

AMD21 SS 09/05/1989

QU: I haven't actually looked at your questionnaire, so if I ask you things that were already in the questionnaire don't worry. Can we start by talking about relationships generally, like your friends, whatever, who are the people you spend most time with, who are the most important to you?

A: I don't think I am as close to my parents and I used to be, because they have just split up, well twelve months ago they split up so I turn to, with being a twin, I'm really close to my twin sister and I would say my best friend, and I have a few male friends but at the moment it's kind of platonic. I don't really want to get involved at the moment. So on the questionnaire it said I can't narrow it down to who I spend the most time with, so I would say I even it out.

Q: Well tell me a bit more about what sort of things you do?

A: With friends?

Q: Yes.

A: I'm at college during the week and I can't really see people but at the weekends I go round to people's houses and go out for the weekend, or we will just pack a bag and go away for the weekend somewhere. Because we have got some friends in Blackpool who work in hotels and things like and so we just go down.

Q: So you would go with ANNA?

A: No not with ANNA because she is really silly with her boyfriend at the moment, so she has just kind of lost touch with all her friends. I've got a good friend, she's like a sister to me now and I spend more time with her than I do with ANNA now. That's the kind of things we do really.

Q: Do you live locally, do you come from Manchester..?

A: I live ... in the car it's straight down the motorway and it takes 15 minutes, but to get here in the morning I have to get a bus and the train, but if anyone asks where I come from, it's Manchester.

Q: So you say your parents have split up, are you still living with one of them?

A: I am living with my mum at the moment.

Q: Is that both of you?

A: Yes. The divorce hasn't come through yet, but he was the one that broke the marriage up so he has left, so we have stayed at home. It's not through choice or anything, because I wouldn't like to choose between my parents anyway. It has been hard. It is kind of like, I have come from a really secure family background and I never thought my parents would split up, so it's been a bit of a shock really. But that's the way things are, but I think I have become distant from them.

Q: To protect yourself?

A: Well not just to protect myself, they have become wrapped up in other things. My mum has not been able to show love and affection because she has been too down and so I have just had to look out for myself. When I come home from college now she doesn't say, 'How has your day been?', or take an interest, and my dad has his own business to run, so he's tied up with the business.

Q: Is he still in this area?

A: Yes, the thing is his office is five minutes from our house, it's just at the back of our house you see, so it's kind of unavoidable that we bump into each other. My mum is very bitter at the moment as well and that's hard because I love both my parents, and I know he left but he had his reasons, there's two sides to every story, and her bitterness comes out and tries to turn me against my dad, so that's hard as well. Sometimes I feel resentment against the pair of them and I just don't want to know.

Q: You just want to get on with your own life?

A: Yes.

Q: I'm sure that's not uncommon in that situation. How old are you?

A: Seventeen.

Q: Yes, there are a lot of things you want to do without looking after them. Do you think it has made you more wary of relationships?

A: When the relationship first split up between my parents, no, because I was going out with a boy at the time and I felt so insecure and everything, I got so possessive of this boy, I just wanted to be with him all the time for company, but now I have got over it and I've got my confidence back and now I don't need a relationship at the moment, because it's taught me to get on with my own life and I've got the confidence about myself and I don't need to have a boy by my side all the time. I don't need that security at the moment, but twelve months ago I did, all I wanted was to have someone there.

Q: How do you think you have managed that, to develop your confidence, to get it back?

A: Well I didn't go out for quite some time when my parents split up, but I think it's going out and meeting new people that has done it.

Q: People that are new for you?

A: Yes, in the last two months just say I have been asked out so many times. It's just I like going and meeting people, socialising, being complimented, these little things. But if you stay at home you miss out on all that and you think you are worth nothing, but I think it's just this friend I've got now, she will go out, she's very active, she doesn't like being bored, she doesn't like being with boring people, and she has brought me out of myself, and that has given me confidence.

Q: Did you meet her at college?

A: No I have known her from school, but at school she was never my best friend or anything like that.

Q: Were you and ANNA best friends at school?

A: Yes. I had a best friend as well, but since I've left school we have changed in personality and we found that we didn't have anything in common, me and my friend, and yet we were so close and knew each other for five years and lived in each other's houses and now we can't bear to look at each other.

