

THE SECRET LIFE
OF THE
AMERICAN TEENAGER

DISCUSSION GUIDE



EPISODE 13—"Baked Nevada"

FOR TEENS

Stuff to talk about:

- For the second episode in a row, Amy heard some serious truth-telling from her mom. Last week, Amy learned that Anne has no intention of caring for the baby while Amy goes to school, and this week it's a lesson about the awesome responsibility of parenthood. What do you think of this new honesty between Amy and her mom? Why did Anne take so long to talk to her so candidly? Would Amy have listened before? Now that Amy seems to accept and even embrace her pregnancy, she still seems like she's in denial about just what it means to have a baby. Is her mom's reality check helpful or too harsh? Do you think Anne should care for the baby so Amy can finish school? What would you want your mom to do in this situation?

FACT: *Half of all teens have never even thought about how a pregnancy would affect their lives. Have you?*

- Even though Ricky tells people he loves Grace, he's still hooking up with Adrian. Why do you think he's doing that? Why do you think Adrian is hooking up with him? At one point, Adrian tells him she'd rather be the one he's cheating with than the one he's cheating on. What do you think of that? What does this say about Adrian's friendship with Grace? What does it say about Adrian's self-esteem? What does it say about Ricky? Have you ever been cheated on ... or have you ever cheated? How did it make you feel?

FACT: *One out of five teenagers (19%) says their friends are in unhealthy relationships.*

- The Sausage King is mad that Ben went ahead with the wedding without calling home, even though he knew it was wrong, because Amy wanted to go through with it. Mr. Boykewich says, "Don't ever tell me you wanted to do the right thing but someone talked you out of it." If you were Ben, what would you have done in that situation? Why did he cave in to Amy? How do you think this will affect Ben's relationship with



his dad? Have you ever done something you knew was wrong because others pressured you? How did it make you feel at the time? How does it make you feel now? What advice would you have given Ben?

TIP: *You're in charge of your own life -- don't let anyone pressure you into doing something before you're ready, whether it has to do with sex (or marriage) or anything else.*

FOR PARENTS

Watching a show like "The Secret Life of the American Teenager" with your teens 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.

- Go through the conversation Amy and her mom have at the end of the episode and ask your teen to tell you which themes stood out the most. Ask if he/she agrees or disagrees with the following:
 - You can't just leave a child with a caregiver and be a parent when it's convenient. Parenthood is a tremendous responsibility and time commitment.
 - You can't expect that getting married will solve your problems, and you can't run away from a pregnancy.
 - Love isn't just about feeling, it's about doing -- doing what's right for the person you love, all the time.
 - When a baby is coming, you have to have a plan and act on it. You have to. Denial is not an option.
 - A person can't help you unless you talk to them honestly and openly.

Have you ever discussed these topics with your teen before? Now's the time.

TIP: *Most teens say they share their parents' values about sex -- but how will your kids know what your values are if you don't talk specifically about these issues with them? Tell them what you think and why. They need to hear it from you.*

- Teen relationships can be emotionally intense -- take, for example, Grace telling her parents that she loves Ricky, or even Tom and Tammy saying they want to get married after one date. What's the rule in your house about frequent, steady dating? Do you encourage or discourage long-term relationships for your teen? What do they think about serious relationships at their age? Have you made your expectations and values about sex clear to them? Have you talked to them about healthy relationships?

TIP: *You probably talk to your kids about having a healthy body (don't smoke, eat right, exercise, etc.), but remember to talk to them about having healthy relationships too. Discourage early, frequent one-on-one dating. And don't allow one-on-one dating before age 16 -- for your sons or your daughters.*

THE SECRET LIFE OF THE AMERICAN TEENAGER



FACT: *Less than half (48%) of high-school-age teens have had sex. Which means the other half haven't. Help your teens understand that, just because they have intense feelings and may even be in love, they don't have to be sexually active.*

- Obviously, Mr. and Mrs. Juergens have some serious issues in their marriage. They're getting divorced, yet they're sleeping with each other. And fighting all the time. How does their relationship seem to affect Ashley and Amy when it comes to expectations about marriage? What advice would you give Anne and George during this sensitive time in their family?

TIP: *Research clearly shows that talking with your children about sex does not encourage them to become sexually active. Your own behavior should match your words. The "do as I say, not as I do" approach is bound to lose with children and teenagers, who are careful and constant observers of the adults in their lives.*