

THE SECRET LIFE
OF THE
AMERICAN TEENAGER

DISCUSSION GUIDE



EPISODE 17 – “Unforgiven”

FOR TEENS

Stuff to talk about:

- When Henry and Alice are walking through the hall together, she says most teen relationships don't last six months. Is that a long time or not? What do you think about that? Does it seem true? Why do you think that is? Do teens have different challenges in their relationships than adults do? Are most teen relationships healthy?

FACT: *More than half (68%) of teens say their friends are in healthy romantic relationships. But one in five (19%) say most of their friends are in unhealthy relationships. Teens define a healthy relationship as one that has love, trust, mutual respect, and honesty.*

- What's the deal with Adrian and Grace's fight? Are they really arguing about guys, or does it have more to do with the differences in their own values and behavior? Is Grace really jealous of Adrian, or is Adrian jealous of Grace? Is it possible for two girls who are such opposites to be friends? Do you think they have a real friendship? Why or why not?

FACT: *Many teen girls say the hardest thing about being a teen is the constant drama among female friends. Some teen girls say they trust their male friends more than their female friends. What about you?*

- Donovan and Leon are emerging as the likely favorites to adopt Amy and Ricky's baby. Ashley thinks this is a cop-out, that Amy's finding someone to do what she doesn't want to do -- but Amy says she's finding someone to do what she can't do. What do you think about that? Is Amy being selfish? Is she doing what's best for her or best for the baby or both? If you were Amy, what would you do? Should Ashley's opinion even matter? Should Ricky's? Should Amy's parents' opinion matter?

FACT: *Fewer than 3% of pregnant teen girls in the United States choose adoption for their babies.*



- Ricky says he's interested in Amy now -- not Grace, not Adrian. Do you believe him? Do you think he's sincere about wanting to be involved with the baby? Even if he is, are he and Amy capable of making it work? Why or why not?

FACT: *Sex won't make him yours, and a baby won't make him stay. Eight out of ten fathers of babies born to teens don't marry their babies' mothers. Even if they do get married as teens, those marriages tend to last less than two years.*

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.

- Shauna has some reservations about getting involved with Jack because of the difference in their ages. She's 20, and he's 16. Is four years too many? Why or why not? What about three years, or two years? What do you tell your teens about dating people who are much older or much younger than they are? Is it different if it's the girl who's older? What are the rules in your house? Does a four-year age difference matter more in the teen years than it does later in life? Why or why not?

TIP: *Take a strong stand against your son or daughter dating someone significantly older. The risk of matters getting out of hand increases a lot when there's a big age difference. The power differences between younger girls and older boys or men especially can lead girls into risky situations, including unwanted sex and sex with no protection. Tell your sons and daughters that it's safer and smarter to date people their own age.*

- Could one of the reasons behind Amy's confusion about Ben and Ricky, the baby, and parenthood in general be that she doesn't have good role models at home? George and Anne clearly don't trust each other, confide in each other, or communicate well. There doesn't seem to be much respect there, and they aren't very supportive or kind to each other. What kind of impact does their behavior have on Amy and Ashley? What are your children learning from your relationships?

FACT: *Teens say parents are the No. 1 influence on their decisions about sex and dating. But they don't just care about what you say -- they also notice what you do. Be sure to set clear expectations and standards, and talk with your teens about your values -- and why you feel that way.*