Q: It's difficult that, isn't it?

A: Because you see each other every day at school and you think you are doing the same things and you think you've got something in common, and it's not until you leave school and go to different colleges and meet new people, and then you see the differences between you.

Q: What you had in common was that you did the same things every day.

A: Yes. It wasn't like that at all.

Q: You said you had a boyfriend a year ago, was that the first sort of boyfriend you've had on a steady basis, tell me a bit more about that?

A: He was the first boy I ever slept with, yes he was the first boy, but I had crushes, boys before, but I don't know, I don't think it was because I was in an emotional state that I really fell for him, but he was very very good looking and he felt for me, but he was sleeping around all the time and I couldn't be doing with that, so we finished and we finished for about a month then we got back together again, but the second time I finished it because I couldn't handle, I was feeling low as it was, never mind him running around with every girl that came his way, so I finished that and there is a boy I am seeing at the moment, but he has just come back from America and he is going back in a month, so I've only been out with him twice since he's come back and it's still at the platonic stage at the moment, but it might development into something else, I'm not sure. But I've known him for a year and a half now and at the time I met him I just wanted it to be friends but he's changed a lot, he came round the other night and I've not seen him for twelve months and I can't believe the difference in him.

Q: He's done lots of different things?

A: Yes and he's quite good looking now.

Q: That's the thing at your kind of age, people do change?

A: Yes I think looks play an important part with me in a boy, I don't know, I've got to have a good looking boyfriend otherwise I will do without it. Probably a false thing really but it's very rare that you get the two together.

Q: It depends. What do you mean by good looking, do you mean somebody that you find attractive or someone that everybody else thinks is good looking? They are different things.

A: Yes they are different things, I don't know. When I say that he is a good looking boy the majority of other people think he is as well. But it wouldn't bother me, as long as I think he's good looking it doesn't matter what everybody else thinks.

Q: There is no point in going out with somebody you are not attracted to just for the sake of having an appendage. The two boys you have talked about, how old are they?

A: CHRIS, the first boy, he was twenty then I was sixteen and MICHAEL is nineteen. I have just come back from SPAIN at Easter and I met this other boy, he's half American and half Arab and he is very good looking and he is twenty one so it's kind of the age, I'm not saying I can't date anyone younger than nineteen, eighteen, it's just the way it goes. Usually the boys I meet are nineteen or twenty.

Q: That's the usual sort of gap for someone who's seventeen to go out with someone of twenty-one, twenty-two.

A: I like them a lot better because you find boys of sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, are a bit drab aren't they.

Q: Wet, generally. So you said that CHRIS, the first boyfriend you had slept with, had you got close to that with anybody else?

A: Oh yes, but you feel very apprehensive at first. I suffer from a lot of guilt even when I have been going out with somebody for quite a bit, after the first time I always think, oh God, should I have done that?

Q: You mean whatever it is you've done?

A: Yes and I don't know, I just couldn't live with the guilt and I was only sixteen, and I thought if I start now, because sometimes people that have done it once and think well, I've done it once, and other times they are going to do it.

Q: Like eating cream cakes?

A: Yes. One after the other. So I tried to keep it as long as I could and I just can't do it with anybody, the person has got to mean something to me, because I am quite a shy person, I can socialise, but when I'm with a boy I'm kind of shy.

Q: Why do you think that is?

A: I don't know. The other night, MICHAEL was looking into my eyes and I couldn't stand it, I had to look away. He couldn't understand because to talk to us on a one-to-one basis I am quite outgoing, but when he was trying to get close to me, I don't know, I can't handle it. So this CHRIS, I got quite close to him and I thought it was right at the time and I wanted it to happen, but sometimes it's in the heat of the moment and I don't agree with that. Just sex.

Q: And have you done that?

A: No, I've never let it happen. I've got close to it, but I have never let it happen in the heat of the moment.

Q: How do you think you have managed to get out of those situations, how have you actually handled them? One of the things we are interested in is how women actually manage those sorts of situations because they can be difficult.

