

LJH40 13.2.1990

Claire

Q. ... So the thing that we're interested in this piece of research is to find out how young women think and feel about their relationships. So if I were to ask you what's the most important relationship for you now, what would you say?

A. The relationship with my boyfriend.

Q. Yeah?

A. Yeah.

Q. Why's that?

A. He's very special to me, not just like a boyfriend, he's my friend, I can tell him anything. He's always there if I need him. He's been around for me. We both do things for each other, we both make each other happy.

Q. Yeah?

A. That's why it's really important to me, 'cos we make each other happy.

Q. You've known him about two years?

A. Two years, yeah.

Q. Yeah. How did you meet him?

A. Well, I met him through my sister, who went to university with him and was friendly with him, and it just started from that. Knowing him for a friend first, and then it went on and we started to go out.

Q. At what point did you decide to turn it into a sexual relationship? - or did you decide?

A. It just sort of drifted that way really, it wasn't a real conscious decision, it was more something that was gonna happen, it was just a matter of time of when it was ready for me more than him, when I would really be ready for the whole thing. About a month after we started going out, I decided I was ready and I wanted to do it. I wanted to sleep with him. And we'd sort of worked up to it before, it wasn't like the whole thing at once -

Q. Yeah, yeah.

A. - I was prepared for it all (laugh).

Q. What, you'd been doing various things -

A. Yeah.

Q. Yeah.

A. We'd had a lot of heavy petting and it just led into the real thing.

Q. And were you pleased that you'd made that decision, I mean was it - was it pleasant or -

A. It wasn't pleasant the first time at all, but I thought well, if I'm gonna do it with somebody I wanna do it with this man, because I knew he wasn't going to leave me afterwards or say "ugh, she's done it with me, she must be easy". So I was glad and after a while it started to get better, and then I was happy I decided to do it.

Q. Mm, yeah. Was he the first person you -

A. He was the first person I'd ever slept with completely, yeah.

Q. So it was quite a complicated decision - but you say it was because you decided he was - he was somebody you could trust. Had you not felt that before with other relationships?

A. No, I'd had other boyfriends or like casual relationships, and any time I'd gone a little bit far I'd always seemed to be let down afterwards -

Q. Yeah.

A. - and I just didn't feel I could trust anybody until I met him. I don't know why, maybe it's because he was older than me and most of the other people had been about my age, but I just felt a lot of trust - I just knew that he wasn't gonna run off, or laugh at me if I got it wrong. I just - I knew it.

Q. Yeah.

A. 'Cos - I think it was 'cos we talked about it a lot.

Q. So had there been many - you said there'd been quite a few of these other relationships.

A. A few, like - a few men. One man I nearly went all the way with when I was about sixteen, and when I was out to not lose my virginity, but it was the thing then -

Q. Yeah?

A. And I was thinking, "well, why not?". I'd known him for quite a while, he was a lot older than me. And it just happened one night when I was very drunk on a New Year's Eve, and it - it just didn't work. I was very nervous, very scared, I didn't - I did feel an awful lot for him, I thought he was very physically attractive, but I just tensed up and nothing would work, I had a lot of pain, and it just was finished. And then he never contacted me afterwards. And then there'd been a couple of other people who I'd gone pretty far with but again, they were sort of casual - very casual -

Q. Mm. They were casual?

A. Yeah, they were casual about it and I was, I wasn't particularly involved with them or anything, but when I started going out with my boyfriend now, it was more involved.

Q. Right from the beginning, as soon as you started -

A. Yeah.

Q. 'Cos you had that process where you were getting to know him beforehand.

A. Yeah. Because I knew him as a friend before, so there was no like first meeting -

Q. Yeah.

A. - and it was more just turning it into a relationship.

Q. Yeah, yeah. And do you feel that it's gonna continue?

A. Yes. I mean, I don't - no way, I don't think I'll ever wanna get - I don't know that I'd want to get married; I won't say I don't ever want to get married, but at the moment I certainly don't want to think about marriage or engagement; I don't particularly want to live with him at the moment because I think it'd probably split us up, 'cos I think I'm a bit too young at the moment, although I love him and I want to go out with him and I want to be with him, I - I don't want to live with him. Maybe in a couple of years. We talk about it quite a lot. He - he's often said to me, "will you live with me?" and I try and tell him "no", why I don't want to, but I've said, we've been going out for two years; if we've been going out for another two years, then I will seriously think yes, I will live with him probably: 'cos it's that sort of point where I'd either wanna do one thing or the other. But I can see it going on for quite a while.

Q. Mm. You feel confident.

A. I do. I feel confident in a lot of ways. Like sometimes I wonder if it's a bit more a relationship that's just so - not abrupt, but it's so - it is a very predictable relationship. We see each other - not certain days, but we do certain things at certain times and we'll go to places together and other places alone. It's more - it has sort of drifted into one

steady thing. I don't know if I'm too keen on that all the time, but it's - makes me happy at the moment. Every now and then I want more excitement, but -

Q. What, you mean more excitement, maybe doing something with somebody else...

A. Yeah. Sometimes with other men.

Q. Yeah.

A. I've done it a couple of times but I've always gone back to him afterwards, and a couple of times I've sort of thought to him and said to him, "I don't wanna go out with you any more, I can't handle our relationship any more" -

Q. Yeah.

A. - but in the end I've always sat down and I've got so upset about it myself, and it's not just 'cos I feel guilty, 'cos I know I would have to get over the guilt and he would get over me eventually, but in the end I think "what am I doing? I do want to go out with him, I do wanna be with him." I think it's more a fix of every now and then I might see other people who are having such a good time with loads of boyfriends and that, that I think I want it. Then when I try it, I only get unhappy.

Q. Mm, mm. But you think when - it sounds as if you sort of make - you're the one who is in control sort of thing -

A. Yes.

Q. Do you feel you're in control?

A. If there's anyone in control it is me -

Q. Yeah.

A. - and sometimes I don't think that's such a good thing, 'cos sometimes I say to him, "tell me what you think, tell me what you feel, tell me if you're annoyed with me", but he doesn't tend to do that much. Every time I've sort of said to him, "oh, I don't know if I wanna go out with you", and I know I've treated him badly, he's never really put his foot down and say, "well, if that's the way you feel, get out of my life, go away"; it's always like "I still wanna go out with you, I still wanna be with you". I know I'm the dominant partner and sometimes I think that makes me use him a little bit, because I know I'm so in control. I think I'd be a bit more wary of our relationship if he sort of messed me about and said "oh, I don't know how I feel about you" -

Q. Yeah.

A. - then I think I'd be a bit - treat him a bit better sometimes.

Q. Yeah, it's complicated, that, isn't it -

A. Yeah.

Q. - I mean - do - would you - I mean would you like it if he was treating you badly and messing you about?

A. No, I wouldn't at all -

Q. Yeah.

A. - what I'd like from him is - I feel - a bit more assertiveness: not so much "I am gonna mess you around if you mess me around", but "I don't like it when you say this and that to me and I don't like it when you do this".

