

Expect same as friend 'is that too much to ask' **NUR06 SS**

INTERVIEWER: I can't even remember how old you are, are you twenty?

INTERVIEWEE: I'm twenty, yes.

INTERVIEWER: At what point are you in the course?

INTERVIEWEE: I am in the same class as BARBARA, we are in the first year and I'm about seven months into the course now.

INTERVIEWER: So what did you do between school and this?

INTERVIEWEE: I went to college and then I worked for a couple of years as a waitress and various rubbishy jobs like that.

INTERVIEWER: Did you do 'O' levels at school?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes and I tried to do 'A' levels at college but I failed those.

INTERVIEWER: You actually took the exams and failed them?

INTERVIEWEE: No I didn't take the exams, I got bored before that. I took one and did pass it, I got a 'B' in General Studies.

INTERVIEWER: That's not bad, you did better than I did in General Studies. That's pretty good, but you didn't take the rest?

INTERVIEWEE: No. I played truant a lot and missed so much of it.

INTERVIEWER: You had other things to do. So at what point did you decide to try and be a nurse?

INTERVIEWEE: About Easter last year. I was very unsure about what I wanted to do and everyone said I would make a great nurse because I am really a right bully.... and I don't mind clearing things up and people say you have got to be a really loving person to be a nurse and as long as you have got quite a strong stomach I think you can do it anyway. I love my work and everything and I love the people I work with. I'm on the geriatric unit at the moment and I love working there but I am told you have to have a loving heart to be a nurse.

INTERVIEWER: It's a bit of a myth really, the angels of mercy type of thing.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes they value their work I think.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, anybody who's nice can do it rather than it being a skill or hard work or whatever. Yes, I did it just for four or five months before I did my degree, I was an auxiliary in a geriatric hospital.

INTERVIEWEE: I wouldn't be an auxiliary for anything, they get all the rubbish jobs.

INTERVIEWER: Yes well it wasn't all auxiliary but it was very hard work, and there were so few qualified staff that we didn't just get the rubbish jobs, we got all sorts of jobs we shouldn't have been doing. You know I don't think there was anything I didn't do apart from injections. I don't think there was anything else, dressings, drugs, enemas, so I didn't have any ideas about being a nurse, I just wanted something different to do before I decided what to do next but I found it really good, really positive.

INTERVIEWEE: Most people have who have ... get an easier job than that.

INTERVIEWER: Yes it taught me a lot in that sense, but it did help me understand a whole set of things which I would never have understood otherwise.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes I love the geriatrics though. It's a really nice place to work, you feel as though you are really doing something. On a surgical ward they don't really need you the same.

INTERVIEWER: It's much more technical as well. A different sort of nursing. So does that mean you have got an idea of what sort of nurse you want to be in the long term?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. And also another thing about being a geriatric nurse is that nobody else wants to do it so you can get a better grade. Because people who have been there six months are on an 'F' grade and that is really good for being a nurse for six months.

INTERVIEWER: I don't really understand the grades anymore, they have changed them since I had anything to do with it.

INTERVIEWEE: A is nothing and I is Margaret Thatcher really. I haven't come across anybody that's on an I grade but there are people in hospital on it.

INTERVIEWER: So what level would a staff nurse be?

INTERVIEWEE: A staff nurse starts on a D.

INTERVIEWER: And a charge nurse would start on?

INTERVIEWEE: A G. So a staff nurse has been qualified for such a short period of time to be on an F. She's not doing so bad.

INTERVIEWER: Sometimes it's quite useful to be interested in something that's unpopular. So what else have you done apart from geriatrics then?

INTERVIEWEE: Medical surgery then geriatrics and then I am going on to the psychology block next.

INTERVIEWER: So you decided at Easter last year, was that quite a sort of 'yes, that's what I will do'?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, a snap decision. I applied at Easter and I had an interview in May and started in September. I did it really quickly. Most people apply when they are fifteen and they were on this corridor.

INTERVIEWER: Really, they had known for ever what they wanted to do?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, I can't understand people who can know that far back what they want to do.

INTERVIEWER: What did you think you wanted to do when you were doing your 'O' levels.

INTERVIEWEE: Oh I always wanted to be a librarian, I don't know why.

INTERVIEWER: I did that as well for a while.

INTERVIEWEE: I wanted like a community library, you know where they have bees on the windows and kiddies' things.

INTERVIEWER: I worked in a small library for a while. I did really enjoy it, but I got bored after a while. The downside is it's very quiet and if you are interested in books, which I am, the books aren't that exciting but if you like meeting children and people then it's great.

INTERVIEWEE: Perhaps I will do that after nursing if I get sick of that.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think you are going to stick it?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't know. I don't see why I should have to if I change my mind about what I want, but I don't think I want to be in the depths of the National Health Service for ever, but the training I think I will stick it for a good while yet.

INTERVIEWER: So you think you will actually get through the training?

INTERVIEWEE: Oh yes, definitely. I don't see why not.

INTERVIEWER: Did you know anybody else who is a nurse?

