

LJH37 31.1.1990

Lisa

A: ... 'cos I thought it would be interesting. I also wanted to know what it was all about.

Q:...

A: No, no, it's fine.

Q: Oh, look, I've got a little note to me - pay your fare. Don't let me forget. That usually slips my mind. Well, one of the main things that we are interested in in the research is to find out how young women feel, what they think about their relationships. And I suppose the first question to ask you is what's the most important relationship for you at the moment, that you have?

A: I don't know. I think I'm in a limbo at the moment.

Q: Yeah?

A: I think probably my mum actually.

Q: What's good about that relationship?

A: Well, it's just really started to open up. We've never been like the ideal mother/daughter relationship; we've not really fought, but we've not really talked either. But since I left home I noticed each time I go back we talk about more different things and more personal things about each other's lives, like I've grown up and on an even keel with her, and - well, and it's very difficult to say though, because something - New Year's Eve I had rather a nasty experience with a lover of mine, so I - initially I turned to a friend who I used to live with last summer, then I turned - then I phoned up my mum; then I spoke to the people I work with and live with, and then I became really good friends with a ... woman who was around that night to like look after me. So, sort of -

Q: What was that, what's the -

A: Well, the thing was he beat me up. So -

Q: Is it somebody that you -

A: Well, yeah, it was quite - six months. So that was a shock but I think the reason I turned to my friend first rather than my mum was because she knew RON and also we talked about intimate things anyway while we were living together, but then I found it was my mum who I kept on wanting to phone up and say, "this is happening, this is happening". And it was - and I think - I just started to realise just how important she is.

Q: Mm. Well, it's good that you can talk to her. It's good to have somebody to talk to anyway.

A: At last. Yes, yeah, 'cos I - I mean maybe if something similar had happened when I was still living at home I would have found it far more difficult to talk to her about. It might have helped that I did the talking over the phone initially anyway. But, yeah.

Q: Did you - I mean, how did you feel when it happened to you, I mean -

A: Oh, gosh. Well, there's lots of things. I haven't really sorted it out yet. When RON hit me, it was a complete shock. I thought he'd never hit me. I was very, very, sad, 'cos I mean it meant the end of our relationship, which is something else I wasn't ready for. I was very, very, upset because of the implications that he'd hit me, meant that he didn't like me as much as I thought he did. And I sort of ranged from grief to anger for the next couple of weeks. And I also fluctuated from feelings of guilt - "oh, it shouldn't have happened, I should have stopped it or I should have got away, I shouldn't have gone there to see him" to - to "he's got no right to touch me, he shouldn't get away with this",

you know. And it was very - I'm still not really in control of it because I still didn't - I still feel that - I still want to like continue a relationship with him, but I know I mustn't for my own sake.

Q: Yeah.

A: So it's -

Q: You say it was a complete shock when he did it, I mean - he hadn't been violent, or you hadn't felt that he had the possibility for being violent before?

A: Well, it's complicated. When I first met him, it was - it was like - I'd lived in London for three days. I was a volunteer working with disabled people, and the set-up was that three volunteers working for this couple lived in a flat, two female, one male and - on [NORTH LONDON HOUSING ESTATE]. Now, I didn't have a set of keys when I first went there, so the other volunteers said, "we'll let you in when you get in from work", 'cos it was quite late hours. And I got in from work at about half past eleven at night. And the volunteers didn't let me in, and I knew that one of them was asleep, it turned out, one of them was pissed 'cos he was an alcoholic, and I thought they were at a party which they were going to earlier in the evening; I thought "they haven't come back. Oh, no! I'm all alone on [NORTH LONDON HOUSING ESTATE], I don't know what I'm doing!". And RON sort of came along and said "oh, are you -" - he was my neighbour, "are you the new volunteer?"; I said "yes", and like "come in for a coffee". And like we really hit it off. And I thought, gosh, this is really nice, this is a nice man, I'd like to be friends with this man. And he was a residential [CARING ROLE], so I thought he's probably alright. And the next thing I heard about him - I was telling the other volunteers, not the ones I live with but other volunteers... - said "oh, God, no, look out for him, he beat up this woman". I thought, "Oh, my God, lucky escape; never go round there again, I won't go out for the drinks he suggested", you know. And so, I thought "dodgy customer here". And then I got to know the woman who he had allegedly beaten up; she said, "he didn't beat me up. We were having a fight and he hit me". And so, I believed her. And I thought, oh, he is alright, after all. You know, and -

Q: Yeah.

A: - so -

Q: ... about it anyway.

A: - so I thought he was alright, and he phoned. I never thought he'd ever hit me, 'cos I just - it wasn't - it's not something you expect, especially from somebody you feel quite strongly for. And when it actually happened it was when we were in bed - making love, I thought. And it was just a complete shock. As I said, it was New Year's Eve, so it's - I was a bit tipsy anyway. So - it was very, very, very surprising, and I didn't do anything to like stop him hitting me, 'cos I thought it will stop, 'cos I didn't really believe it had started; 'cos it was so surprising. So that's -

Q: And it did stop - and it did stop?

A: Oh, yes, yes, it stopped. My nose bled, you see, and he stopped; and my face was covered in blood. That's the phrase the police chose to use in my statement. And I know that my face was covered in blood because I ran out of this house and two of the volunteers who were living in my old house, although I was no longer a volunteer then, I knew; so - 'cos I'd worked with them for a bit. So, I knocked on the door and - it wasn't them, it was the other volunteer who'd come to replace me, but she let me in and like looked after me then, so -

Q: That was the one who you'd been living with before, was it, or -

A: No, no, no, sorry. She replaced me -

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: - and so we'd like met for a quarter of an hour or something.

Q: Yeah. But you say that you went to the police. You decided that you'd go to the police.

A: Yes. Yeah. I didn't initially. 'Cos we didn't know what to do because it was like - he'd assaulted me but all he'd done was like give me black eyes and a bruised nose and cut me a little bit and bit me, and it doesn't sort of seem an awful lot when you hear about rape and stuff; and also -

Q: But it isn't pleasant, is it.

A: No, no, it wasn't. And so, we weren't quite sure whether I also had anything to say against him, because I'd gone there and I was a bit drunk and I wasn't in control of the situation. I was also very confused about what had happened, and I couldn't really piece it all together... or anything because of the circumstances. So I didn't initially know what to do, and it wasn't till I was talking to - well, New Year's Day in the morning, two of my flat mates - sorry, I've started from the middle; from the house where I used to live, I called my flat mates, LOUIS and VICKY, and they came and picked me up 'cos LOUIS' got a car, and took me home, and told me to go to bed. I went to bed. Woke up in the morning and ROSS, who's like my best friend who I still live with, had been on night duty the night before. He came in that morning. He didn't say - he obviously could see something was wrong with my face, and also the fact I was back quite early from RON's house; and eventually I told him it had happened and he said - and I said "I don't know what to do" - and ROSS said, "go to the police. It's assault".; so I said, "yes, I'll go to the police. It's assault". So, I went to the police and I went through the whole bit, and then it wasn't till afterwards I thought about, well, what does this mean? This means our relationship's definitely ended 'cos I can't communicate with him anymore, and he'll be arrested, and his job will be jeopardised, and - I start feeling guilty again. (laugh)

Q: But it's he who should feel guilty.

A: No. I mean, it's stupid. I mean, he hasn't been to court yet. It's the [REDACTED]. He's pleading guilty. And he's got - he was suspended from his job, from what I can gather, for about three weeks, and now he's back at work again. So, it's not gonna really affect his life at all, the fact he hit me. And I would imagine at court he's only gonna get a small fine or something, not - nothing very significant; and I feel - I feel relieved in a way that - it's weird - I feel relieved that he hasn't lost his job altogether, because his job is something he's very, very good at. He works with [VULNERABLE PEOPLE]; and he's excellent at his job. And so, it's good because it's like a very normal part of his life even though he's some kind of funny sadistic male -

Q: Yeah.

A: - and at the same time I feel a bit annoyed because he's virtually got away with it, and it's not unless he hits another woman, and they press charges, that he's ever gonna -

Q: Yeah.

A: - be punished, so it's -

Q: Very conflicting feelings you have about it. You were saying before about not being sure that you wanted to stop the relationship anyway, I mean - you still have feelings for him as well as kind of -

A: Yeah. Yeah, I mean he was like - he was a person who - he was - because last summer... the other volunteer, the other female volunteer, left very quickly, 'cos she was on to do - it was the end of her time period - there was no replacement for her, and the other - the male volunteer was an alcoholic; and I was completely alone in London, if you like, and when I got back into talking to RON again and got to know him a bit more, that's when the relationship sort of developed. And he was the person I knew in London and he was the person who told me where to go and - we went to Alexandra Palace and places like that together 'cos we were living in Tottenham, and, you know, he was like - he was my friend; and so that's - I mean there was one point in November, he was the only consistent person since I've been in London who was there - well, from day three, and was still there, because I'd stopped being a volunteer and I'd had to find my own flat mates and flat and everything. And -

Q: So it was continuity for you. But you enjoyed the relationship -

A: Yes, we did. And I was in love with him, I suppose.

Q: Yeah.

A: Though that was something which I didn't really realise until November (laugh). We met in July. Oh, dear.

Q: It might take a bit of time to... realise that, or to grow -

A: Yeah, that's right. Yeah.

Q: What - what made you decide to turn that into a sexual relationship? - or did you - I mean -

A: It wasn't really - it wasn't a conscious decision. I think it's because the first few times we spent together on our own he was filling me with compliments about me, my personality and my body and things like that. So, I decided to just - play it cool and - and take him as a lover (laugh). Tried to do it without emotion. 'Cos - oh, dear - I mean if you're interested - I mean, weird relationships I've had last year, I just - when I moved to London I'd just finished my A-levels. And the volunteer placement came up and I intended to start in August and I started right at the beginning of July, straight after my A-levels - to get away from [COUNTY], because my boyfriend of up to June had just had a nervous breakdown, and I felt - and had to go to a hospital and everything - and I felt - had felt incredibly guilty about that. And when he came out of hospital, he didn't want to resume our relationship and I was heartbroken about that, you know, still feel that, although we're still talking to each other as friends. And so, I, like, ran away to London. And so my firm resolution when I went to London was "I will not get involved with anybody in a deep relationship, in a deep way, ever again; and if I do sleep with anyone it'll be because they're good (laugh), and not because I like them". And that was my resolution. But it doesn't work that way, you become emotionally involved with people, especially if they're - if they're a significant other in your life.

