

LSFS36 1.3.1990**Lucy**

Q: So you actually - you left school six months ago?

A: Yeah. Well, I was at college, went to college to do my A-levels.

Q: What did you do at A-level?

A: Well, I did - it was a course, it was like a package, you know those GCSE packages, and I did - in the first year I did drama and typing - 'cos it was a ..., it was a media course, so you did shorthand and typing, and the first year of your A-levels so I did English Literature and Sociology. In the second year I did photography and the second year of your A-levels. I did - resat my maths, I failed it again.

Q: Was that GCSE?

A: Yeah. It was harder than the O-level because - 'cos I did, like I was the last - the end of the O-levels; I found the GCSE harder than the O-level because - couldn't get on, the coursework's so different from what you're used to, it's like - that's why I found it harder. I wasn't very impressed with that, but that's probably - if I'd always done GCSE, I'd have not known any different. 'Cos I'd done the O-level I was constantly thinking "I wish I was doing the O-level" and -

Q: So what did you end up with?

A: What, my grades? I got a D for sociology and I got an E for English actually.

Q: And then you've been working -

A: Yeah, yeah, I got a job straight away after my exams. I didn't wait for my results 'cos I didn't think I'd passed at all. And went to the career centre... It wasn't really for someone as old as me, it was just an office junior, 'cos they was looking for someone about sixteen and they wasn't really looking for someone like with qualifications really, but they took me on and I - I've moved now, I'm still in the same place but I've - now on accounts department, you know, 'cos like I outgrew my job quite quickly, I was getting - getting a bit - I was getting a bit - started to get, not - at school you might call it lippy, but I was - getting - like I couldn't take orders or anything, you know, people were telling me what to do and I was, you know, I was getting like upset and angry 'cos I didn't like doing what I was doing, I was like - like... a dogs body or something. And they - 'cos it was quite a nice place really, they liked me, and they moved me onto accounts and now I'm a trainee accounts person now so -

Q: And is that better?

A: Yeah, like someone's doing my job now who's sixteen and probably will carry on doing that for a couple of years and not get angry or anything, you know, 'cos it's suited to their abilities but I got, you know, I outgrew it very quickly.

Q: Yeah, I can imagine, you must have felt really fed up.

A: Yeah, I didn't - at first it didn't matter how educated you were if you were just doing a normal office job and you'd never done it before, it'd all be new so you - you'd enjoy it, but after a couple of months you start, you know, doing things with your eyes closed and finishing your whole day's work in like the morning, and you've got nothing to do. Plus the fact you're below everyone else and I don't like that.

Q: No. Whereas now you've got a bit more status.

A: Yeah, I've got my own little - not - it's like, not an own room thing cut off, a door and everything, but my own like cubicle, you know, like - sort of like people going "oh, she's got a proper job now". One of the consultants walked past today and he said, "oh, she's got a proper job now, she's not talking", you know. It's quite good. I won't say it's... though. Soon outgrow this job as well.

Q: Do you know what you want to do eventually?

A: The only ambition I've got at the moment is to earn some money. Haven't got - haven't got any ambitions in doing something wonderful for the world, just wanna do something for myself at the moment. Stay in accounts I think, 'cos there's a lot of money in it and that's all I'm interested in at the moment.

Q: Really? And you live with your mother and your sister?

A: Mm, yeah.

Q: Is that alright?

A: Well, it's alright in as much as I suppose anyone living with their parents is alright, you know. I wouldn't - I suppose the only reason I'm living with my mum is because I'd never be able to afford to live anywhere else. Possibly - I mean I haven't paid her rent at all. I only paid her really once and that was last month, and this month I haven't got no money and so I said "mum, I haven't got any money, do I have to pay rent this month?" and she said "well, pay me when you can", but I mean you wouldn't be able to say that to a landlord, say -

Q: No.

A: - or say to the bank, say "I can't pay my mortgage this month, will you let me off?". So I'm lucky in that respect really but you don't - you still - there's still times when you think, you know, think "oh, I wanna leave, I wanna go and live somewhere". And I'd only get a place if I - I wouldn't get a place with my friends, but I'd get a place with my boyfriend. If we got a place together I'd do that. But only if I had some money anyway. But I've stayed - stayed with my friends like, you know, like girlfriends... live with friends.

Q: Does your boyfriend live on his own or does he live -

A: Well, he lives in [NAME OF TOWN], he comes from [NAME OF TOWN] -

Q: [NAME OF TOWN]?

A: Yeah. He was working - that's where I met him, at my job, and he was made redundant at Christmas; but while he was working in London - he was working in London for about a year - he - he lived in [LONDON BOROUGH] with his aunt, so he lodged at his aunt's, so he had it quite good as well, you know, like only paid thirty pound a week rent and food, so he had it quite - he's got it quite good as well. But since he was made redundant at Christmas he's moved back to [NAME OF TOWN] until he gets another job in London, so he's in [NAME OF TOWN] at the moment. So - when he's staying in London he lives with his aunt.

Q: And you can go and visit her?

A: Well, I - I used to stay there and it was getting to the stage where - I don't think his aunt likes me and she used to get a bit funny when I used to go there. 'Cos he's got a spare room - there's like the aunt in her bedroom, then there's like him in his bedroom and like the spare bedroom, so I'd have to sleep in the spare bedroom. He's twenty-three and I'm eighteen. But at my house we're allowed to stay in the same bedroom, you know, and I can see that some people might be a bit funny about that, but when we go there you have to sit in the living room. We're not allowed to - even though we're not sleeping in the same room,

we're not allowed to stay in a room together on our own as well. It's like something out of Victorian age, do you know what I mean?

Q: What, his aunt has to be there all the time?

A: Yeah, she - we have to - we're not allowed to go upstairs to the bedroom and say listen to some music, you know? I mean, I might understand it more if he was eighteen and I was eighteen, but he's twenty-three and I'm eighteen. Like if I go round there after work we both sit down and have our tea and you sit there and watch telly until like ten or eleven and then you go to bed and he goes to his room and I go to my room and you get up in the morning and, you know, like it's - like I just - I don't - I'm not saying "oh, gosh, I can't sleep with him for one night", it's just that I feel silly, sort of like, you know, like going -

Q: Yes.

A: - you know, "goodnight" and going into your room. One night - that's the last night I stayed there, I said "I'm not staying here again", 'cos she made me feel like I was some tart or something. She - he like went to bed and before I went to bed, you know, I was just sitting in his room talking to him. I wasn't in bed, I wasn't undressed or anything. I was sitting there dressed on the bottom of his bed, I wasn't even next to him, and she came in and she goes "I'm not having any of this going on!" she goes, "you're not at TONY's" - which is like his sort of step-dad in [NAME OF TOWN] who he lives with in [NAME OF TOWN]; she goes "you're not at TONY's, not at the moment", she goes "I'm not having any of this carrying on". She goes "go into your own room", and I felt so - she made me feel like I was so dirty, I said "I'm not staying here again", so - but then he lost his job. Like not that long after then anyway, so there's been no like - no occasion to -

Q: So how old's she?

A: Well, she's only sixty. It's not like she's - her husband died I think - I don't know, about - it must be a good six years ago I suppose. But I mean she married - she's like from the East End, lived in LONDON BOROUGH, not like posh, you know, it's a council flat; the only reason she's got a three-bedroomed flat is 'cos at one time she had a big family and now like they can't take flats away from you. I mean, they might not give an old age pensioner a - a three-bedroomed flat now, but it's 'cos she's always got that, you know, so she's like - it's funny really, 'cos where she lives, in LONDON BOROUGH there's like - she's got a three-bedroomed flat, and for other people to qualify for these three-bedroomed flats they've got to have something like two people in each bedroom or something, and like four kids in one bedroom, and there's - like, most of the people that live on her like housing block are all like Indians with large families, and they've all got about six people in each bedroom and she's got a three-bedroomed flat to herself, you know, and it's - it seems a bit unjust.

Q: Yeah.

A: But I don't think - I don't know - they can't actually take a house away from you but they can offer alternative accommodation, can't they -

Q: Yeah.

A: - 'cos my - my - my nan in KENT, which is... London... Kent, she had a two-bedroomed house and they offered her, you know, like a granny flat, a one-bedroomed flat, and she didn't want that because it was - not 'cos it was smaller,

but because it was away from all her friends and everything, so they give her another house, but it was a one-bedroomed house, you know?

Q: Yeah.

A: So, you know, I think -

Q: So - do you go and visit your boyfriend in [NAME OF TOWN]?

A: Yeah, I do quite a lot.

Q: And is that alright?

A: Yeah, that's fine there, he's -

Q: You stay there?

A: Yeah, we stay there and - like his dad's like really nice, really, you know like - no, there's no problems there, it's just the same as if he was at my house, how you expect it to be, just - I don't know, you just expect it to be like that in this day and age, you know. Don't expect no funniness, you know. I mean, I suppose I - I think it's a bit funny like if my fourteen-year-old sister wanted to sleep with her boyfriend but I mean not when you're both working and like he's twenty-three and I'm eighteen, I'm nearly nineteen. No, his dad's alright. Dad doesn't live - well, it's his step-dad, very confusing - it's not even his step-dad because his mum and this TONY, sort of his step-dad, didn't actually ever marry, although they lived together for about thirteen years they didn't actually ever marry, so - it's like he would be a step-dad if they'd married but they didn't.

Q: He's equivalent in terms of feelings and whatever -

A: Yeah, yeah, so - yeah, so - but he doesn't call him "dad", he calls him "TONY". And TONY doesn't actually even live in his house really, so whenever we're there, TONY's never there anyway, it's just TONY (?) belongs to it. TONY's never there.

Q: That must be quite nice then, 'cos it's...-

A: Well, it's like - like - it's like playing house, isn't it, you know, doing cooking and everything.

Q: And how long have you been going out with your boyfriend?

A: I think about - I'm not sure -... January. It's the end of February, isn't it - that's six months.

Q: Since you started work?

A: Well, actually I must have been working in [NAME OF COMPANY] longer than that. I started in July - so it's July, August, September, October, November, December, January, February - I've been working there eight months, so I've been going out with him six months, so yeah. See, it wasn't like boyfriend and girlfriend from the start; it wasn't like he'd go out with me. We was just friends, you know, just work friends while it worked out. We both had - we both was going out with people, you know.

Q: ...

A: Yeah, yeah. So like we was just friends. It was just the way it worked out. Spent a lot of time together and that.

Q: What happened to your other relationships?

A: Well, mine was quite - quite cut and shut really, you know, I didn't - I didn't actually say "I'm going out with someone else" because I didn't not like him, do you know what I mean? It wasn't like, you know, all of a sudden a really bad relationship and I sort of like went from one bad relationship and I sort of fell into another, it wasn't like that. It was just boyfriend and girlfriend, that's all it was, but

we was like friends. But then I met NEIL and - well, I didn't actually tell my boyfriend that I was going out with somebody because I didn't wanna hurt him, you know, it wasn't very nice. I just sort of - you know, I - you know, "it's not working" or - no, I didn't...; he just said to me "what's the matter?", I said "I'm just not happy about us", and he said "don't you want us to go out together no more?", so I said "no", he said "oh alright then". So that was it. You know, it's not very -

Q: ... easy -

A: Yeah, you know what I mean? - it was - that was easy, you know, that's what - and that was on the phone as well, it was very easy. And that was it, I never saw him again, because he lived in London, you know but - I've never seen him again. But his girlfriend, that was a different story, and it still is, you know? 'Cos she still likes him and so like it's a bit awkward in that, you know, she writes letters and phones and -

Q: - wants him back.

A: Yeah, wants him back, and tells people, you know, and you hear from through the grapevine, you know like "she's gonna get him back after Christmas", you know, like or "she's gonna get him back this weekend", you know, like, sort of like constant - it's like I've sort of like won the trophy, you know, but... hang on, you know, sort of like - it sometimes causes arguments, you know.

