

**LSFS5 06.04.1989**

**Donna**

Q. I see from the questionnaire that you live with your boyfriend. How long have you been doing that?

A. Er, a year now.

Q. A year?

A. Yeah.

Q. And where were you before that?

A. I was at home.

Q. Was that with all your family?

A. Yeah, yeah. Stepdad and niece and just recently a little baby.

Q. What, your mum's had a baby?

A. Yeah.

Q. So how many of the family are there all together now?

A. Well, what, including me?

Q. Yeah.

A. There's five of us. Like my niece is ... we're just about to adopt her, well, I'm not, but my parents are just about to adopt her.

Q. So does your sister live at home?

A. No, she doesn't. She's got her own flat.

Q. But her baby lives ...?

A. She lives with us. She had some problems looking after her, like her boyfriend went to prison and she had a lot of difficulties looking after JENNY.

Q. Is that your mum who's going to adopt her?

A. Yeah.

Q. It's not you?

A. No. No, I'm just so used to saying 'we', you know, you can't get out of the habit.

Q. And, er, what does your boyfriend do?

A. He's a [SKILLED TRADE].

Q. He's a [SKILLED TRADE]?

A. Yeah, in [REDACTED].

Q. How long have you known him?

A. Nearly three years.

Q. And what happened when you were at school? What sort of school did you go to?

A. A church school.

Q. That's right. Was that ... was it a very church school or was it ...?

A. Yeah, church once a week.

Q. Really?

A. And eucharist once a month, yeah. I hated the school actually. It was very ... a lot on discipline, too much on discipline. Sort of, you know, how your uniform was and that sort of thing. You didn't have much freedom and that - not a very nice school.

Q. Who was it run by? What sort of religion?

A. Church of England.

Q. Really? But they were very strict by the sound of it?

A. Yeah, very strict.

Q. Why did you get sent there?

A. It was one of the best schools in the area. Well, like for examination results and that.

Q. Which school was that?

A. [NAME OF SCHOOL]. It's in [TOWN], [COUNTY]. Cos we used to live there, in [TOWN].

Q. Oh right, yeah. So when did you move to London?

A. About two years before I left school.

Q. And was that the whole family moved?

A. No, I was living with my nan before that and it was just me and my mum who moved in with my stepdad just after they got married.

Q. Cos when did your parents split up?

A. My mum never got married.

Q. She never got married?

A. No. I've never met him - my father.

Q. Really?

A. No.

Q. Do you mind that or do you ...?

A. I didn't, I mean, I'd like to meet him now but I don't know whether I really want to upset my family cos I get on with my stepdad now and everything and I don't want to make him feel, sort of, you know, that he's not enough.

Q. Mm.

A. So, I don't know if I'll try and get in contact or not.

Q. Could you get in contact? Is he sort of ...?

A. Well, I don't ... I mean, the last I heard he was in [EUROPEAN COUNTRY]. He's a MUSICIAN in [EUROPEAN COUNTRY] and that was eighteen years ago so, I don't know.

Q. So who knows?

A. Mm. God knows where he is.

Q. Does that mean your sister's ... kind of, he's the father to your sister as well?

A. No, that's my stepdad's daughter.

Q. Right.

A. She's two years older than me. She lived in [COUNTRY] up 'til a couple of years ago and then moved over.

Q. So when you were at school, did they give you any, dare I say it, sex education at this Church of England?

A. Yeah, they did. Just the sort of basics - how babies are born, sort of thing. You know, the medical side of it. Nothing, you know, contraception and that. Nothing really. There was nothing that got you ready for actual sex, if you know what I mean. Nothing, you know, along the emotional aspects, you know which actually deals with all that, which wasn't much good when you actually came to it cos it is quite ... you know, it's a shock that it isn't just like a biological act, that it is quite emotional.

Q. Mm, yeah. So did it actually kind of surprise you that there were other things involved?

A. Yeah, I mean, I didn't realise I actually had like, you know ... once you'd actually done that you actually felt as though you'd opened yourself out to somebody a hell of a lot and perhaps you'd shown someone too much and I wasn't really ready for that sort of, you know, feeling cos it was quite early on in the relationship and you felt a bit sort of vulnerable that you'd actually opened yourself up to someone that much and they know that much about you. It sounds silly, you know ...

