

LJH35 13.12.1989

Laura

Q: ... of the things that we're specially interested in talking about in this research is relationships, how you feel and what you think about your relationships. And I was wondering, what would you say is the most important relationship for you at the moment?

A: I think with my friends, definitely, it always has been really because I've had quite a close group of friends over the past five years, and I know that they're gonna last... longer than any relationship with a boy.

Q: How - where did you meet these friends? - I mean, have they gradually -

A: Just from school, mainly, and I think we're all from quite similar sort of backgrounds really. I mean we're all - we all really depend on each other for a lot of the time. We're all kind of running away from our sort of family life really. We're all quite - I suppose we're quite - our parents are quite liberal in a way. I'd say all my friends have quite a lot of freedom. I don't know if it's a good thing or a bad thing, but we definitely are all sort of flung together into quite a tight, intense little group. When we left school it spread out a bit more but, you know, it's still the most important for most of us, I think.

Q: Mm. Sounds quite good. Had it just been like a very strong support group?

A: Yeah, definitely, really - boys and girls, totally just - really good, talk about anything kind of, you know, say we love each other or whatever. It's quite nice.

Q: Sounds very good. You were talking about all of you, in a sense, running away from your home life; were you running away from your -

A: I think so really, because I mean I lived with my mum for (?)two years. I left home when I was sixteen. And, although we love each other very much, you know, it's quite difficult really, and so - and a lot of my friends have had similar experiences. Most of them have divorced parents; I think that's - I don't know, I think it's so important really to the way you go later on in life. 'Cos most people I know have got divorced parents, and they're all quite...

Q: How long ago did your parents divorce?

A: When I was thirteen.

Q: And then you stayed with your mum -

A: - my mum in London, yeah, and then I left my mum when I was sixteen.

Q: Yeah. Where were you living - you said you stayed with your mum in London -

A: Yeah, I used to live in Yorkshire -

Q: Ah, right. And you had a switchover in your school as well, I noticed, from -

A: Yeah, but I'm really glad of that, it's opened my eyes quite a lot -

Q: Yeah. It seemed like a very strong contrast to me, from a single sex private school to a -

A: Definitely.

Q: How did you - how did you experience that?

A: I really liked it, 'cos I was so shy before, and then just meeting all these people, and it's quite a nice school as well. I wasn't kind of thrown into a sort of awful rough London comprehensive, it was quite a nice school. And so - it wasn't really that much different, 'cos I mean I was only in the single sex school for the

first and second year, so - I mean I'm quite glad I've had both experiences really.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean it's... more aware.

Q: And it's at the second school, that's where you picked up most of these friends... On - in your answers to the questionnaire, you did say that you'd had a couple of longish-term relationships. Can you tell me what - about the first one, the importance of the first relationship that you had?

A: Well, I've never had a really intense boyfriend/girlfriend relationship, but I've had - you know, with the first one it was just - it was when I was sixteen, it was the first guy I slept with, the first guy - I went out with him for about a year. But it was still quite relaxed, you know, we didn't, like, live in each other's houses, that was nice. And the second one was for about six months. That was quite recently. You know, sort of close friends. I mean we're still friends, I'm still friends with both of them.

Q: Yeah. That was you who - who was saying that as well, that - the difference between having - having a sort of scene with somebody who's a friend, or -

A: Yeah, yeah. I mean, maybe some people don't see it like that, I don't know, but I could never sleep with someone that I didn't know, so - I suppose it's still a one-night stand as such but -

Q: But you know the person before you...

A: Yeah.

Q: So that - the first one that you slept with, had you been seeing each other for long, I mean as going out, so to speak, before you decided that you would -

A: Mm, about three or four months.

Q: How did you come to that decision, I mean did you come to a decision or -

A: Well he - he wanted to right from the start, and I thought I would wait until I did get to trust him and know him better. And then - I've always been quite a curious sort of person, so, you know, it just felt quite natural, it just happened really.