Q: Yeah, yeah. Would you like to tell me about that - the other relationship?

A: The one earlier on - well, that was sweethearts. We met just after our O-levels, fell in love - our relationship was forged on common interests including the fact that we were both Christians. It was very "this is it, this is the real thing", right the way through.

Q: Was he about your age?

A: Yeah, yeah, he was the same age as me. We were both virgins. We had sex for the first time together, for the first time with each other, and it was all mega and amazing. Although physically a flop, it was all incredibly amazing. And -

Q: - but the emotion, the idea of it -

A: Yeah. And we were incredibly happy and dependent on each other for about a year, and then - I mean, oh, dear - it was very, very strange because I had to move. When we went back to school again, I'd had to change schools in order to go to sixth form, and he remained at his school, but it was different schools. And we lived in a rural area. And so after this summer, by which we'd spent every single waking hour together, we were suddenly plunged into weekends-only, of which Sunday afternoons were the major part because we had homework and things to do, and also - I found it very, very difficult to form friendships at school, and also I felt I was failing at school, because I was finding everything very, very difficult all at once; and so I became very dependent on him and his circle of friends before I evolved my own, and then I did. And then there was a group of friends we had that we shared from church, and he was much closer to them - 'cos I went to the church he went to; I changed from my village church to the church that his dad was rector over, just so we could spend Sunday together really; and so he - he was seeing these people at school, after school, and - whereas, because I lived six, seven miles away, he could only see me at weekends. So I got incredibly jealous over the amount of time I phoned and he wasn't in and - and he was doing this and he was doing that, and I was stuck because I was ten miles away from my friends and six miles away from him and, you know, it was like - I became very, very jealous over it, and then he was an upsetting person anyway, he let me down all the time. So it, like, screwed me up. And instead of dissolving the relationship when it started to fall apart - 'cos he started forgetting my birthday and things like that: ah! - I still feel sore over that one (laugh) - instead of dissolving it we just sort of clung onto each other. And then about - I suppose from January last year - was when he started going a bit funny in his head, but nobody really knew what was happening because it didn't come to crisis point till June. But then the relationship really was on the downward trend and I spent - remember spending my Easter holidays in tears and most of the half-term in tears. Instead of concentrating on my A-levels I was concentrating on DANIEL. That was -

Q: So what was happening?

A: It was a shitty relationship. I mean, he was - he was - we both lost interest in each other really. But he wasn't - I wasn't setting myself, but he wasn't setting himself really, or telling me I was free or - or - from - it was heartbreaking because from going - being incredibly in love - we were both saying, "well, I don't know whether I still love you or not" at regular intervals to each other, and making up again, and - I -

Q: You said before that the - when you first had sex it wasn't very successful physically. Did it - did it become more successful?

A: Yes, it did. We got really good (laugh). Yeah, no, it was actually. 'Cos we were completely fascinated by sex apart from anything else, because it was so new and interesting. And so from going like - neither of us really knew what we were doing; I mean, as you can imagine, before - before we actually tried the sexual act we'd been playing with each other, touching each other and getting to know each other's responses anyway; the first time we had sex was a flop in the literal sense, and the first time we had sex was like not the first time we'd attempted it. And - but once the initial

de-virginised thing had happened we felt we were able to like experiment and we got very, very good at responding to each other. And it's - I mean - it's quite weird because last summer, and I was like saying oh, I'm independent now, I've got my own place in London and I've formed a relationship separate from you and I'm having a wonderful time - 'cos I was - and I was really happy and I was really sure of myself, and DANIEL's life on the other hand had crumbled, because he came out of hospital, did our A-levels - he managed to do his; he scraped through his. And then I wasn't there for him for the first time. 'Cos, I mean, our relationship was very unequal. It was me - me wanting him to be there and him never being available, and suddenly it was the other way round. I was no longer there and when he phoned up, I wasn't particularly interested, and I wasn't writing to him, 'cos I felt "you bastard! I'm not interested". So, I mean he's still doing it to an extent. He was contacting me, came down to visit me in London, and I didn't tell him I was sleeping with RON - came down to visit me twice before he went away to university, and - which was only a matter of about six or seven weeks, so that's quite a lot - and he - at first, when he came down the first time, it was just a visit. When he came down the second time we went to go to bed with each other and I couldn't be bothered; but I was quite surprised by how sensitive he was to me, especially in contrast to RON who, like, obviously didn't know me quite as well. So, then I slept downstairs after that first night, separately from him, 'cos I couldn't stand him being in my space.

Q: When you'd sort of emotionally moved on to RON.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Although he could still physically -

A: Yeah -

Q: - manage it better.

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

Q: It's interesting, that, isn't it?

A: Well, I was fascinated... I mean, fascinated. I mean, I have been really experimenting with men basically, which isn't particularly sensible, given the current climate -

Q: I was gonna ask you about that, about - were you taking any precautions?

A: Yeah, well - when I went to - when I first moved to London I was on the pill, left over from DANIEL; and I quickly decided that I didn't want to stay on the pill any more, even though it was a continual sexual relationship, because that just meant I was more likely not to use condoms. 'Cos your immediate fear is pregnancy, 'cos it's one you've lived with the possibility of all the way through. And - I mean, it's quite funny, 'cos it did occur to me, "is RON safe?", and then I felt I'll never know really, because I don't know how many relationships he's had and I wasn't gonna make him take an AIDS test because I was, like, definitely in awe of him, and - and much younger, he was twenty-five - so I never asked. But he used condoms anyway, which like instilled confidence in me: 'cos he used condoms without me mentioning it, he just reached for them and there they were -

Q: - right from the beginning -

A: Yes, very handy. Yeah, so -

Q: And how did you feel about the condoms?

A: Well, I used them with DANIEL anyway initially. I mean, the pill was something I wasn't too keen on for a long time, but it was just safer in terms of pregnancy.

Q: Yeah.

A: So -

Q: So you were quite used to condoms.

A: Yeah. And then I went and had a diaphragm fitted, to combat the other... (laugh) Having had condom failures in the past and no longer wanting to trust a condom. So - yeah, so RON was like - he was using the condoms anyway. And then he asked me about my sexual history and I sort of like explained it, and he was very, very surprised that it was only DANIEL; and they sort of disappeared for a little time, and there was (?)no gap between me not being on the pill, but I thought it would be okay anyway, 'cos I assumed he must know he's safe 'cos he's like using condoms; and anyway I didn't really want to think about it, 'cos you don't want to if something is - if you want - want the relationship, I didn't wanna, like, fuck around with questions.

Q: Yeah.

A: And that's just how it is. And then I did something really silly; 'cos as soon as I went off the pill, the condoms came back, and... I can't imagine why I did it - well, I do know why I did this - and then I didn't - I was having a sexual relationship with LEE who lived with RON (laugh) from about September. And that relationship started - that was quite - started because I went round to see RON one evening; RON was sitting drinking. I thought (sigh). LEE was there, so me and LEE were talking, chatting and got on really well. And RON sort of said "right, I'm going to bed now", clomped around the flat saying "I'm going to bed now" at regular intervals - hint, hint, hint, LISA - so: "night" - sat there talking to LEE. And we got on really well. And then a few nights later - I met LEE a few times afterwards, and - round at RON's house - and RON was in the pub, and - and by then I was like getting on about him so well, and, oh God, you know, RON snored all through the night; I couldn't stop him, I was like moaning about things like that or "he nicked all the pillows or all the duvet!" - we were like talking about things like that and laughing about RON. And anyway one - LEE quite misinterpreted this because I wasn't talking to LEE like that with the intention of maybe it would be better, but he said - he said "why don't you go to bed with me then?". I said, "yeah, why not?", so I did (laugh). And that was just - I mean, I said I liked LEE, but I wasn't terribly attracted or anything, but I just liked the novelty of it because like RON was asleep downstairs. And I liked it, 'cos I felt really in control.

Q: Yeah.

A: And - and we didn't - didn't use anything with LEE at all, completely stupid. I laid afterwards and I thought, "my God, I could be pregnant, I could have contracted HIV. Oh, well"; and LEE goes, "what's the matter?". I said, "well, we didn't use anything"; and he goes "no. Are you worried?", and I said "no, no, I'm not worried" and lay there and worried about it. And then a few days later I said, "LEE, how do I know you're safe?" and he said "oh, 'cos I've had an AIDS test, LISA, and I assume you're safe". And I said, "well, you only know I'm safe if RON's safe", and he goes "right, well RON's my friend, so I assume he's safe too". So anyway, that was quite -

Q: Yeah. Did you - I mean did you repeat the sexual -

A: - exercise with LEE?

Q: Yeah.

A: Not while RON was around. And I mean the thing about LEE is that he's a better lover than RON was. So - but I hadn't really got any feelings for him except that he's a

really nice person. I mean now I'm like - and he's a lot older, he's twenty-eight; so (laugh) I mean now, because RON isn't and LEE is, and also LEE's a decent person, and when he found out that RON had hit me he moved out of RON's flat and I thought, well, solidarity here. And he was very, very behind me. And so now I think he's - well, I really admire him really 'cos he's so straight and grown up and things.

Q: So, you have - are considering a relationship with him as a friend?

A: Yeah, well, as a sort of lover, because we agreed that we were going to have a platonic relationship, and then last time I was round at his place something happened, and we ended up in bed. So never mind. Well, you can't start from the middle with a platonic relationship, if you've slept with each other before. And it was nice, so we slept with each other again. And -

Q: Using any contraception this time?

A: Yes, yeah; in retrospect we thought it might be a good idea. That's quite - that was quite bizarre. So I've had quite an interesting year. And I can't really work out what all these relationships are about, flinging myself from one man to another.