Q. No.

A. Perhaps I was a bit too young as well, going into it when I wasn't really ready but luckily enough, you know, I got a good bloke and it worked out alright.

Q. Mm. How old were you?

A. Fifteen. Pretty young.

Q. That was the first time?

A. Yeah.

Q. And was that, kind of, his idea or your idea or ...?

A. Mutual. It wasn't, sort of, him forcing me, you know. It was more he thought I wanted to and I thought he wanted to and, you know, it went like that, otherwise I think we probably both would have waited until we both got to know each other better, cos after a month that was it, sort of thing.

Q. Mm, so do you think it was more because it was, like, how you interpreted what the other person expected?

A. Yeah, I don't think I would have otherwise. You just think well if you don't, they might sort of pee off, you know, and I think he thought the same as well, so it wasn't sort of forced, it was just, you know, crossed wires.

Q. Have you talked about this since or is it ...?

A. Not really, no.

Q. But did you ever talk about those sorts of things?

A. Well, I did, sort of a little while after, to say I didn't feel I was really ready for it and all that, and it upset him a bit but, you know, he thought he'd done something wrong, sort of thing. But it worked out alright cos he's a very understanding bloke which is lucky cos usually I fall for some complete bastard, you know.

Q. And had you thought that you might have sex with him ... I mean, had you been prepared or was it one of those spontaneous ...?

A. I don't really know. It's quite a while ago since. I don't know. I mean, he's a hell of a lot older than me so I think it probably was what I was expecting. He was twenty-one when I went out with him, so I suppose it's something you expect with a bloke that age.

Q. Do you think a lot of girls do sort of go in for, like actually having their first of whatever sexual experience?

A. How do you mean?

Q. Well, whether they ... whether they think it's something you do at a certain point after you've met a bloke rather than actually because you want to?

A. I think it depends. I suppose it depends on the person. I mean, I think the first time it's usually because, you know, perhaps you want to get it over and done with and just get on with ... you know, just get that first time over and done with, whether it is expected of you. It is something to worry about, you know, 'Oh God, what's he going to think of me?' A lot of people just dive into it and think, 'Just get it over and done with and then it will all be alright', sort of stuff.

Q. Mm, yeah. Do you ever talk to your friends about their ...?

A. No.

Q. Not at all?

A. No. It's just something that I think is personal and you keep to yourself. I mean, if I've got a problem, I'll skip over the in-depth details and talk, sort of, you know, around it, but I hardly ever go into detail because it's putting ... it's not just my personal life, it's his personal life as well and I've not really got a right to talk about it, you know, unless it's something that's really bad that is hurting me, then I will. But not something that's affecting, you know ... it's up to us to sort it out, not other people.

Q. So you haven't got a special friend that you might talk about personal things with?

A. No. I've always been a very closed up person anyway. I prefer it that way. It's not something that I really want cos I feel it's better to keep things to yourself cos you open yourself up to be hurt, you know, if other people know too much about you, even if it is a special person there's always a chance of breaking up and they've got all that information.

Q. Mm. How did you meet him?

A. I was walking along with my mate, um, along a road, you know, totally drunk, and they drove, and he said, 'Do you want a lift?' and we said, 'Yeah' and we got in and it went from there and I met him the next night and it sort of just carried on.

Q. And what do you usually do as a kind of social life?

A. I don't. I prefer to stay in. I don't really like going out clubs or discos or anything like that.

Q. And what do you do when you are in?

A. I read, paint, watch tele, listen to music, just laze around generally.

Q. Is that with your boyfriend?

A. Yeah. We do, you know ... he's a keyboard player and we ... I'll play the top part with a big tenor recorder. We do music together and we listen to music together and you know, we do spend a lot of the time together.

Q. That sounds nice.

A. It has its ups and downs.

Q. What do you paint?

A. Oh, just anything, you know, just ... I don't really paint from real life ... just, you know, things that come into my head. I sort of go through phases when I do it and then I won't do it and then I'll come back to it.