Q: You were curious to find out what it was like?

A: Yeah.

Q: What was it like?

A: It was bloody horrible really (laughter).

Q: In what way?

A: Well, he was really nice about it, I mean he was - I have very fond memories of him; but, yeah, it was quite - quite painful and quite - not what I expected. Although I did expect it in a way, but it was quite different to anything I'd been led to imagine.

Q: Yeah. Can you tell me what you had expected, I mean - I'll get some sugar.

A: I think I expected it to be a lot easier -

Q: Yeah.

A: - you know, sort of - well, just -

Q: What, come naturally sort of thing?

A: Yeah, just - just a slight pain and then, you know, waft away in the flow of bliss and all this. I think girls especially get quite a lot of misleading sort of propaganda really, about their relationships. I think - I mean, I know most of my friends are definitely very disappointed after their first few sort of sexual relationships really,

expecting a lot more than they did get really.

Q: Did it get any better?

A: Yeah, it did, but I'd say that - it wasn't unpleasant, but I'd say I never really started enjoying sex until about a year later really, I'd say.

Q: But with the same person - you said you were with him for a year.

A: Yeah, no, it wasn't - wasn't with him. Like I always found it - maybe that was - I think part of that was me not knowing what to do, not knowing how to act or, you know, whether to just lie there or whether to, you know, do things; and also just simply - I think it's quite a traumatic thing really, I mean it's not that easy. I know friends of mine now as well that sort of come up to me and say, "what's it like?" And I say, well basically it was quite horrible for a long time. And they say, "thank God for that, I'm not really enjoying it either".

Q: Yeah. What sort of things do you think would - I mean is it difficult for you to come to some - to talk about it with the person and to improve the situation?

A: Not now. It was then.

Q: Yeah.

A: But, you know, now I'd just be completely open and sort of talk about what I wanted, whatever. But then - even if I didn't feel embarrassed or shy, which I didn't really, I just didn't really like to talk about it. And it was probably my age as well, 'cos it was, you know, quite young. But then, you see, I know people who say that they've lost their virginity, I know like - I know boys who lost their virginity when they were twelve, and like girls about fourteen; I just can't imagine what it must have been like for them!

Q: Yeah. But you say it's - it - it got - it did get better, or at least it got better as you were able to say more what you want.

A: Yeah.

Q: What kind of sort of thing, what kind of things do you like?

A: I don't know, just a lot more foreplay, whatever. Just a lot more tenderness really, I find a lot of boys, they're just - they're quite - especially when they're getting a bit carried away, they're very - quite rough and sort of domineering really, even if they're the sweetest of people normally.

Q: In normal circumstances.

A: So you have to say, calm down 'cos I'm a human being here.

Q: What about now, are you having a relationship at the moment?

A: Yeah. And I would say it was definitely - I mean, they do seem to get better, they're definitely progressing in the right order...

Q: What's that like, how long has that been -

A: About two months now, and it's just nice, 'cos then again it's quite relaxed. I don't like to really see my boyfriends that much, 'cos I find that I like to be independent, but it's just nice, very loving, tender, sweet, it's really nice.

Q: That's good. You were saying on the questionnaire that you had - in the beginning you hadn't used contraception very much.

A: Yeah, you see, I think - like at the moment, with all this AIDS saying to people things like, don't sleep with anyone until you're married, or sleep with one person, it's not going to work 'cos people just aren't going to do that, basically. And I think there needs to be a lot more advertising about like condoms aimed really at

young people, 'cos I know so many people who just won't use them, or haven't thought of using condoms, specially boys. And like, you know, I'd consider myself a really intelligent person, and yet for almost a year I didn't use any contraception at all. Like now I do all the time, 'cos it's sort of - it just hit me, how stupid - how lucky I'd been, never being pregnant or anything,... and there's so many people that are just like - "it'll never happen to me".

Q: Yeah. So what - did you - when you started using contraception, was it condoms?

