

THE SECRET LIFE  
OF THE  
AMERICAN TEENAGER

# DISCUSSION GUIDE



## EPISODE 16—"Chocolate Cake"

### FOR TEENS

*Stuff to talk about:*

- Were you surprised when Ashley got emotional with her mom? Anne told her that, even though she has strong opinions about the baby and the divorce, Ashley is 13 and doesn't have all the answers. Instead of making a sarcastic remark or keeping up her stoic front, Ashley agrees, starts to cry a little, and embraces her mom. Why do you think Mrs. Juergens and her daughters are finally getting more honest with each other? When is it OK to let your parents in? What makes a parent easy to talk to? Hard to talk to? Are you waiting for them to approach you, or can you approach them?

**TIP:** *If your parents try to talk with you about sex, love, and relationships, realize that it's just as awkward for them as it is for you. You don't have to talk about everything all at once. Start small, and talk about your friends' relationships or something you saw on TV (like this show!), if talking about your own life is too weird at first.*

- So Adrian hooked up with her stepbrother Max. What's worse -- that he's the son of her father's wife, or the fact that she got intimate with him almost right after they met? What do you think of the way Adrian's always messing around with guys? Why do you think she does it? How does her own mother's history with men affect her behavior? Do you know girls like Adrian? What do people at school think about her?

**TIP:** *Sex doesn't make a guy "yours" -- just like a baby won't make a guy stick around. Just because you've said "yes" before doesn't mean you have to do it with everyone. If you're having sex to prove something, think seriously about what it is you're actually proving. Sex has consequences: emotional as well as physical.*

- How do you feel about Donovan and Leon as potential adoptive parents for Amy's baby? They're obviously adults in a longtime committed relationship; they have a stable, loving home; and they've wanted a



child for some time. Should it matter that they're gay? What qualities do you think make a couple potentially good parents?

**FACT:** *More than 65,000 children are living with a gay or lesbian parent. Gay and lesbian parents are raising 4% of all adopted children in the United States.*

- Let's talk about the drama with Grace and Adrian. As soon as Grace finds out Ricky is still messing around with Adrian, Grace calls her and tells her off. She says that once Ricky comes to terms with his issues and no longer needs to mask his pain by sleeping with Adrian, they'll be together. A few things to talk about here:
  1. Why isn't Grace confronting Ricky about his behavior? Why is it Adrian's fault?
  2. Why IS Adrian pretending to be friends with Grace while obviously going behind her back with Ricky?
  3. What does Ricky get out of all this?

**FACT:** *Many girls say that "drama" between friends is the hardest part of being a teenager. Have you ever had conflict with a friend over a guy? What happened? Did it change your friendship?*

## FOR PARENT'S

*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.*

- *The whole reason Adrian's stepbrother Max was even at Adrian's house the night her dad, Ruben, found them in bed together is because Max's mom (who's married to Ruben) sent him over there to find out whether her husband will leave her for Adrian's mom. A little complicated, but the point is that the mother sent the son to pry around his father's private life -- which brings up some interesting questions: How much should teens know about and be involved in their parents' relationships? How does it make children feel to know this much about their parents' suspicions and fears? Ask your teens: Is it appropriate for Mr. Molina to complain about his marriage to the kids at school? Is it smart for Mr. Juergens to want Amy to deceive her mother about the gay couple so that Anne feels like she came up with the idea herself? How does Mrs. Bowman's past infidelity affect Grace and Tom?*

**TIP:** *The number one job of a parent is to be parental. Period. They need you now more than ever.*

## THE SECRET LIFE OF THE AMERICAN TEENAGER



- *Often in stories about teen pregnancy, much of the attention is focused on the pregnant girl, though on "Secret Life" we do see a lot through Ricky's eyes. Does your teen know any pregnant or parenting teens? Is the father of the child involved in those situations? What is the real-world experience of teen fathers in your community?*

**FACT:** *Too often, teenage boys define "responsibility" as buying diapers once there's a baby. We need to help them understand: Sex doesn't make you a man -- being responsible means preventing pregnancy in the first place. Most teen dads don't stick around. Eighty percent of the fathers of babies born to teen moms do not marry their babies' mothers.*

**TIP:** *Teens tell us: "Pay attention to us BEFORE we get into trouble." Too often, teens who take risks are the ones who get all the attention. Be sure to notice and reinforce good behavior too.*