Q: Is that the way you feel that it was?

A: Oh, I don't know. 'Cos - I mean, to make a moral judgement I could say I've been acting stupidly and loosely and ... all my promises to myself about no sex without love, and - obviously doesn't work because I went - I had a form of sexual relationship with RON without any love on his part, and ended up with me being involved with him and him obviously not treating me with the respect I deserved. So -

Q: You were talking a bit about control, that you feel with LEE and especially in that incident where RON was actually in the flat, that you were in control.

A: Yeah, 'cos it was my - it was my - well, I then had the use of two lovers, was the way I told myself was how it was; and they continued to - I mean the thing was, right, RON didn't really care if I was sleeping with LEE -

Q: He knew about it?

A: He didn't the first time. I snuck out first thing in the morning. He didn't know the second time because he was on night shift. The third time he knew because LEE had got to go to work at half past seven in the morning, 'cos LEE left me the housekeys. And so LEE didn't have the housekeys when he came in and so when RON came in, LEE was waiting for me to give him the housekeys and I wasn't there 'cos I was at work, and so LEE was outside and ended up waiting for RON, and RON said "why haven't you got your keys?" and LEE said "because LISA's got them", and RON said "why's LISA got them?" - "'cos she stayed the night". And RON - this is what LEE said - and RON said, "what did she stay the night for?", and LEE said, "well, what do you think she -" and went in (laugh). And RON didn't care, so I thought, right, RON doesn't care, I'm gonna carry on sleeping with LEE, 'cos he was nice and - but I was continuing to sleep with RON because I was - I still felt strongly, strongly towards him and like we'd spend evenings when the three of us or - RICK who also lived there - four of us would be together, on our own or with other people, and the awkward moment when it was time to go to bed - well, (?)either duck out gracefully and go home, ... sit there and see who's left and go to bed with them, or what. And it a bit - I mean, was ROSS, who's my friend, said "God, it looks to me like you just go round there for one thing and one thing only" (laugh). And - 'cos it looked like every time I was going round there, I was ending up with a different person. But I mean sometimes I'd just go home, but usually what would

happen was LEE would defer to RON. It sounds really - I mean it does sound really - it is really funny, it's very funny and -

Q: How did you feel in that situation where - I mean especially if he was - it wasn't your decision -

A: Well I didn't used to discuss it. No, no. I didn't used to discuss it. LEE would say "I'm tired, I'm going to bed", I'd get up to go and RON would say, "LISA, would you like to stay?" and that's how it would happen. Or, "LISA, I would like you to stay" - "Of course, your wish is my command"!

Q: Did he know how you felt about him?

A: No. Well, I don't know because - oh, dear, RON's really screwed up anyway, and I'd always known that and that was part of the appeal, that he's everybody's kid brother, and - I don't think he'd really thought about my feelings towards him. He kept - he said to me a few times "I don't understand why you come round here", and I said "well, it's because I like you a lot", and he said "no, no, it must be something else. It must be the squalor, or it must be the [HOUSING ESTATE], or it must be my bed". I said, yeah, it's your bed, it's three-quarter size and mine's only single, and like laugh it off and -

Q: Why do you think you did go round there?

A: Because I mean - the reason I was going round there was because I wanted RON to like me. So, I really, really, really felt strongly towards him. And he wasn't really giving me a lot back except if I went round there and - a certain time in the evening, we'd probably go out somewhere, and then we'd come in, and then I'd probably get to stay the night, which was a way of being with him. As I said, RON wasn't like - he didn't do a lot for me as a lover, but it was a way of staying with him and having his affection. That was a way of doing it. And that was just bad because what happened was, I stopped - I was like two different people with - I was - with myself and RON and then later, with RON and LEE, just to make it easy to explain. I'd spend an evening maybe with LEE and we'd be chatting and laughing and joking and stuff, and if we wound up by going back to RON's flat, then - and RON was around, I'd become immediately subdued and quiet and - it was because RON wasn't a very affectionate person and - we talked about that quite a lot, a long time after I had changed myself to adapt to it. But, like, after we'd had sex a few times - well, the first time, the second time and the third time, each time, you know, I wanted to cuddle up with him and go to sleep, and I'd like cuddle up and then after a little while he'd turn over and light up a cigarette or something. And I felt very, very rejected but didn't dare say anything about it. And we were discussing this, in December actually, I finally plucked - 'cos I was no longer living next door, I suppose - and I wasn't seeing as much of him and had the chance to think about it. And I asked him about why he wasn't affectionate, or did he - I said "you're not affectionate, are you?" and he goes "no, no, I have problems with affection"; and then he said to me, "you're nothing like as affectionate as you used to be". And I had changed, because I found that if I did initiate a cuddle it was usually rejected. So, I stopped initiating the cuddles.

Q: Yeah.

A: It's like say - all part of the "I'm not involved in this; you're not involved with me, I'm not involved with him". That's - I mean, that's why I didn't really know that I was in love with him because I was telling myself I wasn't.

Q: Now you think that you were - what happened in November...

A: Well, I was talking about it with ROSS -

Q: Yeah.

A: - 'cos I talk to him about everything, and we were having - me and ROSS were having a row, and ROSS, because he's a male friend, initially it took a long time for him to come to terms with the fact that I was sleeping with men and still quite - still felt quite strongly for him, and we were having an argument and ROSS said "why don't you just admit it? You're in love with RON - "

(Tape Change)

Q: He said, "why don't you admit it?" -

A: Yeah, and I - and I said "no", but very, very quickly, and then I said, "my God, I've said that far too quickly, didn't I?", and he said "yes", and I said "ROSS, you're right", and I went just sort of "oh, no, you're right" (laugh), and it just like hit me and I thought, hang on, if I'm in love with him this relationship is no good, I want it on different terms. This isn't good anymore. I've got to tell him how I feel and the whole relationship changed. I wanted to - I wanted it changed. I wanted to go over to see him and assert myself. And anyway, I went over there with the best of intentions, found it extremely difficult 'cos obviously it was his territory, to really broach the subject. And the most I ever said was "I really like you, I really care for you and I'd like you to cuddle me a bit more", and that's all I managed to say.

Q: Mm. What was his response?

A: Well, as I said before, he dismissed - he dismissed it when I said I liked him. When I said that I cared for him, which was on a separate occasion, he just didn't react, he just didn't say anything; and so that became an awkward silence, which I left in; and - I don't know, he's -

Q: You weren't able to move the relationship in the direction that you wanted to.

A: No, because I - because I'd forced myself - I'd changed myself so much to, like, conform to what I thought he wanted. As I said, whenever he came in the room I went quiet. And I'd gone into kind of submissive role, which probably - probably one of the - helped him to hit me, 'cos he knew damned well I wouldn't fight back and I wouldn't - I didn't fight back 'cos I thought it would stop. And, oh dear, - I never really got - I mean the thing - oh, dear! - ... but I have this thing that I must be involved with myself and things like that, and I actually did quite get to grips with myself and started really thinking about myself and started giving myself a lot of time and self-respect. And then I take it all back to RON and say no, no, that isn't right, that isn't what I want, and he'd just ignore me. And then I realised - it took me a long time but I suddenly realised that, despite all that he said, all about saying that if I asserted myself then this would happen and this would happen: even if I did assert myself, he didn't respond to it. And so, I knew it was a shitty relationship, but I wanted the relationship. Still - I mean, the thing that struck me as like a tragedy - when I was with... in 1989 I found that by the time RON and I had finished with each other, it was exactly the same situation that DANIEL and I had got into, because I was - I was doing the chasing, I was dependent on him, and, despite being rejected and despite thinking "I'm worth more than this", I was still going back to it, and nothing was changing at all. So, it sort of - and that worried me. I thought, "my behaviour patterns! Oh no!" (laugh). And it's quite funny because I'm

really, really trying hard not to get into that with LEE. I'm really, really trying to be honest with him and talk about everything which slightly niggles me about the relationship, but it isn't - although that's going alright, 'cos we hardly ever see each other (laugh), it's going okay, and - but I still find myself thinking "is it going okay?" when I haven't seen him for a little while, and "was that phone conversation exactly what I thought it was?", and - I suppose I've become slightly paranoid.

Q: It is complicated to work out what's going on in a relationship, isn't it -

A: Yeah.

Q: - I mean especially when you're a little bit ambivalent yourself or -

A: Yeah, I mean that's the problem. I mean it amazed me when I decided in December, before - I thought, right, okay, RON and I have more or less folded here; it's not gonna work; I've sorted out this - I've sussed this relationship, it's not gonna work. I'm not gonna see him again. Right, that's RON sorted, now sort out LEE. Must sort out LEE so I know whether he's going to be a long-term friend, a lover, a casual person - what are my feelings towards him?". Anyway, that's what I decided, so I arranged for us to meet, which LEE didn't turn up to... sort of get used to it now, I just don't turn up to rendezvous either (laugh) - half an hour after we're supposed to meet or where he's still at home: "hi, LEE, thought you'd be there". But he didn't turn up and unfortunately we'd arranged to meet at RON's flat, so I did see RON again, having resolved not ever to see him again; but - I felt "right, I'll sort all this out with LEE". Then he went away for like a month over Christmas - he went on holiday, he went to his folks and went to see friends, and so by the time I actually did catch up with him he was off the next morning and we didn't have a chance to talk about - 'cos he wanted to talk to me about our relationship as well, and so we had to arrange it for January - [REDACTED] (laugh).

Q: ... in your diary.

A: Yeah, that's right. Well, it was his birthday, so I thought "he's got to remember"! And he did, but he had the flu (laugh). But - yeah, so I was like trying to sort all this out with LEE, and when I did finally see LEE, it amazed me just - I mean first of all it was like "God, are you alright? I heard about what RON did to you. What did he do to you? What have you done about it? - Right, I'm moving out", and that was like the first part of the conversation. And then... "we were supposed to be meeting each other to talk about us, not RON", and he said "yeah, well, I don't want to - I don't want you to latch onto me just because you and RON have broken up", and that's - and when he said that I realised that in a way that was what I was trying to manipulate, a sort of RON replacement -

Q: Yeah.