Q: What, between you and him?

A: Yeah. Not sort of like throwing saucepans arguments but, you know, bad tension, bad feeling; there's nothing I can do about it really. She's there -

Q: Has he - how does he feel about it?

A: Well, he doesn't not like her. Do you know what I mean, he doesn't hate her - he doesn't say he loves her but he doesn't not hate her, so he can't say "oh look, you silly cow, go away, leave me alone", you know, like call her names and things, so it doesn't work like that but - I don't know, it's so - ... No, he doesn't say like, you know - I mean, I can't hate her but - I don't - I don't know what the answer is anyway, if he - you know, I don't know what he can do really. I mean, all I can think of is if he wanted to go out with her really he could, you know. He wouldn't sort of like, you know, really want to be going out with her and be going out with me. If he wanted to go out with her then he would.

Q: And did he have a sexual relationship with her?

A: Yeah. Well, she was sixteen, you see.

Q: Oh, she was quite young.

A: Yeah, so she was quite young. I mean I'm - well, I'm nearly nineteen, but she was like sixteen, nearly seventeen now; and so like I mean - I know - I mean I've been sixteen myself. I know what sixteen-year-olds are if they're going out with boys twenty-three, idolise them, you know.

Q: Really?

A: And so like, you know, she - I mean, she wrote him all these letters, and he let me read the letters, and they were like so - you know, things like, they were saying things like "oh, we were -", you know, "we were made for each other, we were married even though we wasn't legally", you know, things like that, really sort of like really sort of really - like if she was a couple of years older and she read them she'd probably think "oh God, did I really say that?", do you know what I mean? It's just one of those things...

Q: You put in your questionnaire that you'd had other sexual relationships before NEIL -

A: Yeah.

Q: Can you tell me a bit about those?

A: Well, shall I start from the beginning?

Q: Yeah. (laugh)

A: Right, well, I lost my virginity when I was sixteen - nearly seventeen, I wasn't like just... I was sixteen and eight months or something, you know, I'd left school and everything. And I started college, been at college for a couple of months. And it wasn't like a boyfriend or anything, I wasn't - just a one-night stand and I never wanted to see him again; and I didn't - wasn't pressurised into it - I'd like to think I was 'cos it was so horrible I'd like to sort of like sort of sit back here, nice and comfortable, and think, you know, "oh he forced me to do it, I didn't wanna do it"; but it weren't like that. I just - I was really - really scared - like if I was with someone I liked, I was really scared to do it and I was like all prim - "no, no, can't do it, no, mustn't". And I met this boy from CB - you know citizen band radio? -

Q: Yeah.

A: - well, they had - they called it an eyeball meeting -

Q: An eyeball?

A: Yeah, they call it an eyeball (laugh). They had a meeting and we went for a drink - and I didn't drink alcohol so I wasn't drunk, you know, I just had an orange juice or something, so I wasn't drunk either; and we just went for a walk, and it was just like kissing - he was a really horrible kisser and he wasn't nice at all, he was really really ugly. He was just gross. And - and I did it with him. I just wanted - do you know what I mean? I just wanted to get it over and done with, it was like, you know, I've done it now, I can go and do it with someone I like or something, you know. But then in actual fact I didn't actually do it again for ages, I can't - you know, I didn't... about Christmas. And that was about the end of summer, just when I started Christmas - started college. But it wasn't - you know, I don't - I don't regret it really, 'cos I don't know if I would have enjoyed it the next time. I don't know, I was really scared, you know.

Q: Did you know - when was the point when you knew you were going to do it? Did you decide?

A: Well, we was kids and everything, and normally when - you just know a boy's gonna try it on or something, you know, like - and, you know, that's when you say "no" or something, but I didn't. I wanted - I did want to do it, it wasn't like I was - like I say, I wasn't forced or anything. I knew what was gonna happen and, you know, I wasn't worried. And I didn't use any contraception, I wasn't like on the pill or anything, and I wasn't - didn't say "oh, let's use a condom" or anything like, you know, what they say, so - but I think - I'm sure then at that time - I know it was only a couple, like three years ago, but I'm sure there wasn't no AIDS - I'm sure it wasn't when the AIDS adverts were around then. It was just when I left school. I can't remember -

Q: It wasn't something you thought of at the time?

A: No, 'cos I'm sure that, maybe if it was - I can't remember it being like round then - sort of seems as if it - maybe it was like six months later that it became all like, you know, like the AIDS adverts on the telly and "wear a condom", you know, like things like that. "Best life insurance" or anything like that. But just, you

know, I - I - one, it didn't occur to me and two, I wouldn't have had the guts to ask anyway I don't think.

Q: You wouldn't?

A: No.

Q: Why not?

A: I - I know it sounds really silly, but because I was frightened 'cos - frightened to ask I think, because of - I think you know, they haven't got one anyway. I mean, you know if they've got one in their pocket or something, you know like, they don't offer to use one and you don't ask them to use one, you know? But you sort of kind of know they probably haven't got one anyway. And plus the fact I wanted to do it, I wouldn't - I wasn't in the frame of mind that I would have said "oh, 'cos you haven't got one, I don't want to". Do you know what I mean? There wasn't that - I just wanted to do it. I wish I - if I could go back then and change my mind I would, not because I lost my virginity but because he was so horrible (laugh). But I can't. And it wasn't very nice really either, it wasn't like nice, it was -

Q: You didn't enjoy it.

A: Oh. Well, not like - you know like you were saying do I like my job, but 'cos I've got nothing to compare it against, then you don't know. Well, the first time you have sex you haven't got anything to compare it against, so you don't know. You sort of like, you know, I think - you might - in one sense I think you might enjoy it because, you know, like you're having sex and, you know, you don't really know what to enjoy it's like, so, 'cos you're doing it... But when I got home, it was like really really...

Q: ...

A: ... wasn't like, sometimes you read on the problem pages on the back of girls' magazines and they say, "I'm worried about bleeding", and they say "you'll just have a little bit of blood", but I had blood everywhere. I had blood all over my hands - 'cos it was dark, it happened outside, it didn't happen indoors; outside on the grass.

Q: And was it very comfortable?

A: Oh, he put his coat down on the floor.

Q: A bit chivalrous.

A: Well, it was the summer, it weren't cold. And - and I got home, and I had blood all over my hands, I had blood all over my clothes, I had it all down my legs, I had blood everywhere. You know, like... walk for a couple of days (laugh), you know.

Q: Was it painful?

A: Yeah, it was, it was painful. I stopped - I think I - so hard to move but it's not, you ... age you really try and think. I remember saying stop, 'cos it hurt - you know, that wasn't straight away, after a little while I said "stop, it hurts" -

Q: Did he stop?

A: Mm, mm. Oh, he loved me, he did, he was in love with me and everything, you know like -

Q: But that was the only time -

A: Yeah, well, you see, he kept ringing me and he wrote me a couple of letters in that week, you know, he said oh he wants to marry me and everything, you know, I'm only sixteen, you know like -

Q: How old was he?

A: He was about twenty. He must have been about twenty-two, twenty-three, he was quite old. And I suppose he must have been on a right high, you know, just, you know, broke someone's virginity, a sixteen year old girl. But -

Q: Did he know before, that you were a virgin?

A: Mm, yeah, yeah. I can - you know, like I can see it all now; you know like I was saying about that girl, in a couple of years' time, if she - if she could read those letters -

Q: Yeah.

A: - maybe she'd feel such an idiot. You know, like, but you can't help feeling like that when you're sixteen, it's just - that's what sixteen year olds are like.

Q: Growing up...

A: But I suppose in a couple of years' time I might think the same about being eighteen now. But - you know, like, and then he rang the next week and... 'cos he was coming up - because he didn't have a car, he was gonna ride his bicycle; it was about ten miles. And I said "oh, I don't wanna go out with you anymore" (laugh).

Q: Had you only had the one date or -

A: Yeah, that was it.

Q: That was it.

A: Yeah. I didn't wanna see him again. I suppose part - one of the part of the fact I was so willing as well, was 'cos I knew I'd never see him again because he lived right over - he lived in [NAME OF COUNTY] and it was miles away. I'd never seen him before. And, you know, like - 'cos that's another thing, you don't like doing it with boys round where you live because it all gets out and you've known them all your time - all your life anyway, and you know - you just don't. That's probably one of the reasons most of the time that you say no, 'cos you - you don't... But I - so that's probably why you'd save it for someone you liked, because it's gotta be someone round where you know that... opportunity... I don't know. Might be able to explain it easier if it was just after the time 'cos it'd be all fresh in my mind but, you know, I did want...

Q: Did you feel anything at all - I mean, apart from it being painful? Did you feel that it could be enjoyable or did it just feel -

A: No. No, I thought - I don't know, I just - I just thought, you know like - I think - but in actual fact, for ages after that and running up until recently, you thought the only person who got any enjoyment out of sex was the bloke, you know like you didn't get nothing, you know; only as much as sometimes, you know, just - just doing anything sexual was exciting, but, you know, it just seemed like they always seemed to get more... you know, like -

Q: What, they got an orgasm?

A: Yeah, that's right (laugh). Yes.

Q: ... get.

A: But - yeah, I - I - always reading those ... magazines like about, you know, women and orgasms and that, and I had one and I would have thought that I'd still be sitting here saying that I hadn't had one with a boyfriend, but I - last weekend, Monday, I did, my boyfriend and -

Q: For the first time?

A: Yeah, and - you know like when you - you know - you read magazines about pretending, women pretending that they had one...

Q: ...

A: ... please like - well, I used to do that as well. And I read in that article in one of the free magazines they hand out, only a couple of weeks ago, and it said you shouldn't do that, you know, you're having a relationship on a false basis if you do, you know. But everyone I know does that, you know, you - you know, sort of like, there they are, you know, and if you... sort of like, they go "you didn't come, did you?" and if you say no, they go "oh" (sigh), and they sort of feel like they're so - not a man, you know. You know, you might enjoy sex but just 'cos you didn't have an orgasm it's not the end of the world, but to them it is, you know, and they - I mean I suppose they equate it to them, you know, if they didn't -

Q: Yeah.

A: - if every time they had sex, you know like, for five years, and they never ever come, you know, they'd sort of like be out killing themselves, wouldn't they? But, you know, women do it for years and years, you know, it doesn't bother us, you know - well, as much as it might bother them, and - you know, like so when I did... I couldn't say to him "oh, that's the first time I've had an orgasm" (laugh), you know, so - but I was a bit surprised. I thought "oh, my God".

Q: Yeah. But was that with actual intercourse or was that with other things?

A: No, that was - but it was - it was 'cos I was on - I was on top, you know, so I suppose I got more stimulated that way, you know. But it's surprising actually, how much they don't - that's why they're so - why maybe they might not be able to please a woman, it's because they don't know nothing about our bodies. Like I don't know if it's 'cos they don't read or they didn't take any notice of the biology lessons, but I mean it's like quite easy to learn about what makes - you know, what a bloke's private parts, you know, do and everything. But honest to God, he thought that urine came out of our vagina, you know, where your periods and their penis goes and everything, you know like, and he thought, you know, like that's where your wee came from, so he thought it was dirty 'cos, you know, like your wee came out there. You know. I couldn't believe that. That was only about a month ago that, you know, that I told him that. I can't remember how it, you know, came about, but that's where he thought - so if they think that, you know, it shows how much, you know, ... they are.

Q: ... parents told them -

A: Yeah.

Q: - let alone actually knowing -

A: Well, he -

Q: - how to touch you...

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: .. actually turns you on.

