

**LJH39 7.2.1990**

**Gina**

Q: One of the reasons - one of the main things we're looking at in this research is to try to find out how young women think and feel about their relationships. So if I ask you a very straight question - what's the most important relationship for you at the moment?

A: I think the relationship between myself and my fiancé.

Q: What's important about that relationship?

A: Well, I didn't really have a childhood - I had a really rough time - and I met this boy about three - oh, it must be over three years ago now - and he was very understanding about things, and he's coped a lot with me, and I find him - he's always there when I've got problems, when I need to talk - you know, even though he lives in my home town, which is [YORKSHIRE], which is, you know, about five hours away, he's there on the phone and I get letters every day and cards and things; and he's very understanding and - he give me a lot of support, especially with my education. I probably wouldn't be here if it wasn't for his help, so - you know, he's always there, I think, he's my stability and he probably keeps me quite sane actually.

Q: Yeah, yeah. How did you meet him?

A: Well, actually, he used to go to my school, he was a year older than me; and I always remember him being enormously fat and I always used to take the mickey out of him, you know, he was one of those, you know, people that used to... when you're at school you do things like that. And I remember going to college a few years later and my friend was telling me, she said, "oh", you know, "I'm going out with this boy", and I said, "what's his name?", and she said "you probably know him, his name's DAVID" - you know, "DAVID ...". And I thought, oh, I remember him from school, and I said he was always really fat and that, and she went "no", you know, "he's really nice", and I thought "oh". And she showed me him once in the club and he just - we just got talking and then that was it really. We just - I didn't really - the first few times I met him actually, I didn't - I didn't find any sexual attraction, nothing like that. I just found him very easy to talk to and we had a - we had a good laugh and - yeah, he made me laugh quite a lot, which is really nice. I didn't like him in the beginning, he was just a friend. It wasn't like a head-over-heels love, it was - I grew to love him type of thing. Really strange.

Q: Was there any problem with your - with your girlfriend, I mean ... she was seeing him.

A: Well, she - she was actually - she wasn't actually going out with him, she was seeing him, what we call seeing someone -

Q: Yes, yes.

A: - and he wasn't actually keen on her and he'd made that point rather clear to her and she was a bit frustrated, 'cos she said to me, you know, "I've offered him my body and he's turned it down several times", she said, "I wonder if he's gay."; and I said, "oh, you know, maybe he actually respects you"; and she said, "it's really strange, you know," and in the end - this was actually the time I met him, he told me, you know, really - there's nothing there in the relationship, and she said to me, you know, there's nothing there. And actually that night I was talking to him, she got off with someone else anyway, so - she was one of these people that flitted from boy to boy, so she didn't - she wasn't too bothered anyway.

Q: Yes. So - but it took you a little bit of time to develop the relationship -

A: Yeah, it did, because, as I said, I had a bad childhood and it takes - it took me a lot to actually put my trust in someone and to tell them a lot of things, and to actually let the barriers down, which I haven't let them down a hundred percent yet - I probably never will actually - but I give him about ninety-nine percent, but I always keep a little bit back for myself.

Q: What were the problems in your childhood?

A: Well, my father had many affairs, and he was very violent towards my mother. And he wasn't necessarily violent to me and my brother, but it was my mother all the time, you know - she'd have broken ribs and I'd always be sat with her, and I'd say, you know, "you can't go on like this", and she'd say, "well, I love him", you know; and I couldn't understand why people stay, you know. And this went on for sort of seventeen years, this - this beating and - and I got into a lot of trouble at school, I sort of rebelled and thought, you know, well, what's the point of trying to get on with my life type of thing?, you know. I got expelled from school and I got into fights. My mother was going - when they actually split up, a trial separation, my mother was bringing men back, going through a stage where she felt she had to find herself; and of course, at the same time my dad was bringing women back, mostly prostitutes, in front of me, when I was like eleven, twelve years old, just doing things and making me sit there and watch while he did these things to the women. And it caused - I had these ideas, you know, that sex was, you know, quite dirty and it was - he made it sound all sordid, the way - the way he did, there was no affection, no love or anything. They both seemed to be searching - searching for things, and I was just all mixed up - and, 'course, when I met - when I met DAVID, I was - I'd got to a stage where I thought, right, you know, they've messed their lives up; you know, we moved into a new house and my mum and me started getting on really well, and we thought, well, why should we suffer for something that my dad caused? So my mum got a new job and she started, and I thought, you know, I'm never gonna end up like my mum, pregnant at sixteen, you know - two kids and married by the age of eighteen, working in a crisps factory. That I'm never gonna be like that. So I started pulling my socks up, and when I met him, of course - he's a very stable person, got his head screwed on, you know, a job, a mortgage, a car, he's just so - he just knows what he wants, and I think that's what helped me a lot. And it took me a lot of time to actually calm down and confide in him but I think it's worked really well now.

Q: Mm. Yeah, they must have been dreadful, the periods when - I mean, all along really, your mother being beaten by your father.

A: Yeah, I mean even now - my father's got to a stage now where - I still see him now and again but he's an alcoholic now, and he tends - he's now turning his violence towards me, so -

Q: He has?

A: Yeah.

Q: When you visit him?

A: Yeah. Yeah, he's just so drunk all the time - he's got this real problem about wanting to beat women up, I don't know where it comes - I think it stems from his own childhood. (Interruption) So he sort of - every time he sees me I think he has this guilt thing; and I was always sort of his favourite, he always, you know, always his little girl. And he still sees me as a little girl and he - I tell him, you know, I say, "dad, you've got a problem with the alcohol", and he says, "your mother's feeding you all information", and things, and I'm saying, "dad", you know, "I'm twenty years old", you know, I've got - it's no longer information passed on from my mum - maybe she did it when I was younger, you know, "your dad's a bastard"... but as you get older you develop your own ideas, I mean you know, and you learn to judge people

for what they are. And I don't really see him a lot now 'cos, well, it's just a waste of time basically. He tries to put the guilt on everyone else, especially my mother...

Q: But you wanted to go on seeing him, I mean even after they split up?... relationship.

A: Yeah, I've never actually - no matter what he's done, I mean which he's done some awful things; no matter what he's done, he's all - he'll always be my father. I'll never ever forgive him, I'll never ever forget, but he is my flesh and blood, and to a certain degree I mean I still - I still do love him. And I think it's more the pity thing now. I don't ever - I mean, I don't respect him... I respect my mother so much, I mean she's a brilliant woman, but I don't respect him. I think once respect's gone there's not - there's not really a lot there, it's just like - we tend to be two strangers when we sit together. I mean, we could never talk like this, you know, how we feel really. We just sit there and - "so how's the weather?"; you know, it's nothing constructive, it's just a waste of time.

Q: Yeah. But you still feel you want to keep up the contact. Or not so much?

A: Not so much, but I mean I still have to - I still feel an obligation. I still feel like he's my father and, you know - I still care about what happens to him, when I see him as he is now in - I mean, he's just bought - I mean, he had a lot of money once and he lost it all, bankrupt, 'cos he wasted it on women and alcohol and people ripping him off left, right and centre; and he just - I just see him now and he's so thin and looks so old - I mean, he's only about forty-two, but he looks so old and wizened and, you know, you just have to pity him, you know. He's lost everything that he had, he lost his family, he's lost respect, he's got no friends, he doesn't talk to his own mother; he's got no one really, which is - I mean, it's quite sad really. He's brought it on himself... He needs a certain amount of pity, I think.

Q: When you were saying - I mean, when you were about eleven and he was bringing home these prostitutes and doing things in front of you, how did that affect you at the time?

A: Well, I remember... weekend, and I mean this one weekend it was about three o'clock in the morning; and you know you hear strange voices, and things you don't - voices you don't recognise, and you suddenly wake up; and I remember just going out onto the landing and my dad's bedroom door was held ajar, and he just had two women. I remember them saying - you know, he was so drunk he couldn't even get an erection like, I just remember them saying, you know, "you can do it, come on, you can get it up"; and I remember I just stood there, and I - I didn't actually hear myself whimper, but I mean I must have done, I was crying; and one of the women had heard me and she turned round, she said, "ah, there's a girl on the landing", and he just said, "oh, fuck her. Forget it.", you know. And I just remember standing there, and then my brother come out and he said, you know, "what's going on?", and - he's three years older than me, and he just, you know, put his arms round me and we just sat in front of the fire and I just remember feeling so sick, I thought well, what's he doing with these women? What - you know, why isn't he with my mother, and why is he with these type of women? And I just felt so disgusted inside, I just wanted to be sick, which I mean I was, I was violently ill the next day. And I just looked at him and I just said, "dad, I was stood on the stairs last night", and he said, "don't tell your mother", and that was all he said. And I was so knotted inside, these visions, I mean I had nightmares for a long time, and my mother sensed something was wrong; and she was - she - in a relation - in these divorce things you're always tied between these two parents. And one's saying "don't tell the other this" and the other one's saying "don't tell the other this" -

Q: Yeah.

A: - and she used to question me, she used to say "I don't wanna know what your dad's doing", but then she used to question me when I come in and she used to sit me down and she used to say, "right, where's he been, who's he been with, was he in bed on his own?" - you know - "what time did he get in?"; and - and I remember her questioning me so much that I actually broke down and told her. And the first thing she did was she went round his house and she put all his windows through with a brick, and she attacked him - my nana, my grandmother actually went down there; she attacked him. And my mum was actually gonna get - get some - actually report him to Child Welfare or something like that, and I just said - I just said "no, you'll get him into trouble", and she said, you know, "are you sticking up for him and it's wrong? It's wrong", she said, "I'm disgusted, I wanna get something done about it. He shouldn't be doing these things.". I don't know why, but I probably wouldn't do now even - I didn't want him to get into trouble, I just wanted - I wanted it to be forgotten really, even though I knew probably I'd never forget it.

Q: Yeah.

A: It was really strange, but I didn't ever want him to get into trouble for it. But I mean even now I still look back and think I'll never, ever forget that.

Q: Mm. That must have been a shocking experience for you.

A: Yeah.

Q: And it's strange the way - I mean your mother, when it was her being beaten up, she didn't want to sort of report him or leave him or get him into trouble, and then when it was something happening to you, you didn't want to.

A: Yeah.

Q: Like you were both sort of protecting him.

A: Mm. I mean, that - that's - yeah, it is very strange, but where my brother and myself are concerned, no matter what he did to her she would always, it doesn't matter how it was - I mean, she did stick up to him, she did actually, you know, hit him over the head with bottles and throw televisions down on him and things, I mean she did actually put up a good fight and things, but where we were concerned, she always - always protected us, no matter how much, you know - I don't think he would ever - I mean, he did used to... mother quite a lot, he did actually pick on her quite a few times, but never me. I think it was just more mental, psychological things that affected me, things that - things that he did and he said. You know, he always said that we stopped him from doing what he wanted in life. We were stopping him from what he really wanted to do, and he once said that we were deadwood in his life. Which when we were - this was when we were on holiday, he left us stranded for three days...

