

THE SECRET LIFE
OF THE
AMERICAN TEENAGER

DISCUSSION GUIDE



EPISODE Eight

FOR TEENS

Stuff to talk about:

- When Ricky expresses interest in perhaps trying to be a decent father, Adrian accuses him of just pretending that's the case because he thinks it's what's expected of him. Do you think Ricky is doing the responsible thing? Or does he have other motives? How do you define "responsible behavior" when it comes to teen pregnancy? Is responsibility different for guys and girls? Why? Who helps you figure out what "responsible" means?

FACT: *Three in ten girls gets pregnant at least once by age 20. That's 750,000 girls just last year, and they didn't do it alone.*

- Grace thinks it would be embarrassing for Amy to be pregnant at school. What do you think about pregnant or parenting teens staying in school? Have you ever had a pregnant girl at your school? Was it embarrassing for her? Do you know anyone at your school who has fathered a child? Is it embarrassing for him? Do you think schools should make special arrangements, like tutors or day care centers, for parenting teens and their children?

FACT: *Less than half of teen moms ever graduate from high school, and fewer than 2% earn a college degree by age 30. Parenthood is the leading reason teen girls drop out of school.*

FACT: *Did you know that 75% of teens do not think it's embarrassing to admit to being a virgin?*

- Ricky says the embarrassment of being at school while Amy's pregnant is just part of paying the price for something they shouldn't have done in the first place. Is this the first time Ricky has admitted he regrets having sex with Amy? Do you think he's sincere? Or do you think he assumes only Amy has regrets? Grace says she hopes it's not the baby who will end up paying the price. What do you think she means by that?

FACT: *60% of teens who have had sex by age 18 say they wish they'd waited longer.*

FACT: *Children of teen moms are more likely to be born prematurely and twice as likely to suffer abuse and neglect than children born to older mothers.*



Ricky (Daren Kagasoff) and Adrian (Francia Raisa) talk about Ricky becoming a father.



- Madison thinks Ricky was trying to seduce her when he asked for Amy's cell phone number. Lauren doesn't necessarily believe her but gets jealous anyway, and the two of them start to compete for Ricky's attention. Eventually they realize how silly they're acting and vow never to let another guy come between them. Do you think it's common for good friends like Madison and Lauren to get into fights about boys? Why do you think girls sometimes value a boy's attention more than their own friendships? If Lauren and Madison were your friends, what would you say to them?

FACT: *Teens (59%) and adults (74%) believe that teen girls often receive the message that "attracting boys and looking sexy is one of the most important things they can do."*

- Ben tells Henry that he and Amy are going to wait until they get married to have sex because he loves her "that much." Henry says he loves Alice so much he would have sex with her this minute if she'd let him. Do you know anyone who is waiting until marriage to have sex? Why is he or she waiting? What do friends and peers think about that decision? Do any of the adults in your life tell you that you should wait until you're married to have sex? If so, what do you think about that? Even though Amy has had sex before, why do you think she and Ben haven't done it?

FACT: *Nearly all teens (94%) and adults (91%) believe that teens should be given a strong message from society that they should not have sex until they are at least out of high school.*

FOR PARENT'S

Watching a show like "The Secret Life of the American Teenager" with your teen is a good way to start a conversation about sex, love, and relationships and what your expectations are. Even though teens say that parents most influence their decisions about sex, parents of teens underestimate their own influence in this area. Here are some ideas for talking to your kids after watching the show.

- Amy's mom lies to her own mother about the state of her marriage by saying her husband is out of town, when actually they're living apart. She does so in front of her own children, who are part of her plan to fool Mimsy, and she glares at Ashley for hinting at the real reason her dad is gone. This is just one example of the ways parents can send mixed messages about relationships. Do you ever talk to your teens about what to expect from relationships and marriage? Do your kids know how you feel about the ins and outs of love and marriage? Do you talk with your teens about what you think about the sequencing of life events (education, marriage, babies)? Ask your teen if he or she hopes or expects to be married some day, and what he or she thinks should be in place before that time.

FACT: *Almost two-thirds of teens say they share their parents' values when it comes to sex.*

TIP: *Be clear about your values. Don't just tell your teen what you expect. Explain why, and ask what they think.*

- Ben is totally preoccupied by Amy during this episode. He imagines her everywhere and tells Mr. Molina he is thinking about her "every second of every minute of every hour of every day." Teens are often overly dramatic and emotional about their relationships, and many teens think their relationships will last forever. Do you ever talk about the expectations and realities of relationships with your teens? How do you know when they're getting too involved? And what is "too involved" for a teenager?

TIP: *Television shows like this one provide a good opportunity for parents to bring up subjects like relationships and values, as well as sex, with their teens.*

FACT: *Three-quarters of teens say that when a TV show or character they like deals with teen pregnancy, it makes them think more about the consequences of sex. It is also the case that most adults (72%) and teens (76%) wish the media showed more or talked more about the consequences of sex, including teen pregnancy.*