A: Well, see - he thought like that you could get pregnant every time you have sex, so that every time say you have sex, on the first day of my cycle, I could get pregnant if we didn't use anything. You know, he didn't know that there was like - you had like an ovulation, you know, you only had a couple of days in the month when you could get pregnant. He thought every time you had sex you could get someone pregnant. You know, so - he's not like come from a sheltered background, you know, he's sort of talked to the lads and everything so - shows you, doesn't it.

Q: Yeah. So can you talk about sex with him at all?

A: Yeah, in as much - no, quite much - apart from - apart from the big orgasm, you know, like apart from that. I think everything else -

Q: What do you mean by everything else?

A: Well, I think that's the only thing - you know like sometimes - you might not have something you talk about. Well, that's the only lie, you know, 'cos that was a lie. I don't think there's anything else.

Q: But can you sort of say to him or talk about what you like, or might like him doing to you?

A: Yeah, yeah, I have done that, yeah. He was - he was - 'cos like at first like, it was like, you know, it was like having sex quite a lot and everything, but recently we haven't done it hardly at all... 'cos he's not working and he's getting really depressed and everything 'cos he can't get a job. He's been trying, you know, he's got - he's got another interview lined up for next week but he's like getting - he's got twenty pounds, you know, left, that's all he's got, and he's got no job, and - well, he had twenty pounds left Monday, he's spent ten pounds he told me today, so he's only got ten pound left in the bank. He's got a loan as well, that's a hundred pounds, so he's got all these worries and things, and he's just - he's just lost all interest in sex.

Q: Really? Yeah, it does happen like that with depression.

A: And - and he - he just - just not interested, you know like. So that caused problems because - 'cos you think that it's me, you know, I think, you know, something wrong with me. And he'll say "no, it's not you, it's me", you know like, 'cos I - I might go up there - like this weekend I went up there Friday night and I come home Tuesday, 'cos I had Monday and Tuesday a holiday, you know like, and all that time we didn't do it till Monday, and even then we wasn't gonna do it, it was only 'cos like - 'cos we went to bed, you know, 'cos - 'cos I know he was - there was some, you know like, sort of before - until that night he talked about it. Before it was just "I don't wanna do it", you know, so there was me thinking there's something wrong... and then Monday night we talked about it, you know, 'cos I said, you know - he said that's why he's like that, and like - and we was, you know, we went to sleep, but then he woke up in the middle of the night, you know, and he was, you know, he felt like it then, you know, so - I don't know what happened while he was asleep, you know, but he lost his depression for a little while...

Q: And if he still - if he thinks it's dirty down there, does that mean that he doesn't kind of have oral sex...?

A: Well, he - he said - he has, we have, yeah, we have, you know like, but he said - like once he said that he didn't like doing it. But when he said that, you know, I thought, well, I'm not gonna ask you to go down there if you think - you know, you don't like it, you know. 'Cos I suppose if I didn't like doing it to him then maybe I wouldn't want him saying "I want you to give me a blow job" or something, if I didn't wanna do it; so I wasn't gonna press it. But he has since then. And I was thinking, you know, "you said you didn't like it", you know - you know, I thought maybe, you know, maybe he's doing it 'cos he thinks he has to or something. But I suppose - saying you talk about things, I suppose you - even though you might think you talk about things you don't talk about them that much really.

Q: No, you sometimes skate round -

A: Yeah. I don't think he likes it that much though.

Q: But do you like it?

A: Well - well, I like - quite like doing it to him; but I - I don't not like it because - don't not like him doing it to me because, you know, I think it's dirty but - but it doesn't give me that much satisfaction in as much as he doesn't really know what he's doing anyway, so it's, you know - it's boring in that respect. I don't not like it because, you know, like, I think it's dirty. I wouldn't put it high on my list because it's not that, you know, that good...

Q: What do you put high on the -

A: I just like having straight sex really, I... just like lots of kissing and like just being - just - like all of it together. I haven't got one bit. I like it altogether. I suppose if I just had one bit, you know, just had oral sex every night or just had straight sex or like - altogether... that's the only way I could say. I haven't got one ... that... Makes it - I think I love him, it makes a difference. You know, I can enjoy sex with him more than I have with anyone else. Like my - my boyfriend before, it was - that really was "lay back and think of England", that was; and I didn't do anything with him, didn't do anything at all, didn't - I didn't even touch his willie, penis, whatever you call it (laugh). I didn't even touch it. You know, I think - I - I might have touched it just to help him into me -

Q: Yeah.

A: - you know, like, but I didn't - wouldn't do like any oral or, you know, like masturbation or anything, you know like... It was - you know, like actually, it was like - might be a bit funny this, 'cos he was - he was black, you know... make a big thing out of black lovers, don't they? You know, like - but that's all we did, just completely and utterly straight sex with capital letters.

Q: Basically sort of in and out.

A: Yeah. You know. That - that - he'd come and, you know, he'd roll over and go asleep. You'd roll over and go asleep. That was it, you know.

Q: What did you think of that?

A: I didn't really think nothing of it, 'cos I'd not - you know, like - I didn't think "oh, wow!", but I didn't think, you know, "oh God", you know, "it's bad". You know, it wasn't really until I met NEIL that like I had, like, a really like loving sexual relationship. You know, before that it was just - just sex, you know, like all the other times before. With him I didn't use any contraception either.

Q: What, with the one before -

A: No.

Q: Didn't you think of it?

A: Well, I think probably maybe I was a little bit worried but not that much really. Like didn't use a condom, and I think I just was starting to think of going on the pill when I - when I started going out with NEIL. And so with NEIL I've been quite good, but there was even - 'cos like I kept forgetting to take the pill. I - you know, like take it and then - and then like I'd forget it for three days, you know, and then I - you know, like, then I'd think "oh, God", you know, "I might get pregnant". And there was times - one time, when I thought I was. This was when I was going out with NEIL. We only - we'd only been going out a couple of months and I really thought I was pregnant because I kept forgetting to take the pill, like during this course, and I kept forgetting to take it, and I thought I was pregnant because, you know, you come off it for a week you're supposed to come on, and I didn't

come on. And it was like about the ninth day and I still hadn't come on. So I went to my doctor's and I said, you know, "I want a pregnancy test". And he said to me "well, we can't give you one, you've got to have - you've got to have missed your period for something like a month or something", he said -

Q: - fourteen days.

A: - fourteen days, is it, oh - he kept saying, you know like "oh, I don't think you are, no, no"; I'm going "well, I haven't come on", you know. He's going "well, leave it a couple more days and come back and see me", you know 'cos he was going... and he was right anyway. But I was really panicking. And - maybe it was fourteen days, but at five days at a time, if it was only about nine days -

Q: - oh, God -

A: - it felt like a long time. You know, I was really panicking 'cos I didn't wanna baby and I - I always - all I could think of was, you know, having an abortion, and all I could think of was - you know, all these horror stories. I just wanted to find out straight away and have an abortion straight away. I know it sounds - it might sound a bit callous, but that's all I wanted to do. I wanted to find out straight away and be able to, you know, like get myself down for an abortion straight away. It sounds really bad but it's what I felt like at the time. I think if I was pregnant now I'd feel a bit more different because like at the time I'd only been going out with NEIL for a little while so it wasn't a very strong relationship, you know; whereas now I'd be going through the dilemmas of oh, you know, like, you know, it's NEIL's baby, do I wanna do this - whereas really that's stupid because I'd still be in the same position. You know, I'd still lose - not being able to work, I'd still be tied down with a baby for like sixteen years, so it's stupid, but I know I'd feel different now. But - I wasn't pregnant, but like I told NEIL and he's like really understanding, you know, like "new man", and so we went to the chemist and we bought a pregnancy test, but you can't do it til the morning - it says "wait til morning", so like - this is like on a Thursday afternoon we bought it, lunchtime, and so I was gonna have to wait until Friday morning to do it, and, you know, we was talking about it, and I said that I didn't wanna baby and everything, and I said I'd want an abortion if I was pregnant; and, you know, like he didn't say "oh", you know, "yes, I think that's a good idea", you know; but that's what he wanted as well, but - that afternoon at work I come on. I'd just spent ten quid on the pregnancy test and I came on!

Q: Might need it again.

A: Yeah, well, I might need it again, yeah. But hopefully not. But, you know, like after that, you know, I suppose after that it must have been easier for him to say it, but he said to me, "If you was pregnant", he goes, he goes "I would have stood by you if you wanted the baby". You know, he said that, but I mean it was probably easier - looking back now, it was probably easier to say that -

Q: Yes.

A: - once I'm not, you know. It sounds really nice and supportive, doesn't it, but that's after, you know, I wasn't. But -

Q: Did - did that make you any better, as it were, at taking the pill? - or not forgetting -

A: No. No, it didn't. It's so difficult, it's so - it's so easy to say - you hear these people say, you know, the anti-abortion people say "well, they can take the pill, they don't have to get pregnant", you know like... I take the pill, but I'm only

human, I can't help forgetting - I forget - I forget my bags, I forget everything; I come to work and think "oh, God, I've left my sandwiches at home". You know, I leave work and I get on the train and all of a sudden I haven't got my scarf on me. You know, I'm just really a forgetful person. So people say carry your pill round, it's something you carry around like your purse; but I don't have a handbag that I carry around with me every day. 'Cos I'm disorganised, I don't have a purse - I keep my money in my coat pocket. And - "get a purse", you know, but I mean I - I wouldn't - I just like - I took it this month and I remembered every one apart from the last one, and I took that the morning - 'cos I take it in the evening - and so I took it in the morning; so I only missed it by like about ten hours, but that was the last one so I don't think that's gonna be anything difficult. You know, like, but - I'm not the only one, I know like - you know, a couple of my friends, they - like they forget them, like I'll say something and they go "oh, God, you've reminded me, I haven't taken it!", you know? It's easy - it's 'specially easy for a bloke to say, you know, you can take - "it's your fault you're pregnant, you could have taken the pill", but, you know, it's not easy to remember. I don't know, I suppose - they say it just becomes part of your - like brushing your teeth or something -

Q: Yeah.

A: - but sometimes you don't brush your teeth in the morning, do you? (laugh)

Q: Right. Do you use a condom at all?

A: Well, with NEIL I have a couple of times, quite a few times - that's when I've not been on the pill, I've forgotten to take it. But there has been

A: ...But there has been like a couple of occasions when I've said "look, I'm at my risky time of the month" and - 'cos I've forgot to take the pill or I wasn't on the pill, said "we've got to use a condom", and we got to the crunch and we didn't. You know, like, and I said, you know like, you know, "we didn't use anything"; he went "yeah, I know". But - I don't like using it because - it doesn't matter how much they say you can make it part of "oh, she can put it on for you", you know like, you know - but it don't work like that -

Q: Yeah.

A: - because you put it on and you put it on wrong or, you know - it's still, even if she does put it on for him, she's still got to rummage around for it, you know, even if you put it at hand you've still got to "oh, let's put it on now", you know. But there is - I mean one thing I do actually like with using a condom is you don't get no mess on you. Because, you know like, you know, afterwards, you know, you sort of like stand up, you know, and it all comes down -

Q: ...runs down -

A: Yeah, or, you know, like I like keep a, you know, like your knickers... knickers off and they're on the floor and I'll sort of reach for knickers and I'll wipe myself with my knickers or something, you know. So - no, I suppose - I suppose if I'd been living with someone for years I'd have my - my towel by the side of the bed that I use or something, you know like... 'cos it's horrible that, you know. And that - they haven't got nothing. But if they have the condom then you've got to get out the bed and clean yourself up. That's why they probably don't like it, you always... don't like it... I mean they'd be the - the - the cleaning up afterwards as well as the fumbling around.

Tape change.