Q: Yeah. Complicated, isn't it - I mean it's complicated, your feelings for him, as well.

A: Yeah, it is, I mean my fiancé, you know - we do talk a lot about the relationships between myself and my dad and my mum - I mean, I'm so close with my mum; and he says, you know, "if it was my dad, I would have killed him". But I said, "you don't know, until you're in that position" - people say "if I was - if I was her I would have left him, ages ago", you know, "if I was in that position - if I ever got hit one time", you know, "I'd leave that minute". But you can't unless you're in that position. It's no good saying, you know, "I'd do this and I'd do that"; you've got to be in that circumstance. I don't know why I still don't hate my dad, and I don't know why, you know - I've never - I mean, he's done a lot of things, I mean, you know, he's dealt with drugs and things, I mean I could have easily got him into a lot of trouble, but, you know, it's not the way I feel. And he can't understand that, you know, he thinks I should hate him and that. I don't know, I just don't, and it's hard to explain why - why

your feelings are what they are, but it's just something inside that you can't explain. It's very strange.

Q: This - when - I mean, your feelings about him and the way that you felt about his sexual behaviour, did that influence you much when you started to have - I mean, you've implied that it did, that you found it very difficult to trust people. Is that the case, that -

A: Mm. Well, when I - when I was growing up, my mother was - is a very open person, and my dad never mentioned anything about sex, although he had a double standard. He'd do it in front of me but never actually, you know, tell me about anything.

Q: Yeah.

A: And, you know, I wasn't allowed boyfriends in the house or anything. And my mother was very very open; I mean, I knew everything, you know, by the time I was sort of, you know, eleven or twelve, I knew - you know, she just used to sit me down and I'd find it very easy to talk to her. And so as I was finding out about these things as I got older, I found I was very interested, I was very interested in them; and we used to have a lot of magazines around the house and books and, you know, blue videos and things. So I was growing up I did experiment from the age of - I don't know, from the age of seven or eight, with different things, before I actually had sexual intercourse. I mean, up until the age of sort of eleven, twelve when all these things were going on, I would - you know, I would - I'd been out with quite a few boys; I'd never actually had sexual intercourse 'til I was sixteen, but I'd done everything else, at the age of, what, twelve, thirteen or something. And when all this was going on with my dad and with my mum and men, you know? - it used to make me feel quite sick, and I did actually - I didn't actually wanna have sexual intercourse. I didn't mind the other things, that's a bit - I don't know, I can't explain that but I'd do everything else, the touching and the kissing, probably because it - it felt nice, you know, to be cared for or whatever. But the sexual intercourse always to me - you know, it always sounded very painful. I'd hear the sounds on the video when I was sitting in the next-door room and I thought, "ooh, it sounds very very painful", and, you know, myths of what your friends tell you - you bleed to death and you can't walk for two days and things like that, but I - I'm not too - but the thing was I never actually wanted to do it until I met someone that I really liked; and before this boy I was - before this bloke I'm going out with now, I went out with a young boy from the age of thirteen to sixteen; and he was all - he was a very nice, you know, a very nice boy, and he was very caring and understanding. But he was very sexually perverted, strangely enough.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, I don't know, I seem to get associated with - with perverts. My dad was one, and that was something I hated, you know.

Q: In what way was he -

A: Perverted, you mean? I mean, well, he always wanted to try anal sex which is something that is a no-go area for me; and he always wanted me to bend over and touch my toes - in high streets and things, it was like - well, it's really not the right place. And he masturbated five, six times a day. He had a special glove for it.

Q: Was that on his own or with you present?

A: This was - this was on his own actually. I mean - yeah, this was on his own. We used to - see, as I say, I was a very unstable person, I was going through a lot of trauma; so every other date we'd sort of finish - I'd say, "look, I've had enough of you, look, just piss off" or, you know, "just go home, I don't need it". And then when I used to finish with him, he used - the first thing he used to do was go down a back

alley and - and masturbate. Well, I mean the thing is, I think it all stemmed, you know, from child... upbringing or whatever; and I mean, and his mum and dad were so strict about sexual things, you know - they weren't allowed to watch anything on the telly or see anything or - you know, so 'course, he was brought up - he was brought up with all this pressure, you know - masturbating's really wrong, you'll go blind, and things like that, you know, it's not a thing that men should do and - so I mean he never actually - so he used to have to sneak about and do it. He used to go down the shed with a pair of his mother's American tan tights, you know, and - and... I mean he was very, very - he always wanted to use utensils, kitchen utensils and things. I mean, it's quite funny when I look back on it now, you know. But I didn't wanna - I did go through an experimental stage with him, for the first six months or something, and then that was it. After that I thought, you know - it's not - there's nothing - there's nothing sort of - there's no love, no affection, it's all like, "yeah, let's see what we can do with this little thing for ten minutes". You know, it was all sort of two - two kids trying to, you know, explore different things together, which - I mean, it was something that I think was quite important in my growing up, you know. In fact, if it hadn't been for him being there, I don't think it - I don't think I would have made it through, you know, to where I am sort of - sort of now, you know. Because from the age of eleven, twelve to the age of - I don't know, fifteen, sixteen - I mean I was expelled at the age of thirteen; I mean I was arrested on several occasions. I mean he was - he helped me through that. You know, he was always there, he'd come round every night, and we'd sit and we'd talk, you know, and - and it was really nice 'cos my - 'cos my dad was always working abroad, and even when he was home he didn't - even when I stayed the weekends with him he was out, and I'd only see him for that hour, and then he'd bring a woman back. I mean - and my mum was out nightclubbing, she'd get in four and five in the morning in terrible states, and I'd have to sit there and pretend to be ill so that, you know - so that the men wouldn't do anything to her. And - and he was - my boyfriend was always - you know, he was always there for me, and I think he helped - he helped me through that. I mean, even though I look back, it was a very weird relationship, very, very humorous relationship, I think - lots of ups and downs, you know, in more ways than one.

Q: What were you arrested for?

A: Fighting and for putting shop windows through.

Q: Were you - were you going around with a group?

A: Yeah, I was the leader of the gang.

Q: Yeah.

A: I was like - you know, I used to - was the one who took the pocket money off people, and beat people up and, you know - if they had a nice jacket on I'd say "give me your jacket" and that was it, you know. I don't know, I just - I saw a lot of violence at home and everything -

Q: Yeah.

A: - and, you know, I thought "well there's nothing really all that wrong with it", you know. I used to pick on a lot of people who were smaller than me and I was the leader of the gang, and everyone'd say, "oh, you know, GINA said for you to come and let's go - let's go" - and I used to - I used to play truant and I got into trying drugs and alcohol and - I just got myself into a real state really. Then when I got expelled, that was it really, I thought, well, you know, what you gonna do with your life, what you gonna do with it? I was at a stage where I thought, God, I'm gonna have to go to a new school - with this new school, this new house, this has got to be a new start for me. And I did it - I mean, even - I've always been a rebel; I mean, even now my

mum - my mother's had letters from the Polytechnic, you know, for not going to lectures or for attitude problems. I'll always - I'll always be the same but I have - I mean I have calmed down now. I mean I still like to go on the marches and things, I mean that's just a part of being a student, isn't it?

Q: Yeah.

A: And part of, you know, knowing your own rights and things. But I think I'll always be a bit of a - bit of a rebel really.

Q: Mm, yeah. It sounds as if those were pretty turbulent years really. What age were you when you were expelled?

A: Thirteen, I think; twelve, thirteen. Yeah, because I was starting third year senior when I - when I started my new school. They were very bad years. In fact, I did - I did take an overdose.

Q: You did?

A: Yeah. When I was - when I was thirteen. You see, I started - before I started this new school, and me and my mother were living in this new house - I mean, you know, we were getting - we were finding it very hard, a new life, a house actually on our own - my brother had got into his own flat, he was sort of doing his own thing as men do, and, you know - before I started this new school and my mother started this job, we never ate - I mean, I never ate for four weeks, I had to go to the doctor's and things 'cos I just didn't eat or anything. What I was eating I was, you know, vomiting back up. And I started this new school. And it was a whole - I knew nobody and I felt so insecure, and the time I went in my mother had actually took an overdose -

Q: Yeah.

A: - and my mother was in hospital. I mean, I actually saved my mum, because I was staying with my dad at the time, and I rang her up, just to see if she was okay, and she never answered the phone for ages, and eventually she answered it, and I just said, "you know, mum, just - you know, just want to say I love you and I'll be home at the weekend", and she just said, you know, "just get an ambulance". And - and so I started this school and I mean there was all these people I didn't know and things; and I got a lot of stick, you know, the new girl and things like that, you know, and, 'course, they'd heard all these stories about me being expelled and all that, you know you think you're hard and things like that; and I just couldn't handle it. My mum was in hospital and I remember just this one day, these girls who were supposed to be my friends, you know - they were talking about me and they just said, you know - you know, "just go away, we don't want you", and I - and I remember, you know, being so - such a big fish in my old school, you know, just a hard - such a hard person type of thing, you know, and I come to this new school and I - I was just - didn't know anyone, and I felt so small, and I had so many things on my mind, I couldn't get into work or anything. I remember these girls, you know, just talking and literally just pulling me to pieces, and I remember - just - they just said, you know, "you think you're it and, you know, what's your problem?", and I just started crying. And they just said oh, you know, "cry-baby", you know, "what you crying about?"; and I just said, "well, actually, if you must know", I said, "my mother's dying in hospital, she's took an overdose". And they just looked at me, and one of the girls, she sort of went "well, what's that got to do with us?". And... get one of them, I just literally just punched her in the face and broke her nose. They never actually bothered me after that again, but... And then - and then I - then I took - and then I took - I think it was - I can't remember, I took Mogadon, (?)Norvel and Valium, quite a few actually, and I was unconscious I think for three days.

Q: Why did you - because of all the pressure you decided to do it, or -

A: Yeah, just - I mean, just - just everything. Because, as I said, my dad was doing his own thing, I mean he was just... making me feel so, you know, so ill about things. My mother was trying to find herself; you know, when she wasn't at work she was out clubbing it, you know, and - and I was starting a new school, I was in a new house, I knew nobody. You know, at this time I hadn't met, you know, TONY. And I remember just feeling so isolated, you know, just - I never bothered with my old friends from my old school because when I realised that they weren't friends I got into a lot of trouble with them. And I thought, you know, I've got to break away and... and I just sat there one night and I just thought, well, you know, what am I doing? - just nothing, there's nothing sort of here for me. So I took these tablets; and the night before I'd actually been drinking quite heavily with my brother, and, 'course, the next day he comes round and I'm really - I got brought home from school 'cos I collapsed on the field... overdose. 'Cos I took some tablets before I went to school, 'cos I thought I felt alright, you know, and then I just collapsed.

