

LJH31 17.8.1989

Helen

Q. So how did you get hold of the questionnaire?

A. A friend gave it to me -

Q. Yeah

A. - who works for a youth club, she works...

Q. Well one of the main things that we're interested in... about young women and their relationships -

A. Yeah

Q. - what they feel about them, what they think about them, what's the most important relationship to them. What would you say is the most important relationship to you?

A. My daughter, the relationship with my daughter, and if I can get another man - 'cos I've got a kid and I'm separated, basically get another man, and then how that's gonna work out. That's the most important to me really.

Q. How old is your daughter?

A. She's two and a half.

Q. Yeah. How is she? How is she, how's she getting along?

A. She's alright, she's... a lot -

Q. Yeah?

A. She's - she's at the stage where she has tantrums, you know, she goes a bit mad at times but she's alright...

Q. Where is she now?

A. She's at nursery...

Q. This - the relationship with the father -

A. Yeah

Q. - how did that work out?

A. It didn't work out really, I mean like I got pregnant when I was sixteen and we were still going together but after a while it was such responsibility asking like to him that - it was just too much, you know, like... was saying, she's asking too much from him.

Q. How old is he?

A. He was a year older than I was, a year and a half older, and after a while he started getting a bit violent as well, so I had to break it off. I couldn't take it anymore.

Q. Yeah. Were you living together?

A. Yeah, well... like he would go out to work and it was just too much commitment for both of us, I was cleaning up and doing his dinner, and he wouldn't come in at the right time and -

Q. Yeah

A. - it was just too much. I had to do everything for him, like, he just didn't want it, so in the end I just gave up. It's better now.

Q. Do you still see him?

A. Yeah, I do still see him, I mean we've got a good friendship more now than it's ever been, and he's said to me that he still wants me back, but I'm not gonna take him back, 'cos I know it's gonna be the same again, all over again.

Q. Yeah.

A. I won't accept it.

Q. Yeah. How long had you been together before you got pregnant?

A. About a year and a half. I've known him since I was about fourteen, we started going out together when I was about fifteen,... about a year and a half.

Q. Is that the first sort of relationship -

Q. - big relation that I've ever had, yeah, the first one.

Q. And the first person that you'd slept with, made love with?

A. No, before that it was a twenty-five year old guy –

Q. Yeah?

A. - who I didn't - I didn't know what I was doing, I thought I was in love, and at the time I was going through a lot of - what is it, adolescence, you know, I thought... he loves me, I thought ... a guy who loves me, that time, so I slept with him, I didn't really want it, he provoked me into it, you know.

Q. What were the circumstances, how had you met him?

A. Well he was upstairs and I was downstairs, when I used to live with sort of like hostel parents. At the time I was going through a bad patch, so I think that - that was the only reason why I did have sex with him, you know, 'cos I wasn't getting on...

Q. Yeah. And was it sort of like a relationship or just like a one night -

A. No, it was like a one-off. You know I didn't want it really, I just wanted someone to love at that time. He just wanted a bit of, you know,...

Q. Yeah. What was it like, I mean was it pleasant, unpleasant -

A. No, it was -

Q. - as you thought it would be?

A. I don't know, I was frightened, I was feeling very frightened and scared, you know, but that was the first time I - I was a virgin, that was the first time I'd ever had sex.

Q. Yeah.

A. You know, I just sort of like - scared, I didn't know what to do, didn't know what my feelings were towards this guy or anything. Which I didn't really have any feeling...

Q. Yeah. And afterwards did you see him around or -

A. Well I had to move back to my mum at that - that stage, because at the time, 'cos I was going through a bad patch, I took an overdose when I was about fourteen, fifteen, my mum didn't want me living ... hospital, 'cos she was frightened that I'd do it again, you know, and I went back to live with my mum. And that relationship didn't really work out... we both wanted to, I didn't... such a long time beforehand, and that was it.

Q. Yeah. I mean when you first...

A. I mean it wasn't like, it wasn't like - it wasn't - see my mum got beaten up when she was younger, when she was nineteen, twenty, and she had four kids to like bring up, and she was in a refuge and she met these two women – and [INTERVIEWEE LIVED WITH MUM'S FRIENDS].

Q. But you saw your mum?

A. Yeah, I saw my mum like every Saturday or whenever she phoned up or when I ever phoned her, whatever, it wasn't sort of like I didn't see her at all.

Q. Yeah.

A. But like when I went back to live with my mum it was sort of like - we both expected different things from each other, you know, 'cos we'd both been wanting each other and then just, you know, it didn't work out.

Q. So how is it now, the relationship with your mum?

A. Oh, it's very good, very good. I mean we're both the same star sign, born on the same sort of like birthday, [REDACTED], and we get on really well now actually, I mean I can talk to her and she can talk to me and, you know, it's sort of like - there's something special there between us, it's not sort of like mother and daughter, it's more, it's a little bit more than that, it isn't sort of like, you know, how you see mother and daughters now like on the streets, it's sort of like - it's something really special that we've got together, you know, and I think like if she's angry with me she - she won't tell me, she sort of like you know - I don't know, it's different, I don't know, I can't explain it.

Q. Mm. It sounds good though, whatever.

A. Yeah, yeah.

Q. Does she feel the same way?

A. Yeah, she's very proud of me, 'cos I brought up... I mean she's helped me a lot moneywise, 'cos it's hard like, I'm on social security, really hard like, helps me a little bit moneywise and she tries to help me to budget as well, but she still thinks that I'm doing very well, and she helps me a lot, you know like if I want a babysitter I'll ask my sister or my mum or whatever, and they would help me out, you know, just so long as that I don't mess them about, you know -

Q. Yeah

A. - they'd help me out.

Q. ... But it sounds as if it's gone through a difficult phase that you've managed to get through -

A. Yeah.

Q. - to something good.

A. Yeah. It's better the way it is now, I mean I'm glad that I've got my own flat...

Q. What's the flat like...?

A. ... Well it's just been done up, but I mean it's not posh, it's just sort of like - where the person decorated it... It's really nice, I'm quite happy about it.