INTERVIEWEE: No not really. I've not been ill properly but I think you've got a good idea what a nurse actually does. I mean I think there is a romantic image of what I do.

INTERVIEWER: What about your family, what did they want you to do?

INTERVIEWEE: Go back to college and do a degree.

INTERVIEWER: Is that their long-term expectations?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes really, and when I left and started waitressing and being a barmaid it was 'oh my god what is she doing, she is throwing her life away'. At least I am getting a professional training.

INTERVIEWER: Where do you come from?

INTERVIEWEE: I come from round here, Moston.

INTERVIEWER: Are most of the students local?

INTERVIEWEE: No. A few live within a ten-mile radius but most of them live quite a way away. The people on this corridor, I don't know one that lives in the area. I live very near, well my mum does now. I didn't really think it was a good idea for me to come here, so close to home because I didn't really have a really good record of employment, because I used to do a job for so long, get a bit of money, quit my job, go on the dole for a bit, do another job for so long. I used to get bored going to work.

INTERVIEWER: Those sort of jobs aren't very exciting.

INTERVIEWEE: Very routine, and because I didn't have a good record of employment I didn't think I would get accepted very well so when this place accepted me very quickly..

INTERVIEWER: You just grabbed it?

INTERVIEWEE: Because I hadn't heard from anybody else. I applied to Manchester Royal Infirmary but I didn't think I would get in there. They want the best.

INTERVIEWER: There is still a hierarchy there.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Where would you have liked to have gone, did you think you wanted to get right away from home?

INTERVIEWEE: I would have stayed in the area, Blackpool or Lancaster I think.

INTERVIEWER: So were you living at home before you came here?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. I did jobs working away. When I was a waitress I used to work in hotels so I was at home some of the time and one week I would be away so it worked out alright.

INTERVIEWER: So what does home consist of, is it just your mum?

INTERVIEWEE: My mother, my father and two sisters who have moved away, but we see them quite often.

INTERVIEWER: Are they older than you?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say you were close to your family?

INTERVIEWEE: I am close to my sisters, closer than I am to my parents. I don't think anybody is really close to their parents, people think they are, but they are from a different generation. How can you be that close to people of a different generation. I think you are closer to your own generation, your sisters and brothers.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, so it's different. There are different sorts of closeness. There are people you tell things to do and sometimes you can feel a sense of closeness based on growing up with somebody but not necessarily having much in common. It changes from time to time as well.

INTERVIEWEE: Me and my mum get on great now I have left home especially. But I wouldn't say that I am close to her, but we have a good relationship.

INTERVIEWER: Is there someone or other people you would say that you were close to. Who are the people who are most important to you?

INTERVIEWEE: I would say my sister THERESA who doesn't live in Manchester and two friends here that I am really close to, we do everything together.

INTERVIEWER: So you have got close to them very quickly?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. We are really close.

INTERVIEWER: Before that, when you were doing all those different jobs, did you still have friends from college?

INTERVIEWEE: I had some friends that I did go around with but I finished with my boyfriend and I dropped out from that because he was part of the people as well, and by the time I came here I lost touch with everybody. And for about five months before that I had been away to Cornwall before I came here in September and for about the winter before that I had been quite upset because I had lost my friends, but the place I was working at I had friends there and I used to go out with them occasionally.

INTERVIEWER: But you weren't there for long?

INTERVIEWEE: I had not been there for long and they weren't best buddies but they were good mates.

INTERVIEWER: What is it you expect from a good friend, what makes a good friend. What makes someone a special friend rather than a friend?

INTERVIEWEE: I would expect my friend to be totally honest with me like they can tell lies to other people as far as I am concerned, but as long as they don't try and put one over on me or they would say such and such a thing but don't say anything. But you wouldn't expect them to tell a lie without telling you. And somebody who is really good fun and you know is never going to lie or joke about you if it's something that you are sensitive about. Just anything that anybody else expects from a friend I suppose.

INTERVIEWER: A fair and equal relationship. Is that different from what you would expect from boyfriends?

INTERVIEWEE: No, but it's different to what you get. You expect the same but I don't think all your expectations are

INTERVIEWER: Have you had many boyfriends?

INTERVIEWEE: I have had a few but only a few long-term. I used to date a lot more than I do now. I don't date very often now because I think as you get older, god I am only twenty, as you get older you think, what's the point with such and such because you know it's only going to be for a short time and things like that.

INTERVIEWER: So you are actually making judgements before you get into things?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, before you would just go out with them as take it as that but now you think, well, what is the point. You'd rather have a friend than a boyfriend. I think it's a better attitude.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think it's difficult to have boys as friends?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes it's very difficult. I have a boy that's a good friend at the moment and I felt really comfortable about it at first but I am starting to think different now. I just don't feel as comfortable now I have started to think about it. In fact I feel quite funny about it, he makes me feel uncomfortable some of the time.

