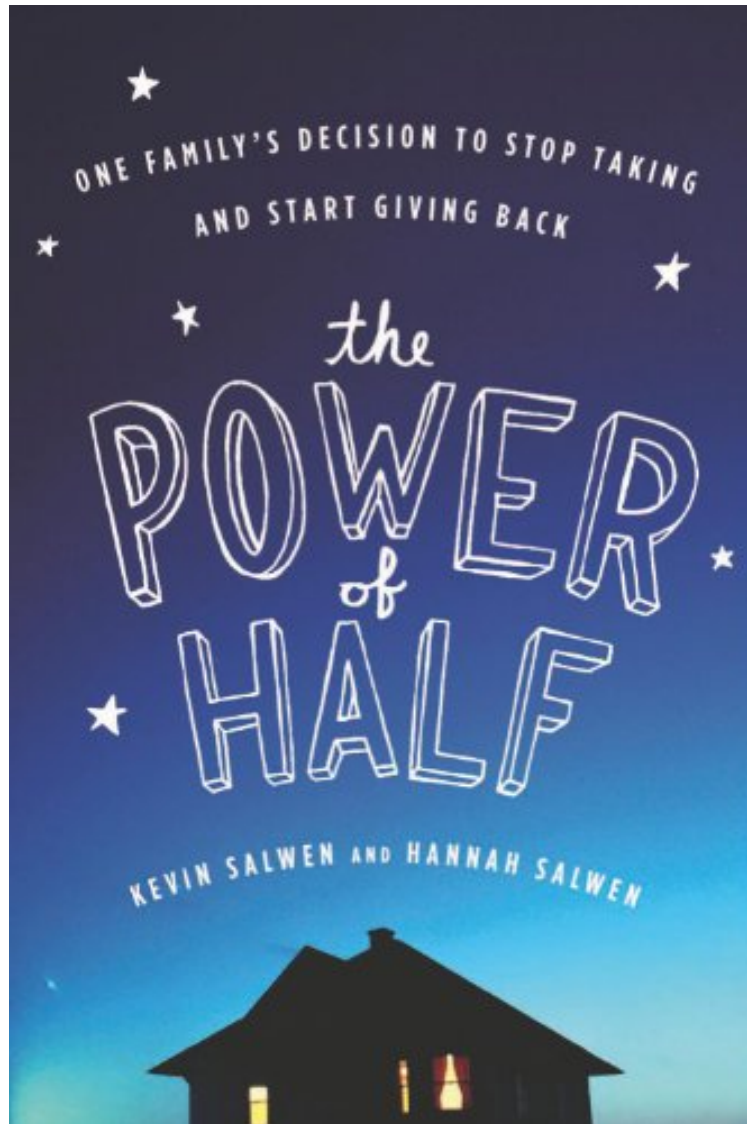


(Mobile book) The Power of Half: One Family's Decision to Stop Taking and Start Giving Back EBK

## The Power of Half: One Family's Decision to Stop Taking and Start Giving Back EBK

*Kevin Salwen, Hannah Salwen*  
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**Kevin Salwen, Hannah Salwen : The Power of Half: One Family's Decision to Stop Taking and Start Giving Back EBK** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Power of Half: One Family's Decision to Stop Taking and Start Giving Back EBK:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Lacked HeartBy Laura JuneAt the urging of their then 15 year old daughter Hannah, the Salwen family sold their home, moved into a smaller one, and took half of the proceeds from the home sale (\$800,000) and donated it to a charity. They spent many months debating which charity to choose and every