Q. Mm.

A. We can talk to each other about nearly everything, but sometimes he holds things back from me.

Q. How do you know?

A. I just can sense it -

Q. Yeah.

A. - I can sense sometimes he wants to say something but he won't, 'cos he's not quite sure how I'll react. And a lot of times if I'm particularly horrible to him, he doesn't actually wanna really talk it out.

Q. Mm, yeah.

A. He wants to talk out the petty things, but not the big things.

Q. So you think that he may be sort of harbouring resentment about the way that -

A. Yeah. Sometimes I do, 'cos it comes out in little sarcasms.

Q. Yeah. I suppose people have different characters, don't they - I mean, are you the kind who sort of just lays it on the line and says what you think?

A. Not always. After a while I will. I'll bottle things up for a long, long time, and I'll sort it out completely in my head before I'll say anything. I don't like to say things and then change my mind five minutes later. And I know he doesn't like that; he'd like me to say exactly what I felt exactly at that moment; but I like to sort it all out completely before I tell him.

Q. Yeah. Do you sometimes think he might be doing that too, or is he sorting it out and then not -

A. - and then not telling me, though. Only in certain cases, only if it's something he knows will upset me. 'Cos he knows - I'm very good at telling him exactly what I think and upsetting him, but if he upsets me I get very upset. It's a bit of a hypocritical relationship like that.

Q. Yeah, yeah. He's done that in the past, has he? - said things that upset you -

A. Yeah.

Q. What kind of things...?

A. Problems with our sex life sometimes. Especially when we first started sleeping with each other, and I wasn't particularly confident. I was a little bit scared, a little bit anxious I wasn't doing it right, and there was things I didn't want to do that he might have wanted me to, and he would go on and on and on about them, and the more he went on the more upset I would get; and I really didn't want him to say anything, but he would just say it.

Q. Yeah. What sorts of things that he wanted you to do?

A. Well, we - oral sex. I didn't want to do it at first with him. I didn't mind if he did it with me -

Q. Yeah.

A. - that didn't bother me at all. But I didn't want to do it with him. The thought of it made me feel sick at first.

Q. Yeah.

A. And I really and truly said to him "I'm not doing it to be horrible to you, but I feel I'm going to be sick if I do this". The thought really repulsed me. And it got to the point where he was saying "if you don't do this, it's gonna be over between us, not because it's the most important thing in our relationship, but because it means a lot to me, because I'm giving you the pleasure but you won't give it to me back". And I knew I was being unreasonable in a way, although I really didn't wanna do it, I knew I was being unreasonable, because I would accept but I wouldn't give. But I really was so stubborn that I didn't want to do it; and then in the end I did, and it wasn't as bad as I thought. And just to see him so happy made me feel good about it.

Q. Yeah.

A. And now I don't mind at all. Like - it's not a great pleasurable experience for me, but it makes me happy to see him enjoy it so much.

Q. Yeah.

A. But that caused one of the biggest problems ever.

Q. Yeah. Is it - is it pleasurable - do you like it - is it pleasurable when he does it to you?

A. Oh, yes, very.

Q. Yeah?

A. It's the best part of our sex life, I should say.

Q. Yeah.

A. But it - like I said it doesn't give me pleasure doing it to him physically, but to see him happy -

Q. Do you do other things, I mean do you have anal sex or anything like that?

A. No. That - I really find that the most repulsive thing to me.

Q. Yeah?

A. I don't think I could ever engage in that. Luckily it doesn't do anything for him, either; he's never wanted to try it or anything. But it's not - quite an active sex life, it's not the same every time, it's not like "right, we do this, this and this" and then we have sex, and then it is over. Sometimes like I'll make him happy and not want anything back myself. Then sometimes it's the other way round or sometimes we just wanna - sometimes we wanna do things loving and sometimes you don't. There's nothing - I've never gone in for any of the tying up, it doesn't do anything for me. Sometimes we used to sort of play-act, like remember the first time we slept together or the first time we kissed or something like that, and - but you can only do it so much and then it's not - it does nothing for you anymore. Now like our sex life is more - it's much better because we both know what makes each other happy and what each other likes. And there's real no bars now, if I want him to do something to me, I don't get embarrassed saying "can you do this?" or "can you do that?"; I just say, "I'd really like it if you'd do this to me", or like - maybe if we were having sex and I could see he wanted oral sex, I'd say "do you want me to do that to you?".

Q. Yeah.

A. And it doesn't bother me. It's - it's more making each other happy.

Q. Mm. Well, it sounds quite good. So - and it gives you pleasure usually?

A. Yes. Well, it's a funny relationship in a way, sometimes it doesn't. I can never reach orgasm through sex, not through physical, like, intercourse. It's never worked for me. Sometimes that gets me. I can only reach it through him - oral - giving me oral sex or masturbation. It's never worked, and sometimes that makes me feel not quite a woman. And it's - it does bother him, 'cos sometimes he feels he's failed, 'cos he can't give it to me like that. But then he's - reads so much and he says, well, so many women can't come like this. But that's the only lowish point of our relationship sexually. But sometimes it just really worries me and sometimes I think nothing of it, 'cos I get so much pleasure otherwise. But when we have sex and that, sometimes I don't - I don't want to have an orgasm. I just don't want to. I'm not in the mood or I know it won't work. But I don't mind having sex without that at the end of it because I still find it pleasurable. Sometimes we can have intercourse and he'll come and I won't, but it'll feel like I have at the end of it -

Q. Yeah.

A. - because I'll be just as exhausted and just as content, even though nothing's been, like, released.

Q. Yeah, yeah. But you might have had an orgasm earlier or something like...

A. Yes. Or later on he'll say, "do you feel like it now?", and I might say "yeah, I do" or "no, I'll tell you when I do" (laugh).

