

THE SECRET LIFE
OF THE
AMERICAN TEENAGER

DISCUSSION GUIDE



EPISODE NINE

FOR TEENS

Stuff to talk about:

- So Henry and Alice are broken up. Did you see that coming or are you surprised? Why do you think Henry was honest with Ashley, who he barely even knows, about his breakup but talked to best friend Ben like it hadn't happened yet? Even though we haven't heard Alice's side of things yet, how do you think she's feeling now? Henry and Alice have talked about having sex. Do you think the decision to have sex -- or not to have sex -- played some role in their breakup? Do you think Henry and Alice had different feelings about whether or not they were ready to have sex?

FACT: Many teens think that "everyone is doing it," but that doesn't mean they are. Just about one in two teens is sexually active -- which means that half are, half aren't, and some are lying about it. Almost all teens (85%) believe that sex should only happen in a long-term committed relationship.

TIP: Sex has consequences -- physical and emotional. The safest way to protect your body, and your feelings, is to abstain from sex.

- Grace insists to Adrian that she and Ricky are just friends and that he is not trying to have sex with her, but Adrian doesn't buy it. Do you? Do you have friends of the opposite sex that you're "just friends" with? Do you think that in most boy-girl friendships one of the people is actually interested in something more than being friends? Do you confide more in your friends of the opposite sex? Do you talk about relationships with them? What are some things that are unique about boy-girl platonic friendships?

FACT: Some teens say they save their most personal thoughts for a platonic friend of the opposite sex, rather than for the person with whom they are sexually intimate. Cross-gender, platonic friendships allow teens to gain insights into what the opposite sex is thinking, and provide opportunities to share more personal feelings without as much risk.

- When they're talking about Amy's condition, Adrian says to Grace that she doesn't feel sorry for Amy, because "a girl should know how to take care of herself. How hard is it to not get pregnant?" Do you agree that it's not hard to prevent pregnancy? Who is responsible for preventing pregnancy? Should it be up to the girl, or does the guy have a role to play in this? Despite what you think the ideal situation is, who usually ends up deciding?

FACT: When asked who usually decides whether to use birth control or not, 39% of teen girls say the girl usually decides, and 50% of teen girls say both the boy and girl decide together. However, boys say that girls only decide 21% of the time and 69% of the time the decision is made together. Very few boys or girls -- just 6% -- think the boy makes the decision.



TIP: *Even though it takes two people to create a pregnancy, it only takes one person to prevent it.*

- In his conversation with Mrs. Juergens, the Sausage King keeps saying that he knows Amy is a "nice girl" and that she shouldn't be afraid to go to school or be seen in public even though she's pregnant. He says, "She shouldn't have to hide her face in shame. What happened, happened." If you were Amy, would you be embarrassed to go out in public? Why do you think Amy is embarrassed? Would she be less embarrassed if she weren't known as a "good girl"? What do you think about teens or young single women who get pregnant? What message do you think society sends about whether teen pregnancy, or pregnancy among single young adults, is OK? Or not OK?

FACT: *68% of teens say it's important for teens to be given a strong message that they should not have sex until they are out of high school.*

- Lauren's parents don't want her to be friends with Amy now that Amy's pregnant. What do you think they would say about Lauren kissing Ricky? Why did Lauren get together with Ricky? What was she hoping to get out of it? Why did Ricky pursue Lauren? If you were friends with Lauren, what advice would you give her now that she and Ricky have kissed?

FACT: *Among teens ages 12 to 17, the most important part of a healthy relationship is trust. However, many teens say they feel surrounded by infidelity and that they try to build protective walls around themselves to prepare for what they view as inevitable: a cheating partner. Even when it comes to friendships, many teens find it hard to trust others or to earn someone's trust.*

FOR PARENT'S

- When Mr. Juergens is comforting Adrian, Ashley gets mad and accuses him of "cheating" on her and Amy. Why would she think that? What do you think about that? Can parents cheat on their kids? How do you think their dad's infidelity will affect Ashley's and Amy's future romantic relationships? What advice would you give Ashley and Amy about relating to their father now?

FACT: *17% of teens ages 12 to 17 say they have no examples of what they view as "healthy relationships" in their lives. 25% say they find it difficult to talk to their parents about relationship issues.*

- There's a lot of interaction between all the parents on this show. For example, in this episode, Ben's dad paid a visit to Amy's mom, and in past episodes he's met with Amy's dad. Do you know the parents of your kids' friends?

TIP: *It's important to know not only your child's friends but also their friends' families. Friends have a strong influence on each other, so help your children and teenagers become friends with kids whose families share your values. For example: It's easier to enforce a curfew that all your child's friends share, rather than one that makes him or her different -- but even if your views don't match those of other parents, hold fast to your convictions. Welcome your children's friends into your home and talk to them openly.*

- When Madison and Jason (Lauren's brother) are getting ready to go out, they talk to Lauren about finding her a date. Lauren says she doesn't need their help finding a date and that, when she's ready, she can find her own date. Then she points out the fact that neither Madison nor Jason has ever gone on dates before, either. Do your teens go on one-on-one dates or do boys and girls mostly socialize in groups? How do you know when your kids are ready for actual dates?

TIP: *Group activities among young people are fine and often fun, but allowing teens to begin steady, one-on-one dating too early can lead to trouble. Let your child know about your strong feelings on this issue throughout childhood -- don't wait until your young teen proposes a plan that differs from your preferences in this area; otherwise, he or she will think you just don't like the particular person or invitation.*