step they took they decided as a family. The whole process brought them closer together, a by product they had not really expected. Kevin Salwen was a journalist and the book read as such. It was pretty matter of fact and dry, really lacking the heart that I would have expected from such an unusual story of giving. It was hard to get through the book which really bummed me out. The Extreme Makeover feel goods never happened. The fruits of their donation were not realized by the time the book was published so the book felt unfinished as well. Great idea, poor writing execution.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A book to read with your family. It could give you empowered dreams. By Yoyo Mitch What happens to a family when one member has a "Eureka Moment"; so bold and so loud that it causes the family to live up to its own definition? For the Salwens of Atlanta, GA, when the daughter connected the dots between "what I have" and "what is needed," it caused them to sell their historic, 6500 square-foot, multi-million dollar home and strive to give half of the proceeds to a project that could cause a long-lasting change in a small part of the world. Kevin and Joan Salwen were successful professionals (he a journalist, she a consultant with Accenture at the onset of this adventure) raising their children, Hannah and Joseph, to be grateful for their affluence and to "give back" to their community by volunteering. As Kevin and Hannah sat at a congested intersection, Hannah noticed an individual asking for food on one side of their car and a Mercedes Coupe on the other. Hannah had a moment of connection, stating, "if they had a less nice car, he could eat." Before she got home, "they" became "we" and the question was, "how can we be a family who DOES something (about the world's problems) instead of a family who only talks about them?" The family eventually decided they would sell their landmark home, move into a smaller (by 3000 sq./ft.) house and using half of the proceeds from this sale in some endeavor that would effect a meaningful, positive change on an issue of the world. In researching the "where and how" of such a project, the Salwens were to learn much about actually helping others. They learned that over 2 Trillion dollars has been spent on "helping" projects in Africa in the last fifty year with little or no change to show for it. "Giving help" and most mission trips do far more harm than help. Lasting aid requires those who are being "helped" to have buy-in to the change instead of giving them handouts (which cause dependency and disenfranchises instead of empowers). Projects that have lasting affect are those which are long-term with meaningful commitment from the community to which they are enacted. After completing their research, the family selected to work in Ghana with The Hunger Project, a non-profit whose mission is to end world hunger by empowering "locals" to find solutions to their own issues and helping them to do so. The project would be to fund, for a five-year cycle, two (after receiving a matching grant, the two became four) "epicenters" in a cluster of villages that houses the community's programs for health, education, food security and economic development. By the book's end, the project was just beginning so the outcome is still in development. There were several points of deep thought for me in reading this short, well-written "report." There is mention of religion in the book, but only anecdotally, the actions taken by the Salwens were rooted in a deep ethic of community, i.e. they wanted to help because there was a need. Their tremendous gift, by the author's admission, did not change their life-style, they are still affluent. They challenged, by the discoveries they made in their research, their readers to confront how they can address the needs they (the readers) have found in their world. This is a book worth reading — engaging writing, the end uncertain but a hint of how a family can make a difference.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Thought-Provoking Reading By Reggae Girl This is a truly powerful book. I have visited Third World countries, and I know the guilt that comes with the problem of having too much when so many in the world don't have enough. This family had the guts to break the American status quo that deifies material wealth and the accumulation of stuff. We follow the family from the homeless man who was the catalyst for their radical change to the implementation of a new lifestyle.

It all started when fourteen-year-old Hannah Salwen had a eureka moment. Seeing a homeless man in her neighborhood at the same instant she spotted a man driving a glistening Mercedes, she said, "Dad, if that man had a less nice car, that man there could have a meal." Until that day, the Salwens had been caught up like so many of us in the classic American dream — providing a good life for their children, accumulating more and more stuff, doing their part to help others but not really feeling it. So when Hannah was stopped in her tracks by this glaring disparity, her parents knew they had to act on her urge to do something. As a family, they made the extraordinary decision to sell their Atlanta mansion, buy a house half its size, and give half of the sale price to a worthy charity. At first it seemed outlandish: What, are we crazy? Then it became a challenge: We are totally doing this. Their plan eventually took them across the globe and well out of their comfort zone. In the end they learned that they had the power to change a little corner of the world. And they found themselves changing too. As Kevin Salwen says, "No one else is nuts enough to sell their house," but what his family discovered along the way will inspire countless others, no matter what their means or resources are. Warm, funny, and deeply moving, *The Power of Half* is the story of how one family grew closer as they discovered that half could be so much more.