INTERVIEWER: You think he wants more than just friendship?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't know. I think he might, but I don't think he would do anything about it. Just the fact that he is thinking that is putting pressure on me really. It's uncomfortable. It does put pressure on you.

INTERVIEWER: Has he said anything?

INTERVIEWEE: No I think it puts pressure on you like unspoken things. Like we were staying at my friends and before I felt this way and it had been a boy who was just a friend, he had the double bed and it was a really comfy bed and I had sleep to on a ... in her sisters room and it was so uncomfortable, and I thought god I wish I didn't know that about him because I could have got in and just said, 'well, thanks', and gone to sleep, but I couldn't do that because it would have just been the wrong thing to do. If there is a tension in the relationship it just puts it wrong.

INTERVIEWER: Do you not feel you can say to him something?

INTERVIEWEE: No not really. You don't want to say anything really just in case you are wrong, that would be really embarrassing.

INTERVIEWER: When did you start going out with boys?

INTERVIEWEE: Just before my seventeenth birthday?

INTERVIEWER: And were they short relationships, long relationships, give me a sort of potted history?

INTERVIEWEE: It was just after I started going to college because I went to a single sex girls' school.

INTERVIEWER: Had you not really thought about going out with boys before then?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes but I was quite fat and I lost weight when I was about fifteen, sixteen.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel that excluded you?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Were you friends going out with boys?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes they were, but I don't think I wanted to just because my friends did it. When I went to college I started going out with lads for a short term. As I left college I had my main relationship. I think I have been disappointed by a lot of boys. You know like you expect them to be this, that and the other. Because I like them I give people moral characteristics and I see qualities in people that may not exist and when they don't exist it's not their fault they don't exist, it's my fault because they have never claimed to be such and such. But I am disappointed in that.

INTERVIEWER: But those moral characteristics are they things that you think people should be anyway?

INTERVIEWEE: Oh yes.

INTERVIEWER: So essentially you are not entirely wrong to be disappointed?

INTERVIEWEE: No, I am not, but I am because I do it every time and I should learn.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, funny you keep hoping that there will be somebody that will live up to these expectations.

INTERVIEWEE: I don't think I am being unrealistic.

INTERVIEWER: What sort of things do you think you expect?

INTERVIEWEE: I expect faithfulness. I had a boyfriend that hit me a few times and I think that's a bad thing. A definite no, no.

INTERVIEWER: Did you leave him, did you get out of it?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. I expect the same things I expect in a friend but more so. Because before I go out with anybody I think about them.... and you build them up into a certain lifestyle as well and when they let you down you feel really let down. And I feel really stupid. I think it's a personal disappointment.

INTERVIEWER: Yes how could this person I have thought was so wonderful really be human.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. And I thought he was wonderful and look at the spots. But I think you can tell a lot about someone's personality by the things that they do. Like I could never have a relationship with anyone who wears a bow tie. I have never met anybody who wears a bow tie that wasn't a total prat. And people who have those things on the end of a pen, you know those little legs that stick over the edge of pockets, people like that are always bad news.

INTERVIEWER: I know what you mean, but I don't think I have actually met anybody.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. There is like a series of things and you really build somebody up into being someone great and I have loads of things like that.

INTERVIEWER: I've got a thing about white socks.

INTERVIEWEE: They are bad news aren't they.

INTERVIEWER: Well I think so, but I am sure it's not fair.

INTERVIEWEE: And people who wear t-shirts as vests. Why don't they just buy a vest, or not bother, or buy a thicker t-shirt. Why do they do this to me.

INTERVIEWER: This relationship you said was your main relationship, how long did it last?

INTERVIEWEE: It lasted about five months.

INTERVIEWER: And this wasn't the lad that hit you?

INTERVIEWEE: No. He came after that. And I found that most of the men I have been out with, it's not long five months, not like a two-year thing that a lot of people my age have had a few times.

INTERVIEWER: It's still a chunk of your life when you are quite young.

INTERVIEWEE: I found that a lot of the men I have been out with since have been like clones. You know there is a certain type both physically and personality, clones.

INTERVIEWER: Like him?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. And another thing that's not very amusing but I find it quite funny, they all look..... as well. It's like repeating the same mistake over and over again. It's very strange.

INTERVIEWER: And you see your dad as problematic?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes I suppose I do.

INTERVIEWER: I can see that I have had relationships with men that have some of the same qualities as my dad has, but they are actually nice qualities so I don't worry about them, but if they are things that you don't think are nice qualities, is that what you are saying?

INTERVIEWEE: I think my dad is a type that's quite common and if they all have the same qualities and defects, he is a very sarcastic man and I always go for people with a sarcastic sense of humour, and they all physically look like my dad as well. My dad is quite big and balding and that and I always go for tubby legs and receding hairline and I am the only person I have ever met that finds that attractive.

INTERVIEWER: And you actually feel you do find it attractive?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, it's very strange.

INTERVIEWER: Well we all have our funny ways.

INTERVIEWEE: It's a quirk.

