

Books

Choosing Survival

PRETTY IS WHAT CHANGES

by Jessica Queller | ★★★★★

REVIEWED BY BETH PERRY

MEMOIR

TV writer Jessica Queller was 34 and single when she discovered that, as she now puts it, “my own body could kill me.” Less than a year after her mother, a breast cancer survivor, died of ovarian cancer, Queller tested positive for the BRCA1 gene mutation, an indication that she was at high risk of contracting breast or ovarian cancer. “This truth,” she writes, “would change the course of my life.” That altered course is chronicled in *Pretty*, an affecting memoir about a decision more women will face in this era of genetic prophecy: whether to undergo a preventive double mastectomy. Queller grapples with body-image fears and her longing to be a mother, admires a mastectomy patient’s new breasts and finally opts for surgery, choosing implants that reduce her D-cup to a B. She balances bleak moments with wit and maintains a fierce independence: Knowing she’ll have her ovaries removed at 40, the author—now 38 and a *Gossip Girl* writer—decides she will try to have a baby on her own. Her brave, inspiring journey lends credence to her message: “Scientific advances give us new opportunities to *live*,” she writes. “Seize them.”

“I stumbled around in a fog, brooding over my existential dilemma: ‘To cut my breasts off, or not... that is the question’”

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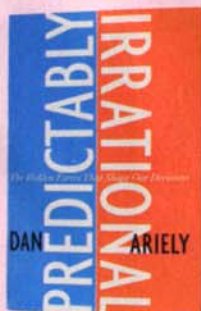
JESSICA QUELLER

*Impossible Choices,
the Breast Cancer
Gene, and How
I Defied My Destiny*

CRITIC'S
CHOICE

WE'RE NOT AS SMART AS WE THINK

Three new books explore why human behavior so often defies logic—and offer tips on how to wise up



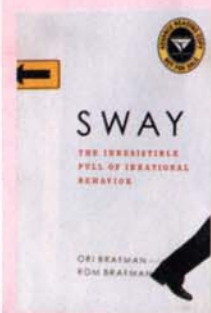
PREDICTABLY IRRATIONAL

by Dan Ariely
You'll eat more at a buffet even if you're full—and other stupid human tricks. Unlearn them here.



THE AGE OF AMERICAN UNREASON

by Susan Jacoby
Steeped in “infotainment” culture, Jacoby says, we're too uninformed to act rationally.



SWAY

by Ori Brafman and Rom Brafman
That's not you who's deciding, it's your unconscious—and it doesn't have a clue. (June pub.)