Q. ... what a nice street this was.

A. Oh, I don't like this street anymore.

Q. No?

A. I mean this area's a dump. I mean it's nice if you live by yourself, but when you're bringing up children around here I don't much like it, I mean there's a lot of - look at the rubbish, a lot of rubbish everywhere, a lot of litter and - compared to Islington it's much tidier... so much poverty...

Q. ...

A. Yeah, yeah, that's right. I mean you get that in Islington as well but - working class people down there, they're trying to improve themselves, you know, to their standards. That's what it looks like anyway.

Q. Yeah. You were saying that - well, let me ask you another question about the relationships -

A. Yeah.

Q. - after this first experience, were there anymore before you had... the father of...

A. No, no.

Q. So he was like the second -

A. Yeah -

Q. - the second -

A. Yeah. But he always thought he was the first -

Q. Yeah. You didn't mention -

A. No, I did, I said, you know I'm not a virgin and he went - he was sort of like shocked, you know, he thought I was a virgin...

Q. So that - what did he - I mean what was, his reaction was shocked, but did it make him behave differently towards you?

A. No, I - he was just shocked, he thought 'cos I was quiet and, you know, I was quiet towards him... like shy, that he always thought I was a virgin, he assumed that I was. 'Cos I used to go out with him before, when I was younger, as well, when I was about fourteen; and then he went off, 'cos he used to work down the bottom of this road, work in a garage, and I fancied him... and then I got a friend to say that I liked him, and then he went off 'cos [REDACTED], and I didn't see him, but he put just sort of like, a silly relationship, you know silly sort of like fling, and then I kept writing him letters... all this and all that, and then in the end he got in touch with me, when I was fifteen, and it started from there...

Q. ... You were clearly very keen at the time. What about the quality of the relationship, I mean it got - it got difficult after you'd had the baby, but beforehand?

A. It was really nice. I mean - I mean the only thing was 'cos I was young and he was young and the pressures of life - but it was something different, I mean like you didn't have somebody else to care about, you could have walked out on the street and not have cared about this other little person.

Q. Yeah.

A. You know, so it put a strain on us, you know, and he said that after I got pregnant that I was... Whilst I was pregnant I was moaning a lot 'cos I was going through hormone - hormone changes.

Q. What - had you - I mean was it accidental that you became pregnant?

A. No, I planned it. Yeah, I mean I - at the time... like my mum kept saying to me oh, you're gonna get pregnant, I said no, I'm not, no, I'm not, you wait and see, but I wanted a baby really, and I think that the only reason why I wanted it was to keep him.

Q. Yeah?

A. Yeah, I think that was the only reason why I wanted to get pregnant, was so that I wouldn't lose him, you know, 'cos I loved him, or I thought I loved him.

Q. Yeah. What about -

A. 'Cos he wanted - he wanted a kid as well.

Q. He did?

A. Yeah.

Q. Yeah. Before you got pregnant were you taking precautions?

A. Yeah, I was at a certain time, then I said to my boyfriend that I wasn't gonna take any anymore...

Q. ...

A. Then I went to go and get a cap, but I didn't like that. Too much hassle. And then after a while I just stopped using contraceptives and I sort of like told him, well look, I want a kid, you know. And he said that he wanted one as well and ... I got pregnant.

Q. Yeah.

A. After about six months or whatever.

Q. Had you before - but before that you had been using -

A. Yeah, we'd been using contraception...

Q. Yeah...

A. ...

Q. What about the first guy?

A. No, I never.

Q. A bit unexpected...

A. Yeah, I was shocked I suppose. I said to him, can, like can you use a Durex at that time, 'cos AIDS wasn't going around then, I wouldn't have sort of insisted that he used a Durex 'cos I was quite, I still am frightened of AIDS, but in them times I didn't really know anything about it, fourteen -

Q. Yeah

A. It's quite young -

Q. Yeah.

A. -... Like nobody knew anything, a lot, well nobody knew a lot about it then, and I even said to him like, could you use a Durex, he said I won't come inside you, so I thought, you know, that's - even though it's a rubbish motto, I won't come inside you, I thought yeah... and that's it.

Q. So you did ask.

A. Yeah, yeah.

Q. Do you think you would now, I mean if you started a relationship?

A. Well I - I - I have started a sort of relationship with another guy, but it hasn't gone anywhere, I mean you know, I met him... friend introduced me to him and I sort of like said to him, why don't you come to my house sometime, you know after about a year and a half or whatever, no, about a year, cos (?) we got to seeing each other again, and I did ask him to use a Durex and he didn't mind using it, you know. But - in a way he did mind 'cos he was sort of like - he couldn't feel the proper sensations as if you use a Durex, he said, but I'm gonna - even if I'm on the pill I'm gonna ask you to use a Durex anyway, whether you like it or not. And after a while talking and... whatever, I ain't seen him since.

Q. You haven't?

A. No.

Q. No?

A. No. I ain't seen him since. I mean, two weeks ago I saw him and he came round, I said, look, where the hell have you been, you know I've got a kid and you come round my house at four o'clock... and he sort of like, he was playing silly games with me, he said - he's the same age as me, he's nineteen, and - and then I asked him, look don't mess me about, if you really care for me come around again Sunday, 'cos this was a Saturday night that he came around, he never came round on the Sunday night, but then if he come around - see he probably - 'cos it's been a week now, a week and - Wednesday, Thursday - he might come around Saturday night, say, make up all excuses, you know -

Q. Yeah, yeah.

A. And I'll just tell him to forget it, 'cos obviously I knew what he was after, and I don't want that, I want a relationship. I mean I need it for my child and for my security, I don't need some...

(Pause)

Q. So that you - you envisage having a sort of settled relationship?

A. Yeah, well that's what I hope to get.

Q. Yeah.

A. I mean I prefer to get myself sorted out for myself first, I don't really know what I want - I know that I want a relationship, but I prefer to get myself sorted out, myself settled down into knowing what sort of person I am and what sort of person I want. You know, I don't wanna sort of like one-night stand, I don't like them, you know, 'cos you don't hardly know the person.

Q. Have you done that much or -?

A. No. That was the first time that I thought - no reason why - 'cos see I had sex with him quite quickly - the reason why I had sex with this guy ALAN quickly was 'cos I trusted him, you know, and he was telling me a whole load of bullshit, basically.