A: I lost my virginity, then at Christmas I had - like for a couple of times I slept with my [REDACTED], who's just a year older than me. So we're both sort of the same age. And when you've got family parties and everything, you know, we always used to get together. But like I nearly did it with him when I was about fifteen - I wasn't sixteen at all, I was fifteen; but we couldn't, you know, 'cos I was a virgin and he was only about - like he was only like - he's not even a year older than me, he's only about six months older than me, and so he didn't really know what he was doing either, 'cos he was a virgin and he couldn't get up, I mean he - you know, it was like - 'cos there's - 'cos there's like - there's that - the hymen there, you know like they try and push it up you and you're tight as well and you think that it's not gonna go, you know. We tried but we couldn't. But like - when I was like - at Christmas, after I'd lost my virginity, we did do it, and we did it a couple of times after then, but I can't really remember. But any time that I've done it with him I haven't used a condom ever. 'Cos even then, I'd lost my virginity, and I was still frightened to ask to use a condom because well - I can't - I can't really think now. Just was. I was, I was -

Q: Was it frightened or embarrassed or -

A: Well, embarrassed, yeah. And - and he wanted to do it anyway. He did say-
(Tape break)

A: - where was I?

Q: - about being afraid or embarrassed to ask to use condoms.

A: Yeah. Yeah. Couldn't use a condom. And then I went - I went on a Spanish package holiday.

Q: How old were you then?

A: I was seventeen and I was, you know, like still in my first year. I just - like it was like the summer. I - I'd - my holiday was like the last two weeks of college term and, you know, like all - all I'd done was lost my virginity with the ugly boyfriend and... [REDACTED]. So that's all I'd done. And I went to Spain, and I don't think I'd slept with [REDACTED] since Christmas, you know, like since... seven months... you know, I hadn't done anything. And I went to Spain and on the second night I slept with a ... German or something, and - well, I can't speak any German, but he could speak a bit of English. I was really really drunk but I wasn't - I wasn't forced into it. I wanted to do it, I really did. And - and that was on the beach, that was, and he... lucky... he didn't - wasn't going to do anything, you know, he was really honourable, you know, he just wanted to kiss and that was it, you know, it was me that, you know, like, did all the initiating, so that - you know, like that was me. And didn't use a condom, you know, like I didn't want to - I just really wanted to do it then, so I did, and that was it.

Q: And what was it like?

A: Ah, I really, I did enjoy it, yeah, it was good, you know. I suppose it was good 'cos I hadn't done it for seven months, you know. I just wanted to really do it.

Q: Did you feel in control of it 'cos you'd initiated it?

A: Yeah, I did, yeah. I was drunk but he wasn't like - he didn't like tell me, you know, it was me telling him. And it's amazing really, even though you might not be able to spend a day with someone, you can't speak their language, when it comes to having sex with someone, there isn't a language. The only language is body language, you don't need to be able to speak the same language as someone. You know, like, there weren't no problems there, you know. Every

country does it the same way, there isn't any communication problems when it comes to having sex with foreigners, you know. So (laugh) - so then that was that, and then I met this - that night in that club there was this like - there was this group of Danish boys and like I was talking to them that night, and I - I was talking to them like - no, I wasn't, no I wasn't talking; what I'd done - like in this nightclub there was this like really good-looking Danish boy by the bar and I pinched his bum and then turned around, you know, like, you know, I saw him but he didn't know it was me; and then the next night I'd - 'cos I'd gone there with - there was four of us, there was two boys and two girls, but we weren't boyfriend and girlfriend, we were just all friends. And it turned out that - that the girl I was with and one of the boys, they got off with each other on the holiday and they sort of like had sex with each other, although we was all friends originally, and then as soon as we got back to England she still liked him but to him it was just, you know, like holiday, you know like had a bit of sex and that was it, you know, he didn't wanna know her in England. And whereas - like she was younger than me, she was sixteen at the time, and she wanted like to go out with him and everything whereas he just pretended it didn't happen, you know, I think he was really embarrassed about it as soon as he got back into England, you know, he didn't wanna know her that way. And, like I said, him and the other boy, they were both twenty-four, twenty-five, that age, but we was all friends, we wasn't like boyfriend or girlfriend or nothing. And - oh, and - but - that - the - this boy, the first boy, the others didn't know about him, I would have felt too embarrassed if they had have known about it. I did it all very discretely, I wouldn't have done - no one knows about it, I do it all very discretely - people you never see again (laugh). And - whereas like I mean that girl, it was really bad for her, 'cos when she got back to England everyone found out about it and it was all like talked about whereas like I'd had a perfectly respectable holiday. And then - there's this Danish boy. Me and one of the boys that I'd gone on holiday with, BILLY, we'd - like the other two had gone back to the hotel - we - we went to like find some more nightclubs to go to and we sat down on the steps and these two Danish boys came by and we started talking to them, you know, and he didn't know that I was the one that had pinched him on the bum the night before. But like we all arranged to meet to go out the next night, like me, BILLY and these Danish people, and we did; and I ended up getting off with the boy that I'd pinched his bum, and -

Q: Did you ever tell him?

A: No, no, I didn't. Oh, I might have done, I don't know, I can't remember. But like - I was - I'm quite - I was quite glad about that actually, 'cos all up until then I'd never used a condom and, even if it had passed through my mind I'd never dared ask to use it, even if - maybe even if I'd known they'd got one, I'd just - there was just a barrier, just like - one, I was frightened to use it 'cos I didn't know how to use it, it was like even if you'd done it without one it seemed like so, you know, hard and, you know, like if you said "oh, can we use one?", you know, like didn't know how to - I honestly didn't know how to put a condom on then, just did not know, even if you - I don't know, I suppose you - it's the boy who should know how to put it on, but one of the barriers was, you know, like I didn't know how it went on, I didn't know how you used it really. I know it seems silly but it's -

you just don't know, you know - 'cos you haven't done it before you just don't know, even if you read the instructions on the packet you still don't really know.

Q: Right.

A: And - but this Danish boy, before we, you know, did it, I was all - all, you know, prepared to do it without one, and he said, you know, "one minute", you know, probably - that's probably the country he comes from -

Q: Yes, 'cos they -

A: - you know, 'cos they - that to them, you know, it's like, you know, they - it's just like second nature I suppose. And he goes "one minute, you -" - this is like on the beach, you know, we was in the sea and like we was like playing, mucking about and that, and, you know, we trot - off he trotted, you know, and got his condom, and come back, you know, and we used a condom and, you know, we had sex and everything and it was just the same as if you wasn't, d'you know what I mean? And I felt really glad about that because, you know, like - it was like a barrier had come down; you know, like it was this - you know, like I'd sort of like - you know, I felt okay about it after then, you know, especially as he said, you know, "I've got to go and", you know, "go and get me condom", you know. "Me rubber", I think he called it "me rubber", "get me rubber" (laugh). And - and then -... I went and next - the one - 'cos I was on a two week holiday, I met this English boy, this nightclub and like - he was like walking me back to my hotel and we walked along the beach and we was gonna, you know, like do it on the beach; and I said to him, you know, "I'm not gonna do it unless we use a condom"; and all - all before that - it was 'cos I was frightened to ask, you know, frightened asking, or a combination of something. I just couldn't, couldn't ask and I just couldn't, and it wasn't until that Danish boy offered to use one, and he did, and I knew what it was like to use one, I knew how it was used and I used one that I felt okay about it. And I said to him "I'm not gonna use one" - "I'm not gonna do it unless we use one", you know, I felt okay about it and I thought, you know, if he says "I haven't got one" I'm just gonna say "alright, we won't do it then". And he had one on him (laugh) and he used it and - there was still like a bit - a week and a bit left of my holiday, and we stayed together for the rest of the week. It was like holiday romance, you know, like -

Q: Yeah.

A: - sort of like - get up in the morning, go down to the beach, go out to a nightclub, and sort of like spent the whole week like constantly together. And like wrote to each other as well when you got back, but then - you know, like you just stop writing to each other. 'Cos you say when you're on holiday "oh, we'll meet up", but you know you're not really gonna go to [NAME OF CITY] or he's not gonna come down, things like that. You know, like, we just said "oh, we'll just leave it shall we?", you know, like - said "alright then". And so that was that and we come back, but for the rest of the holiday we always used a condom and it didn't feel funny not to use one. It was - 'cos I wasn't on the pill or anything and, you know, that was fine. And then like now I think - you hear - now - like at the time, I was saying earlier on, I didn't feel like I heard anything about AIDS or about catching anything, you know, and it didn't worry me, but now I think what an idiot! - I could have caught AIDS, I could have caught any VD or -

Q: ...

A: - any of the, you know, like the normal things you can catch, you know, even if I hadn't caught AIDS I could have - or I could have got pregnant, you know, I could have had a little Danish baby inside me, and I never'd see these - those people again, you know? And so like, you know, like that - to me now, but at the time it didn't. Didn't, didn't even think it at all. Just wasn't worried at all about that. You know. But now I think, you know, oh God, you know, still - still - I still - I feel okay, but you still, when you're - I must have been years... country thinking, you know... back of your mind, 'cos you hear about catching AIDS and it stays inside you, you know, like for years before you know, and you think, "well, I could have it, but I don't know", you know. You know. Millions of people round the country must be thinking that, you know, like it's in the back of your mind and you - you just say to yourself "no, it's nothing, can't happen to me", but you know - I could of, you know, there's nothing I can do about it now. I mean, my boyfriend, he's - he's done the same, he's twenty-three, he's been to Spain, he's had his Spanish holidays, and that's what happens when you go to Spain, you just - it's just - just - just twenty-four hour sex, it is, just - Spanish package holidays, that's all it is. And, you know, like he slept with - well, much more people than I've slept with, you know, he's had a lot more girlfriends, steady girlfriends than me, and he's also, you know, been on loads of Spanish package holidays, you know. I've heard - he's told me a few of the tales that they've got up to, you know, like, so I mean, you know, he could have picked up, you know, AIDS like over there, so I might have it, you know, but you just think it won't happen to you.

Q: Yeah. Somebody else but -

A: ... Even now I'll sit here and I'll say I don't think it's happened to me. I know it could of, but I don't think it has.

Q: If you were going - like if you weren't with NEIL, and you were going out with somebody, or you were gonna meet somebody else, I mean would it occur to you now about -

A: Yeah, what - yeah, yeah, it would -

Q: - about AIDS?

A: It would now. If I met someone now, say like I - say I split up with NEIL and I went to a club and I met someone - like last week we went to a club Friday and I met someone, and if I hadn't been with NEIL, you know, like it would have been like that, because you know like he was giving me all the come-on and everything. And he was really nice, it's just - well, you can't pretend that if you're not going out with someone other people aren't gonna come onto the scene, it's just natural isn't it? But - 'cos you are going out with someone you like you just don't take up those things. But, you know, like if - if like I wasn't going out with NEIL, if I was in a different situation, and I did see this boy, you know, I - I would say "I'm not doing anything unless we use a condom". But at the same time you think to yourself, well, say like I said that to someone and then - how long do you keep saying you're gonna use a condom? Say you kept seeing them, like for three months you're seeing them, you know, like, and you decided to go on the pill, how long are you gonna say that? Because he's still the same person that he was when you first met him. So you thought - you thought when you first met him "oh", you know, "he could have AIDS" - well, he could have anything, you know, he might just have gonorrhoea or something, we'd better use a condom; but he's just as likely to have some infection three months later, you know, like

he still might - just as likely to have AIDS then, and yet you won't use a condom then, you think "oh, he's a nice person" or, you know, like - so I - you know, it's okay for one-night stands but for long time relationships, you know like, you know, mostly people that are gonna have a long term relationship with someone is gonna have AIDS and they're not gonna know.

Q: Yeah. So does it mean that, you know, you're expected to use a condom for the rest of your life?