Q. Yeah. Yeah, it sounds - I mean, it sounds nice. 'Cos a lot of people, it's sort of there's a normal progression or... progression, and a sort of culmination of having the orgasm, or the guy having an orgasm -

A. Yeah.

Q. - sort of thing, and that's it.

A. It's definitely not like that with us.

Q. Not like that...

A. Definitely.

Q. Yeah. I mean - with the - I mean, did you enjoy other sorts of activities with the other guys before?

A. I'd never had an orgasm before I went out with my boyfriend, not even through masturbation. I'd never sort of considered masturbation. Like I knew about it and that, but I never could quite work out the female orgasm or anything, so I never knew what to ask anybody else. I mean, I'd sort of made other boys come, I'd masturbated with them and that, but I'd never really thought of getting any pleasure out of it myself, other than, like, just them touching me; I'd never thought of coming myself, until I went out with this boyfriend.

Q. Yeah.

A. Who really wanted me to be so happy, sexually. I knew it; I knew it; but it just didn't click that it could happen to me. I don't know why. I just didn't think about it, I suppose because I hadn't really masturbated myself. I didn't feel dirty, I wouldn't - I didn't ever think of it as dirty or wrong. I just hadn't ever done it. And now I realise sometimes I might have been with another boy and felt really frustrated afterwards, but I'd have never done anything about it. I wouldn't have thought about doing anything about it. It just didn't come into my mind.

Q. Yeah. Do you think ... ask you about the sex education you got at school -

A. Yeah.

Q. - was that helpful or unhelpful?

A. Not - it didn't really have any effect on my sex life in the end, it wasn't in real detail; like, there was no talk of masturbation, it was merely, like, "this is the sperm, this is the egg which is released once a month, if they come together you will have a baby". And then there was a bit about the periods for girls and the male voice breaking and how the body changed, but there was nothing about, really, sexual intercourse, like in any way other than having a baby.

Q. Yeah.

A. And nothing about diseases or homosexuality, nothing like that. Just the bare essentials. A bit about contraception but that was it.

Q. What - are you using contraception?

A. Yes, I do. Well, we first started off, he used condoms, but it never really worked. It didn't give him any pleasure and he often lost his erection, it just didn't work; so I went

on the pill, it didn't bother me, and I've been on that for about two years now, about nearly two years.

Q. Are you very concerned about getting pregnant, I mean avoiding it?

A. Yeah.

Q. Yeah.

A. I really could not cope with a baby at the moment, I know I couldn't. I mean I don't - I do see children in my future eventually. Not for a long time. I mean, neither of us are ready for a baby, neither of us could afford it; I don't know if I want to spend the rest of my life with him, and I know if I want children I want to have it with someone who I want to spend the rest of my life with. And sometimes like, if I've missed a pill or I've been sick, I'd still have sex and I'd think to myself, "I know I could get pregnant, I know I could"; sometimes I think it's more the - the chance of will I/won't I - I really do not want to be pregnant, but sometimes you sort of think, "well, I wonder what it'd be like if I was" and that. And every month, if my period may be a couple of hours late or something like that, 'cos it comes dead on a certain time, I think, "oh, I wonder if I'm pregnant". Sometimes it doesn't bother me that much, even though I know I wouldn't wanna keep it. It's more - I think it would be more testing whether my body really works -

Q. Whether it could do it or not, yeah.

A. Yeah.

Q. Yeah, yeah. But you think if you were to get pregnant like that, accidentally, that you'd have an abortion?

A. Yes, I'm sure I would. Because, like, I don't want a baby at the moment. I wouldn't want to give up a baby for adoption; I know, if I'd carried a baby for nine months, I'd want it. I'd want this to be my child, I'd want to bring it up. So I would really have an abortion. I don't feel strongly about anti-abortion, I'm for it... bothered. It would bother me obviously, it would upset me greatly, but not the fact that I'd killed a life or killed a child, but I'd stopped something that I created more.

Q. Mm, yeah.

A. Not the fact of killing something, but something that could have been mine and could have been part of me.

Q. Yeah. But still you're taking incredible care.

A. Yeah, okay.

Q. Did you ever worry about other things, I mean not just about pregnancy, about STDs or AIDS, things like that?

A. AIDS only crossed my mind like once, when we first started going out, and he was very open about his sexual partners, his previous ones, and what I'd done or whatever, and one day I sort of said, "there's no chance that you could ever have AIDS, is there?", and he said, "no, I don't think so", he said, "I've asked all my other partners and that, and we have talked about it". But it never worried me to the point of - "oh, no, I must start using condoms straight away, because he's had quite a few sexual partners before me". I never learnt about it at school 'cos when I was at school it wasn't, like, the thing of the time. It didn't come until I'd left school really. I have had a couple of casual relationships, and I haven't used condoms, and - but I know it should worry me, but it doesn't worry me as much as I know it should. I some - I don't worry so much about sexually transmitted diseases, because like the only way I could get that or he could get that is by sleeping around, and I don't sleep around; the only two people I have slept

with apart from him I've known very well, and I've known about their sex life, whatever, so I've not really had worries of catching anything.

Q. Yeah.

A. And I know - well, I know he doesn't - he hasn't slept with anyone else since he's been going out with me. I'm the unfaithful one, not him -

Q. Yeah. Are these - you've slept with two people since you've been with him?

A. Yeah, mm. It was just like the times when I was thinking, "what am I doing, I wanna have fun, I wanna be free". One was very casual, when I was at university for a couple of months, someone I got very very friendly with and it happened in a drunken night. And it was just like the natural thing to happen. I never thought - I liked him and everything, but I never wanted to go out with him. It was just, like, the sex was gonna happen 'cos we wanted it to. And the other person unfortunately was my boyfriend's best friend.

Q. ...

A. I'd known him for a couple of years, for the same time I'd known my boyfriend, and I was ever so close to him, such good friends; like I'd tell him everything if I was having problems with my boyfriend, he'd tell me about his life and that, and we were always close, we mucked about and whenever we went out together, us two'd slide off and have chats and laugh and joke. And one night we had a party, we both had a little bit to drink; we weren't absolutely out of our heads, just very very relaxed, and he started to - it - it just sort of happened, he started to stroke my arms and we were dancing, and then we all stayed at this person's house, and it just carried on. He started to kiss me when everyone had gone to sleep, and we just went outside and it happened. It was like really - it just happened. It wasn't like planned or anything.