.com Product Description It all started when 14-year old Hannah Salwen, idealistic but troubled by a growing sense of

injustice in the world, had a eureka moment when a homeless man in her neighborhood was juxtaposed against a glistening Mercedes coupe. "You know, Dad," she said, pointing, "If that man had a less nice car, that man there could have a meal." This glaring disparity led the Salwen family of four, caught up like so many other Americans in this age of consumption and waste, to follow Hannah's urge to do something, to finally just do something. And so they embarked on an incredible journey together from which there would be no turning back. They decided to sell their Atlanta mansion, downsize to a house half its size, and give half of their profits to a worthy charity. At first it was an outlandish scheme. "What, are you crazy? No way!" Then it was a challenge. "We are TOTALLY doing this." Each week they met over dinner to discuss their plan. It would transport them across the globe and well out of their comfort zone. Along the way they would inspire so many others wrestling with the same questions: Do I give enough? How much is enough? How can I make an impact in the world? In the end the Salwens' journey would bring them closer as a family, as they discovered, together, that half could be so much more. Warm, funny, deeply moving and wholly uplifting, *The Power of Half* is the story of how one family slammed the door on the status quo and threw away the key.

Exclusive: A Letter from Author Kevin Salwen Dear Readers, What does "living well" mean? By traditional standards, our family was there--nice cars, expensive vacations, dream house, fancy stuff in it. It took a fourteen-year-old to make us take a second look. That teenager, as you probably know from glancing at the book description above, is Hannah (now seventeen). As she and I waited at a stoplight just a few blocks from our home, Hannah's head swiveled between a homeless man and a pricey new car. As she wrote in her journal later: "Driving past the homeless man that one time changed my life. I felt sad, like I wanted to help him, but angry, really angry. At myself mainly. Thinking there was so much I could do for this man and for a lot of the poor people in this world considering I had so much." Now, Hannah is not one to keep emotions to herself. She brought that anger back to our family's dinner table, challenging us to "be a family that makes a difference in the world, even if it's a small difference." My wife, Joan, and I defended ourselves: We volunteer for Habitat and work at the food bank. Hannah stared, unimpressed. Joan and I described the checks we wrote to charities each December. Hannah rolled her eyes. Finally, Joan decided to challenge back: "What do you want to do, sell our house? Move into one half the size? Give up your room?" That opening series of questions launched our family on an audacious project that we chronicle in *The Power of Half*. How we decided to sell our house. How we chose to invest the proceeds. Our travels to the places where we decided to work. Along the way, we tried to figure out how much was the right amount to give to charity, both in time and money (the average American gives 2.1 percent of income). We learned about extreme giving (50 percent, anyone?) by average people and about new programs popping up to teach kids about sharing and spending. But if that were the whole story, I doubt we would have written this book. Joan and I began to realize that our "Half" project was transforming our family--heightening our trust in one another, empowering our kids, building a deeper connection. Because we, as the parents, shared influence and listened in a new way to our kids, our project to make the world a little better was making the chemistry between us a lot better. In other words, we had traded some stuff for togetherness--and I bet a lot of folks would take that deal. So Hannah and I are hoping that our book can inspire you to create your own "Half" project. We don't expect you to sell your house, of course (that's nuts!), just to look at your life to determine what you have more than enough of. It could be time; it could be belongings. Depending on what issue you care about, you can brainstorm creatively what you can live with half of. (One example: If fighting drug addiction is your passion, you could give up half of the cups of caffeine-laced coffee and cola you drink.) By following the road map in the book, you can build your own project, and in turn create deeper bonds among your family, community, any group you choose. Oh, and of course make the world a little better at the same time. That's our definition of living well now.

Kevin Salwen (Photo copy; Allison Shirrefs) A QA with Kevin and Hannah Salwen, Authors of *The Power of Half* Q: What made you decide to write a book about your family's experiences? And what is meant by "the power of half"? Hannah Salwen: After we decided to sell our home and give half the profits to a charity, we began getting questions from friends and others about how they could do something like our family did. They didn't want to sell their houses (no one is that crazy!), but they saw how our family was taking action and had become connected. So we realized that we could help people understand that this is an amazing way to improve relationships within families while making the world a little bit better. Kevin Salwen: As to "why half"--well, the concept of "half" provides a measurable way to keep track. When we think about charity, so many of us say, "I ought to do more." But "more" is so mushy that we don't end up doing anything significant. The size of the project doesn't matter; it can be as simple as watching half the number of hours of TV each week and using the freed-up time to make a difference in others' lives (and of course your own). Q: In these trying economic times, how can we expect people to even think about giving more? KS: These are difficult times indeed. But *The Power of Half* is a book of hope and optimism. The American Dream has always been about parents wanting their children to have a better life than they did, but it usually has been measured by social standing and assets. Joan and I wanted a better life for our children too, but our American Dream focused more on their inner selves than on their assets. *The Power of Half* tells the story of a family that decided it can make a difference in making the world better--even, to use Hannah's words, if it's a small difference. We love the quote by Anita Roddick, founder of the Body Shop: "If you think you're too small to make a difference, you've never been in bed with a mosquito." The "secret sauce" for our project is that we did it together and over a sustained period of time, unlike many volunteer or