A: Yeah. I know 'cos - especially as, you know, like for people - not so much - like say, like my mum is not married now, but she still, you know, she's [IN HER 50'S] but she still has sex, and she's with a bloke at the moment. And he's - he's only about thirty-six, you know, he's a lot younger than her. And, you know, like - risks for her aren't so high, you know? 'Cos she's more likely to have sex with someone older, although someone older if she's gonna have sex with might have caught it off someone younger, I know, but it's still possible, but I don't suppose the risks are quite as high as someone in my age group. But like - to her, it would never occur to her. I've even said it to her before. She won't even have a - a smear or anything, even though she's [IN HER 50'S] and had five children, been married three times, you know like, and had numerous other men, you know, like she - she hasn't got it, she knows she hasn't. You know, like, and that to me seems like silly, you know. But she says she hasn't got it. She goes "I'm not gonna have one of them", she goes, "I haven't got anything, there's nothing wrong with me", you know?

Q: Best to check up though.

A: Yeah but she wouldn't. She won't have a check-up, she won't have a - she wouldn't like look for breast cancer and all these other things you hear happen to women, she - that, to her, for her generation, that type of thing don't happen to her. Someone else, you know? Whereas to me, that would be something I'd be worried about, you know. I'd have a check-up and that. I haven't yet, but you know, it's something that I'd think about.

Q: Yeah. No, it's a good thing to do.

A: Well, she wouldn't use - like VD, right, she - she - she's not, you know, she's passed her menopause so she couldn't get pregnant, but she wouldn't think of using a condom to stop getting VD. D'you know what I mean? She would just think of using a condom as stopping getting pregnant, she wouldn't think of it as, you know, like, you know as a precaution. So it does - does show that education does help, you know, 'cos no matter what the adverts or what leaflets she read now, it wouldn't change her mind at all 'cos she's too old, because it's - I think it's more to do with how you're brought up and influences around you, not by, you know, how many leaflets you read. I - I - I feel more - feel more aware of it now, but - but partly that's to do with maturity, not - you know, it's like I was saying, at sixteen I didn't - you know, even if the leaflets were around I can't even remember them being, but -

Q: Where do you remember hearing about AIDS first?

A: I can't - I thought - I thought I was at college but maybe it was at school, I can't remember. I remember at school we were getting loads of leaflets for, you know, like social and personal development lessons, they were - we got loads of leaflets all about all the different types of VD you could catch. Now I'm sure that we would have got a leaflet on AIDS but I'm - swear I don't remember getting it.

But maybe I've just got a block over that, maybe I did. I can't remember. Do you know when it become famous, it was - I was at school, 1987 was my last year at school.

Q: It was about - it was about two years ago when they had all the television -

A: Yeah.

Q: - you know, weeks of television and...

A: Yeah. See I can't - it may be - I think maybe it was in the first year at college, which was September 1987, not like beginning of '87, I don't - I'm sure it wasn't 'cos I swear I don't remember it being at school. It could have been but... remember it being.

Q: Do you remember what you thought about...?

A: No, not really 'cos it - it didn't seem relevant to me. You know when you hear all these people say "it's not really effective" or government's advertisements, things like the advert with the gravestone and they're saying you shouldn't shock people, you should teach them and all these things. But because you don't feel like it won't happen to you, you don't think it's aimed at you, and you - you think it's, you know, it's just something for kids. You think oh maybe it is - oh, I don't know - 'cos I don't feel like it's aimed at me, 'cos I don't think that I'm gonna get it, I don't feel like I've got any opinion on it. I don't feel like it's "oh, that's really non-effective" and I don't feel like "oh that's really effective", you know. Once you know - know about something it's hard to know whether something's telling you something. 'Cos I think I know about AIDS now, I know what AIDS is now, I know how you get AIDS. Everyone - not everyone -

Q: How do you get AIDS?

A: Well, you get AIDS through - infect - is it infected blood, if you pass blood? So like if someone breathed on you with AIDS you wouldn't get it, but if their blood gets into your blood you would get it.

Q: And through semen.

A: Semen, yeah. But -

Q: Is there any other way?

A: Well - what, methods of getting it or - what, do you mean like injections or something or -

Q: Yeah...

A: 'Cos see, I mean I've never inject drugs so, you know, even that, you think I won't - apply to me as well. But I - I do - I must admit that - 'cos I can't relate to that very well but it must - it's the same sort of thing, the government's AIDS campaigns and the government's drugs campaigns - you know, they've got - they've got some new adverts, I don't know if you've seen them out, they're brand new adverts aimed at young people my age, you know like d'you know like all this Acid House craze, you know, they're trying to stamp out the right to dance, you know, right to party or whatever it's called; and I'm quite mixed up in all that. You know, like I go round with like people that go to these parties and I've been to like the - the field parties and all that, and the drugs and everything, and when you see these adverts on the telly it makes you laugh because it's just so stereotyped. And they had something on The Bill the other day, I don't know if you watched it, where they got these kids from an Acid House party, and the kids had these bright... really really really loud over-the-top tops on and, you know, they had long greasy hair, and they had like just all these, like, stereotype rave

gear, you know, like whereas, you know, I - I went to this club I went to last Friday and people just don't wear that. You know, there's just so stereotyped. And they've got these people and they've got all these drugs off them and it was just, you know like, everyone, we was all sitting there and we was just really really laughing 'cos it just seemed so funny 'cos it's not really like that. It's just how - if - I suppose someone, people our age, were making that programme, they'd know what we looked like; so, you know, they think that you look different. But most of the people that go to these places would be dressed wearing what you're wearing. They don't wear -

Q: - all this gear.

A: - all this gear, I mean some people do, but they - they've kind of got this image, you've got a hall or a field or a club full of people all wearing different clothes, when you just might have a pair of jeans on, a pair of trainers and a - a Levi 501 t-shirt. You don't look no different from someone who's down, you know, like walking down the road to the pub or something. You know, it's just so stereotyped, and - there was like this thing in the newspaper and it was so obvious that this reporter had made it up. It was in the Sun and it said - the newspaper reporter said, "and partygoers said to me there was lots of ecstasy, acid and pot going round", right? And I didn't actually read this, it was NEIL who read it - he was reading the paper, 'cos he reads the Sun, and he was reading it and he really started laughing and he goes "listen to what this paper says, it says that a partygoer said to this reporter 'I saw lots of ecstasy, acid and pot going round' "; and the reason is, not because there wouldn't be that stuff going round, 'cos there would be, but people our age don't say "oh, can I have an ecstasy tablet please?" - they call them "E's" or - they don't call them "acid", they call them "trips" and they don't call - you definitely don't say "oh, have you got some pot?" (laugh), do you know what I - "pot", you know, "can I have", you know, "have you got some pot please?", you know like (laugh) - you know, like they call it, you know like "have you got a draw?" or something, you know like, they say "roll a number up", you know, as if - say like a newspaper man said, you know, "they had lots of numbers going round", you know, you know, like an ordinary person might think "what do they mean - numbers?".

Q: ... bingo (laugh).

A: Yeah, do you know what I mean? But that's what they call it and, you know like, that was so obvious that that was made up, you know, so it shows you it's all -

Q: Yeah.

A: - and they got - they got these adverts going round now where this boy is taking a trip or something, and he's walking along this bridge and he falls over into the sea, and it's just showing you, you know, if you take drugs you know, you kill yourself. But I know from like - 'cos I've taken drugs myself and my friends do, and that's even more worse than taking - using condoms or something, 'cos you really don't think it's doing you no harm at all. Just - you just - you know you don't think it's - you don't think it's bad at all, you don't think - you don't - don't feel like you're one of those druggies sitting round the toilet bowl, you know, like with all spots and you know like ... It's not like that.

Q: What... take?

A: Well I've taken - I've taken E's - ecstasy - and I've taken trips; I've taken speed, I've smoked dope. No, that's - that's it.

Q: Do you enjoy it?

A: Yeah, I do, but - the only times you don't enjoy it is when you get ripped off, which you get ripped off a lot of the time. 'Cos that's - that's like sometimes, if someone's had a go at me, lectured me - 'cos you do get the occasional people, not old people, people your own age, they do lecture you, and - I suppose everyone's got their own right to an opinion but you just think well, just think to yourself, "well they've not tried it so how do they know?", you know, that's what you think, that's what - everyone - that's a drug user's argument, "you haven't taken it so how do you know?", you know, "how can you sit there telling me all this?", you know. 'Cos they say - they see the adverts on telly where you're sitting round a toilet bowl, you know, like being sick, or you're sitting in a room injecting yourself and using tin foil, right? They get this image and they - they imagine you selling your hi fi and your video, you know, it's like stereotypical image, whereas most of the people that take drugs my age, they've all got loads of money. You go to these clubs, or you go to the (?)raves, they aren't old Capris and old bangered Escorts going round, they're like - ...people driving - they're all young people, not much older than me, I mean I haven't got much money but most of them have. Like they're all driving like D-reg Polo G - you know, like Gold GTRAs and like NEIL's friend - well, NEIL's got a Cavalier, but NEIL's friend, he's got this - he bought a brand new car for nine grand, just like Monday he bought it. You know, they - they're not poor, they've all got good jobs in the city; you know, they've all got plenty of money, and - I forgot what I was saying now anyway. (laugh). I've completely forgotten what I was talking about.

Q: Well, actually, could we go back to like sex education -

A: Yeah.

Q: - and like you put in your questionnaire that - that you learnt quite a bit but it came - sort of came through a process gradually -

A: Yeah. I don't - I only found - you don't actually learn anything about sex itself, you don't actually learn about like - 'cos it - you kind of think you know it anyway; but I do think was quite useful was the things like we learnt about VD and everything. But they didn't sit down and talk to you, they give you ... leaflets. So I suppose if you didn't read the leaflets you wouldn't know. And actually, I can't really - I've got to admit, I don't really remember what everything is. Some - I know the words "gonorrhoea" and "syphilis" now, but if someone said to me, you know, "what is gonorrhoea, what are the effects of gonorrhoea?", you know, you know, I wouldn't know that. I know the word whereas before I didn't know the word "gonorrhoea", I didn't know the word "syphilis", you know, and those things; but that's actually - that's the only two I can think of.

Q: What did - what year did you have sex education -

A: This was all in the fifth year. In the fifth year - this is - this is like - we're talking three months before you leave kind of thing. They don't - the only thing. They don't - the only thing you get, a bit in biology, and that consists of diagrams of rabbits, you know, or diagrams of a cow's inside, you know like -

Q: Yeah.

A: - you know, you don't - or you might get a diagram of a human and a male, but it's not actually their body, it's like their - a bone pelvis, you know like, and it

says the word "uterus" or something. But I can remember at school if anyone - if a teacher said a rude word, like in English if you were reading a book and it said the word "bastard" in it everyone giggled - you know, sort of like, I suppose - it - you know, even if they - when they did like - I remember we - they showed us - in our social lessons they told us about getting pregnant, and they showed us a video about this woman, she was pregnant - 'cos it was a girls', all-girls' school that I went to; so they showed you this woman who was pregnant and she had her baby, and they showed you the woman having a baby, you know, like, say - I mean, a couple of girls fainted watching this woman having her baby, that's how bad it was. But there was - there was some things that were useful, like - like I'm saying, in biology - I don't know if - 'cos it was a all-girls' school so like they did strongly talk about girls' body and everything, but like I was saying, NEIL didn't know about how you got pregnant, whereas I learnt that, whereas I never knew that before. You knew if you got pregnant because of boys, you know, like you had sex with a boy, but you didn't know how, you didn't know all about periods and the times and everything. But I can't - I don't really think we had anything really sex education. I did learn some things.

Q: Did they teach you about contraception?

A: Yeah, that was all in biology as well. What did they teach you, they - no, I think their - their... contraception was if - like you might do a paragraph and it said "and to stop getting pregnant you use contraception", you know, but it didn't actually say what contraception was. But in the fifth year when we had that social and personal development lesson - it was only in the fifth year, this lesson, it was a new lesson designed for the fifth year; and it lasted an hour, and it wasn't till near the end that you got onto the juicy bits which was the sex education. And that did include contraception and - oh, that's it, I remember it now, they brought in - they - they brought in this nurse and this nurse brought some things in to show us. Didn't show us a condom but they showed us what a - I remember them showing us what a - it's not a cap - a diaphragm looks like, I think; is it a diaphragm?