Q. You said on the questionnaire that you... about how men messed you around...

A. Yeah.

Q. You feel that, do you?

A. Yeah. I mean like me and my friend were talking about everything... you know, everything, and ... and how we're getting on and what we'd been up to and how much money we've got and things like that - we talk about anything really... the lot. I don't understand what they're doing.

Q. No.

A. I mean no matter how much you tell them, look why do this to me, I just had all this from another relationship, they do the same thing. Unless you get a guy who's really nice and understands you, whatever.

Q. And you feel you haven't had that yet.

A. Never.

Q. Not even with the father -

A. Well I had it before I had (child's name).

Q. Yeah.

A. I haven't had it since... go to college and study...settle down properly.

Q. You said you were thinking... college but...

A. Yeah, I mean I sorted all that out, I'm going to [NAME OF COLLEGE] in September, 'cos she'll be at nursery, and I'm doing a course and then after the course - ... two year course... after that, do something like for a year, 'cos they don't take you that young (?) anymore... and it's the right age that I feel that I can settle down.

Q. It sounds as though... sorted out.

A. Yeah. I really... fourteen -

Q. Yeah?

A. - and when I was thirteen I wanted... you know like (?) be a nurse, helping other people. Like when I came... I wanted to be a social worker, you know, try and help people.

Q. Quite hard going.

A. Yeah. My mum's a [CARING PROFESSION].

Q. Yeah. ...

A. Yeah. I know quite a bit about it, sort of like help people in trouble, and like my - when my friend was pregnant... and I helped them through it... So I help people... refuges, things like that friends, you know, friends of mine.

Q. Mm.

A. I feel that I can help people -

Q. - in that sort of way.

A. I've got the talent. Well I feel that I've got something there to try and help people.

Q. Well it sounds as if you're getting well - well sorted out... Can I ask you something again about your relationships, which is more about the sort of sexual aspect of it?

A. Mm, yeah.

Q. Did you enjoy it, I mean was it pleasurable? The first one -

A. No, the first one wasn't. I mean, before I had (child's name) it was nice, you know, sort of like different. It was pleasurable, but I felt too dominated, I felt too sort of like - every time we had to have sex, after that, after having (child's name), you know, sometimes I - I wouldn't want it, sometimes I wouldn't want it, but I felt sometimes that I'd been too pushed into it, you know, 'cos it was like a steady relationship, but I mean -

Q. So you couldn't sort of make any decision yourself or -

A. No.

Q. - or say no or something.

A. No, no I mean like if I said no it wouldn't be sort of like that'd be the end of it, he'd still carry it on, you know, and in the end I'd just give up, I'd go asleep afterwards, you know, it'd be like that.

Q. Yeah... boring.

A. Yeah. After a while it did get boring, after I had (child's name).

Q. Do you think that you're - but before you had, I mean you said... What made you decide to turn it into a sexual relationship in the beginning?

A. Well I decided that - because he (we?) sort of like got fed up with touching and - just touching, I felt that like he (we?) wanted more than that... hadn't actually... sex...

Q. Yeah, yeah.

A. ... before that even... you know, but -

Q. So it was gonna happen anyway -

A. Yeah

Q. - progression in the relationship.

A. Yeah, I thought it was gonna happen so I just thought... I felt it was the right thing to do.

Q. Yeah. Well... yeah.

A. Whatever time I got pregnant I thought that I knew everything and that even if I had - I did have a kid, I would be able to look after it, you know like... when you... don't really sort of like know everything, but you think you do.

Q. Mm, yeah...

A. ... I mean whilst I was at college, 'cos I was pregnant, I used to go a sixth form... and I'd get people come up to me and say to me, why are you pregnant, you know, and there'd be girls there thinking, god, she's pregnant, how does she cope going to college -

Q. Yeah.

A. You know, and they'd sort of like admire me, and then I'd go write a little leaflet, you know, for young women on when the baby's young...vegetables... I think a lot of women... young... much more healthy, need advice before they think about having a kid, you know, because like they don't know anything about it, basically. I mean I never, I thought that I did but I never. You know, I didn't... and food and money and if you can get someone to babysit for you, you know, you've got to ask in advance as well. There's clothes, there's everything. 'Cos you don't think about that, you just think about having a little baby to - to look after.

Q. Yeah. Take all the responsibility of adult life... sort of thing -

A. Yeah

Q. - at a very young age.

A. Yeah. It's hard.

Q. Yeah.

A. ... I was cooking for CARL, I took on a lot of responsibility at fifteen, sixteen, 'cos I was pregnant, I still cooked for him and cleaned the clothes and that, whatever.

Q. Like a sort of housewife.

A. Yeah, yeah, it was like that, and in the end I got bored with that sort of lifestyle. Well, for him anyway, he didn't appreciate it.

Q. Just took you for granted.

A. Yeah, that I was there, and he knew that I was gonna be there...

Q. You decided that you just wanted to leave.

A. Yeah... It wasn't the same, it wasn't love anymore, it was just the same boring routine every day and he wasn't changing that, or he didn't know how to change it. He didn't respect me for who I was, he wanted something different, which I felt that I couldn't be.

Q. That sounds as if you both wanted the other to be something different.

A. Yeah.

Q. ... find somebody who fits the bill... One of the other things we're interested in... is the sort of sex education you got. Would you - how - what did you think of the sex education at school, I mean...

A. Yeah, yeah, I got taught a lot of things, I mean like -

Q. You ticked everything.

A. Yeah, I got taught a lot of things, I mean like - 'cos I was brought up with lesbians as well, I got taught from an early - an early age.

Q. Mm. What, so you learned at home, stuff at home as well?

A. Yeah. I learned about lesbians, heterosexuals, gay men and bisexuals and - everything - it was up to me to decide who I wanted to be, they made that decision up to me -

Q. Yeah.

A. - and they taught me about periods, you know, everything else. But I learnt - I mean I learnt more about periods in school as well, like in primary school I saw a sanitary towel, I went and told... what is it? And the teacher taught us from then what it was, about periods. And then I came home one day... secondary school... thirteen, thirteen and a half, and I came with my periods, but I was taught a lot about it, I was given books and magazines to read about it, all about adolescence and...

Q. So you felt very well informed...

A. Yeah. In secondary school we were taught about, you know, sexual diseases, pregnancy and diseases and contraceptives, everything.