Q. Yeah.

A. It was really weird. I couldn't - afterwards I thought, "what on earth have I done?". It was like I'd done something and I wasn't me when I was doing it. But it seemed like the most natural thing ever -

Q. - at the time, yeah.

A. Yeah, I really wanted it and he did too, and it caused a lot of problems afterwards, 'cos - I didn't ever sleep with him again, but we sort of met up and we would sneak off and kiss, and my boyfriend caught us at one point, which caused a lot of problems. I mean, he was really upset, I was upset for being so stupid as to let him find out, because I - I'm one of these people who thinks it's really - it's not alright, but it's better as long as the other person doesn't find out. If he'd have never found out there'd have been no problems whatsoever, but he did find out, and he was upset and I was upset. And I went to speak to his friend, and I went - and I met him one day, we discussed it all; and I knew I couldn't leave my boyfriend to go out with this other man, because I thought, if I do I will - I will resent one or the other, I'll even resent my boyfriend in the end, like "you threw me into this", or I'll resent his friend, like - and I'll split them up. And the thing I never wanted to do was split up the two friends because although it'd hurt my boyfriend, it hadn't hurt him to the extent of like saying to his friend "get out of my life, I never want to see you again"; he was very rational about it. And so I had to make the decision, what am I gonna do? And I decided I wanted to stay - I didn't know if I wanted to stay with my boyfriend but I knew I didn't wanna go out with this other man at the moment, 'cos it wouldn't work. I can see ourselves maybe getting together in a few

years, maybe not. I knew there was something between us other than just sex, it was something more as well. But I said to my boyfriend, "I don't know if I wanna go out with you anymore" and that. And it was one of those times when afterwards I realised I did wanna go out with him and I did love him. I'd done this other thing - I didn't love this other bloke, but I cared for this other bloke, and I admitted it to my boyfriend, I said "you'll have to realise that I'll always care for him" and that. So that just sort of happened. It's not brought up that much anymore, I'm not - I'm not nearly - nowhere near as close to his friend anymore as I was. He's since going out with somebody else, and I don't think he loves her; I think he's just throwing everything into it. I can see him doing it. I try to look at the other girl with a clear mind, and I can't see in her all the things he's seen in other girls, but that's not my business anymore. I mean, who am I to say anything to him after what I've done? - carried on going out with my boyfriend.

Q. ... you nearly split with your boyfriend at that point?

A. Yeah.

Q. Yeah.

A. But I'm glad I didn't now. 'Cos it would have been stupid; it was something I'd done, as a bit of excitement in my life. And although it meant a lot at the time, and it will always mean a lot to me, always - to me it's not like some sordid one-night stand, it was something that was gonna happen one day and it happened when it did. I should have realised at the beginning - afterwards some - quite a lot of people have said to me "I could always see that happening".

Q. Yeah.

A. And in the end, I mean, I look back on it, at certain points I thought, "so can I - it happened". Sometimes I think you just meet a person you're wildly attracted to, and you don't want anything really out of them - not just sex, you just don't want a heavy relationship with them, you just wanna sort of be - have a laugh with them and maybe sleep together. But it's not all you want. I'm glad I stayed with my boyfriend.

Q. With your boyfriend, yeah. Was the sex okay with this other guy?

A. It was very good.

Q. Yeah?

A. Yeah. It really was, and -

Q. Didn't that influence your decision? (laugh)

A. It should of really. And then - but then I thought to myself, sex isn't anything. It is a lot in my relationship, and I think it'll always be a lot in any relationship I have, but it isn't everything. In the end it's: does the other person care for you? Do you care for them? Can you be happy together, can you always make each other laugh or cheer each other up when you're down? Are they a friend to you - not just are they good in bed.

Q. Yeah. Yeah. So you think you - how long ago was that? You think you've weathered that storm in your relationship?

A. That was just before Christmas.

Q. So it was quite recently.

A. Yeah.

Q. And you feel things are going okay.

A. They're going much better between me and my boyfriend now. Sometimes it takes things like that, and we have a bit of a row and arguments, and we seem to clear the air, and it seems to make us a bit stronger. He knows now that I'm not - I don't think he ever

thought I was perfect, but I think sometimes he thought I was near to everything that anyone could ever want. And at least it made him realise I wasn't. And I have got faults. Sometimes he can be very sarcastic about it and he can make little cutting comments. But I don't say anything, 'cos I think, well, it's his right. I think I'd do the same if I was in his place. So we don't usually discuss it. We discussed it all at the time and that was it. It was like "this has got to be over now".

Q. Yeah.

A. It was.

Q. Yeah. Do you think you'd be able to handle it if it was the other way round?

A. If he'd done it to me?

Q. Mm.

A. We do talk about this sometimes, like what would - he often says, "what would you do if you found out I'd slept with someone else?". And I'll say - it depends. If it was a one-night stand, and it was just someone you wanted to have sex with, who you got on with, and you thought it'd be good, it wouldn't be so bad as having sex with someone you really really cared about and could care about more than me. Like if it was an ex or someone you'd always fancied, always wanted, then I'd be more upset than if it was a one-night stand. I think I'd rant and rave at him and I'd throw a wobbler and I'd cry and I'd scream, but in the end I'd always think to myself, well, I'd done it to you. So - and although I just - I don't wanna go out with lots of other people, and I wouldn't want him going out with lots of other people, I think you have to accept that every now and then you're gonna stray, you're gonna wanna do other things, 'cos there's so many other people out there.

Q. Yeah, yeah.

A. It's inevitable that you're gonna meet somebody else who attracts you as much as your partner.

Q. Mm. Do you think that, say, that - that fact exists, that you're always gonna find other people attractive, but do you think that AIDS might have influenced the way that people feel about that, that they might change their behaviour - not be so likely to -

A. I think a lot of people have; but I still think a lot of people think to themselves, "it's not gonna happen to me. No one I know's got it. I'm gonna be the same as I always am." I think everyone comes out with "oh, everyone's so aware of AIDS" - yeah, they're aware of it, but it's the same with anything, "it's not gonna happen to me".

Q. Yeah.

A. You always think that, and often on the spur of the moment, if you suddenly sort of have sex with someone unplanned totally, it doesn't go through your mind, "oh my God, what about AIDS?". It doesn't.

Q. Yeah.

A. I think people won't be as free and easy - I mean, I wouldn't - I would never sort of meet someone at a party who I'd never met before and go to bed with them, I wouldn't do that; because I wouldn't know what I'd catch - not just AIDS, anything. But if it - like if it was somebody I knew and I sort of knew their partners and this and that, I would be more willing.

Q. Mm. What would you think about condom use in that sort of setting, I mean would you -

A. I think, yeah.

Q. Would you be - would you be okay asking somebody to use a condom?

A. Yeah, it wouldn't bother me. Like, that wouldn't bother me at all. I think you've got to be aware of these things, you've got to do it. Everyone's got to take responsibility. If you're adult enough to sit down and wanna have sex with someone, you're adult enough to be able to say to them, "will you use a condom", else you shouldn't be doing it. I mean, I know people do, but in my mind if I couldn't say that, then I shouldn't be at it in the first place.