A: Yeah.

Q: And how - how did you find that? I mean, did your boyfriend at the time - I mean did he object, like them -?

A: Well, I've never met any boy, like friends or adults or anyone, who said they liked using a condom; I mean all my friends have said how much they hate them. But AARON didn't seem to mind, ... quite, you know - and my boyfriend at the moment, I don't think he was thinking of AIDS when he used them, he was just thinking of like pregnancy. But he doesn't seem to mind.

Q: Mm. What were you thinking about, were you thinking about pregnancy or AIDS?

A: Mainly pregnancy... but AIDS - it's so hard really, because you never quite believe that anyone that you are seeing is gonna have AIDS, but, you know, obviously you can never tell. See I think - 'cos I have one friend who's like - I live with her, and she's like extremely health-conscious and AIDS-conscious and pregnancy-conscious, she's actually really good for me, but most of the other people I know, and most people I've met, are completely ignoring it. I think, was it about - maybe last year, there was that big campaign, and everyone was really aware of it, and then it's kind of gone now, and people really don't think it's gonna happen; and I think like we're the generation, people round my age, who like in five years' time are gonna, you know, be finding out. But I mean - I think the middle classes are like aware, safe, but I'd say most of the working classes don't do anything about it at all. Only last night, like me and my friend know all these lads from like our area, and we were talking to them, we were talking about like relationships, and AIDS, whatever, and all of them apart from one were saying, "oh I know no girl that I go with will have AIDS" - you know, "I know"; and I said, well how do you know, because they might have slept with a guy that might have slept with a girl that might have slept with a guy who had AIDS, whatever, you never know. And they were just like, "no, I know they wouldn't, no"; and they still think it's just a gay disease or just something that won't happen to them. And I don't know what you're gonna do about it.

Q: Mm. Well I think some of the - I mean, some of the educational campaigns have been trying to be aimed more towards young people, haven't they? Actually some of the advertising on television for condoms themselves has been directed towards young people; but I think - I mean, what you're telling me sounds very much like what I hear from a lot of young women, that some of them are very concerned about it but they find -

A: - especially boys, you know; most girls, probably because they're already - they're aware of pregnancy anyway, they're a lot more aware of AIDS, but so

many boys I know just don't - I mean, they're intelligent as well, you know, it's - it's quite amazing, they're so intelligent and yet they're just like - "do you worry about AIDS?" - "no, it'll never happen to me". But I don't know what can be done

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Q: That's one of the questions I was gonna ask you, what do you think - what do you think would get to people, to persuade them to... But let me track back a little bit first, let me ask you when you first heard about AIDS.

A: That was - I can't remember, basically when the big media kind of -

Q: When they had... yeah.

A: I can't remember when that was. Was it last year, the year before?

Q: I think it was the year before... summer. What was your impression at the time - I mean a lot of people did think it was a gay plague, and so forth.

A: Yeah, I can't really remember. I remember definitely taking note of it, thinking it was all hyped up quite a lot. I think I probably did think, well it is mainly a gay disease, but it's, you know, it's going to spread, it's not gonna just stay that way. And - 'cos I know - my sister's friend's father died of AIDS last year, and so that was kind of quite close to home.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: But he was gay so... - I still think it was hyped, but I suppose it has to be, really. I think it should be done a bit more sensitively really, I think some of it was a bit -

Q: ... What - do you - do you feel that you've learned much about AIDS as time -

A: Yeah, definitely -

Q: Where did you -

A: - especially - just from everything on the television. Not so much the newspapers, it was all the kind of - I don't know, they had quite a few programmes on it, like documentaries and things, that's mainly where I learnt about it.

Q: Mm. Hadn't had anything like at school about it?

A: No, 'cos I think I'd just left school - yes, I left school after O-levels when I was sixteen, and I've only just gone back like this year to do my A-levels, so I think I'd left school by then.

Q: What do you know about it?