Q. Yeah.

A. ... biology.

Q. In biology?

A. Yeah. Mostly it was in biology,...

Q. So you felt it was useful, this sort of stuff you learned at school?

A. Yeah, it was funny as well, sort of like, I mean we - we were we were sort of like, you know, ugh, I'm not touching that, like the teacher would pass it on to you and show you like through a carrot what a Durex looked like, a penis, whatever -

Q. Yeah.

A. And sort of like - he'd show you the cap, and the KY jelly and all that, and you pass it round - ugh, take it away, you know.

Q. Was it in a mixed group or -

A. Yeah, it was in a mixed group.

Q. Yeah. Do you think that caused embarrassment...

A. No, I think it helped me. It helped me to understand about men, you know, attitudes -

Q. Yeah.

A. - and women's attitudes, together, you know.

Q. So you did talk about that aspect, I mean it wasn't sort of just the physical -

A. No, I mean the teacher we had was sort of like trendy, he sort of like - he knew what to sort of like talk about in biology,... you know, he explained it, he said there's nothing wrong with it, you know... on it...

Q. So you think - it sounds as if it was quite reasonable.

A. Yeah. I got taught quite a bit.

Q. And having these other sources of information as well.

A. Yeah.

Q. You said that there wasn't much about AIDS because it wasn't around. Where do you think that you first heard about it?

A. I think it was a couple of years ago. I can't remember where I first heard about AIDS.

Q. There was a lot of stuff in the newspapers and on the telly at one point.

A. Yeah, there was a lot of it, wasn't there? About three, four years ago.

Q. Do you think that was the first -

A. Yeah. And that's when I said oh, my god... Durex. But even then there's not even safe.

Q. Yeah, well it might break.

A. Yeah. So how do they expect - I don't know - I mean, how do they expect people to sort of like live if they're - why don't they invent something different? You know... sort of like secure and safe and whatever.

Q. Mm. Did you feel that? Some people, young women that I've spoken to, said that... cheat on them because here they are, they're young, they want to have sex and a big threat suddenly hangs over it and really changes the whole thing. Did you feel like that?

A. No, I didn't feel so much like that 'cos I don't feel like I want sex all the time like that -

Q. Yeah.

A. - I just feel that I want a relationship, but I know it involves sex and all that. I do feel it a little bit, but not so much, but it's sort of that I feel that there's more than just sex in a relationship.

Q. Well, yeah.

A. You know, I don't just want one-night stands. It's different if a girl wants a one-night stand... sex or whatever, then obviously she's gonna feel a bit frightened 'cos of, you know, the threat or whatever. But I don't feel so much of it.

Q. You feel that - well in any case I mean you say that... but do you feel that if you go into a relationship where you knew the person and felt that you knew their sexual history -

A. No, I'd still ask him to use a Durex.

Q. Yeah.

A. ... trust a guy. He can say whatever.

Q. Yeah.

A. I mean, I mean I just told a friend like if a guy says to you, I don't wanna use a Durex, just say look I'm not on the pill - it's sort of like, you know mess them about as well.

Q. Yeah.

A. 'Cos I mean if someone came up to me and said, oh, I won't use a Durex, say look, it's either that or nothing. 'Cos I'm not on the pill. Just lie to them, you know. And after you get to know them more you say, look, I was on the pill but I was - but even then I think it - it's still frightening. 'Cos I mean how many - how many people are gonna die in a year or something. That's the thing that really frightens me, you know, if I think I'm gonna be one of these people who are gonna die.

Q. Yeah. Do you feel you know much about AIDS? I mean what - what do you know, do you know -

A. I watch programmes about it but quite a bit of time ago, and after a while you sort of, like, forget a lot - I know it's a disease and that it starts on the body, you know, and the brain, and you can't do a lot of things, you know, you can't - well, they haven't cured it yet, have they?

Q. No. They've found a few drugs that can control it -

A. Yeah.

Q. ...

A. ... But they're still gonna die.

Q. Yeah.

A. But mind you they said that they - I mean I remember there was one guy who had AIDS who I watched on TV and he (?) had an injury, and he recovered from it.

Q. Really?

A. Yeah, I'm sure - I'm sure it was something like that.

Q. Yeah. Maybe - maybe it was something related. What about the difference between HIV and AIDS?

A. Oh, that, yeah, that might have been it. I mean I don't know I only know about AIDS, I don't know about HIV positive or negative or whatever.

Q. Yeah. Just ... but not about... Well, the HIV is the virus that you get, and it may or may not develop into AIDS, and it can sort of remain dormant for quite a number of years, that's why people are so worried -

A. Oh I see -

Q. - because they don't know whether it's gonna turn into AIDS or not, so there are all these people who may have the virus -

A. - give it to the next person -

Q. - they can pass it on, and it may or may not develop in them to AIDS, and you can't tell whether you've got it or not unless you have one of these tests. Would you consider having - I mean, it's probably not necessary for yourself, but would you consider asking someone to have the test, to see whether they might -

A. I don't know, I mean if I was going into a relationship I would expect myself and that person to go together.

Q. Yeah.

A. Like if I wasn't into a steady relationship then I would just forget it and just use a Durex or whatever.

Q. Yeah.

A. If I was going into like marriage or something like that then I would ask him to use a Durex - I mean not a Durex, ...-

Q. ... take a test and check it out, yeah.

A. Both of us go down, if one of us has got it...

Q. Well what about - what do you know about safe sex? There was quite a lot of publicity a while ago -

A. I probably know about it but -

Q. Well, you do, yeah -

A. ...I've heard of it, safe sex.

Q. Safe sex, well when I say safe sex what does it mean to you?

A. That you don't do anything.

Q. Ah, well, it's - what they're - a lot of the sort of information about it was all around using Durex, which you've been saying you do anyway, but safe sex that you don't actually run a risk if the Durex remains intact, sort of thing.

A. Yeah.

Q. But let me ask you another thing - what are the ways in which you can catch AIDS or HIV?

A. What are the ways?

Q. How can you catch it, yeah.

A. Gay men... intercourse in the bum, and women can catch it as well through sexual intercourse, and gay people through actually having intercourse...