Q. Mm, yeah.

A. I do - I mean, I've always carried them around, 'cos my boyfriend and I, if anything had happened and I forgot a pill or anything, it's always handy to have a condom.

Q. Yeah. But you don't particularly like using them, or...

A. No. It doesn't bother me - in fact, it's often easier for me if he would use a condom, 'cos it doesn't make it so messy, and it doesn't mean the stuff is dripping down your legs for hours afterwards, but, because it's not so pleasant for him, we don't use them.

Q. It doesn't affect your pleasure at all?

A. No, not really. It doesn't make a lot of difference for me. Often it's easier because you can get lubricated ones and it makes it all a lot simpler.

Q. Yeah. But he doesn't like them at all.

A. No. He doesn't hate them or anything, I mean if I say "oh, I've forgotten a pill, sorry, gotta use condoms for the next week", he doesn't mind; but it doesn't do a lot for him.

Q. Yeah.

A. And it's a lot harder work -

Q. Yeah.

A. - to get him aroused and keep him there -

Q. Yeah.

A. - if you're gonna start sticking these things over you.

Q. Mm. Some people were sort of saying it's very difficult because of keeping the flow going sort of thing, that you can't -

A. Yeah, you sort of stop in the middle -

Q. Yeah.

A. No, I don't know, I don't know if I would agree with all keeping the flow going. It's not - everyone thinks, oh sex is so natural, you start and you go through the motions and you finish; you don't - you might fart in the middle of it, you might do something like that, that's totally unnatural; you might laugh. I know sometimes I've looked at his face and laughed in the middle of it - now, that stops the flow of it, you know. Unless you're in a massive passionate mood, things will always stop the so-called flow.

Q. Yeah, yeah. Especially when you've been with someone quite a long time.

A. Yeah. I mean, at first it might be a little bit embarrassing - "oh, I've got to stop and put on my condom" - but after a while, if you've been sleeping with someone, it shouldn't make any difference, I don't think.

Q. Mm, yeah. And you think it would be - yeah, easy enough to - in fact, important to ask somebody...

A. If I didn't know them, I would definitely say -

Q. Yeah.

A. - "if we're gonna sleep together, you've got to wear one of these".

Q. Yeah.

A. Until - if I - and then if I wanted to carry on seeing him and sleeping with him, then I'd start saying, "who have you been to bed with before, what sort of risks have they got?". And if I thought there was any risk, then, unpleasant as it might be, then I would want to either carry on with the condoms, or I might even think twice. 'Cos I know it'd scare me if I started to sleep with someone and found out they had a really lurid sexual history, and they'd slept with loads of different people and might have done this and that, I think I'd be a bit worried.

Q. Yeah, yeah.

A. I think I'd think to myself, is it really worth it?

Q. Yeah.

A. "Do I really want to have sex with this person that much?" - 'cos I don't - I wouldn't wanna get anything myself.

Q. Yeah. Incredibly unpleasant. Did you - where did you first hear about AIDS, do you think?

A. Probably on the news really, on the television. Definitely not through school. It was on the television, and they used to discuss it and things, when I was at college it would be discussed; and then you had the old leaflets through the door, and the adverts.

Q. What did you think of the adverts?

A. I thought the iceberg advert was a bit stupid really. I mean, it meant nothing, didn't it? Yeah, it was a pointless advert. And then there was the one - oh, no, that was a Durex one, I think, where there was a boy and a girl over either side of the fence -

Q. Yeah.

A. I think it was related to AIDS.

Q. Yeah, yeah.

A. That was quite a good one actually. It didn't mean a lot but it was more catchy, it had all the pop-song in it and - but the leaflet was a bit stupid really, I think.

Q. Do you feel that you know about AIDS? What do you know about it?

A. What do I know - I know that you can get it if you're a drug user, and you share needles; and I know the only other way they know at the moment you can get it, is if you have sex with somebody who's got AIDS. Or if you've got an open wound and for any reason that got infected, or if you were given a blood transfusion... and that had the AIDS virus in it. I know you can't get it through oral sex or kissing or anything like that, there's like, really specific things.

Q. What about the difference between AIDS and HIV?

A. You can have the virus for a long - as far as I know, you can have the virus and not have AIDS, but you actually contain the virus inside you, and it may come out and it may not; and then there's the full-blown AIDS where you get the diseases and the recurring pneumonia and things like that, but you - I think you can have the virus and it can just be dormant inside you.

Q. Mm. Is that when - would you catch it if somebody just had the virus, or only if they had AIDS?

A. I don't know about that. I couldn't imagine you'd catch it if you only had the virus; the only way you could then get the virus is, I would imagine, if you were pregnant and you would pass it to your child. I'm not - I'm not sure about that...

Q. ... you can get it - if somebody has the virus -

A. Yeah.

Q. - in the ways that you were talking about it being spread -

A. Yeah.

Q. - you can get it -

A. - you can get it like that as well?

Q. Yeah, so you wouldn't know that the person had AIDS, you know, they could have the virus and you wouldn't know.

A. Yeah.

Q. But they could have the virus and it wouldn't develop into AIDS, although it most often does develop into AIDS.

A. Yeah.

Q. When you first heard about it, did you - I mean, there was a lot of stuff about it being a gay plague; did you have any feelings about that or any thoughts about it?

A. Well, at first, like when it came out, the only way that most people thought you could get it was if you were gay - and I mean, I didn't think, oh it's the curse of God on all the gay men, because I'm very aware of homosexuality, I've got homosexual friends and that; but then it became more publicised and you could sort of see - oh, you can get it through other ways. So at first I guess I thought, oh well, it won't affect me, I'm not gay, and I'm not gonna sleep with another woman or another man who's been gay or whatever, but then you realise you can get it other ways.

Q. Mm, yeah. Yeah. So - and do you think other people have gone through that process, the same as you, that -

A. No, I think a lot of people still think to themselves, "well, I won't get it 'cos I'm not gay". I think men are more unaware of it than women. I think that's in a lot of cases of sexual diseases and sex, I think women are always more aware of the facts than men. I think you'll find there's a lot of men out there who'll say, "oh, well, I'm not gonna have sex with another man so I can't get AIDS".

Q. Mm, yeah.

A. I'm not just generalising or being sexist, but I do find that more.

Q. Yeah.

A. I think it's more because women will sit down and talk about these things, and not really get embarrassed, but - in a group of other girls, or even with men; but men won't sit down amongst themselves up the pub and start talking about, "oh, do you think I could have AIDS?" or "do you think I could get AIDS?". They just don't talk about it, it's not the considered thing.

