

THE SECRET LIFE
OF THE
AMERICAN TEENAGER

DISCUSSION GUIDE



EPISODE TWELVE

FOR TEENS

Stuff to talk about:

- Even though Amy and Ben had talked about getting married before, Amy is suddenly very interested in making it happen right away. What do you think changed her mind so fast? Her love for Ben? The fact that her mom said she wouldn't be the one caring for the baby? Why do you think marriage seems like a good idea to her now?

FACT: *Marriages between teenagers are two to three times more likely to end in divorce than marriages between people who are at least 25 years old.*

- Amy seems surprised when her mom says not to count on her to take care of the baby. What did you think of that? Why was she so surprised? Was Anne too harsh? Or was it the dose of reality Amy needed? Do you think Amy's mom should be the one to care for the baby while Amy finishes school? What do you think your mom would do in this situation? Do you think this conversation helped Amy realize what caring for a baby might really be like? Why didn't she realize it sooner?

FACT: *Parenthood is the leading reason that teen girls drop out of high school.*

- When Grace and her mom are talking about whether Grace can go out with Ricky, Mrs. Bowman says she wants Grace to be able to talk to her about sex — which wasn't the situation with Kathleen's own mom when she was growing up. Do you think parents nowadays are more likely to want to have open conversations about this stuff than they were in previous generations? Why do you think this has changed? Do you talk with your parents about sex? About relationships? Do you wish you talked more or less with them about these topics? Are the conversations helpful? Why or why not?

FACT: *Teens say their parents have more influence over their decisions about sex than any other factor — including friends, the media, siblings, or religion.*



- Even though Ben loves Amy and has wanted to marry her for a while, he seems uneasy with it when the time actually comes. He wants to tell his dad, and he wants Amy to call her parents, but she doesn't allow it. If you were Ben, what would you have said? Why did he back down on something so important to him? Would you have gone through with the wedding if your parents weren't there? Have you ever been in a situation you knew was wrong but didn't say anything because others were pressuring you? How do you feel about it now?

TIP: *Trust your instincts. When you know something isn't right, don't make excuses for why you should go along with it. Think about how you'll feel the next day — and do what will make you proud of yourself, not regretful.*

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.

- This episode deals a lot with marriage — the Juergens are fighting and are getting divorced, the Bowmans are trying to patch things up after a misunderstanding about a long-ago infidelity, Amy and Ben have a spur-of-the-moment wedding without their parents' knowledge or blessing, and Grace's brother Tom announces that he wants to marry the girl he just met. Do these scenarios seem realistic to you? How do you think the Juergens' crumbling union affects Amy's view of marriage? Some questions to ask your teens: What kind of marriage will you want for yourself? How do you know when you're ready for marriage? Do you know a married couple whose relationship you admire? Why?

FACT: *Almost one in five teens (17%) say they don't know anyone who serves as an example of a healthy relationship.*

TIP: *Actions speak louder than words. The way you handle your own relationships influences your teens — just as much as your conversations do. If you show them what a healthy, responsible relationship looks like, they'll be more likely to model that in their own lives. And if you've made mistakes in your relationships, or done things you counsel your teens not to do, you can still help them learn from your experiences. They won't think it's hypocritical if you talk about why you feel the way you do.*

- At one point in this episode, Adrian's mom says to her, "I'm your mother; I'm not your best friend." What do you think about that? Do you know teens and parents who are "best friends"? What's the difference between a best friend and a parent? Why is it so hard for many parents to be parental — are they afraid their teens won't like them? Won't trust them? Ask your teens if they have friends whose parents act more like friends than parents. What do they think about it?

FACT: *Most teens say they enjoy spending time with their parents. They also want to know where you stand on issues like sex, relationships, and pregnancy. They're listening to you, even if they don't always act like it.*