

THE SECRET LIFE
OF THE
AMERICAN TEENAGER

DISCUSSION GUIDE



EPISODE TWO

SUMMARY

In the aftermath of Jack kissing Adrian, Grace is feeling humiliated and sad, despite heartfelt parental pep talks. Jack tries to win her back with phone calls, apologies, and a visit to her house – during which Dr. Bowman gives him a stern talking-to. Meanwhile, Amy's in denial about the pregnancy and hasn't told her parents about it yet. Word is getting around school that she and Ricky were together over the summer and Ricky seems like he may actually be interested in her but she's officially smitten with Ben. Ben tells Amy that he loves her and she says it back, though the rumors about her fling with Ricky are clearly troubling to both of them. Amy's friends are inadvertently spreading that gossip, with a little help from Alice and Henry. Ricky and Adrian hook up again. And Amy's parents aren't getting along at all.

FOR TEENS

Stuff to talk about:

- Amy tells her friends that she sees two options with her pregnancy: either tell her parents and ruin the rest of her life, or act like it never happened. So she chooses to act like it never happened. What do you think of that? If you were her friend what would you tell her to do? Have you ever had a problem that you tried to ignore hoping it would go away? How did that work out?

FACT: When a woman is in denial about her pregnancy she is more likely to delay important medical prenatal care which could result in harm to the child and complications to the pregnancy.

- At first Ben is upset at the idea that Amy was with Ricky over the summer but eventually decides that whatever happened before he and Amy were together isn't important. Are you able to ignore previous relationships like that or would it bother you over and over again? Is it worse if you actually know your boyfriend's or girlfriend's previous partners? Should couples talk about their pasts? How much is too much information? If you are in a sexual relationship it could be harmful if you don't talk about your past and know your partner's past. Why?

FACT: 15% of sexually active teens say they have already had four or more sexual partners.



- Grace tells her mom that Jack didn't actually cheat on her – he “just kissed” Adrian. What constitutes “cheating” in your mind? Does kissing count? Are the rules the same for everyone? Does the fact that Jack kissed Adrian in front of the entire school make a difference? What if it had been in private? How do you decide in a relationship what's out of bounds and what's okay? Are the rules different for guys vs. girls?

FACT: *Two-thirds of teens say they wouldn't cheat on a boyfriend or girlfriend and they look down on those who do. Just 4% say they've cheated but wouldn't do it again.*

- When Lauren and Madison talk about what Amy and Ricky did over the summer, word gets back to Amy and to Ben as well – causing a lot of hurt feelings and emotional turmoil. Amy's friends didn't gossip about her on purpose but still, the news got around. Have you ever been the subject of gossip? Do your friends gossip about who's having sex and who's not? What do they say about someone who's not having sex at all?

FACT: *A majority of teen girls say that gossip, rumors, “backstabbing” and “drama” are the hardest parts of being a teenager today.*

- Amy and Ben are officially a couple now, after one date at the dance and some conversations at school and on the phone. His friends think he's jumping into things too quickly but when he tells Amy he loves her, she says it back to him with only a little hesitation. Why do you think Ben said it so fast? Have you ever exchanged “I love you's” with a boyfriend or a girlfriend? Is it important to you to say that (and mean it) before you have sex with someone? Why or why not? Do you think Amy and Ben really love each other? How do you know when you're in love? Who should say “I love you” first?

FACT: *75% of teens say they exchanged “I love you's” with their partner before having sex for the first time.*

- Ricky leaves Adrian's house because he has to get back to his foster parents, whom he says are harder to deal with than real parents. Do you know anyone who lives with foster parents? What kinds of challenges do they face above and beyond the typical teen issues? What have you learned about relationships from your own parents?

FACT: *Research shows that youth in foster care have higher rates of teen pregnancy and childbearing than do the general population.*

- When Grace tells Jack that she'll get back together she makes him promise not to pressure her about sex again. Jack agreed, but do you think he was sincere? Have you ever had to tell someone that you're not ready? How did you say it? What was their reaction? What kind of advice would you give a friend who felt like he or she was getting pressured into having sex?

FACT: *60% of sexually experienced teens say they wish they'd waited longer to have sex.*

- Adrian asks Ricky to spend the night at her house because her mom is out of town for work again and she doesn't like being alone. Do you think Adrian is mature enough to be left on her own so frequently? How does her being alone a lot affect Adrian's approach with guys? When is it okay to leave teenagers home without adult supervision? Have you ever taken advantage of a situation when there were no parents present? Even though there are some exciting possibilities when parents aren't around, why do you think so many teens say they wish their parents wouldn't leave them alone so much?

FACT: *Two-thirds of sexually experienced 16-18 year olds say they first had sex in their own home, their partner's home or a friend's home.*



FOR PARENT'S

Watching a show like “The Secret Life of the American Teenager” alongside your teen is a good way to start a conversation about sex, love, and relationships. 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.

- When Grace says she hates Adrian for kissing Jack, her mother points out that hating the girl her boyfriend kissed while forgiving the boyfriend for that same transgression makes no sense and is a dangerous relationship precedent. What do you think of that? Do you agree with Mrs. Bowman? Do you know people (or have you yourself) been in a similar situation? Have you ever talked with your kids about infidelity? About what to demand from the person you're in a romantic relationship with? Do they know where you stand?

FACT: 88% of parents of teens believe they should talk to their kids about sex but often don't know what to say, how to say it, or when to start.

- After Jack makes a visit to the Bowman home to try and win Grace back, Grace has a talk with her father about relationships and self-esteem. When Grace says she might decide to get back together with Jack, her father reconsiders whether she's mature enough to make her own decisions and says, “Don't put me in the position to have to make up your mind for you simply because you don't think enough of yourself.” Like many teenagers, Grace rolls her eyes at him. As a parent, how do you teach your children about self esteem and good decision-making? What do you do when you fear your kids are making destructive decisions? How do they react? What are some ways that you give your child a chance to build self-esteem?

FACT: 29% of teens say they haven't had a single conversation with their parents about sex and pregnancy prevention.

- Amy's friends are urging her to tell her parents about her pregnancy but so far, she has refused and is acting like the pregnancy doesn't even exist. Why do you think she's so afraid to tell them? If your teen came to you with news of a friend's pregnancy and the friend wasn't talking to her parents about it, what would you do? Are there ways that you encourage – or perhaps discourage – your teen from talking with you about tough subjects in their own lives? Have you talked with your teen specifically about sex, pregnancy and prevention?

FACT: 87% of teens say it would be easier for them to postpone sexual activity and avoid teen pregnancy if they were able to have more open, honest conversations with their parents.

- While Amy is going through this difficult time with her friends – avoiding their phone calls, worrying about the rumors, wondering what's going on with Ben, etc. -- her parents are arguing and are completely oblivious to her situation. She is trying to keep things secret, but are there any signs they are missing? How can you tell when your child is going through a rough time? How do you handle it when you know they're keeping something from you but you suspect that it might be important?

FACT: Teens say the #1 influence on their decisions about sex is parents. Your teens are listening to you, even if they don't act like it.

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