

THE SECRET LIFE
OF THE
AMERICAN TEENAGER

DISCUSSION GUIDE



EPISODE 22—"One Night at Band Camp"

FOR TEENS

Stuff to talk about:

- Why do you think Amy was surprised that she would be the one to name the baby? She says naming a baby is a serious thing, something that will matter for the baby's entire life, and that choosing it is a big responsibility. But isn't being a parent even more of a big responsibility? Why is she OK with being a parent, but freaked out by the naming?

FACT: *Being a parent is a 24/7 job, and it's not easy. Children deserve adult parents who are committed to each other and to the difficult task of raising a family. Babies may offer unconditional love, but they also require it.*

- When Alice and Henry are playing computer games, they joke about people who are still virgins at age 30. Do you ever worry that you'll be a virgin forever? Is there pressure in your school or among your friends to have sex? Do you think people make virginity too big a deal?

FACT: *About half of all high school students have had sex and about half haven't. And the majority of teenagers who have had sex wish they had waited longer.*

- Now that we've seen how the night in band camp happened, do you think Ricky was plotting to have sex with Amy the whole time? Or did it just happen? Do you think he ever considered the possibility of pregnancy? Why do you think most people never consider the consequences?

FACT: *Half of teens have never thought about how a pregnancy would affect their lives. Take a minute and consider the possibilities.*

- In the flashback scenes with Grace and Jack, we see that Jack wanted his relationship with Grace to be exclusive—but her parents didn't allow it. What do you think of that? Should Grace have even considered her parents' wishes, or is she old enough to decide for herself whether she can have a serious boyfriend? Would you ask your parents before committing to one person? Would they let you?

TIP: *Talk to your parents about love and relationships, not just sex.*



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.

- Grace's dad forbids her from dating Jack exclusively. Did that surprise you? Did it surprise you that Grace would ask her dad's permission in the first place? Do you have that kind of open dialogue about relationships with your teens?

TIP: *It's not a bad idea to discourage steady, frequent dating for young teens. Let your kids know how you feel about this throughout their childhood—don't wait until your son or daughter proposes a plan that differs from your preferences in this area; otherwise, he or she might think you just don't like the particular person or invitation.*

- When Lauren and Madison come to see Amy in the hospital, where she's already been through more than nine hours of labor and the birth isn't really close to happening yet, Amy warns her friends about having sex: "Do not have sex. This is what it leads to." Do you think her admonition will be more powerful than hearing it from parents or teachers? Should "good kids" be exposed to people who have made unfortunate choices so they can learn firsthand from their peers? Or would you rather keep your kids away from girls like Amy (as Lauren's parents wanted to do earlier in the season)?

FACT: *Parents have more influence over their kids' decisions about sex than their friends or the media. No matter who your kids' friends are or what their friends do, it's crucial that your kids know how YOU feel about sex, love, and relationships, and it is important for them to know what's appropriate in your family and what your expectations are.*

- Amy is obviously swept up in the moment when she has sex with Ricky at band camp. We see in the flashback how easy it was for her to sort of fall under his spell and go farther than she probably wanted to. Do your kids know how to avoid that kind of situation? Do they have a plan? Talk to your kids (sons and daughters alike) about knowing what they will do when that moment arrives so they aren't caught off-guard and don't do something they'll regret. Talk to them about saying no and about using protection.

FACT: *A majority of teens do NOT see it as encouragement to have sex when parents or other adults encourage them to say no but also to use protection if they do go all the way.*