Q. Mm, yeah. And you think that women talk about their relationships more?

A. Yeah, definitely. I think - there are those men, like - I think my boyfriend and his friends, some of them, do sit down and talk their relationships - about their relationships to each other, but not in the depth that women do. Like I wouldn't say I told my best friend absolutely everything, but if there was something that was bothering me or that, I know I could always go to her and I could discuss it with her. And like one of the first things we always say on the phone is like "how's your boyfriend, how's it going? Has anything upset you? Is it going well?".

Q. Yeah.

A. And even at work, if - the other girls know I've been going through a rough time with my boyfriend, they'll say, "how is it going with JIMMY now, is it going okay?" Whereas a

man won't go in a room and say "how's it going with your girlfriend, is it alright?" - they just don't do that.

Q. Yeah.

A. Women, I think, always talk more about relationships, they're just - aren't embarrassed.

Q. Do you think there's a double standard operating as well, about sort of what's appropriate behaviour?

A. Oh, definitely. Because like if a group of lads met up in the pub and started talking in heavy depth about their relationship, one of them would always scorn that person; and then the others would always join in and that. It's the accepted thing that women are a bit girly and a bit emotional, and men are hard and they never show their feelings. And it's very rare exceptions, I think, when you find men that will talk about their feelings.

Q. Do you think, amongst your friends - I mean, I think you were saying before that amongst your friends you think people aren't concerned about - they don't think it's relevant to them.

A. AIDS?

Q. AIDS.

A. Mm, I think you find that a lot, they don't think it'll ever happen to them. Or they just don't think about it. I mean, I know we hardly ever discuss AIDS. Like if - when I told my - one of my friends that I'd slept with somebody else, she'd never say to me something like, "oh, do you think you've got AIDS?", it's more like "oh, what was it like? How do you feel? Are you upset?", not like "have you got AIDS?".

Q. Yeah.

A. You just don't consider it. I think until - personally with me, I think until I know somebody who's got it, or I can see somebody maybe die from it or very ill from it, it won't affect me. I think it's like all things, until you see the outcome of it, you don't think it's gonna affect you. And as much as, like I say, it might worry me, I wouldn't be worried to that far extent, 'cos I haven't been in contact with it.

Q. It wouldn't worry you so much as to affect your behaviour sort of thing. Yeah.

A. It - I mean, it would in certain cases; like I said, I wouldn't sleep with any old Tom, Dick or Harry -

Q. ...

A. - yeah. But it wouldn't affect my behaviour to a great extent.

Q. Yeah, yeah. When you were talking about the sex education at school being very limited and mechanical, did you get any from home that was -

A. Not a lot really. I - I come from a very open family, like there's no "well, we don't talk about sex here", but my mum never sat down and taught me the facts of life. She didn't - I dunno, she must just have accepted I'd know it, I don't know how, but - I did, it sort of - got it through school and a bit from lessons and friends and that; but I never really learnt a lot from my parents. I mean, if anything was being discussed they wouldn't send us out the room or anything, they would discuss it in front of us, but they never actually sat down and told us anything.

Q. Mm, yeah. So in a way you've learned - I mean, you've learned whilst you've been with your boyfriend as well, haven't you?

A. Yes, a lot there. Yeah. And through my friends.

Q. Yeah.

A. That's where I learn a lot of it. You discuss things that might happen to you, or have happened, or if you're feeling any pain or anything, say "have you felt this?", or -

Q. Yeah.

A. - "what do you think about it?"; she says, "oh, that's alright - blah, blah, blah".

Q. Yeah. So you did feel pain at the beginning, when you first...

A. Oh, yeah, yeah. And then I caught thrush somewhere along the line -

Q. Yeah.

A. - and, I dunno, I kind of knew from the beginning, "oh, it must be thrush, I better go and get something about it". I dunno know I knew, I just knew. I think in magazines and that, I always read the teenage magazines, and they always went into detail about it; and you kind of knew about it before you'd ever experienced it.

Q. Yeah. So you could recognise what it was.

A. Yeah, it didn't worry me, and I thought "that's what I've got, I'd better go and sort it out".

Q. Yeah.

A. So I did.

Q. Yeah. When you were saying about the couple of men that you slept with when you were with your boyfriend, you did it for a bit of a thrill really, to bring some excitement into your life. Do you think you take risks in other areas of your life?

A. Not really. No. I'm a very steady person. I get into ruts easily. It will be a long time before I change my job or do something a bit different or try something a bit different; but when it comes to relationships, I'm a bit sort of ahead of myself -

Q. Yeah.

A. - I rush into things. It's the only part of my life I'm really not steady and stable in.

Q. Yeah.

A. Everything else is like - got a job, stay there for this time; or I do this on a Friday night, this on a Saturday night. When it comes to relationships I sort of - it's not so much the thrill of it, it's just being a bit wild

Q. Mm, yeah. But nothing else - like drink; you do a little bit of drinking, don't you?

A. Yeah.

Q. Yeah... smoking. Drugs?

A. I only smoke cannabis a few times, nothing else. I've never wanted to do anything else. I used to be even - I used to be very very anti all drugs, cannabis, the lot, because I'd seen two people, one of whom I was very close to and one of whom I'd grown up to, end up having breakdowns because they got so into drugs and they couldn't handle it. And then once I had been in a really really low mood and I was very down and I was at a party and someone's offered it me it; and I took it, and it did things for me and it made me feel really happy and really full of myself and I wanted to talk to everybody. And I did it a couple of times afterwards, but never - I never got to the stage where I thought, God, I've got to do this, I'm so down, I've got to go out and get some dope and smoke it. I've always sort of said, well, if it's there I'll have a puff and that's it.

Q. Yeah, yeah.

A. But that's as far as it ever went. But I don't think I'd ever wanna do any other sort of drugs, because - I mean, when you look at the facts, that cannabis isn't really addictive; I know people say, "oh, it's not addictive, yeah, but it leads to other things" and that - that's why I don't like it that much, that's why I feel a bit hypocritical doing it myself, but I

know I might do it - I could have done it for months and months; I might do it once but nothing else, because the others are addictive, to the point where you can't stop and you do get ill and you steal, and you need money for it. I don't see the point.

Q. Yeah, yeah. What about your friends, I mean are you with - do any of your friends do any other stuff, do you think?

A. One - a very close friend of mine, someone who I've sort of been at school with since I was eleven and that, he got into a stage where he did an awful lot. He did tablets and that - never anything like heroin or cocaine, just uppers and that, and a couple of my friends at work have done ecstasy tablets. And then there was someone who I went out with a long time ago when I was younger, he was NATIONALITY, and he comes... see me, tells me he does coke and that. But I hate it. I hate it when they say it to me, I think "why are you doing this, what you playing at?"; like, my friend who I really thought was about to go downhill - luckily he pulled himself together and realised he was getting heavily into drugs and stopped - but I had a friend at work who got these ecstasy tablets, and say "oh come on, you've gotta do it, you've gotta do it". I just thought I don't want to, I really don't. I said, "no, I don't wanna" and that - "you can do it but I'm not into it".