Q: Yeah.

A: And when I got back my mum was at work, she was on a late shift 'cos she [REDACTED], and my brother come in and he thought that I'd - had alcohol poisoning or something, or I'd been suffering from the night before, and that's all he thought it was. So I told - I told everyone that that's what it was, I just had alcohol poisoning, you know, I just had a really bad hangover. I've never really told - I've only ever told really my two boyfriends, TONY and DAVID.

Q: But you were in hospital, were you, or did you -

A: No, I wasn't. That's - surprisingly enough, I was just laid up in bed.

Q: Yeah.

A: And my mother was like "what's wrong with you?". And I just said "oh, I was drinking". And she just said, "you should really - it's really bad" and I just said "oh, well, I took quite a few headache tablets as well with the drink, and I just feel really groggy and heavy-headed". She said, "well, do you think you should go to the hospital and get your stomach pumped?" - with her being a [CARING ROLE] and things, you know; and I just said, "oh, I'm fine". And I just - you know, I made up these things that I'd got - I just felt really tired and run down and she said, "oh, well that's understandable really, being what you've been through".

Q: ...

A: Yeah, so they never - they never really thought...

Q: How did you feel when you came out of it?

A: Well, I didn't think that really when I took it that I wanted to die, do you know what I mean?

Q: Yeah.

A: I did it because - I think I really needed attention. I wanted - they say that suicide is often a cry for help anyway, and - and I think that's what I wanted, I wanted someone just to sit down and just say, you know, "I am really sorry things have been this way", and - and I - when I come out of it, I thought to myself, "well, what was the point of that?". I thought, "what is the point?". Because I remember that when I was laid off, my mother really rallied round me, she was really worried, and my brother was round; and, you know, he'd sit with his guitar and play songs to me. And I thought, really, you know, what's the point? - you really have got people that do care about you. And I thought, you know, God, if something had happened to me, my mother would have gone even further down, which I didn't - I just didn't want at all, didn't wanna give her any more worries than she already had. So in the end I was quite relieved actually. When I come out of it, I thought, "Right, I'm gonna do something with myself. Sod the lot of them, I'm just gonna do something". So I

started going out, meeting new friends and - see, after that incident with the girls, you know, they were my friends after that -

Q: Yeah.

A: - because we'd got an understanding; because I'd put this front on and they all thought I was - thought I was something I was not, you know, really pretentious or something; and I wasn't, I just had a lot of problems which nobody knew about. And, you know, teachers... about you say, "oh, you know, you've got a really bad attitude, get out" and things. And I did have a - I mean I - I started having a laugh again and going out, and my mother started calming herself down as well, she stopped going out - 'cos she realised that what she was doing was not what she wanted, she didn't wanna go out and get drunk and not remember where she'd been, she wanted to find someone who could take care of her and, you know, be nice to her. So she - so we both made a new start, and we've never sort of looked back since really.

Q: Yeah. You get on very well with your mother?

A: Yeah, I do. But - I feel like - I feel very responsible for my mother, because she - she's had a very hard time. She's had three broken relationships since splitting up with my father. She actually got back with my father a year after they separated, and on the night of the engagement he broke three of her ribs and broke her nose. So that was cancelled, the engagement was cancelled. And she had three relationships which all broke up, because one of them was lying, one of them was trying to actually get off with her best friend, and the other one had put his kids in a home and didn't want anything to do with us, so that was - he was out the window. So she's - she gives a hundred percent of herself, you see; she has so much love and she's such a nice person, that people just walk over her, she's so vulnerable. And - and then of course my dad has never paid me any maintenance money, so then we lost the house - we couldn't pay the mortgage or anything, so she moved into a council house with my nana, where she's living still now, and then I ... London. Then my mother come down to London to work and she met a man, and he had eight kids, and then he had her scrubbing floors, looking after the kids; and then she just walked away in the end. She finds it very easy now -

Q: Yeah.

A: - to walk away.

Q: Yeah.

A: And she walked away and 'course, then she had [MEDICAL ISSUES]. So she's been out of work now for six months, and she's just sort of sat in a council house with my nana, claiming income support, thirty pound a week, so - and she's not getting out the house, 'cos she's older and her friends are all married or her friends are young and - and she's tried lots of things, she's tried computer dating, blind dating, and she's tried everything - in papers, advertising, through friends, and she's never actually sort of met anyone. The thing is about her is she needs someone. Some people need - need some people. Some people can live on their own, but she can't, she - I mean, I know she lives with my grandmother, but it's not the same, is it?

Q: No.

A: - as being with someone who cares - it's a different type of love altogether.

Q: Yeah.

A: And that - that's what she needs, she's not complete without a man actually. So I keep, you know, thinking - you know, hoping that she meets someone, because when she meets someone and she's happy, then I'm happy, then I can get on with - with my life.... really. She's just in a bit of, you know, in a bit of a rut with herself at the moment.

Q: So it is a worry for you, you feel very responsible for her, obviously.

A: Yeah. Yeah, I do, because we've always talked about everything. We - we - in fact, we're not mother and daughter, we are actually best friends. You know, if we've got a problem - I mean, sexual problem, financial problems, anything, we just, you know, tell each other straight away. Yeah, I mean, she's got an interview for a job sort of next week, I'm going up there to go with her, just to give her a bit of moral support.

Q: Yeah. That's good, that you've got that kind of relationship with her -

A: Yeah, because she hasn't got that with her own mother, see; she lives with her but - considering that there's the same age gap between her and her mother that there is with me and her - there's twenty years between each generation -

Q: Yeah.

A: And it's like sixty years between them. My nana is - my nana has just - has got to a stage now where she wants to die, right - I mean, it's a very morbid family like; she's got to a stage where she feels that there's nothing left for her. She met a man after like forty-five years on her own... and he died last Christmas.

Q: Ah, gosh.

A: So she's walking round the house in some sort of daze and - and the thing is with her - she finds it very hard when people show emotion; and of course, when my mum cries, my nana just can't - can't handle it, and then she goes in a multi-depression for like a week or something, she just can't stand it. So my mum has to find - has to go into her own room or go somewhere else to cry, because my nana just can't take it. She can't - she can't handle public anymore, the public; she can't go into shops and, you know, she just can't handle it. So of course my mother really has got no one; yes, you can talk to her about, you know, about the weather or - you know, things, but you can't tell her that - that you're saying, "mum, I'm so unhappy, what am I gonna do with my life?", because if she said that, my nana'd just - just - just - she'd just totally break down. Because the thing is when her children are unhappy, she's unhappy. I mean, when sort of my mum's brother got divorced, my nana had a nervous breakdown, she just can't - because she feels sort of responsible as well. We are a very very close-knit family actually, not my dad, my dad's just out the way, but - but we are, when - my brother's always on the phone when he's got problems and - and we always tell each other we love each other, and we go out a lot together, and - we are really close-knit.

Q: What - what about you, I mean that thing about your family, what about you, what about those years when you were with TONY - how long...?

A: I was with TONY for three years, then I met DAVID and then I was - with him, it's now been three years and three months.

Q: Mm. So when - when you were with TONY, were you just with him or did you see other people as well, or has it just been those two relationships?

A: Before - before I met TONY I had a lot of - a lot of relationships. I was sort of sexually assaulted when I was seven by our [RELATIVE], and I didn't really - I bothered with boys but sort of I didn't, if you know what I mean.

Q: Yeah.

A: And then I got into this relationship with him and - and he was really nice, he was a friend. He wasn't - in the end it wasn't lovers or anything like that, it was friends. We were best friends. In - it come to the fact that in the end I didn't - the last year we were going out together we didn't even have any sort of sexual relationship at all. And I went to college and I found that I had new friends, new interests; and he's a very manual person, electrician and engineer and - he didn't wanna know about philosophy or anything like that; and he's saying, "you go in the kitchen... women's

work", and he'd say, "ah, you're into this new women's lib thing", and I'm like - so we drifted apart in the end. It ended - it ended on quite a nice note really, we just said, you know, we're drifting apart, but he was still very much in love with me for a long time. And I said to him, "I haven't finished with you for someone else, I just feel that we've outgrown each other, we're just friends now". And then, as I was going to college and going out and everything, that was - I only really went with two people, but I didn't have sexual relationships - I've only ever had, you know, sex with - sexual intercourse with two, with two people. Well, did other things with many others -

Q: ..., yeah.

A: Yeah, experimented, did everything with other people.

Q: You say you've been - when you were seven you were assaulted by a [RELATIVE] -

A: A [RELATIVE], yeah.

Q: What happened then?

A: He was - I think he was a [RELATIVE] or something; and he was fifteen and - and he had a younger brother. They were both adopted - yeah, they were adopted; and we were very very close. We were two, sort of, close families, you know, we'd go round there every night, or they'd come round ours. And they had... I was going round to stay one night at this farm... stayed at their house; and my brother got in bed with the younger - the younger son, 'cos they used to get on really well. You know, they'd take a torch and read their magazines and things... and so I was put in the other bed, in the same room with the older boy. And I remember just getting into the bed, and I had my knickers and vest on, my Tuesday knickers and vest, and - and he come in and he did a wolf-whistle, and I thought - you know, I thought, well this is sort of wrong, and I just jumped straight into bed; and - and he come to bed about half an hour later, and I pretended to be asleep, and I had my back to him, and his hand just - you know, just went up my vest, and - and then he put his hand down my pants, and then - I was just pretending to be asleep, I didn't move or anything, I just like stayed like a statue, 'cos I thought if I move, maybe he thinks I wanna do it, or maybe if I go on my back he might wanna do something else, he might wanna try and kiss me or something. And I remember feeling this really - this - this pain; it was obvious that he'd put one of his - one of his fingers inside... it was really painful; and I moved really quickly and pretended sort of to do a really deep breath in my sleep, to stop it. Anyway, he stopped and then five minutes later he was back there again, and he was - I remember just sort of kissing my back and things like that. And then I pretended to snore really loudly and then my brother sort of woke up ... - you know, "she's really noisy". And then he - he turned his back and went to sleep; because I wasn't gonna move, I was clung on to the side of the mattress and there was no way he could have turned me round. He did try and he couldn't, and my legs were sort of down one side of the bed -

Q: Yeah.