Q: Yeah.

A: That long thing, was it - was it - no, what is it, it's long and it's sort of like got sort of wires at the end.

Q: Well, there's - the IUD -

A: IUD, that's -

Q: - which is like sometimes in the shape of a seven and sometimes in other shapes.

A: It might have been an IUD. They showed us one of those.

Q: You have a, yes, a sort of string at the end that you -

A: - yes, they showed us one of those, that's what I can remember. So they did like, you know, like told us all about things - but all this was near the end, you know? I mean you already knew about - I think the only usefulness was about - you already knew all these things sort of mostly, you just sort of like reaffirmed what you knew, you know? But it wasn't really very good really. It wasn't - wasn't very good. Could have been better.

Q: You said something about masturbation...

A: No, no, just something that's not talked about, not even with your friends. But I don't really know, 'cos I can talk about, you know, 'cos I do, and like my sister

does. Me and my sister are quite close, we both admit it to each other that we do, but all my girlfriends, no one's ever talked about it -

Q: Really?

A: - and you talk - I went to an all-girls' school and practically what you talked about all day was sex, you know? Your boyfriends and what you did do and everyone would make up stories, I mean even I made up stories, you know like, and like specially in the first and second and third year, you know, you'd make up little tiny stories that you never actually really did, and it weren't 'til like the fifth - the fourth and fifth year, that was your closest mates, you'd sit and laugh, you know, admit that you never really did that, you know, wonderful story that you told, and there'd be some girls that'd make up like - I remember this one girl made up a story about this boyfriend and she had sex with him and everything, which was in the third year, and then everyone wanted to meet this boy so he died all of a sudden in a motor bike accident.

Q: (laugh) Oh, God.

A: You know, but I mean I don't know if it's because I went to an all-girls' school or whether it's because, you know, even at mixed girls' schools with girls it'd be like that, but we was all preoccupied with that, you know, it was a big thing. So it is quite amazing that out of all that no one ever ever said about masturbation -

Q: Yes.

A: - and it'd be dead embarrassing - if I sat - I know, if I was in a room of girls and all sat there and I said "oh, I masturbate, do any of you?", but yeah, every one of'em'd be really embarrassed and say "no" probably, d'you know what I mean? D'you know what I mean, it's -

Q: - not admit it.

A: No, I mean it's silly really 'cos it's not - I know it's still embarrassing, it is embarrassing, but there's no reason why it should be.

Q: No. And it's - I would have thought it was fairly sort of recognised and acceptable.

A: But I don't think it - it's not, I know it's not, I know it's not - even - like I - you know like you said do I talk about things with my boyfriend, right? Well, like I talked about this with him 'cos I said, you know, like do boys talk about it? And he said "well, sort of, but everyone sort of like-" - I mean with girls, everyone - if you do, you just guess that your friends think you don't and, you know, like - and you don't talk about it anyway, whereas he said with the boys you all know you do and you don't sit there saying "did you masturbate last night?", but it's not ashamed about, 'cos they all know each other does and has and will, and they don't feel embarrassed about it, and it's not - you know, like if someone said, you know, "you masturbate", they wouldn't say... 'cos it's not embarrassing for them, whereas it would be for a girl, you know, and... say that's why it's different. They don't actually talk about it but not because it's not embarrassing, but because, you know, probably it just doesn't come up.

Q: ...

A: Yeah, but - yeah, I did put that 'cos I thought it was quite - quite noticeable, I think it's -

Q: - like a taboo with girls.

A: I mean, even with my sister it was embarrassing, you know like - you don't - you know, like I'd never tell my mum. God, that would be embarrassing.

Q: How old's your sister?

A: My sister, she's fourteen... But like we talk - you know, like talk about everything, you know, although she hasn't done anything, you know like we sort of like still talk about things and everything but - you know, she said "oh, I can't-", you know, she says, says things like "oh, I really want to do it", you know; I think "oh, God".

Q: But when you masturbate do you - I mean you were saying you got an orgasm last week -

A: Yeah, I do.

Q: ...but can you...

A: Yeah, I can. That's why I thought - I dunno, even some people might masturbate might never have an orgasm, but - so then you might not - you might think you'd ever have one; but I thought it was worse for me 'cos I could have one if I masturbated myself, but couldn't have one if I had sex with my boyfriend. So I thought - I thought that I was gonna go for the rest of my life, not because it was NEIL, but because I thought it'd be any boy, I thought no boy would be able to give me an orgasm. I thought I could only have an orgasm by myself, but I could never have one with my boyfriend, and I thought that was just - just how it was gonna be, you know? You know, I thought I had - you know, I might all of a sudden have one when I was about fifty or something, but I just could never - before I had one I just thought I'd never have one with a boyfriend, I just didn't think it was possible. I just thought I'd... myself. But I - I - like I did when I was about - I don't know, I was quite young, I was only about thirteen -

Q: What, when you started -

A: Yeah. Well, when I -

Q: - had an orgasm.

A: - had an orgasm, yeah. I think - 'cos I did, I think that's probably what made me, you know, do it. I don't think, you know, I did it that much before, you know, I don't really remember. But I did - like once I did - it was like quite frightening actually, 'cos when I first did I stopped, you know, 'cos I sort of got this funny feeling and I stopped because I didn't know what it was, you know; I sort of knew, you read about it in magazines, you know, books and that, but I - so I guessed that's what it was, but it frightened me 'cos I didn't know what it was gonna do to me, you know, you sort of like - sort of like, dunno, you just have this image, when you haven't experienced something you got to maybe have an image of something. So I was frightened so I stopped, and it wasn't till I - I did it again, I don't know when I did it again, but I did do it again, and I - I got the same feeling, that I let myself have that feeling. But I remember the first time I stopped, you know, like... That's exactly what I thought when I - it was like the first time I'd had an orgasm when I had it with my boyfriend 'cos - I know it sounds really corny, but I said to him, I said under my breath, I went "oh, my God", 'cos I just wasn't expecting it, you know, like - you know like, I didn't, you know, say "oh, no, I'm not going to have this orgasm" but I couldn't believe it, you know.

Q: So next time you'll be...

A: I'll want it. Yeah, yeah.

Q: So do you feel you're a person who takes risks?

A: Yeah, I - I - I don't - at the moment I feel, 'cos I'm in a, you know, like in a fairly stable relationship that I won't take risks but if I did - well, I can't say if I did...

inevitably, you know, like I probably won't stay with him till I'm eighty-six, you know, but - I probably will take risks again in the future, yeah. I know I will.

Q: 'Cos did you feel for instance, when you were having sex and not using anything at all - did you feel you were taking a risk?

A: Yeah, I must of in a way, but it didn't worry me. Didn't worry me. But I feel now, you know, I do feel now that I'd be more careful, 'cos it was like - you know, at first with using a condom it was like there was a barrier there, but now I feel that I'm more confident, I would say, you know, to use one. But then again I know that if I was in a - you know, I was in a risky mood, that I might - if there wasn't I wouldn't say no. Yeah, I am quite risky 'cos I don't - you know, like I don't...

Q: So in a way kind of either being pregnant or getting AIDS isn't - isn't enough to stop you from kind of going with it if you felt -

A: No.

Q: - that you fancied having sex with someone?

A: Sit here and say, right, practically, in reality, no, it wouldn't be at the time. Sitting here and - 'cos I'm, you know, not doing anything risky at the moment, I could sit here and safely say "oh, yes, it would stop me", but I know in real life it wouldn't. I'd like to think that it would, but I know it wouldn't. If you don't - you don't what actions you take now and what's gonna happen in future, you know, I take, you know, you base them on, you know, what's happening at the time. Well I do anyway.

Q: And have you taken risks in other areas - I mean, in a way, drugs I suppose... risk?

A: Well, see, I'm biased, you see. You see, if I'd not taken drugs before then I'd say, you know, they're really bad, but I don't think that they are 'cos I've taken them before. I've not had a bad situation - 'cos - 'cos I always thought before I took drugs, 'cos when I first took what I took, the first thing I ever took - well, I smoked a little bit of blow but the first - I went out with my friend and we was gonna go to this rave, and it was a typical situation, maybe like stereotype situation: "oh, go on, go on", and I'm standing there, you know, really sort of like "no, no"; and one reason was financially 'cos I wouldn't afford it, it was fifteen pounds. And I was going "no, no, no, I don't want one now", but I was - mainly it was 'cos I couldn't afford it, but secondly I was frightened because... scared what it was gonna do it to you, 'cos you see these images on telly and everything; they do affect you, the media and these - these advertisements, they do in a way are effective, 'cos they do make you think that's what's gonna happen to you. So I - I was going "no", I said "no" for about half an hour, it was a typical situation of just saying "no", so I kept saying "no, no, no" and in the end, you know like my best friend, who they say on the television isn't really your best friend because she just persuaded you to take drugs - you know, like, so - my not very good friend, 'cos I think it's my friend, persuaded me in there, and I said "alright then". But 'cos I didn't have the money my "good friend" lent me the money to buy it, you know. And we went to this rave. In the end we didn't even take it because we got there and it wasn't very good, it was one inside this building, and it wasn't very good; and about three o'clock in the morning and we still thought "well it's not worth taking it now", so we didn't, we went home. And the next weekend was my brother's party, you know, like he's married and everything, and everyone

else there was totally straight, you know, like he's got kids and everything, so much older than me; and I took it then. And at first I was - I only took half, 'cos I had a kind of image that I was gonna take it and all of a sudden something was gonna happen to me. So I took half and nothing happened; so I took the other half, and nothing happened. I thought "oh, I don't believe it, I've spent fifteen pounds" - that's all that bothered me, that was all that I was concerned about, was I spent fifteen pound and I didn't get nothing. And I still didn't - I did get something but it's not what I imagined; I imagined -

Tape change.

A: - like disorientating but it - it's sort of like - I can't really describe it, it sort of - it - it affects your brain, so it must be doing your brain - brain in really, 'cos you can really really feel the influence on your brain, it sort of like makes you feel - it makes you - 'cos your brain, like if I hit myself my brain, you know, it sends things to your brain, doesn't it? Well, it affects your brain, you feel completely different in, you know like, like if you dance or something you can't feel - like say if I ran down the road now, I'd get to the end of the road and I'd be puffed, you know, I'd be going (gasp), my legs might hurt or something, I could feel all my bags, but when you're like on an E you can't feel the - your heavy bags, and you can't - so you could run like - that's - that's why it's associated with the dancing, 'cos you could dance all night and not feel it until the next morning when your muscles are killing you and - it - it is - it is bad the next day. You know, like I know it does you harm, but once you've done it you can't - like... something about my friends, when they lecture you they say - they imagine that you wake up in the morning and you wanna have another one, you know, 'cos you feel so bad. But you don't; you feel so bad that you think "I don't ever have - want another one again" -

Q: Right.

A: - but it's not like that. What makes - what makes you have another one is you go to another club and everyone else is having a good time and you wanna have a good time like they're having a good time; and the music makes you want one as well, because the music's really fast and when you take a - an E, it speeds your heart up, and the music's - goes something like a hundred and eighty beats a minute, and if you take an E that's how fast your heart goes. So that's why you really enjoy the music, so that's - like they say the music's got nothing to do with the drugs, but it has; the drugs and the music, the rave music, like even some of it's in the charts, makes your heart wanna go - you know, your heart goes at the same speed as the music so that's why you really really enjoy it. But - you get ripped off a lot of the time. I've been ripped off a couple of times. What they do is they sell you just as aspirin or something. You know, like, unless you're not - I haven't actually done it myself, it's where you've give the money to someone, one of your friends, and they've gone off and they've gone and bought something, and what they give you - have you ever - Pro-plus?

