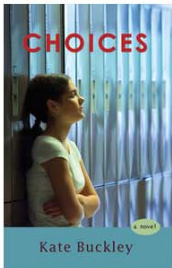


[Teen Health 411](#)**Nancy L. Brown, PhD**
Adolescent Health

Book Review: Choices: A Novel

Nancy L. Brown, PhD

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[Choices: A Novel](#) is a must read for teachers, parents and teenagers, everywhere. A combination of coming-of-age textbook, conversation starter, bite-your-nails, and gotta finish book, it took me by surprise. Laughter, tears, and some great conversations have filled our home this week as we read Choices.

In a nutshell, the main character, 15 year-old Kara, lives in a very sheltered world, attends a girls school, is an outstanding student. Kara seems to know very little about her own feelings and body, and less about those of others, until the star jock from a local school catches her eye and introduces her to the world of parties, drinking, drugs, and [sex](#). Fearing that she is losing his attention, Kara binge drinks, has non-consensual unprotected sex, and gets pregnant. Her life is immediately turned upside down and Kara feels like she is all alone.

The boy fails in every imaginable way to support Kara and finally she reaches out to her best friend and then her very religious parents to find that unconditional love really is more important than religious dogma. Kara learns about responsibility, personal choices, consequences, and what it means to be an adult before her time, in our very confusing world.

The book includes a reader's guide at the end as well as resources for teens, teachers, and parents. I have been amazed at the conversations my family has had this week - we have talked about sexuality education, [abstinence](#), what [rape](#) is, whether drinking makes what happens while you are drunk your own fault, religion, [plan B](#) (the morning after pill) birth control, medical versus surgical [abortion](#), adoption, crisis pregnancy clinics, friendship, legal responsibility and how far a parent could go to help a teen in trouble, and what my own teens would do if they found themselves in a risky situation.

I have to say that I think this novel and Kate Buckley completely rock! Kate is an author, screenwriter and health teacher and youth advocate who is willing to help teens grapple with the hard tasks associated with growing up and making tough choices in our culture. Her courage in writing this book gives me great hope for the future health of our teens. I encourage wellness and health classes to add this book to their curriculum and can't wait for the movie!