A: - he just couldn't move me at all, I mean if he had have tried, I would have - you know, I would have just made louder noises, but I didn't sit up and just say "stop it"; I just - I just laid there really quiet and pretended - I just thought of something else, I thought I was in - I was by the sea or on a beach or something like that, just to block out what he was doing. 'Cos I knew it was wrong. And the next day he just said - he just said - didn't mention anything about it, just got on as if nothing had happened, and we were supposed to go to the farm and I just said "I don't wanna go"; I didn't wanna go and - and I got back, back home, and I was really, really upset about it. I just had really bad nightmares... and I woke up one night, 'cos I had - I was

dreaming about it, and my mother come in the bedroom and she said, "oh, what's wrong?", and I just said, oh, you know, I had a bad dream, and she said, "oh, what is it about, what's it about?", and I told her and she went, "oh, it's alright, it's only a dream, you can go back to bed now". I said, "mum, it was real, it was real", and she was going - and she said, "no, it's not, you just - you just think it's real, 'cos your dreams can be very real". I said, "no, it happened last week when I went down", and she went, "are you sure about this?", and I just said "oh, yeah", and she said, "well, I don't want you going round there anymore. We won't say anything 'cos you know what your dad's like" - so nothing was ever said. But I told my present boyfriend about it, and we see this - my [RELATIVE], 'cos he works in one of the pubs at home on the door -

Q: Yeah.

A: - and I remember DAVID just going up to him and saying "child molester!" and pushing him against the wall, and we just walked out, and I just don't - I just sort of look at him with contempt now.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: But I mean that wasn't very - that wasn't a very pleasant experience...

Q: No.

A: I've not had many.

Q: But you seem to be, despite all of these, you seem to be very positive about the relationships that you've had, with TONY and with DAVID.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. Do you feel - I mean, would you say you feel that in general you don't trust people, or -

A: I seem to - I either like someone or I don't. When I talk to people I weigh them up, you know, I judge them; and I'll either know someone's a good person or a bad person in about ten minutes. I'm very skeptical about people, and - no, I didn't - see, the thing is with me is I need - I do need stability, I know that, and I do, and the thing is about both these - what they both had in common, both -

(Tape change)

A: - where was I? Ah, yeah - they were just - I think they were just - just very stable people. See, I know, no matter - no matter what, what's happened, I am quite a positive person. Yeah, I get - I do get depressed now and again, I think everyone does, don't they, everyone gets despondent at some time or other. But - I think - like people in our family, they have a very good sense of humour; and they do take - I mean, what my mum's been through, and she's able to look back and laugh - and laugh about things. Which I mean is really good. We all have a really good sense of humour and we have the ability to laugh at things, and I've still - I've still got to keep that sense of humour, because it's my defense. It's my way of coping with the problems and things, you know. I always - if something's bothering me really, I always manage to put a brave face on and laugh about things. There's only really DAVID and my mum know when I'm doing this. Everyone else things, oh God, you know, you're so strong and, you know - but I'm not really and - they can tell when there's something wrong, I think, but, you know, everyone else believes it.

Q: Yeah. And DAVID can give you that support as well.

A: Yeah. Yeah, he can, I mean he's - he's a brilliant person, he is - he is so generous, and he's so kind and thoughtful. Because, the relationship I had with TONY was what I needed at that time - I needed something, somebody who doesn't - I mean, it didn't really matter who it was - to help me through that time because - I

can - you know, I took them tablets because I felt isolated, I felt alone, and this person suddenly in my life and he's there all the time. And it made me feel very wanted, and I didn't feel alone anymore, and he was - he was there at the time. He didn't have the understanding that DAVID does, say - if he - he was very - I mean, he had a very high sex drive, and when sometimes I just wanted to be held - I didn't want - I didn't want the sex, I didn't - you know, sometimes people just wanna be held, it's just - the cuddling is sometimes the nice part about it. And I'd say to him "no", you know, just - just hold me, and he'd go in a mood, and keep trying and trying. In the end, you know, you'd just - you'd just lay there and give in -

Q: Yeah.

A: - for the sake of argument.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean, it's just something that I didn't, you know, wanna do. But with DAVID he's - he's that type of person anyway. I mean, we both - we both have quite a good sexual relation, being - I only see him once a month or something. We - we have the same type of feelings about things, we have the same ideas. You know, we understand when - how one of us feels, how the other feels, or what they need at that time.

Q: Yeah. So that's the emotional thing as well as the physical thing.

A: Oh, yeah, yeah. I mean, we know what each other likes, we know what each other dislikes. We know if there's something wrong with each other, just by a tone of the voice on the telephone, and you can, you know - and I remember - I mean, last week, he got into a lot of trouble, he was - he was blamed for stealing a handbag from a nightclub, which he doesn't do, I mean he's so honest. And they framed him - the bouncers actually framed him and set him up, so that he'd say to them, "don't call the police, I'll give you some money", type of thing.

Q: Yeah.

A: So he was put into jail for that - he was put in prison - in the cells overnight. And I had a dream and I woke up, and I knew, I sensed he was in trouble. I mean, I was in London and he was -

Q: Yeah.

A: - up in the North East, and I knew that he was in trouble, I just woke up in a panic. And - and he didn't ring me the next day because he didn't want me to worry. And when he rang me on the Monday, I said "what happened at the weekend?", and he said "well -"; I said "something happened, I could - you know, you were in some sort of trouble"; and he said, "oh, did your mother tell you?"; I said "no" - you know, it's just that -

Q: Yeah.

A: - that feeling we have -

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Just - I mean I have - I have dreams which usually sort of come true or something, you know. I mean, I had a dream that he was gonna get a house and a mortgage and things and he phoned me last night and just said, you know, "I got a mortgage". It's all really strange.

Q: Yeah.

A: It's just that - just that bond. I mean, me and my mother are the same as well -

Q: Yeah.

A: - when we - when one of us is upset or sad, we seem to know, before even, you know, before even contact...

Q: Yeah.

A: It's really strange.

Q: Yeah, yeah. So with him - with DAVID you - you - I mean, you have a good sexual relationship as well, even though you don't see him terribly often -

A: Mm.

Q: - and you enjoy it?

A: Yeah, yeah. I think it's just the - the thing is, before I came down to London we got into a bit of a rut, because I didn't do too well in my A-levels because I was still going through that - that - I've always been a bit of a - bit of a rebel, as I said; and I never actually worked, and also at that time - that was when my dad started taking his violence out on me, when he was drinking -

Q: Yeah.

A: So - so I was going through a bit of a bad time then, and then I come - before I come away, I didn't think I was ever gonna get anywhere, and we got into a bit of a rut with each other. We were seeing each other every day, it was routine, you know, he'd come round and I didn't even bother to - it gets to a stage: when you first go out with someone you clean your teeth, you get ready, you get your hair done, and in the end you're sat there with your bed socks on, your nightie, no makeup on, and you're sat eating a big sandwich or something, or a big bag of crisps, you're sat in front of the television, it's - it's weird how things turn like that -

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, you always make an effort in the beginning. And it got to a stage where we just weren't making an effort with each other. I didn't even realise he was there 'til EastEnders had finished. And - I remember not going anywhere, thinking I'm never gonna get anywhere, and I rang round and there was no places, I was going through clearing and nowhere'd have me, and I was getting so upset; I thought, "God, I'm gonna have to go back to college, I can't stand it, I want to -" - I'd had enough, I wanted to leave home, get my own independence, get away from all the problems back at home. That was one reason why I come to London, I mean everyone... London anyway, that's why we're all here. So - so I come down here, and ever since then we've got on brilliantly because we've got our own lives, but - but yet we're closer than ever. He always thought that when I come down here we'd drift apart, and people all said to me, you know, you really do drift apart because you'll have different interests, you meet different people -

Q: Yeah.

A: - you know, and you'll be spending so much time apart. But in fact, we've got closer. When we see each other, which is probably once - once a month, and then we see each other for the weekend, we really look forward to seeing each other. We don't argue or anything, and even though the first few hours are a bit strained, because it's - it's very hard to explain, but when you... see someone, you don't know what to say at first. It's like meeting all over again. And you sit there and you're very awkward and you're like, "oh, do you wanna cup of coffee?", and then as soon as you get back into it again, it's very hard to separate again at the end of the weekend -

Q: Yeah.

A: It doesn't get any easier.

Q: Yeah.

A: But we really do look forward to seeing each other now. And it's not - I mean it's not, we do - we do have a nice - a good sexual relationship, but it's not - it's not the actual sex, it's the - as I said before, it's the holding, it's - because the thing is, what I feel about sexual intercourse is that I feel it's the closest that you can get to anybody, you can't really get any closer than that; and - and I think that - that's what - that's what we both - we both understand about it, that the cuddles and everything

are really, you know, are really important. Even though I mean it's not - I mean, it's not fantastic; it's not like multiple orgasms or anything like that -

Q: Yeah.

A: It's just - it's just nice.

Q: Yeah.

A: 'Cos we both - we've been going out with each other so long, we know what each other's likes, but it's still not a routine thing. We still always try new things and, you know, we do - we do try and experiment with things all the time. And, 'course, as I said, I mean we're seeing each other once a week, once a month and things, it's - it's still - it never actually becomes routine. Which is a really nice thing about it.

Q: You don't experiment with anal sex, though, you said -

A: No -

Q: You couldn't go for that.

A: No, I just have - I just have a real thing about that, I don't know what it is. But I'd probably do - I'd do anything but not that. I don't know ... complex about that. I don't actually like - like my bottom to be touched at all -

Q: Yeah.

A: - in any way. I don't like anyone seeing it.

Q: Yeah.

A: I can't - I can't say - maybe if it was - I mean, maybe if it was nice and firm or a nice shape, I'd probably say yes, okay. But when it's got more wrinkles on it than the North Sea, you just think oh, well - you know, not too pleasant. But I mean he doesn't bother because he doesn't look at me like that, he thinks, you know, "whatever you are, I love you for it. I don't - I don't look at you like that -" - but I still have a bit of a complex, it's still like... lights out under the sheets.

Q: What about oral sex, does that come into it as well?

A: Well, it's really - the funny thing about that is - actually, when I used to go out with my other boyfriend, right, I never liked it at all. And I never actually had an orgasm in the three years that I was going out with him. And in the three years that I was going out with DAVID, in the first year we - I did like masturbation quite a lot then, and receiving it -

Q: Yeah.

A: - and I found that I could orgasm with him doing that, and that was really - I mean it was brilliant, just having my first one, I mean I'd never - I knew now what everyone was on about.

Q: Yeah.

A: And - and I - I liked to give oral sex, but I didn't actually like receiving it. And - you know, I'd done it, you know, in the first year or something, and I wasn't all that keen on it; because I always used to say, you know - I used to look down and think, oh God, it must look really awful from down there, you know, just stomach and a big pair of -

Q: Yeah.

A: - a big pair of breasts stuck up in the air, and I'd always like be - you know, cover my eyes up and think, oh, God!

Q: Yeah.

A: And then - but finally he just said, you know, "why don't you just let me stay down there instead of bringing me up after like two seconds or something?" - ... up straight away -

Q: Yeah.

A: - so I did, and he just said, you know, "just really relax, just really relax". And then that was it. And I've never looked back since then (laugh) -

Q: Yeah.