INTERVIEWER: Somebody needs to find them attractive, hopefully. There is a lot of pressure, there is the whole kind of tall-dark-handsome myth, I don't always find tall dark handsome men attractive.

INTERVIEWEE: They are too tall, I don't want to spend the rest of my life with someone who's too tall.

INTERVIEWER: You'll get a crick in your neck, yes.

INTERVIEWEE: What is the point.

INTERVIEWER: So on the whole you don't sound as though you have been terribly satisfied with men?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Are you involved with anybody at the moment?

INTERVIEWEE: No. I have not been out on a date for about a year now. I feel I must be either getting very choosy. I think after you get to a certain age, I notice that I am not picking up as many men and I am not getting as many come-ons the same. I know I am not dead pretty or anything, but I always used to cope with that when I went out when I was younger. I think after a certain age everybody just calms down a bit.

INTERVIEWER: It's not to do with, you were just talking about, what you do and what you like that, but it's whether you give enough messages about being available I suppose. You have other things to do at the moment. Do you feel bad about it?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. You do if you have not been out with somebody for a year. I have been out with people just for a drink and just seeing men but that was because neither of us had anything better to do and we had been working in hotels as a friend. It's quite depressing I think.

INTERVIEWER: I suppose as a sociologist I try to think of things in terms of what else is going on in your life, you are very busy at the moment, your social patterns have changed, you are busy meeting people here. And maybe there just actually aren't men around that you are not particularly interested in at the moment. It doesn't mean that you will be like that forever. You will get into all sorts of different situations. I understand what you are saying, but I don't think that this is it forever.

INTERVIEWEE: I don't think I would be that bothered if I never actually found a partner. I want a baby eventually, but apart from the baby I don't see why you should have to live with the person you have the baby by. I know a lot of girls who have not done that and they seem to have gone on alright. Their lives aren't perfect and they don't go out as much and they find money a lot tighter, but they have got a lot more independence. I suppose you would have to think all the time if you ever left the baby at home with the father, So there is a lot to be said for doing things that way.

INTERVIEWER: Have you thought for quite a long time you wanted to have babies?

INTERVIEWEE: Oh yes. I know it's stupid but when I hear of someone that's got a really good career I always try to find out if she has got children. And did she marry. It's like judging somebody on the success of their family life.

INTERVIEWER: So you wouldn't think she was so successful if she hadn't done that as well?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes but it's a choice that she has made and I don't know whether I could do that. I don't really feel it but I always find out.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think it's because women are expected to do everything?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes it is. Somebody came on the ward and she was really efficient at her job and somebody said Miss and I thought oh she's a miss and then I found out she still lived at the nurses' home and I thought she's not very much if she still lives in and she could never be bothered to move out of the building. She's not very independent really. I lost a lot of respect for her then. That's not a nice attitude, but it's an attitude I have.

INTERVIEWER: I think the positive side of it is not to see people as threatening or frightening. You think, well, what qualities do I have that they haven't got? That's a much more positive way of looking at it. It's much easier I would argue to be efficient and organised and in control if you don't have endless hassle in the rest of your life.. Economic independence.

INTERVIEWEE: I think it's easy to have both, I really don't see it as an either or situation. It really surprises me that you have chosen that. You seem quite a warm person.

INTERVIEWER: It's not that I don't like them.

INTERVIEWEE: I always imagine people that don't want children as a certain type of person.

INTERVIEWER: No, it's not because I don't like them, I do spend time with children, I just don't feel that I would be very good at it and there are other things I would rather do. But I do judge myself, I think, well I couldn't be as organised and efficient if I had to or I couldn't do as much if I had to look after other people as well. Anyway, let's move on. You said you have had a few relationships, would you say that any of those have been sexual relationships?

INTERVIEWEE: Sort of. I don't really like that sort of thing because one of my boyfriends, the one that I didn't get on with very well. I only went out with him for about two weeks.

INTERVIEWER: Is he the one that hit you?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes but he did rape me as well so I find it hard to get involved with a man. I think that's part of the reason I don't have many relationships now. It's also part of the reason why I get disappointed in people because you describe moral qualities to them and then they don't really have them.

INTERVIEWER: So you thought he was alright and you trusted him. Is it going to upset you to talk about it?

INTERVIEWEE: No, not really. I did get upset, it's not the sort of thing you can't not be upset by, but I don't mind talking about it.

INTERVIEWER: That's OK then. I don't want to push you into talking about it if you don't really want to. Was it that you didn't want to have sex with him, or had you had sex with him before?

INTERVIEWEE: No I didn't want to have sex with him. I think it's a really common thing though. Once you get together and talk about your experiences I know a lot of girls who have been raped in that situation, but it's never occurred on any computer so I think it's like a really common experience.

INTERVIEWER: It is, there is no doubt about it.

INTERVIEWEE: It was a very important thing in my life, it's changed me. I used to be a real right one of the girls, I used to wear high heels all the time and now it really changed me. And it changed me in a lot of positive ways I think.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about those?