A: - because... simultaneous people in my life for a bit, and I was trying to keep them from being interchangeable basically, 'cos they lived in the same place, it was very, very hard not to. And - and then I thought, right, he's seen through that; okay, let's think about this. He's treating me with respect as a person, this has got to be too good to give up. So I talked really, really openly and said "yeah, yeah, you're dead right, okay; we won't be lovers any more. We'll do things together" - 'cos LEE and I had never gone out together really, just sort of pubs and stuff. So that was going to be the new relationship. And as I say, we ended up in bed together, but - it was good, 'cos I actually - I am thinking about it and I'm also thinking about him, and also he's thinking about me, and so I think I've sort of got to grips with this one. I don't see it as - as I said, I really, really respect LEE because he is so - he's so much older and so much more experienced. I

find it a bit frustrating that anything I say – like, anything I say to him he's heard before, I find that a bit frustrating.

Q: Yeah.

A: ... really... really affectionate, really interesting or something - "yeah, I know, I know"; you know, he says it to wind me up, it's true, he has said it before. And I have a great admiration for him, but I don't think I've got into the kind of emotional state with love and everything that I had with DANIEL and with RON, which sent me down a slippery path.

Q: Yeah.

A: But I think - I mean - yeah, I mean sleeping with LEE isn't - isn't the part of the relationship because I know I've got him anyway, whereas with RON it was the part of the relationship, and with DANIEL it was a very big thing.

Q: With LEE it's just something nice you do amongst the other things sort of thing.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: And we don't do every time or - you know, it is different.

Q: But it's okay, the actual sex is alright, is it?

A: Yeah, yeah, it's nice. Well, last time it wasn't but - stupid body started playing tricks on - I actually wondered whether RON had damaged me because what happened - well, I shouldn't be telling you this 'cos you're not a gynecologist, but there you go. RON used a [OBJECT] on New Year's Eve. It hurt me rather a lot, and then the next person who I tried to sleep with, i.e. LEE, I bled a lot. And LEE was, like, very, very worried about this, thought he'd done something. But -

Q: I wonder whether you should have it checked out.

A: Yeah, I am going to. I've got to go for a smear test anyway, so -

Q: I think you should because it could - I mean -

A: He may have done something -

Q: - objects inside you - But what - had that been part of your relationship before, was that a novel thing?

A: Oh, yes, that was - that was "oh, my God, what are you doing to me? That's hurting." - a New Year's Eve innovation, the first of - that was like - that was funny because I think if that hadn't hurt me and if I hadn't been crying, and telling him to stop doing it, he might not have hit me. 'Cos it was - the way he did it, it was like he was a real sadist. RON was a real sadist because he only hit me - he hit me for no other reason than just to hit me. And like he was - just pushed me down on the bed, sat across me and started hitting me and abusing me. And I just pleaded with him to stop and kept saying - I mean, it interested me afterwards that I said this, trying to be objective, I was lying there and I was going "you don't have to do this to me"; and I suppose implicit was "I will do anything" -

Q: Yeah.

A: "You don't have to hit me, I will do anything". That was what I was saying to him. But that's what he wanted me there for. That's why I wasn't having any effect. "Please stop doing this". I mean, he was hitting me because he wanted to hit me, he was just laying into me. And that felt very, very strange. It felt - I mean, at the time it didn't feel strange, it felt awful, but in retrospect it's odd because I was actually used as an object in a very bizarre way, to gratify his - I mean he was just manic, his expression, everything, and I can only assume that it was the blood all over my face that stopped him - like that's that,

you know. Maybe he thought - because he was saying "I'll break your nose, give you black eyes", maybe he thought he'd broken my nose.

Q: How did you get out of the actual situation? Did he get off you and -

A: Well, he let me go. He let me go.

Q: ... next door.

A: Yeah... gathering my clothes. And he was - he said, "where are you going?" and I said "I'm going home" - 'cos the tubes were running all night; I can remember they were sponsored by Fosters. And I said, "I'm going home". And he said "don't go home, you look a mess" and he was going "you look a real mess, you bitch", you know, and I think the only reason why he was saying that was if anyone sees you I'm gonna be in trouble. So, he said "if I were you, I'd go next door". Anyway, how it was, there's stairs right near his door, 'cos he's the first one in the corridor, so I ran down the stairs, and I heard his door slam and then I hear the Chubb lock go on it, then I ran back up and went next door, so he didn't know where I'd gone; and I thought that was like - I didn't think about it at the time but it was an incredibly sensible thing to do. (Interruption)

Q: Yeah, sorry, so -

A: He had no idea where I was then, so it was sensible.

Q: Mm, yeah... hear anyone run down those stairs.

A: Yeah. God.

Q: I can see how you got - you know, in a state of confusion over it. But I mean your initial reaction that it's just - that's it, sort of thing, I mean you can't have a situation where the guy's gonna hit you.

A: No, I know that, but it's still very hard. I find myself wanting to phone him - I did phone him up. Fortunately, RICK answered, who's still living there. He said, "who is it?"; I said, "it's LISA". He goes, "oh, alright?". I said, "yes, thank you. It happened three weeks ago." And it was RICK who told me RON had got his job back, 'cos the police just told me that he'd been suspended. I was a bit - I mean I said to RICK, "oh good", and then RICK said, "what are you saying "good" for?".

Q: Yeah.

A: ... go anyway.

Q: You've got to go to the court case?

A: No, I haven't, because he's pleading guilty.

Q: Oh, right. So that's good.

A: It's only if - I mean, he won't - I don't think he will plead not guilty because there's no point. 'Cos, as I say, pleading guilty, he has - the situation he's in at the moment, he's got his job, and if he pleads guilty, he's gonna get the minimum. And also, the police took photographs. So, I mean there's no way he could have got away with it.

Q: Yeah. So it's been a bit - horrible -

A: Yeah.

Q: - these last few months.

A: Yes. I mean, I say that but I can talk about - I can talk about RON easily 'cos it's something I understand, it's something other people understand, and it's something I know how to deal with. It's - you go through the channels; you can legitimately have a bit of a weep and everything; but, as I said, I was thinking about all of 1989, and how the first six months were a disaster ending in DANIEL's nervous breakdown, the second

six months were a disaster ending in RON hitting me, and of those two things RON hitting me is infinitely easier to deal with.

Q: Mm, yeah.

A: Maybe because RON never was a wonderful person anyway; although I thought he was wonderful, he never really was. I knew that. Whereas DANIEL was a longer-term relationship. Also, because, when DANIEL had a nervous breakdown, nobody could understand why I had to be involved.

Q: What - how - yeah, you said you felt guilty about that. How - what made you feel guilty?

A: Well, his parents - his mum said - his mum was - she didn't say anything to me. I mean they shut - they shut me out of DANIEL being mentally ill. Everybody said, "oh, it's for your own good, you've got your A-levels coming up". And I was like going, "how can they say that? DANIEL's more important than my A-levels", and I'm bloody glad I didn't stick to that. My mum was - I was really annoyed with my mum 'cos my mum was saying that as well. I was very annoyed with her. But I could forgive my mum because I knew she loved me, whereas DANIEL's parents were both blocking me. They wouldn't let me go to the hospital, they wouldn't let me see him. I was annoyed - I mean - oh, the way it happened was that he came round to my house. He was a bit funny. Mum and dad knew something was wrong. Mum thought "this guy's severely mentally unbalanced". We went out for a walk in the woods. I was incredibly patient with him. DANIEL was talking about visions he'd seen and talking to the devil, and I was thinking "oh, my God", 'cos I'd seen a programme about schizophrenia, and I was thinking "my God, what a weirdo", you know. Anyway, I was incredibly patient with him and then at the last moment I just flipped. There was too much tension, and I started screaming at him. And - and mum and dad took DANIEL home, and I was very distraught, 'cos we parted really, really on very, very bad terms. And dad told DANIEL he wasn't to see me again, 'cos it was too upsetting, and it was too close to our A-levels. And I was annoyed because I wanted to see DANIEL again and my parents initially blocked that off. And then after that DANIEL felt he couldn't go and see me, even if he wanted to, whereas I wanted to be there for him, 'cos I knew something was wrong with him; and he was - was going to mutual friends of ours, MARTHA and TONI, mother and daughter, they were really, really good friends of both of ours. And I was very, very jealous of the fact that DANIEL was turning to them, and at the same time they were telling me not to get involved, not to be around when he was around; and they - they kept on saying "it's to protect you, protect you", and I was - I just thought no, they're just trying to cut me off. And then MARTHA said to me something she should never have said, but she didn't know that, but ELEANOR was actually blaming me for DANIEL's breakdown. She said, "oh, it's LISA's fault. He's never been the same since he came home that night", 'cos obviously he was very annoyed. But in fact, he was - he was - mum and dad noticed that he was off his rocker before he came round. It was just that that night it came to a head with me. I never saw him again until he was in hospital, he'd been in hospital for a few days. That again was very, very emotional, and I didn't handle the situation at all well. And as soon as ELEANOR said that I thought "well, God, it is me, it is me", and that's when it became completely - everything was distorted. I felt like there was a conspiracy against me not to see him; DANIEL hated me anyway and that was why he was going to see SUE, how could he do this? And, you know, and just loads of things.

And it was - and I was very, very confused and upset, and mum was very worried about me. She actually said to me at one point, "God, I don't know whether DANIEL should be in hospital or that it should be you", 'cos I was like screaming and everything all the time, constantly upset. I was going to school and being really - talking about nothing else but DANIEL on the bus, being very, very, quiet all day at school, then coming home and throwing wobblies left, right and centre. So it's - it - I still feel - I still feel hurt because it felt like everybody was against me and I feel - I still feel hurt by ELEANOR saying what she said, no matter how little or how much she meant it, the fact she said it really hurt me. And I still haven't got to grips with that, you know? Just because then I was all alone and it felt like nobody understood me, whereas when RON hit me everybody understood.