Q. What did they think of it, did they tell you?

A. Well, when SARAH said she'd done it it was like she'd got a real thrill and she felt really sexual and all she wanted to do was go out and sleep with someone and that, and then she says - and then it makes her feel really deep and heavy. And I thought, well, it sounds good enough but sometimes I could feel like that just through loving someone or just having a couple of drinks.

Q. Yeah.

A. Which is less harmful in my books, than having to rely on drugs to make you happy.

Q. Yeah. It's also hard to know what the long-term effects of ecstasy is -

(Tape Break)

A. ...She'd gone out with AN AMERICAN, and she'd met some bloke at a night club, and he says "do you wanna buy some ecstasy?", and she said "yeah, yeah", and she bought these tablets off him and when she took them they were sleeping tablets (laugh) and she ended up falling asleep in the nightclub. And I thought to myself, yeah, that's a bit funny, they was sleeping tablets, but you never know what people are selling you. You don't know what you're taking. Like if I have a cigarette or if I have a drink, I know exactly what it is and exactly what it's gonna do to me. You can't tell with the drugs.

Q. Mm, yeah, yeah. So you clearly are, you know, sensible in other areas, it's just that one -

A. Yeah.

Q. - yeah, the one area. You said - on the questionnaire you said, and you said just now, that you went to university for a little while -

A. Yeah, for two months.

Q. What happened?

A. I hated it. I just didn't get on with it at all. I went to NAME OF UNIVERSITY and that, and I was in a big hall and I didn't get on with the other - I got on with them, I made a few friends and that, but I'd gone to college for two years and they were all sort of fresh out of sixth form, and I felt I'd grown up a lot in the two years between school and university, and they hadn't, they were still at school level. We didn't have a lot in

common. None of them were on grants, they were all - had a lot of money, I had none. I was on about eight pound a week after hall fees, which was a joke.

Q. Yeah.

A. And I got a bit - I didn't like my course that much. I started off doing economics and then I changed to politics and sociology, which I did enjoy a lot, but - well, it's a different way of learning. I hadn't done A-levels, I'd done the B.Tech., and that was so different to the studying at university. I could cope with it but I - I didn't like it, I didn't enjoy it as much as I knew I could of. And I didn't like the university itself, I didn't think it was all it was gonna be. It wasn't a great excitement, it wasn't a thrill a minute, it wasn't parties all the time. I just wasn't enjoying myself. And I wanted to be home and I wanted to work; so I was a bit ill, and I come home for a couple of weeks, and then after I had to go back I just said to my mum "I don't wanna go back. I'll go back and clear my stuff out and that and finish the term, but then I'm leaving, I wanna get a job". And she said, "fair enough. I didn't think you'd be happy there anyway, but I wasn't gonna say anything -"

Q. Yeah.

A. - "Come home whenever you want". So I left.

Q. Do you have a reasonable relationship with your mother?

A. In a lot of things, yeah. We can tell each other an awful lot. Sometimes she surprises me, sometimes she'll talk about things I thought she'd never talk about. We get on very well. I love my mum a lot and I hate arguing with her, it upsets me more than anything. I hate doing anything which I think might displease her, and if I ever think she's upset over something I've done, I hate it, I can't stand it, I feel so awful about myself. I can tell her a lot, but I can't tell her everything. She didn't like it when she first found out I was sleeping with my boyfriend; she thought I was too young, I was abusing my body, I was gonna end up pregnant or with cervical cancer; I wasn't ready for it and that -

Q. Yeah.

A. - and it was very "I don't want him sleeping under my roof anymore" and that. I mean, he sort of stayed in my sister's room if he'd been up for the weekend or whatever.

Q. Yeah.

A. And - but she - she didn't want anything going on and that, so we had to be very sneaky about the whole thing. And also, when I wanted to get contraception, I didn't go to my doctor's because my mum [REDACTED].

Q. Ah. (laugh) A bit difficult.

A. Yeah. So I went to one of the Brook Advisory Clinics and I got it all there. And I carried on - I've never told her I was on the pill. I know she doesn't fully approve of it because she thinks there's quite bad side-effects, and I know it is after a while, but I hope I'm being sensible with it and I'll stop after a certain amount of time and that. So I'd never discuss that with her. I mean, if she ever came out with it and said to me, "are you on the pill?", I'd say "yes", but I don't see why I should have to tell her. If I've never had anything wrong and that, I've never wanted to tell her, because I think she made it clear to me when she was saying about my sex life, she didn't approve of it, that she didn't wanna be part of it, so I don't want her to be part of it. Things like, if I had a big problem I'd go to her, but otherwise it's like my body, I'm gonna do what I want with it in a way. But sometimes she surprises me, like when I sort of - I slept with my boyfriend's friend and I went through a lot of emotional things, it really mucked - mucked me about and messed me up; I was very very down for a long time, and she knew, and she asked me,

and I told her, and she was so understanding, so "don't worry about it, I don't disapprove of you, you've done what you thought was right; as long as you're happy, as long as you can sort it out -"; and she said "I wish I'd done it a couple of times in my marriage; there's been opportunities, I wish I'd done it". And I've never been so close to her as when she said that to me.

Q. Yeah.

A. We are very close.

Q. Yeah. What about your dad, do you get on with him okay?

A. I get on with him, yeah, but we're not close at all. I think my dad'd like it if we were all about six again, where he could take us out for donkey-rides and to the fair and to Hamleys -

Q. Yeah.

A. He can't cope with us so much now we're older. We're not his little girls anymore. He doesn't resent us growing up or anything, but he's not got the sort of control over him; he says "ah, you don't love me anymore, you don't come to me for sweeties and toys".

Q. Have you just got the one sister?

A. I've got two sisters -

Q. Are they older or younger?

A. Older and a younger. The middle. But we get on. I mean we have rows, like every daughter has a row with her father. Not so much - I mean, he annoys me sometimes, I sort of think "God, I wanna leave home, I can't stand him anymore", but it's alright, we get on.