INTERVIEWEE: Before it happened I was a certain type of person. I went to college but I was trying to get through it as quick as possible. I never gave any thought to anything or anybody else but myself. Having a good time and do what I wanted. And it puts a brake on you and it makes you think about all your relationships with other women, with men, with boyfriends. It does stop you. I don't think I would be where I am today, being a nurse and caring for other people.

INTERVIEWER: So you are saying that it made you feel that you had to take control?

INTERVIEWEE: Not so much control. I think I am a very aggressive person as well at times. I get into a lot of arguments and fights and massive battles over the phone. Anybody else would say leave it and I have noticed that about the other people I know who have been raped, they are either totally passive and you can get away with anything or they are extremely aggressive.

INTERVIEWER: Would you feel you are defending yourself?

INTERVIEWEE: I suppose I must be.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do at the time, did you tell anybody at the time?

INTERVIEWEE: No, I did nothing. Most people don't, do they?

INTERVIEWER: That's absolutely right, especially if its somebody they are involved with. Did you feel guilty about it, did you feel responsible?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes I did. I did feel it was my fault and I still do in a way, but I know it wasn't. I feel angry that I feel that way.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you feel it was your fault?

INTERVIEWEE: Well I was there.

INTERVIEWER: It's hardly an excuse. You wouldn't say that if he had killed you?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, it's silly isn't it. You can't help the way that you feel because you are brought up to a kind of attitude to this type of thing.

INTERVIEWER: There is a very strong culture that says rape is women's fault. There is a lot of stuff that goes against that now which we hear much more about but it's still there. It's outrageous.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. Especially when you think, when I'm with a group of women now and they say that one in five women will be raped I go one, two, three, four, five, one, two, three, four, five and it's a lot. And it's a big group of the population that are being brutalised and they are not getting a say back. It makes me very angry. Like the page three in the Sunday Sport, it makes me sick, papers like that. I know the Sunday Sport is a bit of a joke, it's not to be taken seriously but that sort of thing it really makes me angry. And that politician Rosie Barnes, she is trying to ban page threes and I meant to write to her to say what a good thing she was doing but I never got round to it. I really thought that was a good thing.

INTERVIEWER: It wasn't Rosie Barnes, I can't remember her name now.

INTERVIEWEE: She seems like a really, whatever she says its right, I think she's right, why didn't I think of that.

INTERVIEWER: You don't see why you should have to look at that stuff?

INTERVIEWEE: I think that it's just soft porn and I don't see why half the population that don't like that sort of thing should have to.

INTERVIEWER: See that over breakfast every day. I quite agree. How did you juggle, you said it was partly your fault and you also felt it was outrageous and you were really angry, were you angry immediately?

INTERVIEWEE: No, I was just upset immediately because I was thinking that's the end of that relationship and it seemed quite important to me at the time.

INTERVIEWER: You lost what you expected to experience?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. It made me angry about a lot of other things like page three. It was good because it made me think, it just totally changed me and made me think about people being poor, everybody that was downtrodden, I started to take more of an interest.

INTERVIEWER: You felt somebody had taken advantage, you had a sort of sense of who you were, and somebody wasn't recognising that?

INTERVIEWEE: When I think of it I am five foot one, I weigh so much, in no circumstances am I ever going to win that fight again. You know if somebody is a lot bigger and taller..

INTERVIEWER: Take up self-defence or martial arts?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes I should do really. But there are a lot of people who are defenceless as well and I am a lot less of a victim than they are. I always thought that people who were victims, criminals look for victims they always used to say, muggers don't mug muggers, criminals look for victims and I always thought there was a certain type of person who got raped, you know like a victim, a person who is more passive. And because I wasn't a victim, I was, I became a victim, I had to think about people who were victims all the time and all the awful things that must happen to them all the time. Like an old person has no defence at all against somebody with a certain manner can get them to do anything. The way they treat old people is disgraceful. Even in the hospital I have done things today that I'm not proud of, like if somebody won't take their medicine I bullied them into taking it because it's easier, they would take it anyway. so I stood there with my hand on my hip and..

INTERVIEWER: Treating them like a naughty child?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes and that sort of benevolent maternalism.

INTERVIEWER: Despotism. But it's not just your decision is it, it's the organisation, I mean you have only got so much time, you have a million things to do and that takes over what you would actually like to do for the best. Let's go back, why do you think it is that men think they can get away with that, treat women in that way and think that what they want is more important?

INTERVIEWEE: I have no idea. Obviously it's a cultural thing, every time the mother did the washing up instead of going to sit in the garden. It is every single thing. On the other hand, if I ever had the family I will do the washing up instead of sitting in the garden but I won't be as important as what my family want so they see women as a losing role.

INTERVIEWER: It's a contradiction. So you are saying that has made you feel quite different about sex and your sexuality?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: It's bound to.

INTERVIEWEE: Although I know a lot of people it doesn't affect the same. Some people walked away from it, they change the way they do things, but they do walk away from it.