A: - you know, I mean it's just like that is - it's a totally - I didn't think that you could actually have - I mean, it's sort of a climax, isn't it, I mean it's like sort of an orgasm; and I thought that it would be the same as a masturbation - but it's not, I mean it's just like - it was just like ten times bigger, and I just sort of floated up; and my legs actually locked, and he was trapped down there for five minutes, which was quite embarrassing! - but I mean just - we don't ... now. But I mean that is something that - that he really enjoys as well, I mean he loves - he loves doing that, just - you know, he could stay down there all day... But we don't - we don't feel any inhibitions about that at all, you know... we both enjoy it and - and we also enjoy watching each other masturbate, and we - we - he's never actually wanted to do anal sex anyway, he didn't - he... that at all. But I mean I wouldn't mind - I don't - I don't mind doing it sort of from behind, you know what I mean? But just - just the thought of that -

Q: Yeah.

A: I just - I just have a real thing about it. I'd hate it if I had piles or anything like that (laugh), 'cos... put things up it, and I just can't - can't stand that at all.

Q: Yeah. Well, there's quite a lot of people feel that way about it, don't they?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: I don't know, I think - I think - I think Freud's anal stage went out the window for me, I don't think I ever actually reached that stage. I think - I think I just skipped over that. I went from the... to the genital.

Q: Yeah.

A: I think it was just missed out completely.

Q: Yeah.

A: Never had any pleasure in going to the toilet or anything.

Q: But it sounds as if you do enjoy - I mean, as you say, it's the - the sort of sexual intercourse isn't the be-all and the end-all, you enjoy all the other things around -... sexual activity.

A: Yeah, I mean that - that is - I mean that is - that is a lot of - about the best thing, I mean just laying someone down and putting oil on them and just massaging them is really really nice, and it's so relaxing; and sex is nice because it's something I feel that when you do - when you - I do the other things, all the other foreplay, yeah, you're both doing it, but I don't think there's that - that unification that you have with sex, with sexual intercourse. And we - we're actually - we're actually now - because I've never actually climaxed during intercourse, and I know that the other girls I live with, five girls, have never actually climaxed during intercourse either, but every other way - which - which - I worried about that for a long time. But now I've just come to accept that maybe I never will. Some women never do. But we've found new positions now where I actually get more fulfilment, so we're actually getting into sexual intercourse now as well.

Q: Mm. Do - do you ever think of those - the other sorts of things - I mean, I was gonna ask you a straight question, like what do you think of, if somebody were to say to you "safe sex" or something like that, what would come into your head? Let me ask it to you like that, if somebody said "safe sex" -

A: What, as in - as in condoms and -

Q: Well, that's what I was wondering, would it be condoms that come into your head? Because all the sorts of things that you're talking about prior to or around sexual intercourse, but without sexual intercourse, you could think of those as safe sex. But do you think of condoms, is that the sort of message that -

A: No, because - because what - I mean, a lot of things, if you consider sort of safe sex, I mean there's a lot of things going around that if you've got - if you've got a cut in your gum or something, I mean you can get AIDS from the sperm or whatever, so I mean that even - nothing like that is quite safe, is it, really?

Q: Yeah.

A: But I have no worries about that, safe sex, because - because DAVID and I, he was a virgin when I met him, and I'd only been to bed with one person, and he'd only been to bed with one person before me -

Q: Yeah.

A: So I had no - no qualms about DAVID or because - but one regret I think, that I wish I'd have actually waited to - to lose - I would have liked to have lost my virginity to DAVID.

Q: Yeah...

A: Just one regret.

Q: Yeah. What do you think about the AIDS thing in general, when did you first become aware of it, do you think?

A: I don't know, a few year ago when it was the big issue and it was all in the media and they made it out to be - it was either brought from - from "the blacks" - I mean it was - I mean it's really bad, the media; or it was either brought from homosexuals, or bisexuals who were going up bottoms and then up the front. I mean, it's just - the thing was, we weren't - we weren't given a lot of information at first, when it - when it first developed. All we were given was what really the media were telling me, I mean it's all just - a lot of it is gutter press. It's just - I mean, everything is just blown out of proportion. So when - when I first learnt about it I thought, well, maybe - you know, maybe it is just homosexuals, maybe homosexuals - maybe it's just them that's brought it round. And then, you know, this thing about - I mean, lesbians couldn't get it and - all the things about heterosexuals, they're alright, they're fine; and I mean it's not, there's a whole - there's a whole issue of blood transfusions and everything, it's just - I mean, it's such a worry.

Q: Yeah. What are the ways you think it is transmitted?

A: Well, I think - I think it's - it's transmitted - I mean, all this thing about saliva, I mean it's just sort of - I think it's transmitted from sperm, from blood - but it's actually transmitted from like sexual - well, shall we say tubes, something like that; and from the blood, and - I don't know really.

Q: Well, that seems to be -

A: That's about it really, I suppose.

Q: - the main things.

A: Yeah, the main - I mean, it's just really... fluid, I mean, it's not like saliva, unless you get about forty gallons of the stuff.

Q: Yeah.... sort of estimates of how much were going up and down and -

A: Yeah...

Q: But do you feel - what about HIV and AIDS, do you see the difference; I mean, what do you know about the difference?

A: I don't really know a lot about the difference between it. All I know is that - is that, I mean, it's - it's sort of, it's a very wide - wide grouping of people that can actually get it; and I think people - maybe myself, who don't know a lot about it - I mean, I would like to know a lot more about it. I have - I mean, recently I've - I've been - when I went to the family planning clinic last week, I got quite a few leaflets on it, but I haven't had time to look through yet, 'cos I - I really wanna know, know about it.

Q: You feel that that's a problem, that people don't have enough information about it?

A: Yeah, I think it is, and I think the other - the other point is that people don't wanna know about it.

Q: Yeah.

A: People are just saying, "well, it doesn't affect me, I'm not a homosexual" or "I'm not black" or - you know what I mean? - "I'm not bisexual", I mean it's really bad; people have this attitude that "oh, well, I won't get it, I'm fine". I mean, I know a lot of people - there's a boy who lives with us, and he's been to bed with now, what, a hundred and twenty women? - and he's - he's used - he's never used a condom yet, in that space of time.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean, he's had penile warts, he's had more sexually transmitted diseases than not, but yet he thinks that AIDS is not a problem, it's not an issue for him.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: I mean, it's an issue for everybody and I think that people - people should be - be aware of that. You know, it can affect any one of us at any time. I think that's - that's the whole frightening thing about it.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I think - yeah, people just don't know enough about it.

Q: So you think the sort of campaigns haven't been terribly successful in telling people about it?

A: Well, no, it's just like, "just use a condom", that's it.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I think there should be a lot - lot more in it: what we can - how we can be educated to not think, "oh, right, I'll put a (?)noder on". You know, there's a lot - there's a lot more to it than that, there's got to be a lot more responsibility about things like this. And people just don't accept the responsibility about it. Whether it's men or women, because women think, "oh, well, use a condom then", you know, and maybe men; but women should carry them around as well as men. I mean, it's not just that, it's all a question about you've got to know who the sexual partners are, how many have they been to bed with, what type of sexual history have they got - I mean it's no good just jumping into - in bed with someone, just think, "oh, right, he's got a condom on, that's great", because I mean condoms are - are just useless. The four times in which I've used them because I've missed my pill, two times they've come off and the other two times they've actually split. So I mean -

Q: You've got no faith in them at all. Yeah.

A: No, I mean - even - I mean, even condoms, they're just - they're just not safe, a safe thing at all. Just not - I mean, they're terrible. I mean, the thing is as well, people just won't use them because they hate them. It spoils the whole effect of it. It's like - I mean, as most people say, you know, it's like chewing toffee with the wrapper on.

Q: Does it - I mean, do you feel that, that that's the effect, that it is like -

A: I can't - I honestly can't abide the things. I really don't like them at all. I mean, we got - we got ones which were sort of special, you know, with the bobby bits on; but I mean, even them, it just - it just come off, it didn't do a lot for me. But I'd use it if I had to - I'd use them, it doesn't matter how I feel about it, because I did. I - I wasn't - I was changing my pill over, from one to the other, 'cos I had real problems, and I had a vaginal cyst, and I knew that I had to be protected in some way. So I mean it was no good using withdrawal or rhythm or anything like that, it's just - or standing up and doing it, as my granny used to say; so, whether I liked them or not, we - we used them. I mean, he doesn't like them, but we - we did use them, because you... you've got to take the responsibility for it.

Q: But it's pregnancy that you're concerned about.

A: Mm.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, well that is - that's pregnancy, but because, as I said, I know all my sexual partners well. But if I didn't, if I was - if I met someone in a club -

Q: Yeah.

A: - if - I'd be very, very wary about doing anything; like, you know, doing - having sexual intercourse with them.

Q: Yeah. Do you think you'd feel okay about asking somebody to use a condom?

A: Ah, yeah, I'd ask them, yeah, straight away. If I was going out a lot and I was single, then I'd carry them around with me.

Q: Mm, yeah.

A: You know, whether I liked them or not, it's just a thing - it's just a responsibility that everyone has to take, I think. I think everyone, you know - if you're single and you wanna - and if you want to - I mean, not necessarily sleep around, but have sexual activities with - with somebody that, you know, that you're not too sure about, then - then I think that you should. Yeah, I wouldn't have no qualms about saying, you know, use a condom. I mean, it's such an easy thing now anyway. No one bothers, I mean they sell them everywhere.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean, they're so easy to get hold of, I mean - when you think about it, it was just in barbers' shops and things. They're just everywhere now. I mean, you can get fruit-flavoured ones and - I mean, all sorts of ones you can get now, there's no - no problem.

Q: So your bad experiences are not gonna affect you - I mean, wouldn't affect you, if you felt that you were with somebody and you should use one?

A: Well, no, it wouldn't, it wouldn't bother me. 'Cos, when you think about it, it's either - it's either use one or you get pregnant or you get some sort of sexually transmitted disease. There's not a lot of choice you can - you can do with it. But I mean a lot - as I said, a lot of people really hate them, that's the whole thing about them -

Q: Yeah, that's true.

A: I just wish there was - there was maybe some - some other - some other method or some other way -

Q: Yeah.

A: Because they're not - they're not - I mean, not only - I mean, it's not only the texture or something, but it's just - they're just not even safe. Not a hundred percent safe at all.

Q: ... problem, yeah.

A: Well, 'cos I mean some of them are even, like, too small -

Q: Yeah.

A: - they just like sort of go halfway...

Q: Yeah.