Q: Yeah.

A: - those things you take. Well, they're little round yellow tablets and if you've not bought one before, then people think they are and so you just - you think how much money people selling drugs are making, but you think how much money people that are selling just -

Q: Yeah, just...

A: I know - I know it is bad. But then like I say you know - even though I know the risks about things it don't stop me from doing them. But I know I'm not just the same, I know I'm not just the same as I'm the only person who feels like this, you know, it's - you know, like people I'm with like that as well. So it's -

Q: What about - do you take risks anywhere else, like drink or -

A: No, I don't really like drink really. 'Cos like take drinking... just makes me feel bad really, you know, getting drunk, I don't like getting drunk. Risks - well... yeah, I do I suppose. Taking risks is I suppose - I don't know if you can take risks and it be good; you know, you say "can you take risks?". I'm just thinking - 'cos I have done - I've stole things as well, I've got in trouble with the police and I was shoplifting -

Q: Got caught?

A: Yeah, got caught. But I'm trying to think of saying "I've done that", but I'm trying to think if you can take risks in your life and it be good, do you know what I mean? I've done like drugs, bad - bad sex and crime, that's all risks. Can you take a risk for good?

Q: Well, I suppose you can take risks and sort of chance things to do with - like maybe risky decisions about - about people or something; like "the chances are this person is not that great, but I've got faith in them so I'm gonna go with it" -

A: Yeah.

Q: - or taking a job or -

A: Yeah.

Q: - you know, I don't know; doing something risky, say taking a job abroad that you don't know anything about or -

A: Yeah, I think probably that I wouldn't -

Q: - that could turn out good or it could be a disaster, who knows?

A: ... someone said to me "oh come to America with me", you know like, "I know you haven't got no money, I'll get the air fare, we'll just go over there and we'll get a job somewhere, you know, working in a cafe or something", I'd say "no", 'cos - d'you know what I mean, that's too risky to me.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. Or like if - I couldn't just leave my job, you know, 'cos I, you know, I need the money, and that's all I'm worried - thinking about at the moment, is the money, you know like I wouldn't just - you know like I was saying I was getting really - I was getting really down because I didn't like what I was doing 'cos it was too menial for me? - well, I think that - I was thinking of leaving but I didn't have the guts to. I kept thinking - I really hated myself 'cos I wanted to just get up and walk out, and I thought to myself, God, when I was at college, if you didn't wanna do something, you didn't, you know? If teacher said to you - well, teacher wouldn't anyway, it was different, but at school like - I was very rebellious at school; if a teacher said do something and I didn't wanna do it, I wouldn't. You know, I was - I was very rebellious; whereas at college it was a bit more freer, but still at the same time if a teacher'd said something or you didn't fancy going back to your lesson, you know, you was all down the pub, you know. You didn't wanna go back, you didn't go back. Then all of a sudden I'm at work and I have to do things and I do, and I sometimes think "oh, God, I'm only eighteen, why am I - why am I working here if I, you know, I wanna go and leave?". But I can't, you know, I -

Q: On the other hand, you've kind of risked getting pregnant and that may have -

A: - affect my whole -

Q: - messed up your finances at work, 'cos you couldn't keep your job and that -

A: I know. I don't know why those things are different, I don't know.

Q: 'Cos what sort of - if you had to describe yourself, what sort of person would you say you were?

A: Oh, that's what - my sister was asking me yesterday; she had to fill in something for school and it said "describe what kind of personality you've got"; my mum was going "oh, you're boisterous, PAM", and I was going... you know, she was going "well, what am I?" and I couldn't describe it, and I can't describe myself either... It's not easy. If you was given loads of things you could tick them, you could tick them, but even then you're still not being truthful... I'm honest, I think. No, I don't know, I say I'm honest, but other times I'm not, other times I lie; I do lie, do lie sometimes.

Q: You're shy, confident - ?

A: Yeah, sometimes I'm confident, I think I'm quite confident at the moment, you know, I'm not being that shy; but other times I can be really shy. I don't know if I'm any one thing.

Q: No, 'cos, like you were saying, in a way you didn't have the confidence to ask somebody to use a condom before, but presumably that might have changed. But can you think of a situation where you wouldn't ask somebody -

A: Oh, God, there must be something. I can't think of anything. No, I can't think of anything... Didn't ask for a rise, I meant to ask for a rise and I didn't. They said, "we'll give you a review in July" and I said "oh, alright then". Before I went in there I was gonna go "I want this" (laugh) and I didn't. Sat there and went "okay".

Q: ...

A: I went, "alright, I'll wait til July".

Q: What happened to your dad?

A: Well, it's... My real dad died before I was born [REDACTED].

Q: So you had a dad who was a step-dad?

A: I had a dad - yeah -

[REDACTED]

Q: Yeah.

A: And my mum and dad divorced and we used to go and see him at weekends and everything and my sister - she was too young at the time, she was sort of like eight, nine, ten the first time they split up, and she sort of like wasn't - it didn't really bother her, she'd stay at home with mum and I'd go and see my dad, you know, 'cos I was like thirteen, twelve, thirteen, I was like that kind of age, you know, and I really missed him. And - and then when I was fifteen, my mum got this boyfriend, she'd been going out with him about a year, and she got, like, really eccentric and everything; and she wanted us to go and live with our dad. So we went to live with our dad, and I was... at school taking exams and they had an argument and I - I - no, they didn't have an argument; I went to live with my mum, right, 'cos I missed her. We hadn't lived with her for six months and I really really missed her by this time; and we hadn't seen her much at all in those six months, you know, 'cos there's been like bad arguments when we'd left there. And then like me and my mum made up and I really really missed my mum. So I

- I asked to go and live - no, not to live, I didn't wanna leave, although probably deep down I did, but I was scared to ask my dad; I - I went to stay with my mum for the weekend. My dad said if I went to stay with my mum for the weekend - not live there, I wasn't gonna live there - he said I was never to come back again. So I did, you know, I packed my bags and I went and I haven't seen him since.

Q: That's sad.

A: So - I mean he - he wasn't, it wasn't very - you know, it wasn't as simple as that; like when my mum was fighting for maintenance for me, eventually like about three months before the end of my two year course at college, you know, like it started when I left school, and it was about three months before I left college, finally he got something and - my mum got something and it was five pounds a week. And it wasn't even back-paid. It was five pound a week and that lasted for about three months and then I left college and I got a job.

Q: ...

A: No, so - I got five pound a week. And he - he - like in all the court cases and everything he wasn't nasty about me, he didn't wanna pay me any money you see, but he couldn't say "she's not my daughter", you know like, 'cos legally I am. So he couldn't say that. But you know, he'd say things like I was thick and that - this wasn't like he was sort of talking, this was all written down in the things; he said that I had no intention of going to college. The only reason I was at college was to scrounge money off him. Which at the end of the two years we got five pound off him, so I can't see why that was the only reason I was at college.

Q: Hardly.

A: But I went to - I went to a grammar school and I got my O-levels and everything, but he said - his like testimony, whatever it is, he said that I'd never shown - in all - all my years of childhood I'd never shown any signs of intelligence so there was no reason for me to be at college, you know.

Q: ...

A: All these things, you know. Like what - there was - like - 'cos my mum's like - 'cos like she's [IN HER 50'S] and she's always had like kids and it's not easy for her to get a job. And she like really tries and she's always moving from one job to another, she's done [MENIAL JOBS]. I mean, she's not uneducated - she's got like a degree and [REDACTED]. And like she went to see him one day to ask him, you know, like for some money for me; 'cos he's not - he's not like a millionaire, but he's fairly well off -

Q: What does he do?

A: He's a [SKILLED ROLE], so, you know, he gets quite a bit of money. And he - he said, you know, like before she even asked him he said "if it's anything to do with LUCY", he said, "I don't wanna know". So all those things - there's lots more things, but they did screw me up a bit, you know. I went through a really bad time. And really hated my sister for a long time because he likes her and I hated her, 'cos he liked her and I thought "what's she got that I ain't got?". You know, so - you know, I still get - I think that - that - that all the things that happened about that affect me, my whole, all, everything I do. Do you know what I mean? That's only one part of my life, just my relationship with my dad, but it affects -

Q: - everything -

A: - everything, because I sometimes get really upset and - I dunno, maybe I am just blaming it on it, but I do - just sometimes, like sometimes like I, you know,

like... Saturday night me and NEIL went to a wedding reception; and - 'cos I just can't - I really get upset at any gatherings of family, 'cos I just - just - just - just is, just some gathering of family, you know, I just get really upset, and I got really upset. And I just went out and sat in the car crying. And he come out and he got angry with me 'cos he didn't understand why I was crying. But I just can't handle gatherings of family. I mean, if it was a gathering of college people or a gathering of - of vicars or anything, but a gathering of all family - not my family, it wasn't my family, it was his friend's family, it was his friend who was getting married. But just - you know, just can't, you know, take families. I know they're not my family but ...

Q: Could you ever talk to your mother or father about personal things? - sex and boyfriends -

A: Well, definitely not my dad. Even when he was, you know, like at home and that. But my mum - not really, no. she - she - she like - she's very liberal in that in the end she leaves decisions up to you; but like she - I never told her about losing my virginity. She found out by accident. She heard me and my sister talking one time when we was having our conversation, all - 'cos she was going out, she said she was going out, and we thought she'd gone out but she hadn't and she was in the kitchen, and she heard everything I said. And all of a sudden I heard something in the kitchen and I said, "hasn't mum gone yet?" and PAM said "I thought she had"; I said, "oh, go and see if mum's gone out". So PAM went to the kitchen and she come back, she goes, "no, she's in the kitchen"; I went "oh, no! She must have just -" - 'cos I'd just been talking about losing my virginity. And like - this is only like just before Christmas, but - before I went to [NAME OF COMPANY], but definitely last year sometime, you know, like while I was still at college. So it wasn't that long ago, you know.

Q: Did she say anything?

A: She just - she - she - we went in there, we said "did you hear what we just said, mum?", and she said - she just laughed and said "yeah"; and, you know, I just said, "oh, I didn't wanna tell you 'cos, you know, I was embarrassed" - 'cos like she didn't lose her virginity til she was about twenty-one, to her husband who she married, you know like - you know like, so I didn't wanna tell her 'cos maybe she'd think that I was bad or something. She's - she's liberal in some ways but in other ways she's not, you know? So, like, one ways - some ways like she's liberal but in other ways she's not. Like she didn't want me to go on the pill, not because - she wanted me to do the method way, you know, taking the temperature -

Q: - that's terribly -

A: - and she said that it works, you know, like even though she got pregnant on her honeymoon to her first husband, she said oh, well, the excitement of getting married must have upset her cycle. But she didn't want me to go on the pill because of the health reasons, you know, catching cancer and all those terrible things. I mean, they still - they do have side effects but I don't think the pill's as bad as what it was when it first started. Like she tried the pill and it was like in the sixties or something, and she said that she had really bad bleeding and everything, you know, so I don't think they're quite - they are different -

Q: It's a much lower dose now. They've got it much more...

A: Yeah, yeah. Like I was reading this article about the pill and it said that they - you know they've got all these evidence and surveys and research done into the pill and the cancers and that; and they said a lot of it related to women that had taken the high dosage pill. There isn't really much information on - on women who've taken, for a period of time, this - like the new - the new pill. 'Cos it - you don't really get the cancers until you're in your thirties, you know. So you've got to wait, you know; it must be sort of like around now but you know... Well, no, I don't really talk about sex with her but I think - I don't know -

Q: Did she tell you about things like periods?