Q: Yeah, yeah. And what about your mother, I mean does she relate those two, are you able to talk to her?

A: No, I haven't talked to her about the two things. I will - I think I will, though, because - obviously she was outside of it but inside of it as well, I mean she was witness to my emotional upset. And I will talk to her about it, I think. 'Cos it was just such a major - it was just a real upheaval... ran away to London and - at the first opportunity; I literally had five days from the end of my last A-level and I was in London to start a different life

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Q: Mm, yeah.

A: ... a little bit. And - I haven't talked to my mum about it but I wrote a very, very, long letter to MARTHA explaining about all these things as they were coming together. I've also written down myself, 'cos it worries me that I'm still feeling - I don't know, you can hear it in my voice now maybe - I still feel very, very, uptight and emotional about that whole thing.

Q: Mm. Well, both of the things were very - very stressful for you, I mean -

A: Yeah. Yeah.

Q: - it's difficult to...

A: Yeah, right, it was because RON hit me, I'm thinking more about DANIEL again. And I mean we saw each other over Christmas 'cos he's been quite dependent on me for support and I was quite concerned because it sounds - he's at university now but - sounds like he's not formed any relationships with anybody at all, and I mean like best friend relationships, whereas I've got about three people I consider my best friends that I met as soon as I left home.

Q: Yeah.

A: So, I was - I'm now quite concerned about that and we're writing letters and talking on the phone to each other. And I mentioned - there was a particular record that he bought that he really - that meant a lot to him in the period when he was having this like crisis but before going to hospital, and my sister can't listen to the record, and I couldn't listen to the record without getting upset. I listened to the record the other day and I mentioned it to him - "oh, DANIEL, I listened to the Rage of the Innocents" and he goes, "oh, did you? I've got that". And I said "well, I don't know about you, DANIEL, but ELEANOR can't listen to that tape because that was the one you were having - she calls it "DANIEL's nervous breakdown tape"", and he goes "oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, one of the songs -"; and I said, "yes. There was a particular song." And he goes, "well, I just don't think about that anymore", and just like dismissed it. So obviously I

mean - his nurses told his parents and told me that he would heal from it, 'cos it was quite a quick mental illness and it would heal comparatively quickly; and it is six months and they said about that and he'd probably be okay about it, but - and he does seem okay because he can like say that, and - the way I just represented the conversation it sounds like he's like denying it, pretending it didn't happen, but he's not - he can actually talk about it as a thing that's happened. I can't talk about it really without feeling very upset. And my sister can't and - just because it made him - I think the two things that made an impact on her, one how DANIEL was the evening he came round, and the other, how much it affected me.

Q: Yeah. Is your sister younger or older -

A: Oh, younger - sorry; older, lots - no, she's younger.

Q: Is that the only other brother or sister you've got?

A: Yeah.

Q: She's living at home still?

A: Yeah.

Q: Well, I suppose in a way that - that for him, although he can talk about it himself, it might be difficult for him to run through the emotional feelings again: that it might be - part of the healing process might be - have been running through them then and now sort of putting them to one side or something -

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: - ... run through them...

A: That's right.

Q: ...

A: That's right.

Q: But I guess you'll just have to - to do it for yourself until you can handle it.

A: Yeah, yeah. I mean I have been taught - because I've been thinking about it, 'cos - 'cos - self-doubt, like "why are you doing", "why have these two relationships gone like they have?", trying to think about it, I've been talking about it more. But the first time I talked about DANIEL's illness to ROSS, I couldn't stop crying - I couldn't talk about it and I couldn't stop crying, and I was very, very, very, upset. Well, ROSS sort of mentioned it to me, 'cos he was saying, "Have you ever worked with anybody with mental health problems?". I said, "no, no, I specifically said I wouldn't". And he said, "oh, I'm really interested in it", and started talking about it from a very detached point of view. And I just couldn't stand it at all. Although now I think it's a field that does interest me.

Q: What made you decide to work with the - you've been working with the physically handicapped?

A: Yeah, and also now I've worked with some women with learning difficulties as well. Well, the decision wasn't really a decision to work with the physically handicapped. I decided to take a year out. I wanted to do some voluntary work. I had this vague idea that in the future one day I would come out of university and be faced with a question of career. And I knew I wanted to do something helping people, and I didn't know what. So - I have a basic kind of sympathetic nature, and, also, I'm quite - well, I'm a do-gooder, one of them. So I went out to do the voluntary work in London, signed on with (?) [CHARITY ORGANISATION] to work with physically handicapped people in their own home, basically because that's what was going, and it was four months, offered accommodation, and it was - that would have been my voluntary work, and then I could

go off and do whatever I liked. What happened at the end of voluntary work was I then decided - I didn't know what I wanted to do. I'd applied for various things to start in January, which hadn't come off. I thought I wanted to do some other voluntary work abroad, but it's very, very, difficult to get onto - unless you've already done some voluntary work abroad - it seems Catch 22 here. So, I was thinking, like, I'll stay in London for a couple of months, and signed on with [AGENCY] who do social care, because that was the only skill I had. I can't type - so that was a job I knew I could earn money for and earn enough to rent a flat every week. And also I wasn't - I mean, another thing, a deciding factor that made me stay in London instead of going home at the time was, I decided I like being independent, I like living away from home, I like being able to say "everything I survey is mine and I have achieved", and I wanted to stay in London to continue seeing RON as well.

Q: Mm, yeah, that was clearly part of the...

A: Yeah.

Q: So do you think you'll stay in London now until you go to university?

A: No, no, I'm leaving in March 'cos that's when our present flat runs out and our domestic situation is such that the only possible combination of living together people is VICKY and I, and I - my full time work has fallen off and I'm now no longer able to work full time, 'cos there just isn't the work, presumably because local authorities would rather go without staff than go so far into deficit of the budget money to pay for agency workers, so I can't really - 'cos my financial situation is insecure, I can't stay in London. So, I'll go home, have a rest, and go on holiday with some other friends that I've got in [COUNTY]. And -

Q: - give yourself...

A: - give myself... something else... going abroad eventually.

Q: Yeah. After the degree.

A: Yeah. Yeah.

Q: What - what are you doing?

A: Well, maybe before. I don't know. I'm also interested in doing a TEFL course. That's gonna cost an enormous amount of money, and might fail it, so that's like (?grunt), but on the other hand if I do it, then I've got that skill, and I might be able to pay my way through university without borrowing too much. So, I might do that.

Q: So you've got lots of possibilities.

A: Yeah, I've got too many possibilities and not enough goals, that's my problem.

Q: Let me track back and ask you a few other questions.

A: Yeah.

Q: One of the things we are interested in in this project is what sort of sex education have you had at school or at home or from your peers and so forth, as you'll have seen from the questionnaire. What do you think of - what was the sex education at school like?

A: Right. Well, I went to - the first sex education I had at a school was... I think it was at the last primary school I attended, and I was in the fourth year at that time, but the primary school only had fifty pupils and so the junior class was from age 9 anyway; so it was 9 to 11s. And all the junior class were being offered sex education; and what that comprised of was videos and booklets, a "How We Grow Up" booklet, which no doubt you've seen; I remember the wonderful phrase "and the erect penis enters the soft

vagina" - and magic, bingo, wow! There's no foreplay! It just happens like that, one day you're married, the next day - And videos, which involved long explanations of baby chicks and naked girls and boys running around in swimming pools, which we thought "pervy camera man", you know, 'cos it was like close-ups on developing breasts and things like that. And then went to high school - that again was a small school with 250 kids, where sex education was part of the health education you received in the first year, where the girls and the boys had a separate lecture about periods. Boys instructed about periods were told to be sensitive to girls, especially for the next few years, 'cos they'd be changing, and they'd be very awkward. I don't think, talking to the boys afterwards, that they really had any guidance that they might have some emotional traumas looming in adolescence. Girls were told about - well, we were told about periods and how we mustn't be shy. In fact, that was - the entire first term seemed to be health education and how we mustn't be shy and to, like, have a shower and things, how it's important to wash when you have your period. And the mechanics of sex were explained as - when you got older - we had this very strange biology teacher who was - he was just a really amazing character. He was an absolutely crap biology teacher! And one of the major themes of all biology was sex. 'Cos he thought this was a way to ingratiate myself in with the young people, talking about what they're really interested in - which was sex, admittedly. So, we were told again in biology about reproduction. Got to... draw ... each other's genitals. I remember MR. NEWMAN saying that one of the characteristics of all women's drawings were just how small a man's penis was in relation to the rest of his body, 'cos we were like embarrassed about drawing it. Well, they are anyway, so I don't know who he was trying to kid (laugh). And - yeah, and then I think it was the third year, or maybe the second year in health education, we were told about VD, and MR. NEWMAN told us about HIV, which was quite interesting, because this was 1983 and most people didn't hear about it till 1985. And so we knew all about it, which was dead good, and I think that is really good he told us about it, although then it was largely confined to homosexual men in San Francisco, and it was about - but MR. NEWMAN was a bit of a scaremonger, and so he mentioned the fact it only takes one bisexual man and it's infecting women too, and so it wouldn't be long, because sex is one of the most common activities of man. I mean, he probably just read this in New Scientist, it wasn't particularly innovative, but - and he explained that, you know, there's no way this disease is gonna be in check really. And, yeah, he was dead right, and - so I've been aware about that and VD - chankers on your lips and watch out for cold sores and things like that. I'm just trying to think - but it was - it was fairly comprehensive.

Q: ... pretty thorough. Quite amazing...

A: Yeah. Pretty good. But even so it was very - well, yeah, people say that, but I just don't know how unusual it was. I can't believe that I was lucky enough to go to both a primary school and a high school that were like really well into it. Yeah, I mean you know all about sex, but like even so I remember the first - I mean, me and DANIEL were like trying it, I was very surprised that he knew how to do it 'cos I didn't know.

Q: Yeah.

A: And there was no encouragement of like - I'd no idea what my genitals looked like, for instance. There was no "you should get to know your body", even - even with the girls' talk about periods there was no "take time to have a look at yourself and see

what's going on". I had terrible problems trying to use tampons, not - not because I didn't know where my vagina was, but just because I just wasn't familiar with it at all.