Q. What - what's the job that you're doing at the moment?

A. I work for TRADE UNION, just do administrative work.

Q. Yeah. And how do you see that, your future in terms of work...?

A. I wanna work in the public sector. I know that, 'cos of my politics and that, I think it'd be hypocritical if I went into a real plush private job. I can't see me lasting with the TRADE UNION forever. I've got - I'm covering for a maternity leave position at the moment that's quite higher up than the grade that I started on. So hopefully when I've finished this and the girl comes back, then I'll be able to move on to somewhere else on a higher grade. I wouldn't mind doing local government work, something in education - I enjoy working in the education bit.

Q. Mm. Do you think you might want to pick up some more qualifications on the way or do you think you're okay?

A. Mm. Sometimes I have thought about it, "oh, shall I go back?" and that; I don't really want to. I think I'm the sort of person that if I had to, I'd do it, but unless I have to, I don't want to. I'd quite like to learn shorthand, because I think it's always quite handy - I don't ever want to be a secretary or anything, but it's good - especially now, if I could do shorthand I could be involved in a lot more meetings, and that gives you better promotion prospects, but that's the only thing I really want to make a conscious effort to do this term. But, like I said, unless I have to get the qualifications I don't particularly want to any more.

Q. Yeah.

A. I feel I'm a bit sick of learning and studying.

Q. Mm. And you think, in terms of the other parts of your life, you think if you are still with your boyfriend, you might start considering living with him in a couple of years?

A. In a couple of years, if we're still together, then I think "yeah, now is the time", then I'll live with him and that. I don't - I don't think I wanna get married. I don't really see the point. I always used to say, "oh, I'll get married if I'm gonna have a kid", but even now, like there's no stigma if you don't get married and you just live with him. What's the point? What's the bit of paper? That's what it is to me really, like you can be perfectly happy with someone living with them. I wanna have children eventually, but not until I'm about twenty-seven, twenty-eight, maybe older.

Q. Yeah. When you said about your politics - it would be hypocritical - what - which aspects of the politics...

A. Well, I'm a socialist. I'm very involved in my union at work, on the committee, I'm very involved in my local Labour Party. If I go around preaching how bad public - private sector is, how much I believe in things for the nation, I couldn't very well go against it or

-

Q. Yeah. Yeah.

A. I did it once, I worked for a PRIVATE COMPANY. It was absolutely awful, especially working in the accounts bit, phoning people up for their money. I felt absolutely awful, I thought how could I be doing this?

Q. Yeah. So you wanna keep your sort of - your principles and your practice together?

A. Yeah. I'd like to. I'm that sort of person. I don't like to tell people one thing and then go ahead and do something totally different. I can't justify it to myself.

Q. Yeah, yeah. How do you feel about feminism - got any views on that?

A. Yeah. My elder sister's like - well, was, until she met her boyfriend, an absolute raving feminist. Like not "oh, she's a real feminist, butch cow" and all this sort of stuff like that men say, she was very women's right, women this, women that - very into women's rights but not to a massive extent, like I don't go to women's sections meetings. I'm a bit funny on this, I mean I believe in abortion, I believe in a woman's right to choose and equal opportunities, the lot, a woman is as good as a man; but I don't get involved in it as much as I do other things. I - not that I don't find it as important, but - I don't know, I don't know that I think so much of the women's section meetings. Sometimes - I went to one once and it was a bunch of middle-class women sitting around discussing things they couldn't possibly know; and it annoyed me, and I thought "I can't go to this anymore".

Q. Yeah.

A. But I just - I do believe in a lot of the feminist issues, I don't put - I just don't preach them as much as I preach other things.

Q. Mm. So you focus your attention more on the socialism...

A. Yeah, yeah.

Q. What would you say is your image of yourself?

A. (laugh) I'd like to think that I'm quite an understanding person and quite a caring person. I know people often come to me if they've got a problem and wanna talk about things. I'm the sort of person I think where someone always ends up crying on my shoulder about one thing or the other. And I can always give advice - I'm very good at giving advice but I'm not so good about doing it myself. And I'm a very stubborn person, and I know that, and I can see that in myself. I think that's one of my worst faults - so stubborn.

Q. What do you think about other people's image of you, do you think it coincides or do you think -

A. Yeah. We discussed it at work today. Someone said to me, "what star sign are you?", and I said "Taurus", they said, "yeah, very down to earth, very ordinary, very passionate in their beliefs" and everything - and she was saying, "I believe all that of you. I think this is what sort of person you are." I think they see me as a real down to earth person who's ever so easy about things, who says what they think, and who's not embarrassed easily. I used to be but I'm not anymore.

Q. Yeah. What do you think changed that?

A. I think going to college did. When I was at school I was all round my friends and I wasn't, like, one of the main people or anything. When I went to college, I went to a college where I didn't know anybody, it was like - so I was out on my own. It's like being your first day at school again -

Q. Yeah.

A. - and I had to make my life there, and I had to make my friends and that, and it brought me out. And the sort of course I did as well, it was a very open - it was like, get up and speak in front of twenty people, and you always have to say your views, and you have to be involved in discussions and that, and it brought me out of myself.

Q. Yeah. So you valued that.

A. Yes -

Q. Yeah.

A. - a lot. And I think also my boyfriend brought me out of myself a lot as well. He's made me appreciate myself and that.

Q. Yeah.

A. He made me feel good about myself, because before I always felt, sort of, maybe I'm not such a good person, all these men sort of come and go and that, but - he really appreciated me and he constantly told me how much he appreciated me, and what a nice person he thought I was. And in the end, I thought, well, maybe I am, maybe it's all alright.

Q. Yeah.

A. It made me feel better about myself, he did a lot.

Q. But you were having doubts specifically about the men coming and going, did you have doubts about -

A. I thought I was doing something wrong. I thought what's going on, why am I frightening them off? Like, "why can't I get someone who'll be here to stay?" and that. And in the end I realised - like, now I realise, it wasn't me, it was more the men I was choosing, they weren't the right sort.

Q. Yeah.

A. I was going for the real bad types.

Q. Yeah. But you didn't realise that at the time.

A. Oh, no, I thought it was me. I thought I must be truly repulsive.

Q. Well - one of the other things we're asking young women to do is - if they've got the time and energy, is to keep a diary. Would you be interested in doing that?

A. What about?

Q. Well, it's about feelings, it's about your sex life... some detail -

A. Yeah.

Q. - what you think about it and what you actually do. Yeah. Great. Well, I'll give you one. Good. If you just do it for, say, a period of a couple of months and then send it back - I mean, you can keep it for longer if you like -

A. Yeah.

Q. I've got a little... had it... I've put a number in it, so that I can - so that I know it was you who sent it back, but it's - your name is on a list kept entirely separately.

A. Yeah.