A: What I know, I think it's basically - it's a cell, whatever, bacteria, enters like your blood through semen or mixed blood with someone, and it just attacks your immune system, doesn't it, and so the actual bacteria doesn't kill you, but if you catch anything that you can't cope with 'cos your immune system's broken down, that will get you.

Q: Yeah, right, it's sort of opportunistic infections. It's a virus, the HIV virus, that gets into the bloodstream. And you're right, it goes through sex, semen, and various blood... Those are the main - the main ways.

A: And also, you can carry it without necessarily developing the disease.

Q: Yeah, yeah. And for quite a long time.

A: Yeah.

Q: Which is one of the reasons why it's so scary, I suppose, because just not knowing how far it's spread already really. You didn't hear anything about AIDS

in your school, but what about sex education, how was that at school...?

A: That was awful, it was really awful, I mean I remember - the last year of junior school like, we had a really good lesson on periods, like all the girls, which basically I think that's probably where I learnt most of what I know about periods anyway, apart from what I've read anyway. But as for sex education, they seemed to - I remember in the first year our religious education teacher kind of rambled on an initial bit of it, it was all very discrete and hinted at..., then in about the third year we had about a few lessons, but by that time most people - not that they know everything, but most people do know about sex and contraception and pregnancy; I did. Like just from my friends. And I think generally it is quite... information... by that age, by the time you're fourteen. I think if you're gonna have sex education they should have it in junior school, even though like people might think it's too young, and that it's just encouraging children, or they shouldn't know about things at that age, the fact is, especially now, like people do know about things at that age. And there are so many people who are, you know, sleeping with people at like say fourteen, thirteen even. But, whether it's right or wrong, you know, the fact is they're still doing it so they should know about at least contraception early, anyway.

Q: And the sort of information they gave you - what sort of stuff were they talking about?

A: It was quite - I can't remember; it was the sort of lesson that basically most people bunk off and sort of laugh at a lot. And I just remember - it was a video about, this girl who was pregnant, and what she did. It's all - it's all quite infantile, I don't know, I think they try and really - they shouldn't aim it for children, 'cos it is like an adult subject basically, so they should - I think they should assume that people... I think they should assume that they're just fairly - I don't know, I think - 'cos most people, by the time they're fourteen, they do know what they're talking about. I think they should aim at something slightly more mature really, it's all quite - "and this is Sharon and she's pregnant, and what's she going to do about it?". And it's kind of soft focus, sort of crappy home video. You can't really take it seriously, you know.

Q: Yeah. And it was mainly about that, about sort of pregnancy, contraception -

A: A bit of, yeah, contraception; not - not much about sexually transmitted diseases. I find it hard to remember actually, whether I did learn about it at school or whether I knew about it before.

Q: Mm, the edges sort of blur. What about your parents, did they - had they been helpful in that respect?

A: They were never embarrassed to talk about sex, but I just never really learnt much from them. ... talk to my friends, we used to talk to each other, and - they were always very open about it, but never sat me down and had a sort of chat, the birds and bees and everything. I think if I - yeah, if I asked them questions, they'd answer really. They talked mainly more about relationships other than sex. Yeah, I don't think they ever really talked about it that much...

Q: You - you said you left school at sixteen and then you've only recently gone back; what were you doing in the in-between period?

A: The first year I was just dossing and working, and then last year I did a CPVE

course in music... sing, so that was quite a laugh. I was on television... school programme -

Q: Yeah?

A: - and then I thought, I've got to get some A-levels before it's too late. So, I'm doing a one-year course now.

Q: So, what - what is... what do you think you might like to do?

A: I don't know. I'd really like to do women's studies at university, or maybe psychology at university. After that I've just got no idea.

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't know what I want to do at all.

Q: There are quite a few places where you can do women's studies now... You may have to travel a bit - York and Canterbury leap into my mind.

A: Yeah, God. I'm not going back to Yorkshire!