Q. Mainly sex, but there's also blood.

A. Ah yeah, blood, yeah.

Q. Yeah, and needles.

A. Yeah, heroin and all that. I wouldn't do anything like that.

Q. No, no? Do you know anybody who does?

A. No. Not heroin. No, I know people who smoke pot and all that, but not heroin, they wouldn't sort of, like, take that risk.

Q. They wouldn't inject?

A. No.

Q. ...

A. ...

Q. So you can catch it in those various sorts of ways. But the main one that you... sexual... Well I mean I suppose the idea of safe sex is to do things in which you won't exchange those body fluids sort of thing, so you use a Durex or you do other sorts of things which don't necessarily involve intercourse, either for men or for women. Like you were talking about before, before you actually moved into having a sexual relationship with your boyfriend, you said you got fed up with touching... so I suppose that's, you do all that sort of thing -

A. Yeah.

Q. - rather than actually having intercourse. What do you think of that, I mean, does it matter?

A. I think it's a nice feeling but after a while you get too turned on.

Q. Mm. And you feel that you really want to have -

A. Yeah. Well I do anyway, I don't know about anybody else.

Q. Yeah. Is that what sex means to you sort of thing?

A. No, it doesn't mean just sexual intercourse. The word "sex" isn't just sexual intercourse to me, it's sort of like touching and holding each other and cuddling and touching and whatever, but, that's what sex means to me, having sex... After a while, you keep doing that all the time, it gets boring, you know, not boring as such, but you want something different. When I said to you it started getting a bit boring, I wanted something different, I wanted to see what it felt like...

Q. Yeah. Curiosity as well.

A. Yeah.

Q. When you were talking about your relationships with men, you -I mean - you were rather negative, I felt as if you don't really trust them -

A. No, I don't.

Q. Do you think there's kind of like a double standard about sex...

A. I don't know about that. I mean I just feel that I've been let down by men full stop. I don't know if any woman feels the same way. Because partly because I've never really sort of had a dad, sort of like 'cos my mum was beaten up -

Q. Yeah.

A. - I never learnt to trust any - any man basically -

Q. Yeah.

A. - you know, so - I wanted to trust my dad 'cos he was my dad, you know, but I don't - I don't feel that I can sort of like trust any man.

Q. Yeah.

A. You know, 'cos what CARL done to me, what this other guy done to me, what this guy just done to me now, so I mean basically that men... basically ...

Q. Yeah. Let's hope you meet a man that's not quite like that. How long ago did your dad disappear from your life, I mean how long -

A. I think I was seven, younger than that. You know, and I saw it through my mum being beaten up, just to know what it felt like,...

Q. Do you ever see him now or -

A. No. If I saw him now, I'd walk past him. If he went up to me I would... I'd just spit in his face for what he put my mum through, you know. 'Cos I don't know how any man can do things like that. He must be crazy...

Q. ...

A. Yeah, he was violent towards me, that's why I had to break off, I said to him look, if you get violent towards me, that's it, we're finished. 'Cos I didn't wanna go through the same thing that my mum went through with my dad -

Q. Yeah.

A. You know, if he hit me once he'd like think, oh, I can hit her again, she won't do anything, you know. I just said to him, the first time you hit me, that's it. The first time he hit me...

Q. Yeah...

A. I mean, but if you love a person it's not just as easy as sort of like, go away, you know. You accept - I mean I wasn't - I did expect him back a couple of times but he never hit me, he didn't go, you know... he used to do other things to me mentally, you know, which was sometimes just as bad -

Q. Yeah.

A. - like after a while I got an injunction out on him 'cos he smashed my windows and, you know... (?) key... (?) the right time when we'd finished... all finished together, he felt that he had the right to come and see her whenever he kind of felt like it. I just felt that was wrong, so that's when I got the injunction out... you haven't got as much rights as you think. You know, I put myself first and my child.

Q. Right.

A. That's the most important thing to me. And then after a while I may...

Q. When you find anyone suitable.

A. Yeah.

Q. Yeah.

A. ...

Q. ... bad experience... Religion, that was another question we were asking, would you...?

A. No, I don't - I don't believe in God at all. It's boring. It's not a thing, I mean - different, I wouldn't mind getting into it but it's something, God, God, God, God. I had a friend and he come round all the time, not preach it, but sort of like get it into my system that God loves you, you know, and I thought, flipping hell, shut up, you know, and I didn't wanna get into it, it was just too much of a complicated issue. I don't like getting into it.

Q. Yeah.

A. I don't know anything about it, I wasn't brought up to believe in God, I wasn't christened or anything, you know -

Q. Yeah.

A. I don't believe - I believe that there is a person there but not as much as, you know, some people make it out to be...

Q. Yeah. What about - there's a question I've been asking people, what how - how do you see yourself, what is your image of yourself? If you had to sort of describe yourself as a person to somebody else, what would you say?

A. Paranoid, a bit shy, not a lot, but I'm coming out a bit more now. What, do you mean in looks or in personality-wise or -

Q. Well, whatever, whatever - what's the strongest -

A. My strongest point, you mean?

Q. What you feel about yourself, you know, either looks or personality or anything.

A. I don't think I'm all that but - I think I've got a nice personality and I think I'm a very strong like person, you know, and that if I wanted to help somebody I could really help them and all that, I think I've got a talent for that...

Q. Do you think that your image of yourself, that is what other people think of you?

A. Yeah, I mean I - I'm stroppy as well, sort of like - yeah, people would say to me, yeah, she's being a right bitch. And I'm stubborn, and sometimes, I'm stubborn. It depends, I mean like in relationships, like even with friends I'm just so stubborn, you know. But I've got a strong personality.

Q. ... What about friends, do you -

A. Oh, I ain't got much - I ain't got much friends - I mean I have - I do - when I used to go to school I used to have loads of friends, but after I had a kid and I met CARL, I sort of - and now I've just got one good friend to me now, the same age as me, and we went to the same school together. We don't go out much as I would like, you know -

Q. What, babysitting problems?

A. Yeah - no, it's not babysitting, it's sort of like - it's the (?) things that we've got to go with. If she's - if she's got someone to go, I wouldn't wanna go then, you know, 'cos it'd be a wedding or something like that...

