

THE SECRET LIFE
OF THE
AMERICAN TEENAGER

DISCUSSION GUIDE



EPISODE 18—"Making Up Is Hard to Do"

FOR TEENS

Stuff to talk about:

- Why does Grace want everyone at school to know she has birth control pills now? Why are her friends telling her to keep it quiet? Do you think most teens believe that girls who carry condoms, or are on the pill, are "easy"? What if a guy is carrying condoms—does that mean he's pushy or expecting sex all the time? Is there a double standard for girls and guys on this one?

TIP: *Have a plan. Know what you will do in the heat of the moment. If your plan is to abstain from sex, think about how you'll say no and stick to it. And if your plan is to have sex, figure out what kind of birth control you'll use, get it ahead of time, and be sure you use it correctly every single time.*

- When Amy's dad is asking her about her feelings for Ben and Ricky, Amy says she doesn't really like Ricky, but he likes her, and it's hard not to like someone back if they like you. Is that true in your experience? When it's obvious that someone likes you, do you feel pressure to like them back? What if they like you A LOT? Do you feel like you need to hook up with them? What about when you like someone—do you think that helps them like you back? How is it different for girls than for boys?

FACT: *Most teens say sex should only happen in a long-term, committed relationship.*

- When Amy is freaking out about Ashley smoking a cigarette, her dad doesn't seem alarmed because he says he knows his girls and he knows Ashley won't smoke. Amy points out that he probably didn't think she'd get pregnant, so how reliable is his intuition, really? Why does George think he understands his daughters so well, when he's clearly missing out on a lot about their lives? Does this remind you of your parents, or your friends' parents? Are there things about your life that your parents would never guess or suspect? What kinds of things? What kinds of things are OK to keep from your parents? What aren't?
- **FACT:** *65% of teens say that parents send one message to their sons and another to their daughters when it comes to talking about sex. What are the different messages they send to girls vs. boys? Why do you think there is such a double standard when it comes to sex?*

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- After the date with her brother, Adrian gets a call from Ricky but lets it go straight to voice mail, which is pretty unlike Adrian. Why do you think she did that? Did she like the formal date with Max more than she likes Ricky's late-night booty calls? Is she starting to think she might deserve better? And when Amy's mom suggests she move on from Ben, Amy says, "I'm a pregnant 15-year-old girl. I don't deserve better." How did that make you feel? Do you know girls who don't think they deserve much when it comes to how guys treat them? Where does this notion come from?

FACT: Nearly 1 in 5 teens say that most of their friends are in unhealthy relationships—those without love, trust, mutual respect, and honesty.

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.

- At the end of the episode, when Ben is once again declaring his love for Amy and vowing to spend the rest of his life with her, he says that being a parent isn't about making a baby, it's about caring for a baby—and earlier, Amy tells Ricky that having a baby doesn't make them adults. Important distinction and important lesson, to be sure. Do you talk to your kids about the responsibilities of relationships and parenthood in addition to talking about the birds and the bees? Which kind of conversation is harder for you? Which is harder for them?

TIP: Kids have lots of questions about sex, and they often say that the source they'd most like to go to for answers is their parents. Start the conversation, and make sure it's honest, open, and respectful. This episode of "Secret Life" is a great conversation-starter. Tell your kids candidly and confidently what you think and why you take your positions; if you're not sure about some issues, tell them that too. What do you think it takes to be a parent? Be sure to have a two-way conversation, not a one-way lecture. Ask them what they think and what they know, so you can correct misconceptions. And be sure it's an ongoing conversation, not a onetime speech.

- When Ashley meets Thomas at the bus stop, she tells him she can pretty much get away with anything right now, because all the attention in her family is focused on Amy and the pregnancy. How do you feel about that? Do you ever have times when a crisis with one child or at work or in a specific area of your life makes it much harder to focus on another child? How do you deal with this? Do you think your children are aware of this and take advantage of it, as Ashley seems inclined to do?

TIP: Pay attention to your kids before they get into trouble. Teens need encouragement when they've done the right thing, not just disapproval when they've done something wrong. They need to feel your support, and to know you care about them regardless of what else is going on.