Q: Yeah. Was it so dreadful?

A: A bit boring really.

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't know, I just...

Q: Mm. What about - I mean you haven't decided what you want to do but you want to do something. I mean, you want to work and -

A: Yeah, yeah. I'd love to have children, but I'd hate to be married.

Q: Yeah?

A: ... I can't imagine meeting anyone that I'd want to live with for the rest of my life. Apart from my best friend anyway. But you can never tell. But I would like to have lots of children. I don't know how I'm gonna work that one out though!

Q: That's quite interesting. I was doing another study earlier, which was mainly around what kind of work or occupations that young women would like to do, and a lot of them were saying that they really want to have children but they just can't face the thought of marriage - you know, how are we gonna work this out... There - there must be a method of doing this, ... worked out... When you talk about your relationships with your man friends and having a sexual relationship with them, do you think that there's a sort of double standard about women and men, different things are acceptable?

A: Definitely. See, I've been lucky because all my friends are quite open-minded and just generally accepting everyone's bad habits or whatever, I mean but I'd say, outside of my group of friends, definitely awful double standards everywhere. So, I've been lucky in the fact that my friends are quite understanding. I know boys who are really almost celibate and girls who, you know, sleep around as it were; and then boys and girls who have done it and do their stereotype roles, whatever. Nobody really cares. For most of my friends it's do what's right for you. But - yeah, I have met a lot of guys sort of, you know "girls shouldn't chat up boys, girls should play hard to get, girls should do this or that". It's completely pathetic. It is changing, though, slowly, I think.

Q: ... quite positive.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. It's a difficult one, that one, but you're lucky with the group of friends that you have, not having (?) affected you so much. What kind of things do you

do with your friends, I mean -

A: I don't know; mainly we just - we're all totally skint all the time, so we generally see each other quite a lot - go round each other's houses, watch films, kind of knock about, go to the pictures, or we might go to the pub, go out. Like, I have different sets of friends for different things really -

Q: Yeah.

A: ... I've got one group, and if I want some good solid support I go to them.

Q: Have you made any friends - friends while you've been at college, or have you not been there very long?

A: I've - I know a few people there from my secondary school... people, but, 'cos I'm only really in four times a week - I don't have to be in for any lunchtimes, I tend to just go in and go out again, leave. I just want to work and - I can't handle meeting any more people at the moment, I've got too many.

Q: Yeah?

A: - not enough days in the week to see them all.

Q: A very large friendship circle. Mm. How are you financing yourself, do you get a grant or -

A: No, I get thirty pounds a week from my dad and I get income support, (?)thirty pounds in benefit.

Q: Right, so you can manage, just about.

A: Yeah.

Q: It's difficult, though, isn't it? Are you seeing your mum?

A: Yeah, I see her about twice a week really, I mean we get on really well now. That's quite nice.

Q: Was it - when you were saying, I mean, how important it is that people experience divorce in the - how do you think it affected you, I mean what...?

A: I think the main thing is that I don't really trust guys, which is why I don't like to have a strong relationship with guys, 'cos I suppose I've had a bad example with my mum and dad and I don't want that to happen to me. But even though I know that, you know, it's still - there's something about me which says, you know, just keep your distance. And I have - you can never generalise, but most of my friends and people that I've known have fairly secure families. Or, even if they're not that secure, still, like, mother and father together. They definitely seem to be a lot more - sensible? - that's not really the right word, but - a lot more responsible, I suppose. Whereas most of the people I know whose parents split up earlier have had a lot more freedom, being allowed to do what they like, from an earlier age; or even if they haven't been allowed, like they basically - if they've just been brought up by one parent, and that parent's working as well, they've had a lot of freedom anyway; and their parents don't seem to have much control over them. And so, they - I don't know. I think it does make a difference. Then again, see, my sister's twenty, and she's basically slept with one person, that's her boyfriend that she's been going out with for three years. It's, like, completely the opposite to me. So, I suppose that's contradicting myself, but, you know, I think in general -

Q: Well I was wondering about that, about how - I mean you were talking about it as that your friends do experience it that way, but there was a little bit of an edge

there wondering whether you felt you would have preferred to have had more, you know - I don't know.