Q. What kind of thing do you like to do?

A. I like going out, enjoying myself. I mean that is the thing that she's got to do, but she works and everything, so it's hard for her to come back in the morning early, and sort of wake up and go to work and - I don't know.

Q. Mm. Yeah. But do you do many of the things that you like to do, going out, having a good time?

A. No, I don't do as much as I could 'cos I'm short of money...

Q. Yeah, that's a problem.

A. ... but I accept that.

Q. Well, I mean once you get your training...

A. ...

Q. But you haven't -

A. Yeah, I am. I mean it's hard at times, but it'll get easier.

Q. But you were saying how - how you wouldn't... have done it -

A. - if I knew a lot more about it beforehand -

Q. Yeah

A. - and not just from parents, I mean from teachers, teachers didn't say a lot about pregnancy in all, they just told you about contraceptives - they didn't say how hard it was to look after a kid or - and I think it should come from the teachers or somebody actually who's had a kid coming into the school who can relate to them, you know 'cos they're young themselves -

Q. Yeah.

A. - say like, just among girls really, and I think someone - boys I think to (?) assert girls more...

Q. Yeah. It's - a friend of mine has just written a book, she's working on a project... book about teenage mothers... different ways of... sort of... responsibility...

A. ... nursery now so I'm lucky, I've got time to myself when I want to. But it's still hard, even after nursery, sort of like she's going through a difficult stage at the moment. It's difficult coping by yourself... if I had two, another person to help me along with it,...

Q. When - is she still gonna be able to go to nursery...?

A. No, not really, but I'm keeping quiet.

Q. So what, you'll bring her -

A. Yeah, I'll bring her in until I get a place in Islington.

Q. Yeah, yeah.

A. But I'm gonna keep it quiet... nursery finds out...

Q. Yeah.

A. Once I've got the injunction out of CARL, I gave them a copy, to one of these people, nursery people or whatever, and she never stuck by it.

Q. ...

A. Yeah, she wasn't supposed to let him in. Anyway, she let him in and I gave her... copy... She never listened to me, she wasn't sticking by me, she was sticking by him, you know so just - after talking to the head of Social Services and... argument with... got her back in. It was sort of like they were all on his side, you know.

Q. Yeah.

A. They weren't sticking by me whatsoever, they... interest for the child, which they didn't think about the child, they thought about themselves basically.

Q. Yeah.

A. So I just got her back in there... transfer her to... quite close... and from there...

Q. Does she get on okay...?

A. Yeah, she gets on really well with them, but I think she'd prefer to see them a lot more, like it's not as easy as that.

Q. ...

A. I've tried to work things out but I can't, I can't...

Q. But you still...

A. Yeah. Quite (?) recently (?) I let him see her a lot...

Q. Yeah... It's all very complicated.

A. Yeah, it is, yeah.

Q. Still, you sound as if you've got things pretty well organised.

A. ...

Q. One of the things we've been asking young women to do for us is ... re-interview...

A. I smoke a lot.

Q. I left them out. No, actually, that's another thing I was gonna ask about,... about risky behaviour. What do you think - you're not - you don't take many risks in your sexual behaviour, but do you think you take risks in anything else that you do?

A. With my mouth I do.

Q. Yeah?

A. Yeah, talking about people.

Q. Yeah.

A. Nothing much than that. Like if I see somebody on the street looking terrible... you know. And it really annoys me, 'specially when I've - 'cos my child's mixed race, I get a lot of stick, but I can plait her hair and I look after her and she looks really lovely, she's a cute kid -

Q. Yeah.

A. - and when young black women see that, I can look after her... and I can plait her hair... white women with a little kid... big afro, whatever. They couldn't manage the hair - like I can plait my kid's hair properly and a couple of times... for no reason, I don't know them, and that's how I get in a fight with them and that's when I feel that I'm taking risks, when I've got my child to look after... carry shopping, you know. I had another woman saying to me, like two women, look at her, look at her... and I thought... disgusting sort of attitude.

Q. Do you just get that from black women, or do you get it from whites as well?

A. No, I get it from young black women.

Q. Yeah.

A. Like 'cos I look alright and I'm young, my daughter looks nice. I hate it. I mean I've got a lot of black friends. I don't know, it's just like - it's the wrong attitude, I don't know what it is with them. It's like they can't accept it still -

Q. Yeah.

A. - it's been going around for such a long time.

Q. Yeah. But not so much - you don't get it so much from whites? You think it's more accepted -

A. It's more accepted, yeah, black and white couples... I mean... But it's not acceptable, you know, so - I think from a black woman's point of view, not - not so much a black man's, a black woman's point of view, they feel degraded or something, you know. That's what... as well, you know. That's why I think I'm a bit paranoid.

Q. Yeah.

A. You know, like when I walk out in the street...

Q. Yeah, yeah. So what do you - get into rows in the street if they say anything?

A. Well sometimes, like if I know... something like that -

Q. Yeah.

A. - I won't bother. Well I would bother, I just like give them mouth and that, well -

Q. You get upset about it.

A. Yeah. Most of all it's shock. You know, I walk along with a big heavy bag pushing my daughter and all I think about is getting home, sitting down and resting my feet -

Q. Yeah

A. - and I get these black women saying, bloody slag, black daughter - you know, things like that, just 'cos I've got a mixed race kid.

Q. Yeah... So you think that's your only risky behaviour apart - what reminded me was you smoking, 'cos some people think that smoking's risky, and drinking.

A. Well I don't drink a lot - I mean - I mean I drink, but not to, you know, an over-(?)amount level...

Q. Yeah.

A. I - I smoke 'cos I feel that...

Q. Yeah

A. - you know it helps me sort of like feel better. I prefer smoking than drinking... smoking more than drinking I feel... You know, I gave up before when I was pregnant -

Q. Yeah.

A. - six, seven months. I can give it up again if I really wanted to but I don't.

Q. ...

A. ...

Q. Yeah. You said that some of your - your friends smoke dope and things like that. Do you ever -

A. ... they take - they smoke hash and they take - well I know a couple of people who... tablets and... and things like that, but I mean I've been asked do I want some and I said no.... me, 'cos I know that, even when I drink I'm sort of like - it's not the same person that I really am, you know, so I wouldn't bother with all that.