INTERVIEWER: You said you changed the way you dress and stopped wearing high heels, tell me what you are trying to do?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't think it's so much, it's not trying not to look sexy, but it's trying to look more cool. I always try to look how cool everyone else is, it's very hard in uniform but at the moment..

INTERVIEWER: Yes but Doc Martens are much trendier than stilettos so you are kind of OK, but is it that you are saying that you feel those kind of clothes like high heels, and whatever go with that, project a certain image that you don't want to project? Or do you think women should be able to wear what the hell they want?

INTERVIEWEE: They should be able to wear what they want, but do you think that people want to wear high heels or they are conditioned into wanting to wear high heels to make themselves look nice?

INTERVIEWER: A very good question. If you are asking me personally what I think, I actually think they are an instrument of torture and they do all kinds of damage and I haven't worn them for twenty years and I will never wear them again.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes women should be able to wear what they want, but they're not. I'm not going to wear the uniform of a bimbo and be treated like one.

INTERVIEWER: So you were saying you are more wary than you used to be, can you imagine a situation where you might want to get into a sexual relationship or do you just feel that you don't want anything to do with it at all?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't know. I can't do at the moment.

INTERVIEWER: Would you still say that you were heterosexual and that if you had a sexual relationship it would be with a man?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes I would. I think I have got a lot of respect for people who break away from being heterosexual and things like that, but it's not for me. I think they are very brave though, the pressure on people to conform.

INTERVIEWER: Have you read anything about it, it seems to me you have thought a lot about it, have you talked to people or?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, well one of my friends at school was bisexual. It was like, 'oh my god' when it all came out, but she was a really good friend and she used to say to me when I used to go home, I don't want to be a lesbian, 'you're a lesbian', she used to say to me, '... if men don't fancy you, why should women'. It sort of puts a perspective on it doesn't it. And she was a friend to me and we just dossed about in break times and we went to the chippy at lunch time, really relaxed and she took a lot of shit at first what she had decided and what she decided wasn't so terrible, she wasn't hurting anybody. She was very brave.

INTERVIEWER: Very brave to come out with that at school. What is the most important thing to you at the moment?

INTERVIEWEE: I want to save up for a house.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me why that is important, having your own house?

INTERVIEWEE: Well I feel dead guilty about saying this but I am a really material person. I have these day dreams about having a really nice set of knives, you know the ones you get in a holder and they are guaranteed for twenty years and some stainless steel copper bottomed pans, not aluminium because aluminium gives you Alzheimer's

disease, and things like that and they just won't all fit in here. And I really fancy having my own house that I can do what I want in. And part of it is security and getting a little dog and a cat and everything. I suppose part of it is playing house and most of it is what I want.

INTERVIEWER: Yes you have your own space here, but there's just not very much of it. It's not a lot for one person to squash themselves into.

INTERVIEWEE: I have so much clutter, there is so much that I have had to leave behind. Stupid things but I can't do without them. I have more clutter than anybody else apart from DENISE. You go into some people's rooms and all they have got is a poster and everything else is in drawers. I don't know, it seems very strange.

INTERVIEWER: So you certainly don't see yourself as going back to your parents?

INTERVIEWEE: No. I don't think you should go back to your parents, I think you should move on. I would always live in North Manchester because I love the area. I love the type of housing, the little terrace houses.

INTERVIEWER: I don't think an ambition to have your own home is, I mean there is this thing that women aren't supposed to want their own home, having their own home is about having a family?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, part of a couple, but if you can't see that happening you might as well go and get what you want anyway. If I did move in with a boy or a man I would want it to be my house that we moved into, that I paid the mortgage on. And if anything ever went wrong there would be no messing about trying to sell it and dividing things in two. It would be mine all along and he would put into the house keeping.

INTERVIEWER: So he would be there on your terms. That's a very feminist kind of statement, do you see yourself as a feminist?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes I suppose I do. I do think things that aren't very feminist though, but yes.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think are not very feminist?

INTERVIEWEE: When I am out and I lose something and I have got to go up to a bouncer to sort it out, say I have lost my ticket and I want to go home before time, and I will be a little girl and say I don't know what to do. Really what I should do is go up and state what I need in a reasonable way and be prepared to argue, but it's easier to be a little girl and so he will go 'come on love' and sort it out for me.

INTERVIEWER: So it's a bit of a contradiction. Life is full of contradictions.

INTERVIEWEE: Mine is apparently. I have never really seen it as being contradictions until you pointed out to me.

INTERVIEWER: I think everybody's is. I was just thinking today, there is a car park I am supposed to park in but there is another one much nearer to the office which I can go in if the other one is full, but sometimes I am in a hurry and I know if I go through and I smile at the attendant he will let me in, whereas there are other people he wouldn't let in and I feel bad about that because it doesn't fit my principles, but sometimes I am in a tearing hurry and I think, well, what I have to do is important and I am damn well going in there. Everybody's life is full of contradictions.

INTERVIEWEE: I feel that I am an honest person and doing that is a lie though.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. It's just difficult to change the world overnight so you are just fitting in with other people's expectations.

