

**LJH34 26.9.89**

23,5; esw; French and English GCE, but now taking professional qual for administration; lives with ma but wants to move out; Ma is [SECRETARIAL ROLE], pa is [SKILLED TRADE] but parents separated when she was 3 (bro is 7 years older, married); she is [ACCOUNTANCY ROLE]; not religious, is heterosexual, not active at the moment but very active at times in the past.

Small, thin, dark, attractive, hair slightly frizzed out, casually dressed in track suit bottom, dark green t shirt and jacket (made out of same sort of material as the t shirt). She had been keen to come to talk to me, and one of the themes which emerged from our conversation was that she saw herself as 'attention seeking'. I suggested at one point that this might be something she had been labelled as early on and accepted it as a description, but it might not even be true. She felt it had happened fairly early on. She is a depressive (in her view and terms and the doc has given her pills and is trying to arrange for her to talk to someone) and has contemplated suicide. What stops her is upsetting her ma, with whom she has had a difficult, but now has a relatively satisfactory relationship.

Parents broke up when she was 3, ma remarried, stepfather used to hit her (LJH34) when she was older I think and there was a traumatic and dramatic scene when she was c 14 at which point ma got rid of step pa, which she had wanted to do for years according to LJH34. Stepfather had found some diaries of hers in which she described what she was doing with a boyfriend at the time (petting and such, but not intercourse "we were so innocent we would never have got to it"). He made an enormous scene, told her ma, called her pa and stepmother around, and it seems the whole crowd accosted and accused her. Called her all sorts of names. Step pa said that she was provocative to him, walking about without underclothes on. It particularly shocked her that he should have said this in front of her pa, and she had no intention of trying to attract him, she hated him. I asked if he might not have been projecting (not in those words). She thought there might have been some of that in there.

She has had a number of sexual relationships, but also periods of celibacy (whilst in a relationship which started out physical) and promiscuity (in her words). The first sexual relationship was with someone she periodically returns to, and he has reappeared on the scene recently, although she feels that she has matured and does not want to be with him.

Things emerged in this interview as time went on, like the bits re step pa, it was not all out on the table from the start, but I'm neatening it up here. They decided to have sex in the first relationship bcs they were madly in love and it was his birthday, she was 15. She left home to live with him for a very short while, but returned to live with ma, although it seems the relationship continued for 3 years this first time. She became pregnant (whilst under 16, he was just 16) and felt that although she wanted the baby, but it was impossible and she would have to have an abortion, which she seemed to try to secure, with some hold-ups from the medical end. The boyfriend was violent, and punched her in the stomach, after which she had a miscarriage. This was what emerged later, that he had punched her immediately before the miscarriage. Initially she described the miscarriage, her feelings, how awful it was to wake up in a maternity ward,

her feelings of guilt, which persist to this day re the child, she wanted to get rid of it so it died, and guilt re letting her mother down. Mother, who she was afraid to tell, seemed to come up supportive at the time of the miscarriage, tho it made their relationship very difficult and strained, and they have only actually been able to talk about it very recently. She said the first relationship broke up bcs of his violence, that was all she knew re love, thought that was the way it was, but grew up and realised you did not have to be punched about. But also felt that he might well be the love of her life, or at least, always trying to recapture the magic of being in love that first time. (He had been abused (beaten) as a child, and gone into care where he was also at a certain point the victim of violence. She understood him, had a lot of sympathy for him, and so put up with a lot.)

Second major relationship started out sexual, but then she became celibate within it for two years, they were very good friends "more of a spiritual relationship', she could talk to him, but she felt that she had a sort of nervous breakdown during this period. She woke up one day and decided she had to leave. Then she had a period of promiscuity, which she thought she needed at the time, did not feel guilt about, didn't hurt anyone, and they were friends anyway. She always seems to have some potential boyfriends (male friends, ex-boyfriends) lurking in the wings to be brought on when needed. We discussed this, she hates to be alone, not to have a boyfriend. Although when she talked re actual sex she said she thinks it is 'dirty' and this comes from the way she was brought up. I asked her whether she enjoyed the sex during this relatively guilt-free period of promiscuity, and she said that it was the hugging and kissing, the affection and attention that she wanted. She could not help feeling when she was actually having intercourse that it was 'dirty'.

Had almost no sex ed at school, nor at home, but she reads a lot, so learned from that. She knew quite a bit re AIDS and is scared and only has sex with a condom now (sometimes she has been using pill and condom). Was on the pill from time of the miscarriage until quite recently. She thinks young people do not pay enough attention to the risk of AIDS, think it has nothing to do with them. Some of her friends do risky things. She was scared of the risks of other STDs, had one in the past and afraid that she might become infertile. She wants children at some stage. Feels she has a pattern of leaving relationships when she feels she is not getting enough attention. Goes for total immersion at the beginning, seeing them every day, everything else drops away. Last bf made her a little more mature in her view, bcs she did not feel as if she was in control in the relationship, as she usually does.

Safe sex meant condom use, but she also valued other forms of sexual activity, intercourse was not essential for her, but she felt it was expected. That was what sex was supposed to be about.

Feels she can talk to men more easily than women, confides in the male friends re her sexual activity.

Very late in the conversation, when my impression was totally other, she said that she was a feminist. She has a couple of fairly close (or at least long term) women friends. But she feels she must put on an act with them, she is always telling them to be strong, not to let men get to them, so she does not want to reveal when she has problems with men to them. So she talks to men, about her problems, not women. She also feels there is a double standard, but feels that sometimes she feels that way too, if someone is called a 'bitch' or whatever, she agrees with it. Then feels ashamed of thinking that, bcs she sees herself as 'liberal'. She made a few statements like that, what she felt she

wanted to think and what she thought being different and making her feel guilty. She is also having problems with her eating at the moment, went down to 7 stone she said, and does not like eating in front of others. Then binges by herself. Risks, she related the urge to commit suicide to having recently passed her driving test, and doing risky things when driving on the motorway, pushing it into danger. I suggested that she takes risks with herself, in the way she goes into these relationships, in the car, with her health with the eating problems.

There were a lot of contradictions in here, and maybe some fantasy. My impression when talking to her was that what she was describing was true, she seemed as if she was talking about real things that had happened to her. She felt she had some insight into why she did things, but could not seem to change the pattern of her behaviour. But when I look at the whole picture, I am not too sure. The way it emerged, in bits, not a neatly tied package of a story makes it seem more convincing, but maybe she was stringing together a whole series of fantasy packages. I don't know why I am expressing these doubts, because she was totally convincing to talk to, seemed sincere. The contradictions in her story (not so much story, as presentation) are those we have come to expect, not attempts to mislead. Young women live these contradictions daily (don't we all). Maybe I am just putting it on record. In fact I was a bit worried about her at the end, urged to make sure she returned to the doc (appointment tomorrow) and tried to see someone to talk to about these things. She said this doc seemed to take her seriously, others had not in the past (more of her 'attention seeking' behaviour). See what you think when you read the script.