A: I wouldn't like - I wouldn't like to live my life any other way really. 'Cos I think I've gained a lot out of it, just the knowledge of people and experiences in general. And I know it's definitely - it's in my nature - I'm quite - I suppose I have quite a lot of masculine traits; I wouldn't say I'm a masculine person, but, you know, I have quite a few masculine traits, although every female has. And I wouldn't like to just be a nice little woman who's going to get married and have children, it's just not in my nature at all.

Q: And how - how do you feel about the people that you have had relationships with now? You said some of them are still friends.

A: They all are, really, I love them all.

Q: They're still in the friendship circle.

A: Yeah. I find it - if I like someone, then I can't just suddenly not like them. They genuinely were friends and still are. It's all worked out surprisingly well.

Q: And that's easy to handle, is it?

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you ever sort of go back to somebody who's -

A: Yeah.

Q: ... back in again.

A: Yeah, yeah, I mean -

Q: And how does that feel?

A: I don't know; for instance, like recently I've been seeing a bit of my first boyfriend - well, the first guy I slept with - again, and that was just brilliant. It was so nice to see him again. I hadn't seen him for about a year and I bumped into him in Kentish Town somewhere, and I've just been going out with him a bit. And that's just quite nice... But not anymore.

Q: Yeah?

A: Settling down.

Q: Yeah. It's quite interesting, though, I mean - do you find it - I mean when you meet up with him again, do you sleep with him again, I mean is it -?

A: I have done.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. I think it's because I don't - I don't meet people, go out with them for a long time, argue, whatever, finally split up with them and think, my God, I never want to see them again. I tend to meet people, have a really - have a laugh, perhaps sleep with them a few times, and then split up on quite friendly terms. So, when I do see them again there's still that attraction there really, which is quite mutual, for them as well. But - yeah, I've never had a bad experience with a guy at all, I've never had any horrible experiences or anything - I've never been forced to do anything against my will, or anything like that. And I'm enjoying myself.

Q: So you feel in the relationship you're - would you say that you're in control?

A: Sometimes, but then I'd say equal really, equal control. And I - I don't think - no one was being led on or being fooled by anything, it's all quite sort of above board and mutual and quite honest really.

Q: It sounds pretty good. But you also said that you hadn't had any kind of passionate involvement or something like that.

A: Yeah. But then again, you know, I see various friends of mine in these long intense relationships just getting hurt. You know, on the one hand, you know, it's "all part of growing up"; on the other hand, I think, well, I just don't want that to happen to me. But, you know, maybe it will, I just haven't - I haven't met anyone that I've been really compatible with yet, in that way.

Q: Maybe it's incompatibility that starts that kind of thing off.

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you think - when you talk about your earlier sexual experiences, when you weren't taking - using any contraception, that was slightly risky, but you decided for yourself that, you know - Do you think you take risks in any other areas of your life?

A: No, which is - I - I've often wondered about that, because I'm normally so sensible, logical, responsible, you know, boringly so, whatever, but when it came to that - I don't know, I just kind of ignored it really. I never understood that, still don't.

Q: Mm. Just for that very first period then... Is - this occasionally recurs?

A: Until, you know, honestly until, I'd say, a few months ago I'd never used any contraception. That's like about one and a half years, on and off, you know. And I think it's because, because I'd been so lucky, after a while I just thought, well, it's never gonna happen.

Q: But other than that, you don't smoke, you don't drink, you don't take drugs - or do you?

A: Well, I smoke. I don't drink. And I do smoke a bit of dope now and again. I don't know anyone who doesn't. Which is quite awful, really. I keep meeting all these, kind of, middle-aged businessmen and people's parents that smoke. But nothing too heavy.