Q. Yeah. Prefer to stay the same.

A. Yeah. I mean drinking's bad enough - I like drinking when I've got the money, you know. When I ain't got the money, it doesn't bother me.

Q. No?

A. Like if I want a drink, okay, I drink, but if I don't feel like it I won't, you know, it's like that with me. It doesn't - doesn't bother me if I have a drink or not. But I've got to have cigarettes...

Q. So what - what I was gonna say before - one of the things that we're asking young women to do is if they would keep a diary for us for a short while, maybe for a couple of months or something like that, just writing about their relationships and their feelings, and also about what they're actually doing, especially in relation to sexual relationships.

A. Yeah...

Q. Well, I happen to have on me - I've got - just a notebook for you to write it down in and an envelope addressed to me for you to send it back. Stamp... I'll write the address on, and that's just for the letter...

A. So what's these diaries for after - after -

Q. Well it's just so that we'll know - what we really want to know is what young - the same sorts of things as I was asking you in the interview, it's to get a bit more detail on it... you know, what you're feeling and thinking and what you're actually doing in relationships. We'll just use them the same way we do -

A. ... just like a diary that you keep, like what your feelings are really, isn't it?

Q. Yeah. But we are especially interested in -

A. I haven't kept one of them for ages.

Q. - in anything you're actually doing as well, that is an important part of it. But the same as with all the material on the interview, it's all completely anonymous and what we'll do is try and get some information that will be helpful with the AIDS education and health education for young women, just sort of feed it back into the campaigns and everything, sex education at school and - and we probably will be - write reports about it but - but it will be so heavily disguised that nobody would ever -

A. I don't mind that anyway... if anything. 'Cos I think they've got the right to know what young women think.

Q. That's right, yeah, well that's what we - that's one of the main reasons why we're doing this, because I mean there's a lot said about young women, but people don't actually find out what they think and what they actually feel about what they're doing and about their own sexuality and so forth. I mean, how do you feel about your sexuality now?

A. Oh well, at the moment it's not progressing at all. It's just sort of like, by myself...

Q. Yeah.

A. I ain't doing anything with nobody, I mean like ALAN comes round and I feel like I want... whatever... you know...

Q. Yeah.

A. I probably might - I think I might say yes, but then again I might not, it depends how the mood takes me -

Q. Yeah, yeah.

A. I mean -

Q. How you feel about it at the time, you can't really judge.

A. Yeah, yeah. I might not 'cos I might think he's messing me about again, but I might feel that oh, I want to use him, you know.

Q. Yeah, yeah.

A. Why not use him?

Q. ... there and available. Take advantage of it if that's what you want at the time.

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay, well thanks very much for talking to me. Do you think -another thing we're asking... friends... Have you got any friends who you think might be interested?

A. Yeah, I think - yeah, I could ask a few.

Q. Shall I give you a couple of questionnaires. (interruption)

A. What sort of woman, I mean like person - person doesn't want a relationship with a man, just wants sex and they don't care about AIDS, like I said to ALAN, you know, the reason why I'm asking you to put a Durex on is I'm frightened about AIDS, and how many people have you slept with.

Q. Yeah.

A. At first he said twelve and - he's only nineteen - first he said twelve and then he said six, and then, you know, you don't know what to believe.

Q. Yeah, yeah.

A. Sort of like not just - who were they - and they have those ads where they sort of have two people in bed and then behind them all the people they've slept with sort of thing.

Q. Yeah, yeah.

A. To me, that's scary.

Q. Yeah. What - what would you count as being promiscuity?

A. Say it again?

Q. Promiscuity.

A. What, I've got to explain the meaning of it?

Q. No, what - well, yeah, what -

A. Well I've heard about it and I probably will know about it -

Q. Well I'll tell you then, shall I - promiscuity - it - the word is used to describe people who have lots of sexual relationships.

A. Oh, yeah.

Q. But the -

A. See I mean - I know about it but I can't get the word -

Q. Yeah, right - I didn't mean - it wasn't like, you know, a test to see whether you know, I thought you might know. But then people differ about how - you know, how many is too many, or a lot, or whatever.

A. Yeah.

Q. I mean, but when you said twelve and then six, when you said twelve it sounded as if you thought twelve's a lot, you know...

A. Yeah, twelve is a lot but six is a lot as well, to me, you know.

Q. No, some people think, oh well, you know, you go through a phase and you have a lot of one-night stands and, you know, it doesn't matter, and other people think -

A. See I mean - I mean - that's what I said to ALAN, I said that to ALAN, and he said to me well, I'm gonna die sooner or later anyway, ain't I?

Q. Yeah. So he's not bothered about it.

A. No.

Q. Do you think others of your friends are bothered about it?

A. No.

Q. Yeah. Or not changing their behaviour because of it.

A. No, I mean I talked to my best friend about it 'cos she had sex, anal sex, without using a Durex, and I was really upset with her for sort of, like, doing it, you know she just, it was like a little fling to her -

Q. Yeah.

A. I said look that's nasty, I mean it's nasty, but it's dangerous, I said to her, don't you know about AIDS and things like that, couldn't you use a Durex, she goes ..., I gotta die sooner or later anyway ain't I, and that's the attitude that some young women have.

Q. Yeah.

A. But - and they could - they could change it, you know, 'cos men do...

Q. Yeah.

A. You know, but it's just like, ...no, I don't wanna use a Durex and they think alright then, leave it.

Q. Yeah. But you think that they should stand -

A. It doesn't feel - it doesn't that any different, that much different, with a Durex on.

Q. From your point of view.

A. No. I mean okay, you can feel it a little bit, but it doesn't feel so much drastically different.

Q. Yeah.

A. You know.

Q. Yeah, some people do - they sort of say - well like you said that the... really don't like to use them.

A. Well it's mostly men, not women -

Q. Yeah

A. - not the women.

Q. Yeah.

A. It's mostly men that feel that they can't stand using it... whatever, but if women stood up a bit more about it then it would be alright.

Q. Do you think that would be a useful thing to put into, you know, sex education at school?

A. Yeah.

Q. Like you say they ought to be told about pregnancy... to be told about that?

A. Yeah, yeah. I think it's just women, young women, who need to assert themselves and like tell men what they want instead of men telling them what they want.