Q: Mm. Yeah.

A: And it was like "oh, my God, I can't use tampons! I'm condemned to towels for the rest of my life!", you know (laugh). And that was the way really.

Q: Yeah. Was there stuff about feelings and the relation... the emotions and that sort of thing?

A: No, no.

Q: So, even though it was pretty thorough and comprehensive, it was only comprehensive in that particular direction, mainly the mechanics and the biological?

A: That's right. Yeah, I mean, that's right -

Q: Yeah.

A: - and like when - talking about contraceptives, the importance of contraceptives, that was the only time that emotion was mentioned: that you may get carried away, like I did with LEE -

Q: Yeah.

A: - this is too good to stop, or - or "I'm too embarrassed to stop" - or anything like that. Nothing - nothing like that was talked about. I mean it was mentioned that it was important to use them and you might get carried away, but there was no - there was no "sex is such a big thing, it will have repercussions", there was no - nothing like that. And also, of course, sex education at primary school, it was sex within marriage, and heterosexual sex.

Q: Yeah, rather than more general -

A: And brief, brief mentions - I think there was a brief mention of the possibility that you might be homosexual - homosexual, but that was like defined in terms of "as you go through adolescence you'll have conflicting feelings as to how your body is - you might - you might find yourself attracted to members of the same sex, but don't worry, this will pass". There was no sort of "you might grow up to be a homosexual and that's okay". There was no - nothing like that.

Q: When you - when you first heard about AIDS, did you - I mean at that time there was a lot of stuff about it being like a gay plague or something, did you - did you feel that it was, that it was... or did you accept what the... was saying about?

A: Well, when it hit the media and it was going on about gay plague, I thought "what a load of crud", because MR. NEWMAN had said you ought to be aware. Whether I thought about AIDS affecting me, I must say - when the AIDS campaign took off, I really didn't see it as - 'cos I'm intrinsically a sensible person, and so I could see there's no real reason why I should get through my life without knowing somebody who's HIV positive, and there's no real reason why I should get through life without having a lover who, unbeknownst to me, is HIV positive.

Q: So you thought it would change your behaviour, you think?

A: Yeah, yeah, I thought HIV doesn't affect me at the moment 'cos I'm in a long-term relationship with DANIEL. The next one I have I'll check beforehand. And I didn't.

Q: Yeah, yeah. But then he used condoms -

A: Yeah, yeah, he did, and it did cross my mind. But I didn't broach the subject, which is what should happen. You should try and broach the subject. I didn't with LEE either, it wasn't 'til afterwards, it was like "we were stupid... doing it!".

Q: Yeah. What do you think stopped you at that moment - that you felt that way and - when you thought that way, what stopped you in the actual event?

A: Well, it was just - well, I didn't think about it beforehand. I didn't even think about pregnancy beforehand 'cos I was just so caught up in the whole thing. And afterwards I worried about it. And I didn't mention it 'cos I didn't want to spoil it, and anyway if I did push it to the back of my mind I was feeling really good and beautiful and happy and so I just fell asleep (laugh).

Q: ... yeah. Do you feel that you know enough about AIDS, for example, now? Say for example, what it is -

A: Well, I... I've read - I've read - I picked up, at the Wembley Youth Action exhibition, I was there -

(Tape Change)

A: ... condemned a major part of sex for me which was, oh God, I really like oral sex. The thought of having to do it to somebody when they've got a condom on is just - oh! The thought of having to cut that out is pretty awful. So, I read the leaflet and then (?) kept the condom. I think I chucked out the leaflet in the end... remember all that.

Q: When you say you like oral sex, you like - do you like it both ways, I mean doing it and having it done?

A: Well, it's quite weird because I like - yeah, I like having it done if it's done well, done patiently instead of giving up (laugh) - kick - but doing it I quite like - I don't - I initiate doing it but I don't like it if - as long as I'm like in control of it and they're not trying to thrust into me -

(Tape break)

Q: You don't like people to thrust themselves -

A: And make me gag.

Q: Yeah... And then you told me what you were thinking about -

A: - yeah, anal sex. It's okay in theory but it hurt in practice. And orgies I like the idea of.

Q: Mm. And so, you might give that a try.

A: Yeah, but I mean you read - you read! - I read how these orgies just happen but I just can't imagine it. But then I've met somebody - BILLY, one of ROSS's friends, who's actually had an orgy, and I said "oh, wow, what was it like?", which was not what he actually expected of me, and - and he said, well, it was completely different to normal sex - normal sex - sex with one other person and it was harder because you couldn't get as involved or something. But I suppose you would have to be really very, very, involved in the orgy to really - I mean I'm not very good at letting go anyway, so - the chances of the right people being around and me feeling safe with the whole situation sound pretty minimal. So I reckon that would be a theoretical one.

Q: So if the circumstances were alright, then -

A: Yeah.

Q: The other thing you were then talking about was what you feel you know about AIDS and you didn't feel quite so comfortable about that, and particularly the difference between HIV and AIDS itself.

A: Well, if you're HIV positive it means that you have a strand of viral - virus in your blood system, and sometimes this develops into AIDS, which is an illness when you will eventually die. Slowly - slowly you die as your immune system goes down. And that's basically all I understand about it -

Q: Yeah.

A: I actually - there was an opportunity for me to work for [SOCIAL CARE AGENCY] as a care assistant, which would have included working with people with AIDS needing somebody to come in and do for them, which they were no longer able to do, and I didn't take it up because at the time I was being offered loads more work for better pay; but I don't really think they would have explained any more about it because when I went for the interview - I got that far - she just said "are you willing to work with HIV-positive people?", the implications being that I would have to wear gloves all the time and just be very, very, careful with bodily fluids. But you have to be anyway. You have to be because there's all kinds of things - I mean there's other forms of hepatitis, aren't there, that you can catch from bodily fluids.

Q: So you'd had that kind of training anyway.

A: Well, I haven't really, I mean I haven't really had any formal training. It's a case of "are you prepared to do it?" and you say "yes", and then you go along, and somebody shows you how to do it. I've had to deal with incontinence in the past, so I'm used to having to deal with bodily - what do you call them? - discharges, I suppose. And that's - yeah, as I say, I don't really - I don't really know a lot about it, what it is. I understand -

Q: What about the spread, how does it spread?

A: The spread. Well, it spreads through - it's quite hard to catch compared to a lot of other things because it spreads through the mingling of body fluids and that would really have to be at quite a nice warm body temperature for the virus to survive, so that's why sex is one of the major - well, that is the method of transmission basically, apart from blood transfusion, because that's like - 'cos that's the way - that's the only real - that's the only real situation where you're going to have other - somebody else's body fluids intermingling with yours. It's sex or if you're having a blood transfusion. So, it is quite hard to catch really.

Q: Mm. And that's the main method.

A: Yeah.

Q: What about - have you sort of felt - I mean you've felt yourself that you occasionally have been at risk or you might be at risk, do you think that other young people think like that, are concerned about it?

A: Well, the women friends I've spoken to have done pretty much the same as me. They've - I mean - the thing is, right, you sit there and you talk about it and you think about it on your own, and you think "I must be careful because this is - this is a risk and it's around in the world" and you know it's there. You can't tell who's got it and who hasn't and - but I mean like my friend HEATHER, she - she says "oh, I'm really silly" - she's even worse than I am about sleeping unprotected with other people - and - but she only sleeps - has unprotected sex within long-term relationships, and then - dealing with AIDS is something that, as a point of conversations and between two people, in an ideal situation where you're having a relationship with somebody who you can trust and who trusts you, they say "I'm safe", you believe them.

Q: Yeah. Do you think - one thing that's come up is that some people think it's easier to raise the issue of using a condom and so forth with somebody that they didn't know well, because it's obvious that it should make sense to them as well sort of thing, and others think that that's very difficult to raise in the situation where you don't know the person, or it's easier in a situation where you do know them well. What do you think? What...?

A: Well -

Q: Or do you think it would be equally difficult in either setting?

A: - yes, no - I think it's easier when you do know somebody because, like with LEE, although I got on well with him, I didn't wanna wreck the whole thing by mentioning condoms.

Q: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's a difficult one, isn't it?

A: Whereas if we'd -

Q: If, for example, you were to start a relationship with ROSS, say - I've just thrown this in as a possibility -

A: Yes. Yes. We'd have to - I mean he'd go - he'd be really anti the idea because he's never used a condom in the entire time he's been having sex, which, like, I was really cross about, because just - just for - not just AIDS, like for pregnancy I was really cross. And - and I said, "you've never offered to, have you, either?"; and he goes "no, I've never used them". And I said, "well, what about with me, would you?" and he said "well, yeah, I think I'd have to". And I said, "but I told you LEE was okay" -and like, "yeah, but that's you and that's LEE, this is me". And so - yeah, so - we've already talked about it, we would talk about it if we were gonna have sex, even though his attitude to condoms in the past has been not very... he doesn't use them and oh, dear, that really does annoy me. But - yeah, it is difficult with somebody you don't know.

Q: Yeah.

A: If you don't - if you want it to work - I mean if it's a one-night stand, if you're at a party or just having sex for - I mean I can't imagine the situation where you'd be having sex - well, yes, actually I can, 'cos HEATHER had a bet with a friend that she could not get this bloke to sleep with her. And she did, she managed to get him to sleep with her. And she said - and that was gonna be a one-night stand - and she said, "right, have you got any condoms?" and he said "no", and she said "right - I have". And - and just sort of that was it.

Q: You said you didn't like it if they were wearing condoms if it's oral sex, but you don't mind it if it's ordinary.

A: No, 'cos - no 'cos then you can't really feel it anyway. I mean you haven't got much feeling in your vagina, whereas I mean - oh, dear - Yeah, I remember thinking about that. Thinking this is silly. God, there's millions of condoms about. There's me with my head down here, not a condom in sight (laugh); and then when they're... I'm not gonna get one 'cos I don't intend to do this. And I just thought it's alright 'cos it's RON anyway and I mean I just decided he had to be safe, and - I mean, LEE says he's had an AIDS test and it was clear and he hasn't slept with anybody else. And so, I just believe him, because the way he said it - I said, "well, how do I know you're safe? You're twenty-eight years old.", and he goes "I had an AIDS test" and I sort of like - "oh, sorry, yes, you're sensible, sorry" (laugh)...