Q. And when you say it has its ups and downs ...?

A. Well, sometimes it gets on your nerves that someone's always there. Cos I'm always in - I know it gets on his nerves. And the fact that he's home every night as well, it gets on my nerves, the fact that I haven't always got that space to myself, you know, just so that you can do what you want without anybody sort of coming in and disturbing you, so I mean that's the only damper, that we both stay in all the time.

Q. And going back to when you were at school, um, it did seem from what you put in the questionnaire that a lot of the things you'd learnt already - I mean, they weren't telling you anything much you didn't know.

A. Yeah. Well, you pick it up from friends, don't you? The basics - you get the basics right.

Q. I can't remember - did you put that you learnt about AIDS at school as well? Did they say anything about that?

A. I think we touched on it in the last year at school slightly, you know - sort of sexual diseases, but not really, not sort of the gravity of it, you know, what big a problem it is. I think there should be more education into, you know, the actual bad side, that there are a hell of a lot of sexual diseases that you can get, and it wasn't touched upon enough the actual dangers of it. You know, it's not just if you sleep around that you're going to get something like this - I mean, not just AIDS but anything - the first time you can get herpes, the lot.

Q. Mm. And they didn't mention that?

A. No, not really.

Q. Did you have something every year?

A. No, we had ... in the third year, that was sex education and then in the last few years we had ... it was just like a form session on a few social problems and that only lasted a few months and that was it. No other sort of, you know, education on it at all.

Q. And was it done by teachers or ...?

A. Biology teachers and head of the girls who taught us, you know - the short three-month thing - who nobody got on with so it wasn't really somebody you could ask questions or talk to about anything, and nobody really liked her so that was a bit of a stupid choice for something like that.

Q. Was it a single sex school?

A. No.

Q. So it was mixed?

A. Yeah, it was mixed.

Q. Did you have all the classes together about sex?

A. Yeah. I mean, that made it even worse, the fact that it was head of the girls teaching boys and girls, you know, just a mutual teacher.

Q. Do you know anyone ... like, do you have friends who sort of go out and have ...? I mean, it's not just you and your boyfriend?

A. Yeah. Oh no. I've got a few. I've got a very small circle of friends, but I like it that way. I don't like lots of friends. I've just got a few - a few that I can rely on. I know they're not going to do anything stupid or do anything stupid to me.

Q. And now to kind of you and your friends. Do you think any of you are kind of at risk from any sorts of sexually transmitted diseases or AIDS or anything like that?

A. Well, most of my friends have got, you know, a permanent boyfriend, so it's OK. I don't think any of them are actually silly enough to sleep around, you know, with the things they know now, if they are they're just taking their own life in their own hands and I've got no sympathy with them if they do come down with something cos it's their own fault - they should know better.

Q. Do you think that people should kind of know better in general?

A. Yeah, I think ... I mean, there's no excuse now for not knowing. I mean, if ... sometimes you are in a situation I suppose where it isn't the right time, you can't ask the bloke to put on a Durex or something like that. But then again, you've gotta think, you know, 'Well, it's my life'. You know, OK, it might ruin the moment but it's something that has to be done if you want to live. You can't just take the risk and think, 'It'll be alright this time' cos it is your

body and you can't expect, you know, somebody else to look after it. It's your body, you've gotta look after it.

Q. And do you use extra protection? Do you use a cap?

A. Yeah. But there's no need with PAUL cos I know he don't sleep around so there's nothing ... no need to take any extra protection. Well, I hope he doesn't anyway!

Q. And if you were in any other sort of relationship in the future or whatever ...?

A. I think I'd use a Durex until I got to know the bloke pretty well and I would know his habits and then perhaps a medical check-up before, you know, we take the plunge, cos I just don't think it's worth the risk in this day and age. You know, I wanna live, I don't wanna die, I don't wanna get anything, you know.

Q. Right. And do you think that would be straightforward, to be able to do that?

A. I don't know. If a bloke doesn't wanna and wants to take that risk, then he's not worth going out with - it's as simple as that. If he wants to take that risk, he can go and take the risk with somebody else, he's not going to risk my life like that. But you don't know until you're in that situation, you know, I can look at it now and say coldly I'd definitely make him, but you don't know until you're in that situation. But I think I would, you know, make sure that he did and tell him to bugger off, sort of thing, if you're not going to do it.