INTERVIEWEE: That's another thing about having your own house, if it's your own house you are there on your own terms and you never have to take a softly softly approach and do as you please.

INTERVIEWER: And let in who you want to. What about, you know you saw the stuff on the questionnaire about sex education and that kind of thing, how much do you feel you know about AIDS?

INTERVIEWEE: I think I know a lot. I don't know a lot through what I have learned in the media, but I do think I know a lot.

INTERVIEWER: Where have you got it from would you say?

INTERVIEWEE: Well from my job. Like today I had a needle stick injury in my palm and so I reorganised this person who was going to have a blood sample taken tomorrow and a count done .. and I do think I know a lot about AIDS. And also I don't think the information the public has got on AIDS, I don't know any better, but I don't think it can be right. For instance, this myth that you can't get it through spit except if you drink two buckets of it. The AIDS virus is either present in spit or it's not. ..

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..People in the drug community and gay community they all know someone who has AIDS now and soon it's going to be everybody, and how can you be prejudiced against people who have AIDS when it's your neighbour, your son, your daughter.

INTERVIEWER: So you think it's wrong to blame people?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, well it's wrong anyway, it's a very silly attitude, gods' wrath.

INTERVIEWER: So what sort of information do you think people should get?

INTERVIEWEE: Well the same as they get now but I don't think it's being made important enough. There was a lot of hysteria when it first started off and big banner headlines but I think you should have people going round and having little sessions in people's workplaces and say 'look, hysteria aside, it is very important, it is a killer.' Just going round and, 'if you don't do this and this you will catch AIDS'.

INTERVIEWER: Presumably you don't see yourself as being at risk?

INTERVIEWEE: No I don't.

INTERVIEWER: Was that an issue when you were raped?

INTERVIEWEE: No not really. I thought I might be pregnant, but I didn't really think about that. But it would be an issue if I was now because this was a couple of years ago when AIDS was just starting, so you didn't really think about it the same, it's like an afterthought to everything. But now if you went out with a lad, you would think. I know I would.

INTERVIEWER: What would you actually do, do you think?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't know. I would be too embarrassed to say anything. If I don't die of ignorance I will die of embarrassment instead.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that's a real issue?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, I think it's embarrassment.

INTERVIEWER: Embarrassment about what, talking about it?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes just talking about sex is a very embarrassing thing to do.

INTERVIEWER: It's often harder to talk about it than to do it.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes it's cringe making talking about sex.

INTERVIEWER: I don't know if you have seen it in glossy magazines, but there is an AIDS ad around at the moment. It's a woman and a man obviously having sex and she is too embarrassed to ask him to wear a condom, the assumption being that if she can do that she can talk about it. And you are saying it's not as simple as that?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. I think the advertising is very good actually. I thought the AIDS adverts where what they were thinking and what they were actually saying, I thought those were quite good, not just from an entertainment point of view because some of them were really entertaining, but I thought they were quite realistic. Some of the glossy couples, being really sophisticated and I thought it was like a gas cooker advert.

INTERVIEWER: The perfume adverts I think are the most similar. I have been doing a comparison between perfume adverts and AIDS.

INTERVIEWEE: They are selling it through the same thing, sex. You sell perfume with sex, so. I have noticed that they haven't done an advert yet that suggests well, don't do it. They all say, 'well go ahead, but think about it first'. Nobody is saying well your mother wouldn't do it. It's a bit disapproving and I know it wouldn't work, but it was the first thought in all their minds. I don't know if it would work or not.

INTERVIEWER: I think they are trying to get a double message across. They are trying to say well don't do it, but if you must.

INTERVIEWEE: It's very glamorous. They are not making sex look unattractive.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that's what they should be doing, making it seem less attractive and less important?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. It's supposed to be a minor part of the relationship, but in those adverts I can't see those couples having a conversation about whether or not they should go to the film or who's turn it is to wash up.

INTERVIEWER: Right so you think all those things are more important?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes but as important. Well more important. I think they may be taken in by the notion that sex is marvelous.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think it is that we are pushed to see sex as the most important thing?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't know, it's beyond me.

INTERVIEWER: I am sure there isn't an answer to that question, I just wondered what you thought. Do you think when you said you thought it was embarrassing to talk about it, can you imagine being able to ask a bloke to use a condom. Can you imagine carrying them around with you?

INTERVIEWEE: No. Because although if I was sexually active I think you would have to, but it is not really an issue for me because I don't have sex. I'm lucky I can opt out of making those decisions. When you think about it for most women, sex isn't that all good an option. You have the risk of venereal disease, pregnancy and some women don't like it that much, all sorts of things. And yet we are told that it's quite a risk and yet everybody does it. I think I will think about this again.

INTERVIEWER: Well there is a lot to think about. Its defined in a particular way. One of the questions that I ask people is what do you think is meant by safe sex, so given what you have just said, what would your answer to that be?

INTERVIEWEE: No exchange of bodily fluids whatsoever. That's what I think of safe sex, that's part of my nursing.