Q: And so, you - I mean you decided that you're okay.

A: Well, I hope I am. I'm actually thinking about having an AIDS test just because I'm not sure about RON.

Q: But would you... want to, I mean would you want to have a test?

A: I don't really understand the implications behind it, 'cos everyone says it mucks up your insurance, but I don't have any personal insurance apart from the one I have for work.

Q: Mm, and that won't get...

A: And you have to fill in a form saying, "have you had an AIDS test?", and then you don't lie about it presumably.

Q: Well, I suppose you could lie about it.

A: Well, I mean I don't - I don't understand really how it should make any difference if you're clear.

Q: Mm, absolutely. But I suppose - the argument has been that you must have put yourself at risk from the fact that you wanted to have a test, to feel that you needed one sort of thing, so then they judge that that you're - that you might behave in that way again or something. I mean it's loony, but you know how careful these insurance people are...

A: It just - it just doesn't make sense, though, 'cos that's just a major deterrent for people not to have them.

Q: Mm, absolutely.

A: Whereas - I mean I don't really, would take out a life insurance anyway, because - just because my parents don't have them, so I just sort of - it's not something I've really placed a great emphasis on and I've not really thought about - as I say, the only insurance I've got is insurance for work. You need that for injury.

Q: Mm, yeah.

A: Or for contracting a fatal disease.

Q: Oh, God. Let's hope not. Goodness me. I mean, I imagine you're absolutely certain that you're safe anyway with respect to the virus, I was just wondering how you felt about it sort of thing, which is why I raised -

A: Yeah, I mean it is something I think about and I think it's just entered into my - HEATHER and I were talking about this, and, like, I categorise AIDS as a risk as with pregnancy as a risk, and girls live with the possibility of pregnancy as soon as they become sexually active. And so, AIDS just kind of fits into that, although - which would I prefer? - pregnancy wins every time (laugh). But, you know, to combat one, handily, you can use the same thing. And so - and also condoms have the added advantage that there's less risk of cancer as well, so -

Q: ...

A: - so it's like they're great (laugh), and that's - and they haven't really impeded my sexual activity, except that if I really, really, was sensible and thought about it, I wouldn't have oral sex with somebody if they weren't wearing a condom and I wouldn't if they were, if you see what I mean -

Q: Yes, right, you wouldn't want to if they were -

A: Although I wouldn't mind trying a flavoured one 'cos I never have but - I wouldn't mind trying it just to see what it was like, but just the idea - grudge(?), 'cos the texture and everything, is just ugh!

Q: Yeah. No, I was thinking of mentioning the flavoured one as well.

A: Yeah, yeah. I mean I tried to buy some the other day from a machine in a pub, but it had run out. Just to see what the flavour was like (laugh).

Q: You were saying there about, you know, young women are at risk as soon as they become sexually active, from pregnancy and AIDS. Do you think that you take any risks in any other area of your life? Do anything risky?

A: Well, in future I will know that every time I get drunk I'm in a vulnerable state. Yeah, I mean I walk the streets alone late at night. I have to in the nature of the job if I'm working a late shift, to walk home.

Q: Yeah.

A: What else? I drive. When I drive I'm taking risks, I suppose. I mean I don't think I do anything that most people think of as a risk, I just don't - I just don't live in a bubble; except that VICKY and LOUIS that I live with are both paranoid about me walking the streets late at night; they don't understand that I've lived at Broadwater Farm and that's where everyone goes "oooh" about, and "oh, you're really really dangerous there", and nothing happened to me there apart from somebody that I knew. And I understand - well, although, I don't dismiss those risks, I think you're at risk everywhere in terms of that. But apart from that I don't think I really do take any risks.

Q: There's quite a range of things that people think are risky. Do you smoke at all?

A: No, I don't.

Q: Any drugs crossed your path?

A: Well, they've crossed my path but I've never tried them. But it's something, I must admit, I would like to try, just smoking some dope one time, just - just to see. But - oh, you see my mum did - worked for the alcohol - she was an [CARING PROFESSION]. So I know the effects of alcohol and you long-term and I know about drugs and the effect on you long-term, and mum's like ultra-paranoid about me getting drunk 'cos she thinks - 'cos I got drunk twice in succession within two weeks and told her the first time I was a bit tipsy when I was round at RON's, and I was explaining how difficult it was to make a statement 'cos - 'cos everything happened and I couldn't really gauge what had happened. And then me and VICKY absolutely got blotto the next week and that was intentional - "let's see what it's like to get drunk", 'cos neither of us had never done it; and then VICKY says to me - I said "oh, I wouldn't mind trying a joint" - 'cos RON smokes dope, LEE smokes dope, a man who I was talking to in Selfridges obviously smokes something, he's got great big long whopping great fingernails on his little finger; and I was thinking, well - and HEATHER smokes dope, she's my best friend. But she doesn't go out and buy it, it's just if it's around she smokes it, she says it's a good relaxant, and she says it's just fun like alcohol. And I think well, if I drink, I could try a joint, because it's being hypocritical to do one and not the other; and I know I can control drinking, and I don't know where to get dope, so the chances of me (laugh) - I mean I could ask obviously, but I wouldn't know who to go to. But, you know, so I just think that's something I'd like to try, that is a risk I'd like to take, if you like. Yeah, drinking's a risk, getting drunk is a risk, and that's really - that really has brought home to me just how much getting drunk is a risk, and that I was not in control so I couldn't get out of the situation with RON quick enough 'cos I didn't know what was going on quick enough. So - and so that's - that's about it. I haven't tried drugs.

Q: Right, but you may, if a smoke passes your way you might give it a try.

A: Yeah. And if I was with company I could trust, that's the other thing.

Q: Mm. Well, that's important, as you were saying, as well, about - that's very important anyway, to feel that you can trust people and that you feel safe somehow.

A: Mm. It's alright if I get ...

Q: And you don't notice. Yeah. When - one of the things we've been asking about is the double standard. Do you feel that there's a different standard for sexual behaviour for men and women, things that are okay?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: Definitely. Definitely. You'd say - you'd hope that you'd be able to say things aren't the way they used to be, in that I can sleep with LEE and RON simultaneously, and LEE doesn't think I'm a tart - I'm not sure quite what RON thought I was, 'cos LEE actually said it did make a difference to the way RON felt about me, that it was not positive, but I didn't know at the time. Yeah. LOUIS who I'm living with, we just can't get on - and I wear - these are like - I'm wearing - I'm wearing court shoes, a skirt (laugh), a sort of Granny-knit jumper, make-up - and usually I clomp around in DMs and jeans, it's just that everything's in the wash just now; and LOUIS hates that, 'cos I go around and I wear Doctor Martens, and he also hates it that I can be friends with ROSS and don't have a sexual relationship; he hates it that I'm - I'm not - hates it that I can - I don't know, he hates everything that I do which isn't feminine behaviour. He hates the fact I drink pints. He doesn't like the fact - he hates - he doesn't like the fact I drink Guinness 'cos he doesn't drink it at all. And Newcastle Brown - "ugh! I'm not gonna buy her a drink again!". "What's embarrassing you, LOUIS?" - and it is, it embarrasses him. So he's somebody who I know who's got a real sexual double standard. And he's the same towards VICKY, who's his girlfriend. And he also resents the fact I've actually changed VICKY by showing that this behaviour is actually okay; and, you know, he hated it when VICKY and I got drunk. He got drunk because him and ROSS decided they were gonna have a lads' night out, they left us to babysit the dog, and we had no choice, we couldn't go out, even though we were the ones who were gonna go out originally. They'd just gone off. LOUIS said, "right, you two are staying in", so they went, so we got drunk, and he hated it because it was not feminine behaviour.

Q: Why did the dog need babysitting? (laugh)

A: Ah, because ... any more 'cos he was very, very, insecure, he'd been traumatised; we picked him up at [POLICE STATION], he'd been abandoned, and he barked whenever anyone left him, so somebody had to be with him all the time.

Q: Right, I've got the -

A: Anyway, so - I know that there's a sexual double standard, and it's very rife among people like LOUIS who comes from a very conservative-with-a-small-'c' background. And of course I've been aware of it at school - "tart", "slag"; one of my friends, she's just so insecure and she used to sleep with men just to like have them for the night, and even some of the men who she slept with would say "tart", "slag" and stuff like that; and I was thinking, "well, what did you do it for?"; but no, it was alright for them. And that really, really, annoyed me. So, yeah, I know there's a sexual double standard and I know it's rife, especially amongst young men, it seems.

Q: One of the - the other things we've been asking about is the - it just reminded me when you said about young men - is the AIDS campaign, what you thought of them when they were... the ones that were on the television and the big publicity campaigns.

A: Oh, yeah. Which ones?

Q: Well, what about the first one, the one with giant slabs - the gravestones?

A: Oh, "don't die of ignorance". Well, there was quite a lot of letters to the Guardian about little kiddies who had nightmares about dying of it (laugh). Well, it made a statement, didn't it; it was quite a powerful statement. I mean, ... knew about it anyway. I wasn't quite sure - I'm not sure about how effective it is, because you still - I mean, then there was a series when they'd meet in a restaurant and stuff and it's okay to carry condoms, and I thought that was quite a good idea; although the night I got pissed me and VICKY walked a hundred yards down the road, got some chips, I dropped my bag, didn't... and inside my bag I had a condom and it was handed in at the police station which was opposite the chip shop, and I was hungover the next day so ROSS went to collect my bag and the policeman sort of said, "right, driving license, purse, keys, credit card and err - err - err - some other things of a personal nature". And I was thinking "suppose he's never seen... a way which sort of..."