A: They are difficult and especially in the heat of the moment you want it, you feel that you want it and everything, but I don't know. I suffer like I said from guilt and also I wouldn't like anyone to brand me easy or the boys at the time thinking they will give you sweets, or, 'you're not like any other girl'. I've heard that so many times and it's so corny that you think you know that this person will be talking about you or discussing it with his best friend makes me feel sick. So it's just the way I've been brought up and I know I've got to keep my name good and everything. It has been hard at times to get out of situations, but I just say, 'that's it, enough's enough', and I don't know how I have done it.

Q: The cut off point would be actually having intercourse, is it?

A: Yes.

Q: So the issue was keeping your virginity?

A: Yes but I lost it when I was sixteen and even then I thought I was too young. Some people lose it at thirteen, fourteen, but I don't know, looking back now, I loved this boy the first boy I slept with, and I still do but I don't have respect for him because of the way he was. I don't know whether there was something inside me that loved him but..

Q: How long had you been seeing him?

A: Six months, and the first we went out together we didn't have sex, it was the second time we went back out with each other so it was only when I felt it was right, but I don't think he deserved me, I think he was a bum. He just thought he could go out and get any girl, that was the way he was.

Q: Do you feel that he put you under any kind of pressure to go to bed, if he was going off sleeping with other girls, did you feel that you might not be able to keep him, was that part of it or not?

A: No the way I look at it, if a boy wants me he will wait for me and if he doesn't he is not worth having obviously, but I don't know. It was just that I liked him and I wanted to give myself to him, but it was just that I didn't feel it was right the first time. And then the second time things seemed to have improved a lot, he had calmed down a bit, but then after a month of being back together he started his old tricks again.

Q: Does that mean that you regret it or did you put that down to experience?

A: I don't regret anything, I think every relationship that I have had it teaches you a lot. I mean sixteen and naïve and I thank him for everything he has taught me because he did wake me up a hell of a lot and he taught me so much and I owe him that. It's best at a younger age than an older age and I don't regret it, no. I think every relationship I've had I have enjoyed them at the time because you don't think something like that. It's only when you look back afterwards you think, 'how could I have been such a fool?', but at the time you don't realise you have been a fool.

Q: Maybe you're not. I mean you can only tell that in the long term. Did it seem something very different to you, the things you had done with him before?

A: I wasn't very impressed with it the first time, I tell you. I don't know.

Q: Did it hurt?

A: Oh yes. I think the frightened thing was I nearly got pregnant the first time. I wasn't on the pill and we were using a condom and it split the first time, I had to take the morning after pill and I really went through it.

Q: What a palaver, was it worth it?

A: I don't think it was worth it the first time. Other girls I've spoken to, they have said the first time was nothing for them, but I think it gets better. He was nice looking but I don't know, the sex part of it he didn't really do anything for me.

Q: Do you think he just wasn't any good at it?

A: I don't know. In the past he has been going with girls and all he has been after has been his own enjoyment, so it wasn't that he wasn't very good at it or inexperienced because he was, but because we were going steady he sat down one night and said, 'look, I feel under pressure to please you this time because I care for you and I want to give you as much enjoyment as I get, but in the past it has just been my enjoyment and it was sod all to the girl', but he said this was different. And that was another thing he couldn't handle, he couldn't handle going steady because he said he got worked up and he couldn't think about somebody else as well. It's funny, I could understand it at the time, but I said there was nothing to worry about, but he just couldn't handle it.

Q: And did you feel you really weren't getting much enjoyment out of it?

A: Well the thing is, I knew that he liked me but also if he was out and all his friends were going with girls then he would go with a girl, and I didn't feel relaxed with him because I was always thinking about him and these other girls and everything, whereas if I am going out with a boy and I'm the only girl I can give myself to him properly, so in a way I was a bit reserved and it wasn't working out. But I have seen him on a friendship basis since and we get on better just being friends and as soon as we start going out together there is so much pressure between us, it doesn't work out.

Q: How did you decide that you would use condoms the first time, who decided that, you or him?

A: Well there was no way I would have sex without any protection anyway, that's the thing, and luckily he had a store of them

Q: It sounds like he needed them!