A: No, she didn't. I don't know where I found out. She didn't tell us nothing about - I remember - see my mum's so difficult to describe, you know? Some people's parents might - you might not talk about sex with them but they might actually explain a little bit, they might sit down and talk to you about the birds and bees in a really prim and proper way; whereas my mum didn't do any of that, although she's quite liberal in some ways, you know, she seems quite open, but really she's not. I mean I told my sister everything about periods and everything 'cos she didn't know; but I don't know who told me, I think I just - just found out as a process of, you know like, from books and television and your friends.

Q: So you knew when you actually got it what it was?

A: No. Now, see, that - it shows you that I didn't; I used to think babies come through your bum (laugh). I don't know how old I was - it might have been, say, in the first year at secondary school; but I used to think that, you know, babies come out and they had all pooh all over them, you know, I thought it was really horrible (laugh). But - periods, I first had my period a year after I thought I first started them. And - some of the things I'm saying, it sounds like the sort of thing your mum might say thirty years ago, but I - when I had my first period, which wasn't my first period but - I wiped my bum, you know, wiped myself, and there was a little tiny bit of blood; now, the bit of blood must have been about one millimeter, so I might have just had a little scratch, you know, on my bum or something, you know, like and I wiped myself and there was this little tiny bit of blood and it was so, really small. I thought it was my period. And I went and told my mum; I said "mum, I've had my period", and she goes, "oh, I've been saving some" - she'd got these big chunky mattress pads for me, you know -

Q: Oh, yeah.

A: And she got them out the cupboard, you know, and she give me one, and I put one in my knickers, you know; and this was at night time and I went to bed, and in the morning there was nothing on there and I was - for a year I didn't really start my periods, for a year I pretended I was having periods 'cos I felt really embarrassed, 'cos I - I'd said that I'd started my period and it wasn't, I just had a cut on my bottom or something. And so, I know it sounds really silly, but I pretended that I'd got my periods -

Q: She never knew?

A: No, no, I thought - I pretended that I did have it; you know like, 'cos when you first start you're quite irregular anyway, you know, so like every couple of months I might say "oh, I'm on a period", but I wasn't really. And I remember a couple of times, me and my friends... she's the same age as me, we both hadn't started our periods but we both tried to use a tampon, see how they worked; but we couldn't use it, couldn't get it up there, but we tried, you know like, even though

we wasn't even on our periods. And when I did start my periods I still didn't really know that much about them. You - you have to think of these things, otherwise you think you knew all about it then, 'cos you know all about it now and you think you did then, but it was only little incidents like this that make you realise you didn't -

Q: Right.

A: 'Cos I think you're about thirteen when you have a medical at school. And the nurse asks you about periods, you know, "have you started your period?" and you say "yes", and then they say "when was the last time you- " - no, "are they regular?", and I said "yes". She goes "when was the last time you had one?" and I said "I haven't had one for ages, it must be about four weeks now" (laugh); and it was so embarrassing because she said well - and then she went, oh, for about fifteen minutes, just telling me all about periods and that you only have them every four weeks, you know, like, and I said "oh, I haven't had one for ages, about three or four weeks I haven't had one!". And so she sat there and explained to me, you know like, and I felt such an idiot, 'cos I knew that anyway; I'd - I'd heard that before, I had been told that, it wasn't some new information. It's just that maybe I - I didn't realise that. I dunno, she was telling me it and every time - all she was telling me I'd heard before. But you still - I still - you know, like I'd said what I said and I felt such an idiot. You know, my mum's sitting there, 'cos your mum's sitting there, you know, so God knows what she was thinking. But she'd not told me, so it proves that she hadn't told me because I didn't know those things.

Q: Yeah.

A: It's only little things like that that remind you what you didn't know. I can't think of anything else though.

Q: And when you started going out with NEIL or anyone, did she ever say anything like "are you using contraception?" or show any kind of -

A: No, no, she never said anything. I think she just assumes that I know. Like when my brother was sixteen - no, before she was - before my brother was sixteen - this is her favourite son, she's got a favourite son... spoilt rotten, he knows he was, he don't even pretend he wasn't; he - she - when he was fifteen and he started going out with girls, she bought him his condoms 'cos she didn't want him to get another girl pregnant. That's a really responsible thing to do, but she never did nothing for me. I think she either just assumed that I did know or maybe she was too embarrassed to tell me, you know, or just think - thought I didn't do it -

Q: Yeah.

A: - you know, maybe she just assumed that I didn't do it. 'Cos I remember my brother, you know, like she used to buy him his condoms for his girlfriends. She didn't - you know, I mean, she didn't wanna rely on him, she'll say to him, you know, "you make sure you use a condom". But then even saying that, he still got his girlfriend pregnant when she was seventeen and they got married. So - they're still married at the moment, still married. So like even - even though she - she did try and she did but he still got - 'cos he didn't use - at the time, I was about, he was eighteen, so I was fourteen, thirteen, fourteen, he was - yeah, I was about that age - and I remember them all saying, 'cos my mum was saying - she was really shocked, you know, 'cos I remember being in the living room

when my brother went and told my mum that, you know, ERIN was pregnant and they were gonna get married. And like my mum was really shocked, and he - everyone was sort of, like sort of, there was sort of like, everyone knew that, you know, condoms, use condoms, you know, so why was - you know, 'cos she was Catholic, you know; and, you know, like she come from a really strict family and she wasn't on the pill. And, you know, like - my brother told my mum that he had used a condom, you know like, and I heard that as well, I heard him saying that, you know like, you know, "and it burst" or something and that... you know, so like that made my mum feel better, you know like, that it wasn't through carelessness, you know, it was just through an accident. You know, and I remember thinking that for years, and my brother and his wife ERIN told me that they didn't use them; they hardly ever use, you know, they might have used them a couple of times at the beginning, so I mean it's not just me, you know, there's something - and that's how she got pregnant -

Q: Right.

A: - she was unlucky; or lucky, as the fact is, 'cos she wanted to get married. So, you know, she - whereas, you know, I didn't - don't wanna get pregnant but I still take the risks, she took the risks and wanted to get pregnant. Because my brother was doing his A-levels and he wanted to go to university when he got his, and she wanted to get engaged, and he said "well, we can't, 'cos I'm going to university", and so it suited her, you know like, to get pregnant; 'cos she was - even if he'd gone - she agreed to him going to university, she wanted to get engaged before he went. So like, you know, it - that's all she - she was on a YTS, she didn't have anything to do, it suited her really whereas it wouldn't really suit me.

Q: And did he go to university?

A: No. He had to give it up, didn't he. And he didn't even get a good job. He got three A-levels -[REDACTED], and he - he ended up working on - he was on the dole for a little while and he ended up working as - in this, you know, work in a - [SKILLED TRADE]. [REDACTED], and - you know like, he's twenty-three now - no, twenty-two now, and he - you know, like I'm like working up in London now and I've got promoted, and he wishes now that he'd gone into office work, you know like, 'cos he likes a stable and, you know like, moneyed job, you know like, and - and, you know like, he sort of like missed the boat really. He says he wish he - he could have gone straight up to London with his three A-levels, you know, but he didn't. [REDACTED]-

Q: No, it's not..

A: - [REDACTED]...

Q: So - does your mother let you and NEIL stay and sleep -

A: Yeah.

Q: - at home now?

A: Yeah, she does.

Q: But she's not -

A: But it's not very comfortable 'cos we've only got a single bed, you see, 'cos mine's just a small room. My sister - sister's got this big room though, but there's no double bed in there anyway. I've just got a small room, but it's very uncomfortable, so that's the only reason why I don't really like it anyway, 'cos it's small, you know. No, she don't mind, don't mind at all.

Q: Can you think of anything else about your kind of relationships that - that would be important, or you think is important?

A: No, I can't really. Sometimes I mean - you know someone asks a question you'd be like - need to be stimulated, don't you really, to -

Q: Yeah, something to - to answer -

A: ... Yeah. No, I - I imagined to come here, you'd have a questionnaire, you'd be asking these questions, I'd be going... unstructured... waffle on.

Q: Well, I've got an idea of what I want to ask you but -

A: Yeah.

Q: - I kind of know it off by heart.

A: Yeah.

Q: And I do have your questionnaire in my other bag.

A: Mm. I think you put - was one of the questions "what do you do with your boyfriend in your spare time?" or something, or - and - and you put on there, you know, "who do you spend most of your spare time with?" and I - I put on my own, 'cos I feel like I do.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, 'cos you said put with your friends and that, but I don't, I - I'm all day at work and then when I come home I'm just at home with the family, you know like, that's - you know like I don't go out much until the weekends. The weekend, you know, I arrange either to go out with my friends or I go out with NEIL, but I don't - I don't come from like a social background where I've got a gang of friends and every weekend and every night after work, guaranteed, your gang of friends would be there available to go around with; 'cos where I went to school was like ten miles from my house, so like I'd have to travel every day to school, then after school you'd go home so you didn't know anyone locally. You only knew people that went to your school, and all them didn't live local to school, 'cos it was like - this like girls' grammar school and you all had to travel to it, so everyone lived miles away from each other and like the only girl that I know who went to school, she lives like about five miles from me, and we still see each other but you have to arrange to meet each other. So like we were gonna go out - she phoned me up to say going out tonight, but I haven't got any money; like - and I said I haven't got any money to go out. It wouldn't - this wouldn't have made no difference 'cos it would have been late tonight, you know; and I said, "I haven't got any money". But that's what it is, it's not like you go home and you go round your friend's house, you know like -

Q: Yeah.

A: - it's sort of like you have to arrange to go out.

Q: ...

A: And 'cos I've got - I've got quite a big family, you know, sort of fairly big, I've got [BROTHERS AND A SISTER] and that, and - my brother lives a couple of miles away, one of them; the other one lives just down the road. If I wanted to just go around there -

Q: Yeah...

A: But I - I do feel like I spend most of the time on my own. Maybe I don't but I feel like I do. You know, I can't - can't really count being at work. I just go home really. Don't feel like there's much time left in the day 'cos I get home at seven -

well, gone seven, get home about quarter past seven, and, you know like, it's only - about ten o'clock I wanna go asleep, you know. But -

Q: One thing I did forget to ask you was do you have a - an idea, like an image of who you think is most likely to catch AIDS, things like that?

A: (pause) No, I don't think I do really. I do know it can happen to anyone. Male, I think, definitely male; any - any famous people in the media, they've all been male, I can't think of one female. Has there been any females?

Q: Not that I've heard.

A: It's all actors and people in the media, you know, like the - the arts world and the, you know like, a famous photographer here, or a pop singer or an actor, they're all male so - I do kind of imagine it to be male really. And in their thirties, you know. I suppose I do have an image; I can't imagine - someone said this - like someone - if I wasn't me and someone said that I'd got AIDS I'd - I probably would go like that, you know, whereas if someone said "that bloke there" and he was like thirty one, and he didn't necessarily look unrespectable, he looked fairly respectable, and they said he'd got AIDS then I'd believe them. But there's - where NEIL lives in [NAME OF TOWN], this boy committed suicide; about two weeks ago he drove off the [NAME OF TOWN] sea - into the sea, 'cos he'd got AIDS. So - and he was male. He was twenty - twenty-four, he was; and it's like... really - it's the closest I've ever come to it, even though that's not close at all, I don't know this boy but NEIL knows him. But he was like quite, you know - it's bad really 'cos he was like a local lad, so local girls have slept with him, and so everyone's sort of like, you know, "who slept with him?", you know, everyone wants to know and it's - you know, everyone's gonna find out and it's gonna be well know, you know, who - who - who - who him women were. So, you know, it's just a process of -

Q: And then what will happen to them?

A: Yeah. So it's - that's the closest I've ever come to it. I've not come closer - before that was the television, newspapers. I suppose that's when it would really make you realise, when it comes closer than that to you. Not that you want it to come any closer.