Q. And do you think ... do you feel that sex is important?

A. Well, yeah, I mean, when you're going out with somebody it is. I mean, otherwise it's just a friend cos it brings you closer, I mean, it can also push you apart if you're not getting on well with each other but I think it is a major part of a relationship ... something that's needed.

Q. And do you think, kind of, young women like yourself get pleasure out of sex?

A. Yeah, I should hope so, anyway. I mean, I do, I don't know about anybody else. It's not the sort of thing you really talk about with someone because I don't think anybody likes to admit that they don't enjoy it, you know, that their boyfriend's useless or, you know, you're useless at it. I think, you know, probably more than it was in the past because it is more a mutual pleasure than just, you know, lay back and think of England, sort of thing.

Q. Mm. Do you think that people do have a sort of defense in a way, of sort of not wanting to admit if there are ...?

A. Well, yeah, I mean, it's always like, it's something ... something's wrong with you, you know, 'God, you don't enjoy it! Why don't you enjoy it?', as if you're a leper or something like that. I don't think anybody likes to admit that they don't.

Q. And who do you think is at most risk from something like AIDS?

A. I don't think there is, I think everyone's equally at risk. I mean, if you sleep around, OK, you're more at risk, but I don't think, you know, the sexiest blokes are just as likely, as women now. Maybe not at the start but now it's all over the board - if you're a woman or a man, you're both at risk. But I mean, you are increasing the risk if you're sleeping around - you've got to take precautions if you want. I don't think anyone should stop their lifestyle because of it, you know, if they want to sleep around and they're that sort of person, then that's fine, as long as you take precautions. Cos, I mean it's not just ... if you're sleeping around and you're not using any precautions, then you're giving it to all these blokes as well or all these women as well - then you're playing with other people's lives and putting them in danger and it's just not right, not fair. It's like going around with a loaded gun, sort of thing, shooting everybody.

Q. Do you think you're a person who takes any risks?

A. No, I'm not and I don't think I would either.

Q. Do you take risks in any other sorts of things, like I notice you smoke? Do you see that as a risk?

A. That is a risk, yeah. I mean, I would like to give up, but I don't take ... you know, I'm not sort of into hang gliding or anything like that. I'm a bit of coward so I don't take risks really with anything, apart from smoking.

Q. What about things like drinking or drugs or ...?

A. I don't drink. I never drink.

Q. You never drink?

A. No. It's something ... I don't like it, it rots your liver and things like that. I don't like what it does to people, the way it affects them. I just don't think it's a nice drug at all.

Q. And what about drugs?

A. Well, I smoke cannabis but that's a totally healthy drug. I mean, if you smoke it you'll do your lungs and if you eat it it does no effect. I mean, if it did then I'd give it up. It's not an addictive, it doesn't cause cancer unless you smoke it and with anything you smoke it does cause cancer and it doesn't cause any violent behaviour. That's something that I just wish would be made legal - save the hassle.

Q. Right. And if you had to kind of describe yourself as a person to somebody who didn't know you, what would you say?

A. Just quiet, stay at home, sort of, you know. Just a quiet, stay at home sort of person. Doesn't like much hassle in life and just wants to get on with it without anybody telling me what to do. That's about it. Nothing special.

Q. And what do think will sort of happen in the future in terms of you and your boyfriend for instance?

A. I can see it carrying on for quite a while. Whether I'll stay with him for the rest of my life is another matter because I'm young and it's, you know, you can't say, this is the bloke, because I haven't experienced any other blokes, really. If it goes on, I'm quite happy with it. If it don't, that's life. You just gotta look for someone else. But I don't know. I can't tell what my future's going to hold.

Q. Mm. How do you feel about marriage?

A. I'd get married if I had kids. That's the only reason, just so there's no worries, you know, 'You've got one name, daddy's got another name.' That's the only reason. I don't really see the point of marriage. If you're going to stay together, you're going to stay together. Why get married and muck it up, you know, if you want to get divorced, sort of thing? It's a lot of hassle to have to go through when you could have just split up cleanly.

Q. Do you think you will have kids?

A. Oh yeah. Eventually. Not yet! Once I've got my career and everything under way, then yeah, cos I do like kids, I enjoy them and I would like to have some of my own - eventually.

