

THE SECRET LIFE  
OF THE  
AMERICAN TEENAGER

# DISCUSSION GUIDE



## EPISODE 20—“Maybe Baby”

### FOR TEENS

Stuff to talk about:

- When Amy is at the baby clothing store talking to the saleswoman she makes up a fantasy story about her life – that she’s one semester short of college graduation, ready to become a mother and excited to raise her child. Why do you think she did that? What kind of reaction would she have gotten from the saleswoman had she told the truth? What sort of social stigma do teen moms face? What do you think when you see a teen mom? Would you feel any differently if it was a young adult mother like Amy pretended to be at the store?

**FACT:** *The vast majority of teen pregnancies are unplanned – people just don’t think it can happen to them – even though it happens to more than 700,000 girls every year. And that sort of thinking doesn’t end when the teen years do – among unmarried women in their 20s more than 70% of pregnancies are unplanned too.*

- When Ashley and Mr. Juergens are watching the DVD Amy made for the baby, Ashley mimics what Amy said and talks about how she’s choosing adoption so that she doesn’t have to miss prom or homecoming or hanging out with her friends. Amy is obviously (and rightfully!) upset when she overhears this. But is Ashley wrong in what she said? What are some of the things Amy will have to forgo in order to care for her son? What kinds of activities and events do teen moms miss out on in real life?

**FACT:** *Teen moms miss out on a lot more than dances. Most teen moms don’t finish high school at all – parenthood is the #1 reason girls drop out – and fewer than 2% of teen moms graduate from college before age 30. This puts them at a disadvantage in the professional world, and severely limits the amount of money they are able to earn to care for their families.*

- Amy’s friends all seem really excited to help out to make things easier for her so she can keep the baby. How realistic do you think those plans are? Amy is 15 now -- what do you think the situation will be like next year, or when she’s a senior in high school? Will her friends still be babysitting for free and helping her find jobs and day care? Even if Ricky is obligated to pitch in financially as the baby’s father, how much money will he truly be able to contribute? What will happen if she and Ben break up and he has a new girlfriend? What about after high school when everyone has graduated? Can Amy really count on them to be involved for the long haul?

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**TIP:** *Having a child is a lifelong commitment, through good times and bad, 24 hours a day, every day. Think about the ups and downs you have with your friends and consider all the responsibilities and activities they have in their own lives. Is it realistic to think they'll be there to help you raise a child?*

- If everything works out with the plans her friends have made, Amy will have a job she likes teaching music to young kids at the church, health insurance provided by that job, as well as on-site day care too. What is the likelihood a teenager could land a job like that? Have you ever had a job? Did you make enough there to take care of a child? Did it come with benefits like insurance and day care?

**FACT:** *More than half of all mothers on welfare had their first child as a teenager and two-thirds of families begun by a single young mother are poor.*

- Amy says she is confident she will be a good mother to her son because she has the best mom in the world to learn from. What kind of parenting lessons have you learned in your family? Are there things your parents have done that you will be sure to include in your own children's lives? Are there things they've done that you hope you'll never do?

**TIP:** *Talk to your mom and dad about what it's like to be a parent. Ask them about what they wish they knew you before they had kids and if there's anything they would have done differently.*

## 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.*

- The Sausage King seems pretty intent on teaching Ben a lesson or two about the financial responsibilities of raising a child, which takes Ben by surprise because up until now his dad has been pretty generous and relaxed about money. When you talk to your kids about sex and relationships, do you talk about the financial consequences as well as the emotional and physical ones? Do your kids know how much it costs to care for a family? Do they know the basics about the financial realities of being an adult?

**FACT:** *The cost of raising a child in just the first year of life is more than \$10,000, at the very least. Would your teen be able to make that kind of money, and continue going to school and doing all the things they want to do?*

- What do you think of the parents on the show? What do your kids think of them? In this episode Amy's parents and Ben's dad play major roles. In other episodes we see Grace's parents, Adrian's parents, Ricky's foster parents, Jack's dad and Lauren's dad. Are the moms and dads realistic to you? Do the situations they find themselves in ring true? What do your kids think about parenting on TV?

**TIP:** *Even if you would make different choices that the characters you see on television, just watching them with your kids gives you an opportunity to share your own values and ideas about life. Let television be a conversation starter in your house, but not the end-all, be-all of what your kids are learning.*