

THE SECRET LIFE
OF THE
AMERICAN TEENAGER

DISCUSSION GUIDE



EPISODE THREE

SUMMARY

Grace's parents forbid her to date Jack but Ricky comes up with a sneaky plan to let them see each other – which makes Adrian jealous and Dr. Bowman suspicious. Amy and Ben go out on a date too, but it ends badly. And little sister Ashley is putting all the clues together...

FOR TEENS

Stuff to talk about:

- When Ashley and her mom are talking about Mr. Juergens's first wife, her mom jokes that the first wife would have never let Ashley wear the tube top she's got on. Ashley notes that she (her mom) doesn't approve of it either, but Mrs. Juergens points out that Ashley's wearing it anyway. Why do you think parents disapprove of certain outfits? Do you think girls dress more to attract boys or to impress other girls? What do boys really think about young girls who dress to look older?

FACT: *59% of teens say that teen girls often get the message that attracting boys and looking sexy is one of the most important things they can do.*

- After the Bowmans forbid Grace from seeing Jack, Ricky says he'll pretend to take Grace out on a date in order to fool her them. Instead of spending time with him, Grace can see Jack instead. She goes along with this, and so does Jack, and they meet up at the county fair after Ricky does the obligatory meet-and-greet with Dr. & Mrs. Bowman. Have you ever deceived your parents in order to be with a boyfriend or girlfriend whom you know they don't want you to see? How did it feel to lie to them? Did they find out? What would have happened if they did find out?

FACT: *Teens whose parents supervise them and monitor their behavior are more likely to be older when they have sex for the first time. However, overly strict, authoritarian monitoring is actually associated with a greater risk of teen pregnancy.*

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- When Ricky first calls Grace to tell her about his plan, she mistakenly thinks he's trying to ask her out. He sets her straight, but she's embarrassed about her assumption. When Grace tells Jack about the plan, he also thinks Ricky wants to be more than just friends with Grace. Have you ever been confused about whether someone is interested in you romantically, or just as a friend? How did you figure it out? How do people act when they're interested in someone as more than a friend, versus just friends? Is it different for boys and girls?

FACT: 42% of sexually experienced teens say they were already friends with their first sexual partner before the sexual relationship began.

- When Lauren and Madison see Henry and Alice kissing at the county fair, they're frustrated and say, "We really need to get boyfriends." Do you ever feel like everyone around you is in a relationship while you're not? How does it make you feel? Left out? Jealous? Is a boyfriend or a girlfriend something you "get?" How long do you think you should wait to have sex once you're in a romantic relationship?

FACT: Most teens think "everyone is doing it." In fact, just half of all high school-age teens are sexually active (48%). Which means some are doing it, some aren't, and some are lying about it.

- When Mr. Molina tries to talk to Adrian about college she ignores his suggestions and tries to flirt with him instead. Adrian is as smart as Mr. Molina says she is, why do you think she's acting like she's not interested in college? If she doesn't care about school, why does she take the trouble to get such good grades? Does Adrian try to down-play her smarts because she's worried that boys won't like her as much? Does Adrian remind you of any of your friends in this way?

FACT: Less than half of teen mothers ever graduate from high school, and fewer than 2% earn a college degree by age 30.

- When they're talking to Ben about the plans he's making for his date, Henry and Alice say they're thinking of having sex – and Henry gets to pick the time and place. Do you think Henry and Alice are ready to start having sex? If they knew Amy was pregnant, do you think that would influence their decision? Is the first time a couple has sex usually pre-planned like that, or do you think it happens more spontaneously? What kind of plan do people need to have in place before they're ready to have sex? Do your sexually active friends talk about the risks of getting pregnant or getting STDs?

FACT: Half of all teens have never thought about how a pregnancy would affect their lives. The only foolproof way to prevent pregnancy is not to have sex; even careful, consistent contraceptive use isn't 100% foolproof. Figure out how you'll say no before the moment arrives. If you are sexually active, you have to decide ahead of time how you will protect yourself.

- Amy's sister Ashley figures out that Amy's pregnant, and she confronts her. Amy begs her not to tell their parents and Ashley agrees, but she's clearly upset about it. Was it right for Amy to ask her sister to keep her secret? What would you do in Ashley's position? What do you think their parents will say if and when they eventually find out about the pregnancy? How do you think Amy's pregnancy – and keeping it a secret – will affect Ashley?

FACT: Younger siblings of teen parents are more likely to be sexually active and to become pregnant than teens whose older siblings are not teen parents.



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 Lauren and Madison are at the gas station talking to Lauren’s brother, he says their parents won’t let Lauren hang out with Amy once they learn she’s pregnant. If your teen had a friend who got pregnant, how would you react? Would you forbid your child to see her? How could you use a situation like this as an opportunity to talk to your own kids about sex? Would your child tell you if one of his or her friends got pregnant?

FACT: Teens say parents are the biggest influence on their decisions about sex – and that their parents are more influential than friends or the media.

- Before Ben’s date with Amy, his father gives him a pep talk and asks if he’s going to kiss her. Ben seems honestly grateful for his dad’s input, and it’s clear they get along well and trust each other. Do you have conversations with your teens before they go out on dates? What kind of advice do you give them? Do you think parents should give different dating advice to sons than to daughters? Do you think your teens know exactly where you stand and what you expect from them when it comes to sex, dating, and values?

FACT: Two-thirds (66%) of teens agree that when it comes to talking about sex, parents often don’t know what to say, how to say it, or when to start. Among parents of teens, 88% agree.

- Grace’s parents forbid her to see Jack, despite her strong protests and efforts to convince them otherwise. If you were Grace’s parents, what would you have done about her still wanting to see Jack after he kissed Adrian? Who decides in your family whether someone is an acceptable date for your teen? If you say no, does your teen abide by your decision? Does your teen share your values about sex, love, and relationships? How do you know?

FACT: Research shows that talking with your kids about sex does NOT encourage them to have sex. In fact, talking with your kids about sex is one of the best ways to protect them.

For more tips for parents, visit www.TheNationalCampaign.org.

For more information, please contact web@thenc.org
or visit us online at TheNationalCampaign.org and StayTeen.org.