INTERVIEWER: So you would say that using a condom wasn't enough?

INTERVIEWEE: No it's not. No exchange of bodily fluids. Yes, I don't know. As long as no fluid enters your body system you are safe because as long as you consider that you are safe. But that's not just using a condom, it's thinking about all different things.

INTERVIEWER: Well there are potentially lots of things you could do?

INTERVIEWEE: Lots of things to consider and lots of things to do.

INTERVIEWER: The issue is that most people when you say what is sex, what do you think they would say or what would you say to that question?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes it's sex isn't it.

INTERVIEWER: Well what most people say to that question if they want to answer it is that sex is penetration. And that the issue of condoms is related to that, but you could have a much much wider definition saying that sex is a whole range of things, a whole process and not just about that?

INTERVIEWEE: I suppose the way to educate people about sex is to re-educate them in the whole idea of sex and then go on to safe sex.

INTERVIEWER: Well done. What the campaign has done is to start at the other end.

INTERVIEWEE: I think what else is wrong is the way they targeted the high-risk groups and they should have targeted the low-risk groups as well, because those are the people they should really make an impact on. Because the high-risk groups, I think they already know about AIDS. If you meet someone who has got a problem or is gay they do know the risks, they do know what they are doing because they have been told by their friends and they all know someone who has AIDS. It's the low risk groups they should have targeted because it's those people that are still catching AIDS, people in the high-risk groups aren't catching it as fast. I don't know if it's true or not, but this is what I have been told. They are not catching it as fast because they are changing their habits.

INTERVIEWER: It's true for gay men.

INTERVIEWEE: Drug users are different because they don't care as much.

INTERVIEWER: It varies from place to place, there is a lot of research, but it is true for gay men in most of the cities where research has been done.

INTERVIEWEE: It's an educational thing though, it's not through the little glossy leaflets that are still tagged.

INTERVIEWER: It is also getting across to people that it's not being in a group that puts you at risk, it's what you do that puts you at risk. A lot of people think if you are gay or use any kind of drugs then you are going to be at risk. It's not as simple as that.

INTERVIEWEE: I don't think AIDS has changed people's habits though, there is still a lot of promiscuity. It has changed some peoples habits dramatically.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think it's played a part in how you feel, or do you think how you feel at the moment is much more to do with your own personal experience?

INTERVIEWEE: I think how I feel is from my own personal experience.

INTERVIEWER: What happened to you, is that something you have talked to more people about?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. I think it is important to talk about it. I don't mind talking about it. I think it is important to talk about it because I should have said something at the time. I wish I had and made an issue of it at the time?

INTERVIEWER: What do you wish you had done if you could have done it differently?

INTERVIEWEE: Well I wish I hadn't gone into the situation. To be there, it doesn't justify it, but if I had not been there it wouldn't be an issue now. And just lots of things. I don't know if I would have gone to the police, because I don't think a three-month suspended sentence he would have got would have contributed anything. But it's something I should have done. Looking back on it the best thing I could have done was set fire to the record player.

INTERVIEWER: Get your own back. Have you had any contact with him since, or is it somebody that you actually see?

INTERVIEWEE: No. I saw him in the street once, but I didn't say anything because I was talking to my friend. I was quite pleased I was busy doing other things, looking as though I was having a good time and being happy. I was quite embarrassed though.

INTERVIEWER: You didn't go to have counselling or go to the crisis centre or anything?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: It sounds as if you have talked to women who have been in the same situation?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes I have.

INTERVIEWER: I think that's where most women get their support from, listening to other women.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes I suppose so. It does make me very angry, the whole concept. Of being feeling bad because you are a woman. It just makes me so angry. I don't even have words for it, even now I am so angry. I should go round and set fire to something, it might make me feel better.

INTERVIEWER: Yes it's difficult to know how to deal with that. I know my sister does counselling for crisis and she talks about how difficult it is to work out what to do with the anger. I suppose what you have done with it is made you think, so you have changed and you feel more positive about yourself I suppose, and that's better than thinking about him. But then the issue is will he do it again?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't know. But I can't be responsible for everything he does again. I have thought about that. Has my not doing anything about it because I didn't even mention it at the time actually. I didn't even speak to him about it I was so upset.

INTERVIEWER: You just blocked it out?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes and has that condoned it to say that that's alright now. Is he going to do it to some other poor bitch. I don't know. Have I put someone else in the shit by not being brave enough to say something at the time. But I can't be responsible for everybody. I have stopped thinking about that now. I feel a bit guilty.

INTERVIEWER: I don't think you should feel guilty. Like you say, what would have happened, would you have been taken seriously, how long would it have gone on and would it have made any difference to him in the long term, would it have changed his mind. I am speaking personally, I think it's wrong. It's just another reason for women to feel guilty about something men do. On the one hand it's important that some women do speak out and that we all know that it happens to a lot of women, but I don't think individual ones should necessarily feel guilty. That's not appropriate, it depends on the situation whether you feel you can do it or not.

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