A: Yes. I would never have sex without protection.

Q: And does that come from things you have been told, or why do you think you have such a strong feeling?

A: Well mum works in a clinic for abortions and she sees girls coming in at thirteen, even fourteen, and they are expecting their second child and that has opened my eyes as well, because she has come home and she has said this girl came today, it's confidential but she only tells me because I'm her daughter and she wants to make me aware, and I don't discuss what goes on with anybody else, but that's an eye opener as well. And my dad is very protective against us and he has said.

Q: Is it just the two of you?

A: Yes and he has drummed it into us that no boy is worth getting into trouble over and the thought of having a baby and getting pregnant at my age, well I just don't want to think about it. And of course as AIDS came out that terrifies me. To think if you did get AIDS or get pregnant just after, it would feel greedy just after a few moments' enjoyment. It's not worth it.

Q: So because of all that you knew about the morning after pill and such like. Did you talk about that to your mum?

A: Yes, the thing is it's very open my family, and my mum and dad both put me on the pill twelve months ago and they know about me having the morning after pill and things like that, and I do sometimes sit down and discuss who I am going out with and what's going on kind of thing, but as I am getting older I try to keep it to myself a lot more, but if anything did happen I wouldn't want it to be a shock and say, well I didn't think it was that kind of relationship at the time. I like everything open.

Q: So they knew that it was on the cards and they were reasonably accepting it?

A: Yes.

Q: You said something about AIDS, tell me what you know about it, where you got your information from?

A: Well I went to a private school and so they didn't believe in teaching you anything about sex education or things like that, so really it's not from school and it's just my dad is always going on about it, how easy it is to catch it, I go away a lot, especially SPAIN, it's rife over there and it's just a big party and everybody is sleeping with each other, and my dad before I go away, he sits me down three or four times and gives me lectures about an hour long and drums it into me, you mustn't do this, you mustn't do that, now you know, and with him being a man he gets a bit embarrassed and says well, your mother should be telling you all this, but he doesn't feel he can let me go away and be at ease unless he has told me himself and my mum tells me a lot. And I think it's just the publicity that's around in general, I can't put it down to one source. I don't really know all the facts, I just know a few ways of how you can catch it.

Q: Do you see yourself as being at any risk?

A: Not at the moment. I went away at Easter and I met this boy and he is the kind of boy, he's twenty-one, and he has lots of girlfriends, so while I was there, I was the only girl at the time when I was actually over there and I know that as soon as I had gone there would be another girl and previous to that there had been about a hundred, and that made me feel a bit conscious of it and we did use protection and everything so in that way I don't think I am.

Q: So you are saying you use condoms as well, is that what you are saying?

A: Yes but I have come off the pill now about a week ago, because of all the publicity about breast cancer and things like that and I am not going steady with anybody at the moment and I don't think I should be putting this drug inside my body, because I know in a few years' time when I want to go steady I will go back on the pill and it is damaging to your body. But I came back and when my friends first found out, one of the first friends found out I slept with LUKE they said, 'oh gosh, about this AIDS', you know what it's like with the girls. And sometimes I will be lying in bed and I will think, oh gosh.

Q: Did you use condoms with him?

A: Well there was one time I didn't while I was over there but I was on the pill and I didn't, and the way I looked at it he was very health conscious, he didn't smoke, had a fabulous physique and he was down at the gym nearly everyday and I thought, if he does all this for

his body I don't think he is even going to allow himself to have a chance of getting AIDS, whereas he didn't know where I had been, he didn't know my history.

Q: He didn't ask you?

A: The only thing he asked me was, was I on the pill. But he didn't seem to bother about wearing a condom so ever since that I have been a bit wary about it, but I think the chances of it might be very slim.

Q: It's just a matter of remembering that next time and not giving yourself that worry in the future, you just don't need to have that worry. So the time you didn't use a condom, why didn't you?

A: Just because there was none around at the time.

Q: And when you did, was it you that suggested it or did he have it around?

A: No, because when I first met him the first thing he said was, because I was a bit funny because we went out and there were absolutely swarms of girls because he lives over there.

Q: Do you go back to the same place every year?