Q. And what are you going to do? Is it a nursery nurse?

A. Yeah. Cos I enjoy working with kids.

Q. Um ... Do you think you've kind of changed your sexual behaviour at all since ...?

A. Well, I haven't had any need, cos I'm just with the one bloke.

Q. Right.

A. But I would've if I was sleeping around or just not going steady then I would've, definitely. It's just not worth the risk.

Q. Mm. And do you think that's what your friends have done as well, or do you think that you are like that because of the person that you are?

A. I think most of my friends, you know, the ones that ... most of them are going steady, like I said, but I think most of them would protect themselves. I think you're a bit sick and stupid if you don't.

Q. Yeah, cos do you ... obviously, you know, it's clear that sexual attitudes have changed, say, over the last twenty years or so, from the kind of free and easy sixties-type attitudes to what has happened in the last, you know, five or six years or so. And are you ... do you feel aware of that at all or is that like something in the past?

A. I mean, it is something in the past. I mean, I never lived through the sixties. I mean, you can ... and I was growing up while all the AIDS thing was coming out and it's sort of been over the last four years, so I mean I've only just come into sexual terrain, so you don't really notice it. Perhaps if I was a bit older then I would have noticed, like, the change, but because I've come into it at this stage it didn't notice.

Q. And do you actually have any kind of idea what would help other people to take ... you obviously take the risks quite seriously but can you think of anything that would help people of your age take them more seriously, because there are quite a lot of people who don't.

A. I think it's got to come from school and mainly from parents, actually, cos a lot of the things you see at school, you think, 'Oh, what a load of rubbish', sort of thing, whereas

parents educating their kids and you know, actually being able to sh- you know, books or films, to actually show what can happen to people, not just from AIDS but, you know, if you get herpes you're stuck with that for life - you don't get rid of it and any sexual disease and you end up sterile or anything. And to actually ... parents to start actually, you know, instead of just skimping around it, you know, the birds and bees and that, actually going through the dangers of it all. Cos from your parents you're more likely to listen than you are from a school. I think you need something like that. Or more organisations that are actually going round dealing with young people's problems and their attitudes to sex and that, rather than just from school cos I don't think anyone really takes a lot of notice from school.

Q. Would it help if they came into schools, as outsiders coming into schools and talking or would that still be ...?

A. It would help but ... you can't really talk to somebody at school because, you know ... or ask questions, especially if you don't know that person, they're just coming in, because you feel stupid - all your friends are going to laugh if you ask a question like that. I don't know what the answer is because if you have an organisation with some of the girls in, most people are shy and won't do that. I don't really know the answer.

Q. Did your parents give you any sex education?

A. None whatsoever. Apart from, you know, about periods, and that was it. I think my mum just assumed that, you know ... she was always ready to talk but I think she just assumed that I knew, and that school would deal with it. But she wasn't sort of prudish - she wouldn't talk about that sort of thing or got embarrassed and shied away but I think she just sort of left it up to the school to tell me about it.

Q. So have you been able to talk to her about those things since?

A. No, I don't talk to my mum about things like that.

Q. What about your sister?

A. No, I don't really get on with her now. I used to a couple of years ago but now I don't really get on with her, sort of different lifestyle or similar lifestyle but just different people. I don't really get on with her at all well.

Q. And when people talk about things like safe sex, um, do you know what that means or ...?

A. Just using a condom and protecting yourself. That's safe sex isn't it?

Q. And what about the other sorts of safe sex in terms of avoiding penetration and things like that? Do you include that or ...?

A. I dunno. It's just that there's ... I dunno.

Q. Cos that's not ... I mean, those sort of areas are not something that get talked about that much in sex education or anything like that.

A. No, no. I should think unless you're using Durex, any sort of sex isn't safe. As long as ... I mean, unless it isn't touching your body or, you know, cuts or your mouth or whatever ... any other orifice, I don't think sex is safe unless you're using a Durex.

Q. And when you first heard about AIDS, how did you kind of react?

A. I was terrified, I mean, especially, you know, when they showed, you know, the way this thing attacked. It really was terrifying that something could ... some disease could have mutated so much as to actually have attacked the very centre of your whole immune system, you know, and the pictures of the people it had happened to. It was terrifying. To think that just having sex could just totally kill you, I mean, not just give you a disease for life that you're just going to have to learn to live with, but actually to kill you in such a horrific way as well. It is terrifying. Nasty.