Q: Yeah. What about your friends, do any of them -?

A: Everyone I know smokes a bit, and that's about it really. I know a few of these like Acid House... And it is true, they do all take drugs all the time! But they're not really like my close friends or anything.

Q: Yeah. Nothing injectable sort of - just checking. Did you -... question, whether you said you were religious; probably no in big capital letters...

A: I don't mind, you know, - people should do what's right for them, but I haven't been brought up religiously, I suppose that's the main thing. I've just never felt a need to turn to God. I - I believe in being, you know, a good person as far as you can, kind of helping others and just being aware of other people's feelings, but I don't think you really need to be religious to do that, I think it's just a bit of a crutch really. I'd say I was quite spiritual, I suppose. I'm quite into meditation and stars and everything. I'm not religious.

Q: Sort of organised type of religion, that kind of thing. What - what would you say is your - your image of yourself? - if you had to sort of describe yourself to somebody else, what would you say?

A: I'd say outwardly I'm quite confident and extrovert, but inwardly I'm quite thoughtful and quite shy. I'd like to think that I'm very open-minded and I don't

take people for what they look like. I mean I'd like to think that I would talk to anyone, no matter what they look like or what they're into. I try and be kind and helpful really. I suppose I'm quite irresponsible sometimes, but on the whole, quite mature. I hope I am anyway.

Q: What do you think that if - if one of your friends, or a selection of your friends were asked for their image of you -

A: They'd say I was wonderful! (laughter)

Q: Would it coincide, or would there be some dramatic differences between the two?

A: I think - I think we all know each other well enough. I'd say people that I really love, love me, I think. And - quite confident of sort of love...

Q: Yeah. You feel you're quite secure, I mean -

A: Yeah. I mean, obviously I have many annoying, awful habits and characteristics, but I know them, my friends know them, they know that I know them, and just kind of live together really. I mean everyone has got their bad points.

Q: You live with a group of your friends?

A: I live with one friend and these other guys - they advertised for rooms... mortgage...

Q: That worked out as well -

A: Yeah... bit behind with the mortgage payments, so -

Q: - everybody might get through, including the owner of the house, really. You said something earlier on - what did you say, you said something about trust, and you couldn't have a relationship with somebody you didn't trust.

A: No, I couldn't. I have to - whether it's friendship or a sexual relationship I have to trust someone. And I feel I can, even if I've just met someone, I either trust them or I don't. I think I can tell straight away. Yeah, I definitely have to respect them as well, and like them.

Q: But you haven't - I mean, so you have to have that process of building up the friendship, say with men and that, because of your experience with your dad and feeling that - it's like a general view that men cannot be trusted.

A: Yeah, yeah. Although that's - really the... when I was at my worst kind of man-hating stage when I was about thirteen, and since then I've kind of - 'cos I've had very, very, good male friends, and I've seen sort of really lovely kind of fathers of my friends, and so it's gradually, you know, (?)mellowing out and I'm kind of a lot more un-militant about it really.

Q: Yeah. Was it a bad period, I mean there was a bad period at home before - before the divorce or something?

A: Yeah, it's just, you know, I don't really see my dad anymore, we just don't really get on. He was quite awful to my mum. I just thought, "they're all like that".

Q: Yeah... a very traumatic experience really. Do you never see him at all, or do you occasionally see him?

A: No, I haven't seen him for a few years, 'cos I just thought, well, I don't miss him really at all. You know, he's remarried and got his own life really, so... Christmas. But I feel quite comfortable about that.

Q: Does he - is he still...

A: Yeah.

Q: And your mum's in London.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. That all sounds - it sounds as if you've got yourself pretty well sorted, doesn't it? Is there a crack in it, is there a crack in the armour?

A: No, I don't think so. I think now I - I do feel quite together really, probably for the first time in my life. But I just feel my confidence has grown. I think know myself quite well, and I'm living on my own, so I have my own - I'm responsible for myself, so I don't really have anything to get me down any more.