A: Or even you have problems getting them off or getting them on. I mean it's not - I mean, it totally kills it, doesn't it, if you meet someone, you've got this real hot passionate thing with someone, and all of a sudden you jump into bed and you go, "hang on, I'll just go and put my condom on", and you like, "oh, well, let me put it on for you", right, so you're putting it on for him and you get all the hairs trapped (laugh) and you're not doing it right, and he says "always remember to nip the air out the top" - "okay then", you know: right, let's roll it down. And by that time, I mean, it's

just totally gone down, or you just - or you've closed up totally, or you've lost your flow -

Q: Yeah.

A: - or something, and you just - "oh, hang on, let's use some spermicidal jelly as well, just in case -"

Q: Mm, yeah.

A: It's just - it does kill it, but it's got to be done.

Q: Yeah. The only way. Yeah. Did you - I think you mentioned in the questionnaire that they had mentioned something about AIDS at school?

A: Yeah. Because it was - it must have been, or - no, it was later on, wasn't it, because it's - I don't know, when was it, the seventies or something when it came out?

Q: Probably about '81 or something like that...

A: Yeah, it was late seventies or early eighties - so I remember learning about it in - we got it in R.E. or something, it was all very -

Q: Yeah.

A: It was all very dampened down. We never got a slide - we never got any films on it, or slides or booklets or nothing, we were just told, you know, "transmitted by homosexuals"... When I went to college, my first year college, or my last year at school, I decided - you know, I looked - I wanted to find out more for myself than what the school was telling me.

Q: Yeah.

A: 'Cos it's just - they just told you the symptoms or whatever. You know, there's no cure for it, you die and -

Q: - that's it.

A: That's it.

Q: What about other - other sex education at school? I mean, you sound as if you had pretty thorough sex education anyway, from your mum and so on -

A: - my mother, yeah.

Q: Did you - what about what you got at school, what did you think of that? Or did you get any?

A: We didn't really get any at all really. It was basically about - what you got about - your menstruation, and about how you can be - be cut open when you have a baby, how it can sort of split, and we were all sort of, you know, it was quite - quite frightening, that -

Q: Yeah.

A: - and just things about - we got a video on - on actual conceiving and things like that. We were showed the little sperm and how it fertilised the egg and - and then we were shown the growth of the baby. And we were shown about erection. Well, I mean, it was all very clinical - it was all very, you know, "this is this, this is that, so watch what you're doing, don't sleep about", and that was about it really.

Q: Yeah.

A: But -

Q: - just the mechanics of it.

A: Yeah, it was, there was nothing - there was nothing else really to it. I mean we never got - we never got any education on homosexuality or lesbianism. I mean, I always wondered - I never knew what lesbian - I always thought that lesbians used - used a dildo or something, until - I mean until I was, what? - late seniors at school. I mean, I always thought that they used some sort of penal representation, which I mean is totally wrong, because, you know, it's not - I mean, it's not important to them, is it?

Q: No. How did you find out in the end?

A: Because I remember my friend was one - because when I was younger, I always thought that I was one; and I had a bit of a relationship with a friend of mine, who was - I don't know, five years older than me. And I was always amazed because she was so more developed than me. And I used to sleep at her house quite a lot, and we used to bathe together, we used to wash each other - but that was about it really. We - we kissed... and that was about it. And then I - I didn't - I just really had crushes on girls; I really felt "oh, she's - I wish I was as pretty as her", or, you know, "she's really really nice"; and a friend of mine, an older friend of mine, was - was one, and I was very naive and I thought, you know, oh I don't wanna - I don't wanna bother with them really. You know, and, talking to her, I actually found that she was, you know - I met her through my brother or something, he used to go to college with her; and she's just such a lovely person, she was so brilliant to talk to; and I didn't realise until she just - I just said, you know, something about boyfriends, and she said, "ah, boys don't interest me"; and I said, "oh, d'you mean you're one of them?" and she went, "yeah, I'm one of them". And we just talked that night and I just said, you know, well - do you have to have one of those strap-o-dick-tomies, you know (laugh), do you have to - do you have to like use one of those dildo things? She said "no, we don't", she said, "because that's a penal representation". I said, "well, what d'you mean, what d'you actually use?". She said, "well, we just use what we've got - we use each other". And I said, "well, what - how can you orgasm and things, just -"; she went "well, it's just a normal sexual relationship like anyone else, you know. It's nothing sordid, it's - it's quite a beautiful thing.". And I remember just, you know, always thinking about that - and then every time my friends would say something, I'd always - I'd always correct them from then on -

Q: Yeah. Yeah.

A: That was it - "they don't use them type things, they don't use cucumbers anymore, or bananas, that's a myth".

Q: Yeah. But really, I mean, you've gathered quite a lot of information over the years, haven't you, about -

A: Yeah, I mean I was - I was - because I'd seen a lot, and from my early age, I was one of those who used to tell everyone the information. People would come up to me and ask me things and, in actual fact, I taught my mum a lot of expressions, sexual ex- - you know, what - words for certain things that you do, i.e. like sixty-niners or a pearl necklace or something like that.

Q: Yeah.

A: And I actually told my mum what some of these meant in the end, you know, a snowball - she'd go "what's a snowball? It's a drink, isn't it?" and I'd say - so I taught her quite a bit in the end ... pick up, and kids'd always come to me and ask me questions. And even now in the household where I'm living - where I'm living with twenty to twenty-two year old, you know, women, who - who are in all in sexual relationships, ask me for sexual advice. You know, "if I've missed my pill, will I be covered for tomorrow?", "do you think I should use some spermicidal jelly with that, do you think I'll be safe?", you know; and they always come to me when they've got some - some sexual questions. Or even relationship problems, they always come to me. When one of them's having trouble with - with the other person, they always come to me. And I solve the problems. And then when they go away happy, I'm sat there thinking "oh - who's gonna solve mine?".

Q: That's always the problem with solving other people's problems. It's always easier as well to see what the solution is when it's somebody else's...

A: That's it, isn't it, you can't - you find it very hard to solve things yourself.

Q: Yeah.

A: It's easy giving advice, but when it comes down to yourself - I mean, it's alright, I'm - like my mum saying to me, telling me to do things - you know, "if you're in a relationship, don't take the shit, get out"; and I said, "mum, look back at your own"; she said, "yeah, yeah, you're right, that did take seventeen years" but - then she talks to her friend: "get out of it, get out of it, don't stay with him". So, you know,... seventeen years...

Q: When you were talking about - I mean, the way that you run your own sexual relationships, do you feel that the points at which you decided to make it into a sexual relationship, you decided or you decided together, or he decided?

A: Well, it's me really -

Q: Yeah.

A: - I'm the pusher with it all. When I first - we got our first date together, we were quite - I was quite drunk; and I remember him giving a lift home in his car. And we were sat in the back seat for - I don't know, five or six hours 'til - I think it was six o'clock in the morning, we were just talking and listening to music; and we just kissed. And I thought, you know, why isn't he doing anything else? Why isn't he even wanting to - to unbutton my blouse or anything? And he never did. Then we went on another date, and we kissed, and he never did anything. Then we went on another one, we didn't do anything. And then we actually - first time he felt me I was just so shocked, I was like - pulled back, and he went "oh, don't you want me to?", and I was like "yeah, yeah". So - and then that was it, we just sort of stopped because either our parents were coming back or we were going somewhere or we needed to do something or something like that, you know. So - and I remember it was - we - we'd actually just done things like feeling, but we hadn't actually - I'd had like my blouse unbuttoned or something; but it was six weeks, and it was New Year's Eve, and my mum said to me, "look I'm going off, I wanna go and stay with your auntie, right?", and she went, "look, there's a double bed in my room go - go back there, have a really nice time, and I'll see you tomorrow". So I said, "oh, thanks, mum" - 'cos she used to let my boyfriends sleep from the age of thirteen, TONY always slept. And - 'cos like she bought me a double bed and things like that - and he - he stayed. And I remember coming back from - we both got so drunk, but I'd saved myself, I'd calmed down at the end of the night 'cos I thought "oh", you know -

Q: Yeah.

A: - and I forgot to actually tell him what the plans were. 'Cos I thought, you know, "I really like this person and I really wanna make love" - it wasn't sex, or anything like that, it was making love -

Q: Yeah.

A: And I said to him, you know, "are you sleeping back at mine tonight?", and he said "oh, alright", and he never thought anything about it, because my mum was away and we had two - 'cos we had a spare room there. And he brought his stuff, and I remember him putting it on my bed instead of the double bed, and as we were going to bed - it was about, I don't know, about three in the morning - and we actually got there. And he went - he kissed me, and he went, "okay, I'll see you tomorrow"; then he went, "goodnight"; and I went, "where you going?"; he went, "well, I'm going in the spare room, aren't I?". I went, "no, you're not" - honestly, I went, "no, come on". So I dragged him by his hand into the bedroom, 'cos, you know - I mean a lot of drink sort of makes you - when you get very relaxed you tend to feel quite, you know... so - I mean, poor lad, was just in - he was so shocked, 'specially when I started undressing him, he just stood there and he didn't know

what to do, 'cos I mean he'd never done anything at all with anyone else before. I mean, the furthest he'd got was a kiss, he'd never - never done anything. I mean, he was just so - so shocked, he just stood there. By the time we undressed and did everything, not actual sexual intercourse but we - you know, we kissed and we cuddled and we massaged and things like that, it was five hours later, you know, before we actually sort of got to the - to the actual deed. And we talked about - I mean, he knew I was on the pill anyway, first time we'd met, 'cos I was just really open about anything anyway, you know. And he said, "oh", you know, "you sure you want to?", and I said "yeah". And the thing was we'd - I'd totally forgotten he'd drank so much that we just couldn't even manage it in the end -

Q: Yeah.

A: - which was quite sad after five hours of leading up to it.

Q: Yeah.

A: And it was just a real downer and everything. He fell asleep. So the next - it was just like - I was just lying there and I thought, oh, poor lad, I should have told him not to drink them two bottles of Bacardi. And we got up in the morning - we never actually had sex then, we just got up, and we had a shower together, and then we went back to bed. That was it. It wasn't anything, we just said, you know, do you wanna make love or anything, it was just something that happened. I just said, you know, "d'you wanna shower?", 'cos I said, "I feel really ill. Really groggy after last night."; he said, "oh, yeah", I said "come on, you know, we'll get in together", and so - and that was it really. Just started off in the shower. We never - we never planned it or anything. I think it was just - I think it was just me, though, if I hadn't have dragged him into that bedroom that night, I don't know. 'Cos he was just - he just - poor lad, I mean he just didn't know what to do. But the thing was he - when he actually got down to it, he knew - he knew exactly what to do; which is really nice, 'cos he was just so gentle and he knew exactly the places to touch or what not to touch or whatever. And he was really nice. See, I mean most people are just like straight on top... but I mean it was just - just a very nice thing.

Q: Yeah. Well, it sounds as if it's - it's just what you need really, doesn't it, a relationship which offers you quite a lot.