Q. Mm. And you think that's the way it usually goes?

A. Yeah. I mean it's gotta change. If they wanna stop AIDS then they've got to stop it with young women, 'cos men aren't gonna listen. You know if men say, look, I don't wanna use a Durex, then say okay then, fine, you don't care about me, and that's it. 'Cos that's what I would do. If a man wouldn't use a Durex... forget it...

Q. Yeah. Yeah, well that's it, you're absolutely right, and it is through young women that it's got to be controlled.

A. But the way I see it young women aren't going to stop it, I mean the young women I know aren't gonna stop sort of like - they don't care, put it that way, they don't care.

Q. Yeah. They don't think about the consequences as well. Well, maybe more information about the actual effects of AIDS if you've got it -

A. It's easy if you - if you sort of like - if you showed young people in schools what AIDS actually does to you, like, you know like... or whatever they've got... or whatever they've got... sort of like, films about pregnancy, a woman giving birth -

Q. Yeah.

A. - that freaks out kids, it freaked out me, it freaked out everybody, you know, you go 'ugh, no, the woman's in pain'. They see a person who's got AIDS and they're in the classroom and actually sort of like looking at the person, you know a young woman or whatever, a young man having AIDS, and what they have to do every day just to be alive, and I think they'd think about it a lot more.

Q. Mm, yeah.

A. I think that would be good -

Q. Yeah - the other thing -

A. I mean to me it's just this age, my age group who aren't gonna think about it 'cos they're not - they haven't been told to think about it, you know.

Q. Yeah. And they also need to make that connection between them, I mean you can show them people with AIDS and they'll think it's got nothing to do with them, I'm not at risk or something like that, 'cos they don't recognise what the dangers are from the inside. Did - at the beginning of a whole load of stuff about AIDS there was talk about a gay plague or something like that, did you ever think of that yourself?

A. No.

Q. Especially -

A. 'Cos I was brought up - 'cos I was brought up... I mean I think a lot of men think that, a lot of young men think that, a little amount of women -

Q. Yeah.

A. - but I think it's mostly young men who are frightened about that. You know, they think oh, it's only gay men, you know. 'Cos I think they're frightened of - is the idea, you know, some... rather than themselves.

Q. Mm.

A. ...

Q. ... I suppose they're doing it now with drugs...

A. But I mean how - how - how do we know that it's true, though, how do we know that - okay, we know that it's sort of like, it's there, but how do we know that it's actually from sex?

Q. Well I suppose that they've done quite a lot of studies to show that that's about the only behaviour that would have caused AIDS, and they've found - they've found, sort of tested sperm and stuff like that and found, you know... And they - I read something the other day, they've found it in tears even, but I mean they - not in sufficient quantity really for it - the only places that it can really get across to another human being is if you - mingling the blood or the sperm or whatever, if it gets into your blood stream that's supposed to be it, I mean something like, you know, a tear drop, wouldn't be sufficient -

A. So how many people do they say that's gonna die?

Q. Well, I'll try and remember the number, I keep seeing the figures and I put them out of my head, you know, but it's a lot, it's a hell of a lot, it's millions worldwide because it's spreading -

A. But I thought it was supposed to be from 1990 that -

Q. Well why they say that is because of this business of the lag, you know, because you can have the HIV for maybe about five years or something, then you start developing AIDS, and then you might live for about two years ...

A. ...scary.

Q. It is scary. But I mean the likelihood of you having it is pretty low, isn't it, I mean, let's face it.

A. Yeah. It is scary even thinking about it.

Q. Yeah.

A. ... if I - if I did have it and like I was fourteen... still around when I was fourteen, and I slept with this other guy, you know, when I was twenty-five -

Q. Yeah.

A. - wouldn't I be showing the signs then?

Q. Oh you would, yeah. You would... you're okay on that one. I don't think you need worry about... worry about CARL... relationships. But even then, I mean - it's also more difficult for it to go from a woman to a man -

A. So I mean even CARL's said that he like, he can use a Durex, I mean like we talked about it after we'd finished, if we could ever get back together sort of like, you know, for a fling or whatever, that he would use a Durex on the other girls, on every girl that he used - and I can trust him with that -

Q. Yeah.

A. You know, but - I've just been too long and I think that I... oh forget it, but I'm just...

Q. Well, that's the other thing too, that it's not just AIDS, but I mean AIDS is just the most frightening of them, the other things they can clear up hopefully.

A. But that is just as bad...

Q. Yeah. Well it's terribly unpleasant. And they can be, I mean they can damage... get pregnant again.

A. Oh, can it?

Q. Some of them, yeah, but if they're not treated, because sometimes they're sort of - you don't see many symptoms with them, like gonorrhoea or something like that, and then it can cause an effect and damage the tubes and stuff like that. So I mean the thing is -

A. But it's all from men, isn't it?

Q. From men?

A. Yeah.

Q. Yeah.

A. So why don't we get their sperms cut off or whatever?

Q. A radical solution. Well do you think you'd like - you might move in that direction yourself, I mean you sound as if you're very much interested in men, but do you think that you might...

A. No. No, I mean I could have made that option already -

Q. Yeah.

A. But I've changed, I've got a kid and, you know, I like men.

Q. Yeah.

A. I feel attracted to men, I don't feel attracted to women.

Q. Yeah.

A. I mean if my mum wants to be a lesbian, fine by me, you know, it doesn't, you know, I feel - I feel happy that she is what she wants to be, you know, I mean she's chosen that

for her life. I mean it's not like she didn't know what she wanted to be, but she slept with men first and then slept with women.

Q. Yeah.

A. But I know what I wanna be, you know, I'm too attracted to men to sort of like... I don't think it's nasty...

Q. So I suppose all these problems are less likely to arise with women. Still, okay, look, I'll just put your initials on there, so I know where they came from -

A. Right.

Q. And there's your diary, and I'm very grateful to you.

A. Alright then. When shall I start writing it?

Q. Well you can start immediately.

A. Tomorrow.

Q. Yeah, and keep it for a couple of months, like to the end of September, something like that.

A. Alright.

Q. And the other thing was, some young women we're gonna re-interview next year... new address.

A. Yeah... well shall I just put it here.

Q. Just write it there, yeah.