Q: Mm. It sounds pretty good. Can we get back to the issue of AIDS... I can see that you're worried and concerned about it now...

A: Yeah. I still - you see, it's so hard, because if - if you meet a guy, or a guy meets a girl, I mean you can't say, "do you think you've got AIDS?", because they're never gonna say, "well, yes, I think I have actually", you know, and then expect you to sleep with them or whatever. So, you can't tell. I don't think anyone can - can tell if they've got AIDS. I think the only thing you can do is just use a condom all the time, but then again, some people won't. I don't - I really don't know, it's so hard. Because I think maybe if you've got young people or youngish people who think out a really clever campaign - 'cos all those adverts, you know, the "tip of the iceberg" ones, I mean they were just awful, I thought. I thought the best adverts... I've seen actually, they were in magazines, just showing - there was a man and a woman in bed, saying "condoms are awfully fiddly to put on, but isn't that half the fun?". And I thought they were one of the best adverts I've seen, because they were quite appealing to, sort of, young people. But I think, yeah, just in schools really. It's - always the middle classes are going to be, very AIDS-conscious, but, you know, the working classes aren't at all. I don't know if that's a classist thing to say, but I think it's true really.

Q: Well, they might well be aware but not be doing anything much about it, mightn't they? I mean, from the way you talk about your friends. I mean, would you say most of your friends are middle class or working class?

A: I'd say most of my old friends are middle-classish, but - yeah, I suppose, they're all educated. Financially, you know, they're not well off, but educated sort of parents. But then a few of my close friends are working class, a lot of my kind of mates, like you know, are working class as such. I don't really think about it. But there definitely seems to be - 'cos, like, I've recently moved to Croydon, and my friend said, I know all these kind of lads from the area who, you know, are black guys, they're quite - quite young, and they're completely ignorant. Or they don't want to know. They're intelligent in other ways, but they're still - it's just a gay disease to them.

(tape change)

A: This - this is for women (?)and AIDS, isn't it?

Q: Mm. What we're doing really is - I mean we're asking young women these sort of questions to find out how they feel about their sexualities, and partly to find out how - I mean what degree of control they feel they have in a sexual encounter. I

mean, you seem to feel that, by and large, you negotiate it with the person and you're not forced to do -

A: Mm. But I would say that I think a lot of - a lot of girls, I think they're probably quite embarrassed. I mean even I was until recently, to actually say, you know, "will you wear a condom?".

Q: So maybe some of this stuff should be directed towards the young men to point out to them that...

A: I think women are more aware and generally more sensible most of the time, anyway. I think it is kind of, you know, young men that they need to say, "you're still macho if you wear a condom", or whatever.

Q: Yes. I think they - they've got some in the States now where they sort of package them like that, you know, big, giant, enormous or something like that. (laughter)

A: Yeah.

Q: And persuade them that it's a good idea to be seen buying them in the shops and stuff like that. Yeah, I'm sure there's a hell of a lot more that they can do about it. Is there anything else that you feel that you'd like to -

A: I can't think actually. I've said everything really.

Q: Yeah? One of the things we're asking young women is whether they would like to be interviewed again at a later point.

A: Yeah - yeah, I wouldn't mind. I think it is quite important because, you know, before I got that form I actually had been talking about it with my friends quite a lot, and they were saying how awful it is that people in our circle of friends, intelligent people, are still so - just ignoring AIDS really, and that something should be done about it. So, I would quite like to be interviewed.

Q: The other thing is we're asking people if they would keep a diary for us, I don't know whether you'd be interested in that - just for maybe a couple of months, and write it - we are interested obviously in your sexual experiences, and what you actually do as well. Would you be interested in doing that?

A: Okay...time.

Q: I've just got this little notebook for you, so just anything you do that's, you know -

A: What kind of thing do you want?

Q: Well, interested in any - any...

End of tape.