A: Yeah, it is, there's a lot - there's a lot in it for me. I mean, he keeps - keeps me sane. I mean, he rang me up about like, you know, one o'clock in the morning, because he rang me on Sunday and I had this really bad essay on liberalism, and I was really really struggling with it, and I just didn't understand; and I was doing... at the same time, and I was - but, ah - I was getting so deep into it and he rang me up, and I was just like "I don't wanna talk". So he rings me up at one o'clock this morning - "are you alright now? I didn't dare ring you earlier on". And we were just talking 'til three this morning on the phone. Just about everything, you know, about football, and - we just talk about anything. And he just told me he'd got this mortgage for his house, and we were planning what we - what colour we were gonna do his walls. 'Cos I'm gonna sort of move in with him in summer and help him do the house out, and then just go to [EUROPEAN COUNTRY] for a few weeks or something, camping.

Q: How do you see the future, I mean what do you think about the future?

A: Well, I've got another year here, and then I'm gonna take a year out, probably to go [COUNTRY]. I know - I love him a lot and I'd like to live with him, but I'm not ready for total commitment yet, not all - I wanna - there's a lot of things out there that I wanna do, there's a lot of places I wanna go and a lot of people I wanna meet before I do anything like that. Then I wanna come back, and then I've got another year at pre-journalistic college for a year in [SCOTLAND], and then after that - that's

when I wanna start work, and hopefully can live together or something like. And I mean I'd like to have a child to him, I really would, but I mean that's not 'til I'm about twenty-six, twenty-seven.

Q: ... in the future.

A: Yeah. 'Cos the thing was - the thing is I want my child to have a steady - steady home, with parents who love each other. I'm not... marriage, I mean people don't have to be married now. I'd just rather live with somebody, it's a lot less complicated. And, you know, I wanna have a nice environment, no violence and that.

Q: Yeah.

A: So I mean, you know, a lot of money to have something that, you know, that I never had.

Q: What about work? ... a pre-journalist course...

A: Yeah, I wanna be a journalist. Yeah, but I wanna be in gutter press (laugh). I don't wanna be doing - I mean, anything like that.

Q: Yeah.

A: But he is - I mean, he is - he is a [SKILLED TRADE]. I mean, he has maybe got three CSEs but he can do things that I - I mean even though - he's taught me a lot of things; he's - he's taught me a lot of manual things, you know, how to cope on my own. I mean, I can wallpaper, I can plaster, I can Artex, I can tile, I can do anything like that now.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, I can - I can do electrics and things. And he's - he's taught me a lot about that, which - which I'm really glad. He's teaching me mechanics next. But he's so - we're so different but yet we're so much alike. We have nothing in common -

Q: Yeah.

A: - but I can't really see what the - what we do. In fact, we have nothing whatsoever in common apart from the fact that we love each other. And at the moment that's enough really.

Q: Do you think he's learned anything from you?

A: Yeah, yeah, I think he has. He's - I push him, you see; I'm quite - I'm very ambitious; and the thing is, I said to him, you know, "alright, if you wanna live your life in [YORKSHIRE] - you should - you should do something with your life. Get out of your house, get out from your parents, do something. Set up your own business, do anything - get out, get out every time, finish your apprenticeship and get yourself motivated.". And he's finished his apprenticeship now, he was doing a ... course; I'm trying to get him now to do his City & Guilds, which I might talk - I mean, it's only one night a week, I'm gonna try and talk him into that.

Q: Yeah.

A: 'Cos I think he needs - he - he - I do push him, and I dress - he now asks me about "do you like this shirt?" and everything now, I've taught him to sort of dress, he's got a good dress sense. He's more outspoken now as well, he says what he thinks; and he has - he can laugh about things, which he couldn't do before because - I mean, his dad was INJURED in [COUNTRY 2], he's disabled... paralysed. So he's been - had a very bad childhood as well, and he found it very hard to laugh about things. And - and now he - he's very positive, and he's actually, you know - he's motivating himself, he's got his own house, he's got a car now, he's got a job, and I actually got him to go out - you know, go out with his friends and meet new people and - and do things, pick up a sport and things. So I pushed him into a lot -

Q: Yeah.

A: - and I think he's learnt how - he's learnt really what love is all about by me. He's a lot - he's a lot better in relationships with his - he's a lot more tolerant now in relationships, and I think we both are, than he was before. Especially with his mother and father now, he learns to sit down and just say, alright, yeah, and it goes in one ear and out the other, whereas before he used to run away, he used to pack his bags, he used to get really angry. And - and he's very positive about things now. So I think we've learnt a lot from each other.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: We push each other. I mean, he got me this place down here. He drove me down about five o'clock in the morning... and I've got him - and I've pushed him to work and to better himself. I mean, he's learnt a lot language-wise as well -

Q: Yeah.

A: - 'cos I learn him a lot about - you know, about things that are going on around him, about - I tell him about the ozone layer and things like that -

Q: Yeah.

A: I tell him - I tell him about all sorts, and about women's inequality and things. I mean, he's very - he's a lot better now than he used to be.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean now, I mean he'd never - he doesn't think about it now, he just picks up tea towels and he does the drying up -

Q: Yeah.

A: - and he irons my clothes before I go out and - in fact, you know, he's a lot better at things like that than I am. He's very domesticated. In fact, probably people would like probably slag him down for that but - he's really good, he does a lot.

Q: Yeah. What about that in general - you were saying before about your dad having a double sexual standard; do you think there is a double standard, that different things are appropriate for men and women, that -

A: Ah, totally. There's double - there's double standards all the time, there's - you know, it's alright - I mean, it's - I mean, that stems, I mean, right back, right back from history; it's alright for - for - I mean, just look back in sort of Victorian times, which is still going on now, when men were married and women sat in the home, and that men went out to prostitutes, but yet prostitutes were condemned: but yet, if it wasn't for the men, they wouldn't have been there in the first place. There's got to be a demand for - for that anyway. And it still applies today. It's getting a little bit better. I mean, yeah, women - but - but the thing is, what really... is that women have sex, right - if they sleep about they're termed as "slag", "slut", "prostitute" - I don't know, "whore"; but yet a man sleeps about and it's a good thing, it does a lot for his street credibility, you know, he's one of the guys - "God, look how many women he's been to bed with" and the men'll stand up and he'll say, "oh, I've had that one", and the lads'll just laugh and they'll think it's a really good joke. But if women - if a woman does it - if a woman is flirting or whatever, you know, she's a flirt, she's a slag - if she's - if she wants to have a good time, then that's it, she's - you know, they say that a lot of women who were raped and everything, you know, they deserved to be raped because they were wearing short skirts. I mean - what type of mentality is that? If - I mean, just coming over on the tube here today, a man was just sat there, just staring at me, and doing that type of thing - do you know what I mean? - licking his lips -

Q: Yeah. Yeah.

A: - and that. But I would never ever dream of doing that to a man. Now, if I'd have done that to him, how would he have reacted to me? It - it is - I mean, I got my bottom pinched walking up here -

Tape change

Q: Yeah, so you think that sort of - the double standard is rife really.

A: Oh, there's a lot - I mean, there's a lot of double standards, there's a lot goes on. It's just a real sort of masculine thing to do, isn't it? Well, I mean, women - I mean, if - I mean, my - my father is just like, you know, a prime example. He would just bring prostitutes back - it was alright for him to do it - but once he saw my mum out with a man, in a club, he broke her nose. Once I brought a boyfriend back for a cup of tea, he was thrown out immediately, he was out the door - "isn't it about time you were going home, son?". I mean, that's just a prime example of just like - just what goes on.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean if a woman - if a woman drinks a drink out of a pint glass, she's a lesbian, she's masculine; but I mean it's alright for men to down the pints. If - if a woman smokes, she looks "common"; if a man smokes it's a real, you know, real masculine thing to do, "let's all smoke Marlborough and be real men, boys together".

Q: Mm, yeah.

A: It's - it's - everything is - is sort of a double - a double standard really.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean, the whole thing about education, politics, the same as I mean, the whole education like system, it's all - it's all sort of men, and the whole law, and everything. Just - every ideology that is passed on is - is all masculine, whether it's, you know -

Q: Do you think - would you call yourself a feminist? - do you think, or would you not?

A: Well, it depends what you mean by feminist - whether it means am I just like aware or - or whether, you know, I hate men or whatever. 'Cos, see, some people are like at one end of the scale and one at the other. I mean, you can be a real radical, can't you, a real radical feminist, where some - I mean, I know a lot of women who just like, you know, "castrate them all; pickle the balls in a jar. And I really hate men." - I mean, I couldn't be like that, because the thing is, men - they say that men are sexist, right? But of course, a lot of women are sexist towards men. Instead of being male and female, we should be people, you know? I wouldn't - I'd say that I am - I'm aware of - of equality and aware of women's views, and I think that things have to be changed. Men shouldn't - men and women, I think - shouldn't be - be so ignorant about things, there's got to be some - you know, some real changes. But I mean it just - just maddens me that even now, when we're supposed to be in - in the '90s where this is - this is gonna be the time for equality and everything, it's still not. I mean, we - I mean, they're just - they're just letting - is it, they're actually letting the WRENS, is it, this weekend or something -

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean, actually with the men; I mean, how many years have women been fighting for the country?

Q: Well, I think it's manpower shortages, so to speak -

A: Yeah.

Q: - that - that they can't get enough men to go into the navy...

A: Yeah, I mean, it's just everything.

Q: No, that's what prompted me to ask - because you were sort of listing the whole way in which the thing's biased against women, so I just thought that, having that kind of view, that you may or may not regard yourself as -

A: Well, yeah, I mean I live with a real - real feminist. I mean, and... I mean, she's sort of a vegan and - since I come here, I've learnt a lot. I've learnt a lot about people's views. I used to be really sort of prejudiced. I used - I mean, I must admit I

used to be quite racist and quite homophobic really. I used to be against, sort of, I don't know - I had these - I mean, it's all to do with media or whatever, ideologies that - "all lesbians have got hairy legs" and, you know, "they really hate men and if they sit next to you they're probably gonna make a pass at you" - I mean, I just can't believe that I used to think like this, but since I've come to polytechnic - that's the good thing about it, there's such a variety of cultures, and such a variety of people who have different beliefs, that you learn so much from each other, which is - it's really good, I mean -

Q: Yeah.

A: I'm - I mean, my best friends are either sort of homosexual or... they're lesbians. They're so - I mean, they're so brilliant. So I've learnt so much about things. Especially - I think especially about - about women's liberation, things like that. I knew nothing about that until I come here really, until about the last few years, I really knew nothing. But I've always been one where to say "shouldn't you do the washing up, dad?", or even when I was younger, you know, when my mum was in the kitchen doing all - doing all the ironing and that, I used to say "well, can't dad help you?", or when my brother used to say "go and fetch this", and I'd say "why don't you get it yourself?" and he'd say "well, because women are for doing that type of thing". He used to like really wind me up 'cos he knew I hated anything like that. So even when I was younger, I always used to think that, you know - why should it just sort of be the missionary position, why shouldn't women get on top, why -

Q: Yeah.