A: Yes, I'm going back in the summer. And it was kind of horrible for me because I had to stand there and watch all these girls coming up and kissing him and putting their arms round him and I thought, when I am not here what does he get up to, and I sat down and said, 'look, I've not slept around, I am clean and everything'. And he started going on about AIDS and that he knows what it's like and the last thing he wants to get is AIDS, so he was very health conscious and he didn't even like to talk about AIDS, the thought of getting it, so in that respect no, it wasn't hard. And obviously I don't think he would have, if he had an inclination that he did have the virus I don't think he would have allowed himself to sleep around anyway. But AIDS does scare me a lot. You can meet a boy and see that he is a decent type, but he might not be aware he's got it. When you sleep with somebody you don't sit down and ask about all the previous girlfriends or boyfriends or anything like that.

Q: In some of the articles about AIDS it actually says that that is what you should do, but it is very difficult isn't it?

A: And sometimes it can be very embarrassing because you don't know how the boy is going to react. He might feel insulted in some respects.

Q: As if you are checking up on him?

A: Yes, as if you are checking up on him and he might not want to discuss his past life. Some boys are like that, they are very touchy about it, but this CHRIS I went out with the first time, he was very willing to go for an AIDS test because he even said to me, 'I know I have been putting it around a bit', and I just hate myself, but it was really after the relationship I found out what he was like, he kept it all under cover, but he did say it was worrying because at the time he wasn't really aware of it. Boys, some boys I speak to and I say, 'are you not worried about it?', and they just laugh, shrug it off, it won't happen to me.

Q: Nothing to do with me. Yes, that's what we are hearing.

A: And if they go out with a good looking girl they think, oh, she wears nice clothes and she's good looking, she won't have AIDS, but they are the worst type really because they get more boys and things like that.

Q: You certainly can't tell by looking at people. That's absolutely right. You still can't tell, even if you know all that sort of detail, it's very difficult.

A: Sometimes you can be going out with somebody for a few months and you do have sex and you don't, my dad always says to me on numerous occasions, 'I think you should take him for a medical and get him checked over', and I will say 'Dad, get away, I can't do that', it's embarrassing for both of us, I don't think I could do that.

Q: You don't think that's the solution to it?

A: I don't know, there are ways of finding out because sometimes it takes, is it years, before you can actually identify the virus?

Q: No, generally you expect to be producing anti-bodies after about six months.

A: But that could be too late then, couldn't it?

Q: Well once the virus is there, it's there.

A: No what I mean is, say you did go for a medical and you slept with a girl the night before, or a week before, and he started going with you and he had a medical, the doctor couldn't detect it in his body at the time.

Q: That's right, he would have to have another test in six months' time.

A: But say you have been sleeping with him for that period until six months would she be able to get it off him if it was properly developed.

Q: Yes.

A: That's what I mean sometimes..

Q: So you would have to wait six months and have another test and you would use safe-sex practices in those six months. If I said safe-sex to you, what would that mean?

A: Well do it as regards to AIDS, I would say using a condom. But the times I have used condoms I wouldn't say they were the most reliable form of contraception.

Q: You had one split on you the first time which must make you feel a bit anxious about it.

A: My mum is pregnant at the moment with this guy she is with now and that was through a split condom as well, and my mum is now forty and.

Q: So not at her most fertile?

A: No, and she has not had children for seventeen years and it is such a shock.

Q: Is she having it?

A: Yes, she's having it because even though she is in the abortion profession she doesn't believe in it and she doesn't think having given birth to two children and knowing what the effect of giving birth is like, she doesn't think she can stand the guilt of an abortion. So it's a very worrying time for her because she's forty and she smokes and she has the odd drink.

Q: Yes, it's difficult, but on the other hand she knows what she is letting herself in for and in some ways she might even be fitter, because she might think about those things and do something about them. I don't know, it's different, my mum was nearly forty when she had me and she was forty-six when she had my sister, so I don't kind of get shocked about that in the way people do if they have much younger parents. It certainly makes you unlikely to trust condoms, so what else do you think you could do to minimise the risk against AIDS?

A: Well I thought that was the only method that could stop you from getting AIDS, I know others stop you getting pregnant but I thought that was it.

