

THE SECRET LIFE
OF THE
AMERICAN TEENAGER

DISCUSSION GUIDE



EPISODE FOUR

SUMMARY

Ricky's plan for Jack and Grace to continue secretly dating turns disastrous: Ricky forgets to pick her up at the appointed time and place, and she is threatened by some scary strangers. She does an excellent job defending herself—but the situation is caught on camera and the video goes viral. Soon everyone knows (including her parents), and the aftermath makes for some very public drama for Grace and Ricky. Adrian is upset by all this and seeks comfort in Jack. Meanwhile, Amy STILL hasn't told her parents (or Ben) she's pregnant, but Ben's dad is starting to wonder.

FOR TEENS

Stuff to talk about:

- When Grace is caught in a dangerous situation, she thinks fast (and prays) and then defends herself successfully. She was in danger in the first place because she was trying to hide her relationship with Jack from her parents. Have you ever hidden a relationship from your parents because they didn't approve of your boyfriend or girlfriend? Did they find out? What happened?

FACT: *Close parent-child relationships -- not just discussions about sex -- help protect teens from risky behavior.*

- Ben gets upset and jealous when Amy says she has to talk to her friends about something privately. Should Amy be confiding in him? In your life, are there certain things you're more comfortable talking about with your friends than with your boyfriend/girlfriend? What are they? Why? At what point in a romantic relationship do things start to feel easy and open, like a good friendship?

FACT: *When the going gets tough, more girls turn to their boyfriends (33%) than boys turn to their girlfriends (23%).*

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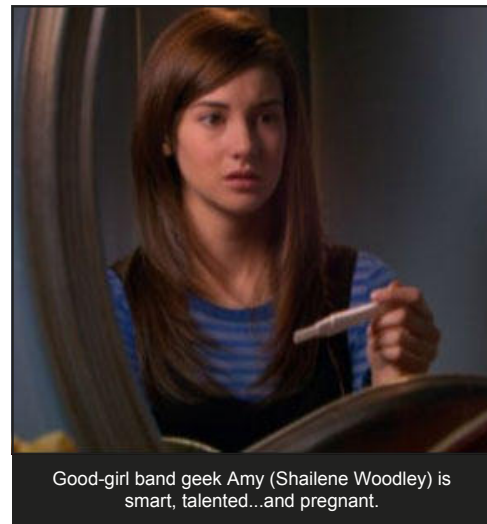


- When Adrian wants to have sex with Jack before church, he refuses but says it's OK if they make out. Why do you think Jack is so conflicted in his feelings about sex? Do you think it's a common situation that the girl would want to do more than the boy wants to do? What do you think of Jack saying no? Why do you think Adrian wants to be with him? Have you ever had to say no to someone who wants to do more than you're ready for? Is it awkward or empowering (or both)?

FACT: *You can always say no, even if you've said yes before. Just less than half of all high school-age teens are sexually active. Which means half aren't. It's OK to delay.*

- Amy's parents are having trouble in their marriage, and her mom suspects infidelity. When parents expect their kids to be honest and faithful but aren't behaving that way themselves, what message does that send to their kids? What are some things your parents do that you see as a good example for how you want to be in a relationship? Are there things about your parents' relationship that you definitely don't want to follow in yours? What? Why?

FACT: *44% of teens say trust is the most important part of a healthy relationship, and 25% say it's difficult to talk to their parents about relationship issues.*



Good-girl band geek Amy (Shailene Woodley) is smart, talented...and pregnant.

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.

- Despite Amy's odd behavior, appetite, and weight gain -- not to mention rumors her dad overheard at his store -- her parents have no idea she's pregnant and refuse to entertain the thought she might be sexually active, even after she tells her dad she is. Why are they so reluctant to believe Amy might be sexually active? How does their denial about this -- because she's supposed to be a "good" girl -- fuel Amy's reluctance to talk with them honestly about her pregnancy? Have you ever felt that your teen was trying to tell you something, but you were afraid of what it might be? What happened?

FACT: *Most teens (71% of girls and 69% of boys) have talked with a parent about at least one of these topics: saying no to sex, methods of birth control and where to get them, STDs, and how to use a condom. Also, 52% of teens say they think age 13-14 is the right age for parents to start talking with their kids about sex, love, and relationships.*

- When Amy's little sister, Ashley, gets dressed up nicely for school, her parents automatically think she's up to no good. They accuse her of being on drugs and having sex, among other things. Exasperated, she says she just wants a compliment on her outfit: "Why can't you just tell me I look nice!?" Why do Ashley's parents expect so little of her? How do you think their expectations influence Ashley's behavior? How do you communicate your expectations of your kids to them?

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FACT: Many teens say that they wish their parents would pay attention to them before they get into trouble.

- Religion plays a big part in the lives of many characters on the show -- the Bowman family, Jack, even Ricky. Does your family's religion ever factor into your views and values about sex and relationships? How? If you do attend religious services as a family, how does your particular faith address these issues? Do your teens share your values when it comes to sex, relationships, marriage, and pregnancy? How do you know?

FACT: Roughly 90% of teens report being affiliated with a particular religious denomination, although fewer say they regularly participate in religious services or youth groups. Regardless of gender or race, teens who attend services frequently are less likely to have permissive attitudes about sexual intercourse. More frequent attendance is associated with later sexual initiation for white males and for females generally. It also appears that frequent attendance is associated with increased contraceptive use among boys but decreased contraceptive use among girls.

For more tips for parents, visit <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org>. To find out what teens are saying about relationships, go to <http://stayteen.org/whats-your-relationship-reality/default.aspx>.

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