Q. How did you get the information? Was that ...?

A. Tomorrow's World is where I first heard of it and then the various AIDS programmes last year and the year before. Just from that.

Q. So it really did sort of have its effect on you?

A. Oh yeah. I don't see how it couldn't have, you know, on anybody who watched it. It terrified me. It was the worst horror movie I've ever seen. It's terrible.

Q. Was that before or after you'd actually started having a sexual relationship yourself?

A. After.

Q. After.

A. So there's not a lot you can do!

Q. Did that affect it at all?

A. Well, like I said, I was going steady so it didn't, but it would have done - it would have affected it. I mean, after you've taken the plunge you sort of, I mean, there's no good worrying about it now cos it's happened. So you just carry on.

Q. And does your boyfriend ever talk about it? Is he someone who talks about those sorts of things?

A. Not really, no.

Q. But would he have been the sort of person that you could have asked had you met him for the first time?

A. I think so, yeah. I don't think he would've asked me. But, yeah, I think I could've done, I mean, I know his past life anyway from what he's said, and he wasn't the sort of bloke to sleep around anyway so I think he's probably OK.

Q. So what do you feel is the most important thing in your life at the moment?

A. My boyfriend, I suppose, is about the most important thing. He's the only sort of, like, real stable factor, the person I can rely on and I know who's going to be there. So I suppose just making it work with him is the most important thing to me and getting on with him.

Q. Do you have a kind of equal relationship or does one of you tend to make decisions more than the other?

A. No, it's equal - straight down the middle. If I start getting, you know, too over the top and start making decisions then he'll bring me down, if he starts doing it, I'll bring him down, so it's pretty equal. Everything's discussed together. It's the best way to have it.

Q. And do you think that double-standards do exist for men and women?

A. Oh yeah. Not so much ... I don't know about relationships, my relationship but I mean ... especially with sex, if you sleep around you're a slag, if a bloke sleeps around he's lucky, you know? That sort of thing. There is a hell of a lot of double standards. You're expected to be faithful, you're meant to forgive a bloke if, you know, he goes off perhaps the once, if you do then that's the end of it, totally the end. I think there still is a lot of double standards. There's still the fact that it's still sort of the woman who takes charge of the contraception, that area of it, I mean, it's just as much their baby as it is your baby, but because it's not happening to their body they don't seem to really worry about it. It should be, you know, the bloke should be thinking, 'I don't want to have a baby. I don't want the responsibility', not just, 'I just want to have sex, you know, without anything and just enjoy it.' It's about time blokes actually realised that it is their baby - it might not be happening to their bodies, but it is their baby and their responsibility.

Q. Mm. Do you know anyone who sort of thinks like that? It sounds as though you ...

A. I don't know. You talk ... usually talking to friends and that, they still consider it their responsibility that, you know, 'Well, it's my body and I've got to look after it.' I mean I think that as well - it is your body, you've got to look after it but I think it's got to be a change in attitudes in blokes, that it might not be happening to their body but it is their baby and they're the ones who've gotta, you know, look out for that as well. It's not just up to the woman and it's her fault if it happens. It's his fault as well.

Q. Yeah, cos you'd think that in these enlightened days that might have changed a bit, wouldn't you?

A. I don't think it ever will. Everybody likes to shy away from as much responsibility as possible. If you can put the responsibility on someone else, then you do. So, I suppose it's just the natural thing of human beings that if you can put the responsibility on somebody else for something, then do it. So it is a very hard attitude to change.

Q. Mm. So you still feel that girls and women are expected to be far more responsible than men?

A. Yeah, I do and I think it's a shame that it is because it does put a lot of pressure on you and puts you in the position to say, 'It's alright, I'm on the pill' or 'I'm using the cap' or 'Will you use a Durex', rather than the bloke saying, you know, 'Are you on contraception?' It's



usually ... they don't ... some will, some won't, but more often they'll just go for it and that's it, not really worry about it.

Q. Think about it afterwards.

A. Yeah. And then leave if something does happen.

Q. Right. I think I've just about finished.

A. OK.