Q: Well I just wondered what you had found about it. If you use a spermicide with a condom that helps an awful lot, and if you use the cap as well.

A: Well I wouldn't want to use anything like that.

Q: You don't fancy the cap?

A: No. I know all about them, I did do that in Biology and seen them at the clinic.

Q: You are not keen on the idea, why, do you know what it is?

A: I don't know, just the thought of having that inside me. Are they safe methods?

Q: Used with a spermicide, yes.

A: But there again it is messing around. This woman I know, she got pregnant with the cap. I have narrowed it down to the pill and the condom, they are the only two forms I would use.

Q: So do you think in future you might use both of those together?

A: Well once I have come off the pill now it looks like it will have to be the condom, but I don't really like using them. I was talking about it with this boy I know on Saturday night and he says he doesn't like it because of the break messing around putting it on and I think it kills everything, but I suppose it's better than getting AIDS anyway. But if it splits I get it and it's a risk getting pregnant.

Q: You are caught either way. Can you imagine a situation where you could get quite involved with somebody and get sexually involved but not go all the way or have penetration?

A: There have been times like that but it gets harder each time.

Q: Harder for you, or harder for both of you?

A: Well both, really. I don't go all the way all the time, I have started to see this boy now, this friend I met a year and a half ago, and things do start getting a bit out of hand, but I have not seen him for such a long time and I want a chance to get to know him again first before I start getting involved that way, but even though I know that we probably will in a few weeks, I

don't want it to be classed as a steady relationship. I won't see anybody else but I will see him if I am not doing anything else at weekends with my friends, because I am only seventeen.

Q: You won't organise everything around him?

A: I am only seventeen and I do get easily attached and I don't want to put myself in that situation where I am scared of making a decision in my life because I have got this boy to think about. I have seen my sister, she's the same age as me and she is getting engaged in September, and he's the first boy she has ever slept with and will be the last and I don't want my life to be like that. They are planning their life now, he is at university and when he finishes his degree they will get married and he will have a good job, she will have money, but I don't think she has lived or will have any experience behind her and I think life is all about gaining experience and things like that.

Q: Does it interest you that you have gone such different routes, have you always done similar things?

A: Yes we have always done similar things and we have always wanted similar things. And now I sit there, and I am really happy for her, but what she wants out of life isn't what I want. I went away on holiday with this girl, she's now twenty-six, she got pregnant at seventeen, had the baby, married this guy, this guy is forty-five and his now twice her age near enough, and she just went wild on holiday because it was the first boy she had ever slept with and she had to marry him because her family is Catholic and she couldn't have an abortion or anything, so she went wild on holiday because she had no experience of it. She didn't know anything else apart from her husband so she just went absolutely wild and when I found out about it she said, 'do you mean to say that I'm going to be like that', and she takes everything on the offensive as if I am getting at her, so I have got to be careful what I say, but it did show me that you do need some experience and you do need to meet different people because I don't want to be in her situation.

Q: That's a decision that only you can make for you. What about your parents, would they rather you were like her, or she was like you?

A: Well they like this boy she is going out with, RICHARD, he will do anything for her and my dad, they know that they are really in love and there is nothing he can do about it but he wished that RICHARD had come along say when ANNA was about twenty, but you can't plan who is going to come along at what time, it happens when it happens, and it's happened for ANNA. My dad says, 'well sometimes you can wait all your life and not find the right person', so he is happy about that and as long as ANNA is happy, he is happy. But I am more like my dad and he can see that I want to travel and meet people. He took us to private schools and he wants something back in return, so he doesn't want to see us settle down.

Q: Just by way of finishing off, connected with that, what do you plan to do next? If you have plans, what are they?

A: Well I am on this course now.

Q: Yes, do you think you will finish it?

A: Well I have done twelve months and now I know I have got to finish it, but say six months ago I was ready to pack it all in. Because loads of girls are on one course and talk about bitchiness, I have come across it before but there is nothing worse.

Q: Did you go to an all girls' school?

A: No it was a mixed school, but being surrounded by girls all the time, and the staff are women as well, the staff you would expect them to be a bit more mature, but they are as bitchy as the girls.