A: - you know, why shouldn't women be politicians or things like that, you know. That's why - that's about the only thing that I admire about Margaret Thatcher. That's the only thing I can say -

Q: Yeah.

A: - I admire her because she's a - because she's a woman.

Q: Yeah.

A: ... man's part of society.

Q: Let me ask you something about risk. When - when you've been talking about your sexual activity, you don't - you don't really take any risks, you're not gonna take any risks about getting pregnant, and you would be careful in terms of AIDS if the situation arose where you were with somebody else. But it sounds as if, in some other areas of your life, you have engaged in risky activities. Do you think that that's the case, I mean -

A: Yeah.

Q: ... doing those things that got you arrested when you were younger.

A: Yeah, because where it - see, like that, is because where - where things like that are concerned, where AIDS or, you know, where pregnancy is concerned - see, pregnancy, you've got to provide, I think that - no good having a child if you can't give it a good life, right? And AIDS, I mean it's just so bad, I mean what's the point? - you're gonna pass it on to someone else or you're just gonna die or -

Q: Yeah.

A: - I mean it's just so bad; but I do like - I've always, since I was little, liked excitement. You know, I've always - where the other kids have gone on the - I don't know, on the little swings or the roundabouts or something, I've always wanted to go on the rollercoasters, on the big dippers. You know, I've always wanted - I mean, I always went parachuting and I've done hang-gliding and -

Q: Yeah.

A: - and abseiling and just things like that. I really - I do - I do like that.

Q: Like things - yeah.

A: 'Cos I mean - I mean, really when you think about it, coming down London was - was a big risk. Leaving everything that I knew behind, coming down to London and knowing no one, doing a two - like, doing a few years' course, you know, that I didn't really know anything about; just coming in amongst academics and intellectuals where I thought I wasn't, you know -

Q: Yeah.

A: - thinking that I'd be inferior. But I - I did, I took it, and it's one of, you know, the best moves I've ever made.

Q: Yeah. It does sound as if it's been very positive, doesn't it - yeah.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And yet, I mean, the other things that you were taking risks about, I mean you were doing things that were getting you arrested. That's very risky as well, isn't it?

A: Yeah, but I mean I just - because of the situation, because of my circumstances, I was seeking - I think that I need a lot of attention; I always - I always need to be reassured and a lot of attention, and I think that that - by going out causing trouble, by getting people to look at me -

Q: Yeah.

A: - and to think, you know, this girl - you know, let's all follow GINA, let's - you know, it was just a way to say, "hey, look at me" -

Q: Yeah.

A: - you know, that - that I always needed to feel part of something, that I needed to be looked at, I needed to be - with - getting attention; I mean, taking - taking the overdose was my way, I think, of just saying, you know, "I'm really lonely, please" - you know - "please just give me some time" or something like that. So I think - I think that my - I think that's the way - my way of sort of coping.

Q: Yeah. That's the explanation for that.

A: Yeah. But - but I - I'm not very - I'm not a sort of conventional sort, a straight person anyway, you know. If I go to a party I'm always sort of - I'm always the head of the party. If anyone has a party, they say "oh, invite GINA", you know, 'cos I'm always there, you know, getting people up and - you know, I like to have a really good... And... experiment with drugs and things like that, but I know - but I know limitations on everything. I know how far to go and I always have the ability to stop myself from going too far, every time. Which is really quite good. Even though I do like to have fun and I like to do dangerous things - you know, I mean I used to steal a lot because of the excitement of stealing, I knew when to stop. Which I suppose is quite good.

Q: Yeah. Where do you stop as far as the drugs are concerned?

A: Just probably - I mean, I smoke, I mean that's just a drug anyway, isn't it, I mean nicotine - but I do - I do marijuana, occasionally. Because when - I mean, students, it's so easy to get into it and it's so hard to get out - I mean if you - if you were sitting at a party and everyone was smoking hash, it's very hard just to say no when it's coming along and it's being passed; I mean, everyone's done it at some point in time, everyone's done it. But I would never ever do cocaine or heroin or the ecstasy or crack or anything like that, I've never done anything like that. I've done speed and marijuana, that's it.

Q: What about your - any of your friends, the people that you move around with in London, do any of them use anything?

A: No. I know - I know one person who does coke - cocaine, snorts cocaine. But I mean when you look at them, I mean the money he spends every week and the state of his nose, I mean you just sit and talk to him and it just bleeds, and he's lost

all sense in it, and he just - it's just such a waste, it makes me feel so sick. Because my dad used to take drugs as well, you see.

Q: Yeah, you mentioned that.

A: Yeah, I mean he used to do opium. So when I see things like that, that far - I do it because it's sort of social - sociable, and because it makes me feel good, but doing something like that I don't think would make me feel good at all.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: 'Cos you just sort of see the state that people get in.

Q: Yeah.

A: Once you get down - once you get into it in a sense, it's so hard to get out. Seen so many people - I mean, so many - so many people who I know, friends of friends and things, who've just like died, you know, OD'd on heroin or whatever. It's just - just a total waste. And the babies they have are born addicted and -

Q: Yeah.

A: ...

Q: Not worth it.

A: Not at all.

Q: You've been - as - as you've been talking, you've also been saying things about the way that you see yourself and the way that other people see you, what - supposing I ask you that as a straight question: what's your image of yourself?

A: Of myself? I know - I'd say I'm very very open and outspoken, in fact I'm too outspoken at times. I'm very tactless, I know. I'm quite positive. I'm a pusher - I'm - I'm ambitious, and I wanna - I wanna make the best of myself as I possibly can. But yet I - even though I have quite a bit of confidence, I'm quite positive, I sometimes have a lack of confidence and I need to be reassured. I get quite dependent on people, but I hate - I dislike that of myself. I hate to be dependent on someone. That's why I said, as I mentioned earlier, I always keep that one percent back for myself, because it's my way of coping then if something happens. You never ever - you never get..., never get totally demolished, there's always that something there for yourself. No, I think I'm - I wouldn't say I'm sort of - I wouldn't say I'm intelligent or anything like that. I've got a lot of common sense, I'd say, more than intellect. People always seem to come to me with problems, for advice; they always see me as being stable. What I see myself is - as me needing to be reassured as much as most people, but people don't see that. Because I think that's - that's the image that I want to portray. I don't know. I want - I don't want to be vulnerable, I don't want people to see me as weak or, you know - "oh, she's on one of the downers again" -

Q: Yeah.

A: - I wanna - I wanna give this positive image. I always - have always wanted to be liked by people and I think that's why I've done a lot of the things that I've done, to be one of the crowd or, you know, "she's a good laugh, let's invite her round". I hate to be disliked, you know, as people - you know, as the saying - the Irish saying goes, it's nice to be liked... I see myself as a very moody person and very very - I think these are like negative - very very bad-tempered, and I make a very good friend, but I make a really bad enemy, a really bad enemy. You know, "when she's good she's very very good -"

Q: Yeah.

A: - " - when she's bad she's horrid".

Q: Yeah.

A: It's what - it's what my mum has always said about me, you know. I'm very - I can change very quickly and - 'cos some people think - look at me as if I'm really sort of, you know, a real walkover, but when I wanna be, people keep out of my way. When

the girls know I'm in a bad mood, that's it, they go in their rooms, they just say, "oh, it's Attila the Hun". They all move away from me.

Q: Yeah.

A: And you know, I see - I see myself as - I think I'm gonna get very far actually, I'm gonna be quite successful.

Q: Yeah.

A: Because I wanna be. I think. And I think if you wanna do anything, then you can do it. Which I do believe, if you wanna do anything, you can achieve it, just putting your mind to it.

Q: Yeah. Well that sounds very positive.

A: Yeah, it is. I like to sound positive.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah, I do - I do like to be positive. I mean, as I said earlier, I need - everyone gets - everyone gets... but the thing is with me is, when you think about it, all the things I've seen - I mean, my dad with prostitutes, alcoholism, violence, my mother bringing men back, being expelled from school, being sexually assaulted - just everything, just one pressure after another: being moved from house to house, having no money, being totally in debt. And then moving - taking myself away from somewhere that I've always known and moving down to London - when I think about it, a lot of other people maybe might not have ever coped with what I've - with what I've coped with. I mean, what may seem to be a small problem to me might be a big problem to someone else.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: You know, quite often I think of things as being trivial - my friend'll say, "God, that's really - that's really bad". So really, I think I've done quite well, to be where I am now. I mean, I could have easily gone on the way I was going, got pregnant, claimed off the social for the rest of my life and lived in a council house, you know, and smoked twenty-four Woodbines every day and live on milk stout or something.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean, I could have easily done that, but I didn't, and that's the same as my mother. She could have easily gone down. She could have - she could have committed suicide and, you know, finally done what - done it. But the amount of knock-backs that we've had, we just keep coming back. And my friends all say it, I mean, you know, "I don't know how you've done it"; and sometimes I wonder to myself, I think, I wonder how - how I've done it really -

Q: Yeah.

A: - because, when you think about it, I must have been really quite strong. But I don't think of myself as being strong -

Q: Yeah.

A: - but I obviously must be.

Q: Yeah.

A: I mean, because I feel responsible for my mum and I feel responsible for my dad, and my boyfriend's had a lot of hassles lately with his mortgage, and with his health - he's got this thing on his head - and, because my friends in the house have all been going through a very rough time, every one of them, all five have been having so much with their relationship, and they all seem to come to me; and then I've been having this trouble at - I mean, a lot of work at poly. So everything's just been piling on. So these last few weeks I've been really down but this week I've - I've sort of pulled myself back up again.

Q: ... back up.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: It's - I seem to like bounce back. You know, I go really down. I went through a stage last week for the first time ever since I've been here, where I actually thought of dropping out. And I thought, well, - where am I gonna go to, what am I gonna do?

Q: Yeah.

A: I'll be working behind a shop counter. I thought no, I'm not gonna do it. So the next day I got - got my essay done, and that was it. So I'm back on the road to recovery now.

Q: Good, I'm glad to hear it. Yeah, well it all sounds - it sounds as if you're... Yeah. Well, I think that's practically everything I can think of to ask you.

A: - covered everything -

Q: Yeah. Well, thank you very much for talking to me. One of the other things we're doing is asking people if they would keep a diary for us, just for maybe a couple of months or something like that; which would include your feelings about things and what's going on, plus actual sexual activities, if any. Would you be interested in doing -

A: Yeah -

Q: - would you have the time ... problems?

A: Yeah, 'cos - I mean - I just -

[REDACTED]

End of interview.