giving actions, in which individuals head in different directions or work together sporadically. That unity brought our family a heightened awareness of one another's perspectives and energized us not only to want to do more work in the world but also to understand one another better. At this time when people need to cut back on their spending, the time invested in family becomes even more critical. The Power of Half shows how working together builds a stronger family. True happiness comes from community, and family is the most core community we have. HS: One other thing. Doing a power-of-half project doesn't require a ton of money. We decided to sell our house because it was a sacrifice we felt we could live with. But the power of half works just as well with lower-cost or no-cost "halves." We always explain to people that they can choose the clothes in their closet, the time spent playing video games, or the price of meals eaten out. Readers can choose their own "half"--it's all about the process. Q: Why did you choose to support Africa instead of a project closer to home? HS: We spent a year as a family deciding exactly how and where to use our money. It was a process, by the way, in which we kids had exactly the same say as the adults--after all, we were giving up our house too. It was interesting because my brother, Joseph, wasn't exactly excited about this idea from the beginning. He became our family skeptic, and we knew that once we proved something to Joe, we really had it right. KS: While we had been--and remain--quite active in Atlanta (we volunteer often at the food bank and Central Night Shelter, and I have been on the Atlanta Habitat board for six years), after a series of family votes we decided to do this project in Africa because bull; we view the world as a single community, a place where the luck of where you're born shouldn't be the biggest determining factor in whether you receive help bull; there is no safety net in rural Africa--no Head Start, no food stamps--to fill critical gaps bull; we wanted our project to completely solve a problem with a group of people, and since our money goes further in Africa, we learned that we could help entire villages build their futures bull; we wanted something exotic, something that would take us out of our comfort zone. It was so helpful for our kids (and for us as parents too) to be "the other" for a little while, to recognize what it feels like to be someone born without the privileges we enjoy. Q: Any other reasons The Power of Half is particularly relevant now? KS: These times are extraordinary for so many reasons, particularly the competing moods of fear, change, hope, stress. Parents are feeling those emotions even more strongly (and it's even more acute with divorced or single parents). With our senses heightened, so many of us are rethinking our lives. The Power of Half offers readers inspiration and new tools to bring their lives a healthier focus, all wrapped up in an entertaining family tale. (Photo copy; Allison Shirrefs) Photographs from the Authors of The Power of Half (Click on images to enlarge) The Salwen family in front of their old house Moving day at the Salwen house Hannah Salwen cuts the ribbon for the Hunger Project Where "the power of half" brought the Salwen family From Publishers Weekly In this well-meaning but self-congratulatory memoir, the Salwen family decides to sell their gorgeous Atlanta mansion, move to a home half the size, and commit half the proceeds to the needy. Putting their plan into action, a raft of family decisions and meetings are led by mom Joan, a former corporate consulting executive and teacher, with the help of an actual whiteboard. Entrepreneur and activist Kevin, a former Wall Street Journal editor, writes with daughter Hannah, who, as instigator of the family project, provides commentary and practical suggestions. The chronicle is intriguing and the cohesiveness of the four family members is remarkable: "Friends and others... always focused on... the big house, the big donation, or the trip to Africa" with their eventual partner, The Hunger Project, rather than "the transformational energy" of "a family eager to stand for something collectively." The authors tend to gush over their efforts while discounting the privileged position that allows them to make them ("we think everyone can give one of the three T's: time, talent or treasure"); their unflagging optimism, buttressed by clear self-regard, can also be tiring. Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "Hannah, you rock!" --Ann Curry, The Today Show