Q: Do you think it is to do with the sort of course it is, what you are expected to look like, is there a lot of pressure?

A: People seem to think so, but there again I'm a twin and there is two of us on the same course and a lot of people have found us very intimidating, because if they say something to one of us which is offensive we will go together and bite their head off, but it's not that, and because there is two of us together they think, oh they are together, they don't need anybody else. So they sort of cut us off at the beginning so me and ANNA didn't let it bother us and we showed that we didn't need them, if they wanted to be like that they could do, but

everything seems to have sorted itself out now. But I don't want to be in a salon, I want to do either sales or promotion work, but I do want to travel a lot and meet new people. I can't really say how I am going to end up because I just haven't got a clue what I will end up doing, but I know when I finish college that I will go away somewhere, but I don't know where.

Q: How did you choose this course and how did you get into doing what you are doing?

A: It was not what I wanted to do, I was going to do a Business Studies course, but I don't think I could have handled that, it's like doing 'A' levels, and I don't really like exams anyway.

Q: You did GCSE's last year?

A: Yes and really I passed the coursework side of it rather than the exam side and this is a continuous assessment all the way through this course anyway, and it's a skill that you can always fall back on and there will always be something there for you to do and I can always go back to work, or go out and do something else, and I am very into health, very into looking after my body and making the best of it and this course, if you want to learn how to do that this course will do that for you. It was the last option, I didn't know whether I wanted to do it when I first started the course.

Q: When you were thinking about giving it six months ago what were you thinking of doing instead?

A: I want to learn a language and I spend a lot of time in Spain anyway, so Spain is the ideal language to learn to begin with.

Q: Has your family got a house in Spain?

A: No, my friend has an apartment over there so I go and stay with them, so my dad has always said once you have a language behind you, you can do anything anyway. So I just want to go over and live in Spain and learn. I have been talking to some students that come from Spain and Italy and they are over here and that's the only way to learn a language really, is to go and live there. I might do that after the course.

Q: Well you are young enough to do all kinds of things.

A: Well I will be eighteen when I finish this course, so that's quite good.

Q: Is there anything you would like to talk to me about?

A: What is this based on, is it do with AIDS or women's attitudes or..?

Q: It's to do with women's views about sex and relationships, but in context of AIDS being on the agenda and how you cope with that, so the things you said to me about how difficult it is and there are difficult decisions to be made. Some of the women we have talked to haven't even thought about it at all, and we are getting a lot of different kinds of experiences.

A: Are they just carrying on as though AIDS doesn't exist?

Q: Some, yes. Not many in the sense of necessarily sleeping with lots of boys, but feel that they couldn't necessarily catch, or it wouldn't happen to them, or the boys they are involved with wouldn't have it. And a lot of that is to do with not feeling able to say, 'I want you to use a condom, I am worried about sex', it's supposed to be the same thing.

A: The thing I found so annoying is something that's supposed to be so romantic and intimate between two people has got so many downfalls.

Q: Disease and pregnancy aren't very attractive, are they?

A: I know. It's supposed to be one of the best enjoyments of your life. You can have a bad day and come home and get enjoyment out of it and the consequence afterwards, it seems so..

Q: Just going back to that, you said something about that before, about pleasure and enjoyment, do you feel it is enjoyable and you feel it's worth finding a way of dealing with that?

A: Yes. I am happy. Some people I have spoken to don't get much enjoyment out of it, but I find it very enjoyable. But I can go for a long period of time without having sex and it doesn't bother me, because I know that when it does happen it's all the more enjoyable and it's with the right person. I can't have sex with anyone as I have said before, it's got to be the right person, it's got to feel right. Sometimes I come across a boy and he doesn't do anything for

me and I don't think it's worth it, but if you have got the right person and you like being with them and it works out then I think it's worth taking precautions, these extra steps. I am in two minds now, because I have been on the pill for twelve months and I'm not going steady with anyone and it's just been, well, I'm seeing this boy and it's starting to get steady now, and I have decided to come off the pill at the worst time really. I just think I have wasted twelve months on the pill. You can't predict how things are going to work out, can you?

Q: No.

A: I think I like it like that, I don't think I want to plan my life anyway.

Q: Yes there are risks in all sorts of things. Do you think of yourself as a person who does take risks, not in relation to sex and AIDS, but in your life in general, are you prepared to take risks?

A: Yes, because that's the only way you are going to get on in life, because if you sit back and think, 'I can't do that because of this'. If you weigh up all the consequences, all the downfalls of everything you do, you will never do it, but if you get up there and say you do something and it does go wrong, there is a chance it might work out right for you.

Q: So you learn something from it. What about other sorts of risky things, do you smoke?

A: No.

Q: Do you drink?

A: Yes.

Q: Much?

A: That's hard to say. During the week I drink water and orange juice and things like that, and some weekends I stay in and have the odd glass of wine, but if I am out and I am with friends, this weekend for instance, I have had a lot to drink this weekend.

Q: What would you count as a lot to drink?

A: Oh gosh, you would be disgusted.

Q: I am sure I won't, when I think about what I have drunk in the past.

A: I have about seven Black Russians.

Q: What's that?

A: Tia Maria and coke, and half a bottle of that before I went out and then a few lagers and that was on a Friday, and then on Saturday it was about the same.

Q: It sounds like you have the same capacity as I had at your age. It wears off.

A: And then on the Sundays I went out and I just had two glasses of wine and a Southern Comfort, but then again that was just because I went with my dad to Blackpool to visit my friends twenty-first, it's only on occasions like that that I will, but on an average weekend it will just be the odd glass of wine because it puts weight on you, there are a lot of calories.

Q: Especially with Tia Maria.

A: This weekend was an exception, I couldn't keep up with it every weekend with it anyway because I have been really bad this weekend, it upset me and I've had no sleep with it, because I was staying in the staff quarters which is the pits and there were no beds for us to sleep in, so this weekend I am still recovering from it and I have drunk a lot and I feel a bit guilty about it.

Q: Your liver is giving you warning signs.

A: It's my head really and my stomach. It will be a few weeks before I do that again.

Q: Are there other things you do that are risky?

A: Well thinking back I can never remember them, but at the time I think, oh, this is a bit iffy. There have been quite a few things like taking days off college, especially on this course where they go on about attendance, if my attendance isn't up to scratch, I think it is 80% or even 100% now, I can't get the diploma at the end of the two years and you don't know that until the end of the two years so that is a risk because it's my career I am messing about with at the end of the two years, if I take the odd days off, because I have had warnings about it. There would be a risk if my dad was still at home because sometimes I come home

late at night or the early hours of the morning. But since my dad has left it's been a lot more open and I have more freedom and I don't want to abuse that. I think if my parents said, 'you can't do this, you can't do that', then I would want to rebel and do it, but because I got the choice of whether I do it or not I don't feel the pressure that I have to do it.

Q: What about coming home late at night, walking about on your own, do you do that?

A: No well I don't really out myself in that situation, there have been times when I have gone out, I was going to go out and visit a friend in Blackpool and I went to get the 11 o'clock train at and missed it so I was walking around town trying to get a bus home, thinking what the hell am I doing, there were all these tramps walking about, but usually I try to avoid those situations, I try to be with people. In the past I have taken risks, but when you try to think back to them you can't really remember them. You can sit down and have a discussion and will trigger something off in my brain.

Q: Can you imagine yourself taking drugs?

A: No. I have been offered drugs quite a few times because of the places I go to in Manchester, those places are rife with the drugs and I don't smoke. Maybe if I smoked it would be easier to say I will try it because my friend smokes and she takes the odd smoke as well, you know, the drug, and I have also seen what it does to her, she gets her head back and laughs and she looks a right prat, but I don't smoke.

Q: What is it she is smoking?

A: Just dope. Some people sniffed glue in bags and one of ANNA'S friends, her boyfriend, one of his friends in the Polytechnic students and they are living in the Halls of Residence and they are going to all these dives and they are all taking smoke and drinking every night and it's not just at the weekends. When you are in that sort of environment, they are doing it every night and I couldn't do that. I don't smoke anyway. I think it's because my mum smokes.

END OF RECORDING.