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Yeah, I - so - and then ROSS said the police had a laugh that I was carrying a condom. And I suppose the policeman thought it makes me some kind of loose woman, just 'cos I had it ever ready. I mean, after LEE I thought, "never again"! (laugh). So I mean I just carried it, I just carry it. I mean I don't know if I've got it with me actually anymore, but I just used to carry a condom. And I thought that was quite good, that it is okay to have them and it's okay to mention them; and then noticed one in - in City Limits, it was two men, men's faces, and the writing underneath actually... but the first sentence really struck me, it said "sex - we all know how much we enjoy it". And I said to VICKY, "it's really funny, 'cos I got a real sense of inferiority then" (laugh) - "you might, but I don't; it fluctuates actually"! And I did read the rest of it but -

Q: You thought they were taking their chances with a sentence like that.

A: Yeah. And then - then the ones on - I don't listen to this station, Capital Radio, Capital Gold, it was one that the clients had; and they had "Hi! I'm a bank clerk, I'm 22 and I like swimming, horse riding and running and jumping..." or something; "Hi! I work in a shop, my name's Tracy and I like reading, walking, discos and parties"; "Hi! My name's Gary and I'm 22 and I like parties and I'm unemployed"; - "one of these has got HIV, can you tell which one? You probably wouldn't have a greater chance if you could see them either". And I'm thinking that on the radio didn't work, but the photograph of the woman, the woman model, I thought that was quite good. 'Cos that's right - 'cos you can't... people know. Also, the fact it was a woman probably helped. Yeah, the other thing about the one in City Limits, it was still two men's heads and I think there still is the feeling "gay plague"; and something VICKY said to me which quite surprised me, she said "... low-risk group", talking about a male friend of hers, "whereas so and so, LIAM, very high risk - bisexual"; I'm thinking, I don't think it really makes a lot of odds any more. Although there is a higher incidence amongst gay men, I think that's only because it's within - I don't think you can tell now, to be quite honest, because obviously the gay men that you know they're HIV-positive, there are gonna be more gay men who are gonna know because obviously they're at risk so more people will have had the test. More people will have developed it 'cos it's been - developed AIDS - because it's been within that sector of society for longer; and so - and I think there's just greater awareness amongst the gay community, and I understand from what I've read that the

gay community has reacted very, very swiftly to safe sex or even non-sexual relationships, whereas the heterosexual community definitely hasn't, and so I think inasmuch as most people think they're at risk, you can't really tell. You can't tell.

Q: Yeah. That was where the - it may have sounded like a non sequitur when I said it was the young men that reminded me of the - the ads and the rest of it, but what I was thinking about was that a lot of the young women I speak to say that I shouldn't be speaking to young women, I should be speaking to young men. They're the ones who need the message because they don't - I mean as the person you were describing who never uses a condom, that it's - they're the ones who the message should be got across to, so that then you could change their behaviour.

A: I think it's - well, of course, but you - if women can feel better about saying "please use a condom", then that is - I mean, women are used to taking responsibility for birth control; if women can only feel confident - it's confidence in saying, in asserting that I'd rather use a condom that's got to be got across. So you have to talk to women and women have to ... felt that it is alright, because you still get the - I find it hard to initiate sex. I'm sure most women do, unless they've been in a relationship for a long time, but even then, the majority of women still leave it to their partners, leave it to their husbands, I would say. And so women are used to - well, yeah, to an extent, taking the pill, using a diaphragm is a passive way of birth control because it doesn't involve the man and it's good 'cos you're in control, but then you're not used to saying "can you use a condom?", and I think - I think that's important. Women must feel safe with that, they must feel safer; they must feel more confident. I must feel more confident about saying that in the future. And I know that they're not going to because I know that women don't feel confident about initiating any part of sexual relationship anyway.

Q: So you think it is important that -

A: I do.

Q: - change the women's attitudes...

A: Well, give them confidence, it's not so much attitude.

Q: Yeah.

A: It's not really attitude, but if - 'cos like they're saying it's down to the men, but when faced with the situation where the men don't use a condom and you really, really, feel strongly about it, is the woman going to be able to say "in that case, then, I won't have sex", which is another thing.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: I mean - with LEE obviously I felt I wanted to risk it - what fleeting thoughts passed through my head -

Q: Yeah.

A: - and I think in real terms it's very difficult to conceive of a situation where - well, I don't know; I mean, if - if women can feel more - if women can feel more confident about saying "will you use a condom?", by saying that you then create the opportunity to say "in that case I won't sleep with you", don't you -

Q: Yeah.

A: - if you say that, rather than just let it happen. I think that's something - I've just thought that through, I think that's something that's quite good that I must bear in mind. And I think that's something that has to be - that has to be got across.

Q: Yeah. And it's also - it's about taking control -

A: Yeah.

Q: - of the situation. Or having some control in the situation rather than it just happening to you.

A: Yeah, yeah. And in a sense, it is all caught up in how women deal with their sexuality anyway, isn't it?

Q: Yeah.

A: If you're confident to say that, you may be confident enough to say, "hey, let's try this" or "that isn't very nice, let's try this".

Q: Right.

A: "Do this." So what I'm thinking is at the moment there isn't the - people do - women do feel uneasy about broaching the whole subject, but if they learnt to broach that subject, that could help them broach a whole lot of other subjects as well. And maybe the adverts are right and if one of them broaches the subject, the other partner would be perfectly complicit, and it could be really good; and no doubt that really would - that will happen, but it is - it is still very difficult. And so, I think it's important that you talk to young women.

Q: To young women, yeah. You're right, I suppose, absolutely. You were just saying - I mean, we've talked a lot about things that - well, let me ask you this straight question first: what do you think of as safe sex, or safer sex?

A: Well, when I read that leaflet, I was horrified! (laugh) - because - that's another thing, on that City Limits advert it said "they don't have safe sex just because it's safer" and I just didn't understand it at all; but - yeah, safe sex is sex where you don't place yourself at any risk at any moment. It's like when you go to the family planning clinic and you say "oh, I don't know what method of contraception to use", and - like I went, and they said "what are you using at the moment?" and I said "condoms"; they said "well, that's perfectly safe, as long as, as soon as the penis gets aroused you shove a condom on it" - and you don't want to! You want - you want to play about a bit first. And anyway, you know, the condom's usually gone a bit dry by the time - and you have to take it off and - and it becomes like - so you don't and you like adapt your sex round using a condom, if you like, and, yeah, it doesn't inhibit your sex. But that's okay when you're just talking about pregnancy but when you talk about safe sex in order to avoid AIDS, you have to actually do that, and you also, as I was talking about, mouth to body fluids - cut out oral sex unprotected as well. And for me I was just thinking (sigh); I mean, you know, just put the gloves on!

Q: Yeah.

A: That's what it feels like.

Q: I suppose what they're saying in the ad is like that safe sex can be fun, or safer sex can be fun.

A: I don't know, I don't know what they were saying. I read it through, I still didn't understand the initial caption (laugh).

Q: Yeah.

A: No, but I remember being - I mean, yeah, safe sex is like a whole new - it is a whole new idea.

Q: But when you say, for example, when you were with DANIEL before you actually had sexual intercourse sort of thing, doing a whole lot - you were saying you were doing a whole load of things which didn't include - although you might have tried -

A: Well, we did oral sex but not -

Q: So that's -

A: Yeah, using - yeah, yeah. And that sort of thing's very nice, and it's something that tends to go once you have conventional - not conventional, but penetrative sex with somebody. But, yeah, instead of - 'cos it's something - I mean actually, thinking about it, I think probably LEE adopts a safe sex policy 'cos when I think about it, I don't think we've had penetrative sex at all.

Q: Yeah.

A: So - sort of - nearly there, but oral sex is still included. Yeah, and that is - is nice. I think - yeah, it is, you can - yeah, it is nice. I'd forgotten 'cos you don't think about it.

Q: 'Cos you enjoy it anyway.

A: Yeah. I mean it's usually used - I'm thinking about using your hands and it's usually used for part of foreplay, but it is actually quite good even if you carry it through. And cuddling and kissing, you get tremendously aroused through kissing and touching properly, so I think - yeah, I mean it's not out of the question. So, it is just a different attitude towards sex rather than a denial of potential ecstasy.

Q: Yeah. Well, I mean, I suppose the other way round of asking "what do you think of safe sex?" is "what do you think of sex?". Well, now you've said, and all those other things are part of sex as well, aren't they? I mean, some people just think of it as being penetrative sex and that's it.

A: Yeah. Well, it depends who I'm talking to. Like I say to ROSS, "have we had sex?" because we've slept in the same bed a few times and we've just like cuddled and we haven't done anything else; and kissing is part of our relationship, though not kissing to the point of arousal - although that has happened, it's not intentional - you know, and - so, you know, that kiss about three quarters of the way through sex, you know; and so what do you define as sex because one of the big things - skin is the biggest genital you've got, you know - 'cos it doesn't matter where you're touched, it's how you're touched and how you feel. But it usually depends on who I'm talking to as to how big a range sex covers. Because when I'm talking to LOUIS, sex is sex is sex is sex is sex - penetrative sex and that's all.

Q: Mm. So different people have different view about it as well.

A: Mm.

Q: One other question that we're asking is: what is your image of yourself?

A: I was trying to answer this because I just bought the Hite Report and there was a questionnaire in the back and I thought, well, I suppose I'd better answer it. Oh, dear. The image I have of myself - I don't really have one at the moment. I don't know. What do you mean, in terms of self-esteem or how I think of myself or -

Q: How you think of yourself. It might be easier to do - the other thing I ask is what is the image other people have of you?

A: Well, oh dear. That's just as hard 'cos that varies from person to person.

Q: Yeah, what you were saying about -

A: - initial meetings - I mean even that varies; I find it very hard. The way I think of myself is, I'm a very emotional person. I'm a very good friend, very loyal. I'm quite open. I'm insecure. And empathetic, something I think I said before, but I think that's quite good because I am. ROSS told me I was; but I am, I'm very good at my job that I'm doing at the moment, and I think I am quite empathetic. And I'm a real - I'm very excited

about myself at the moment because I'm just discovering myself, and I'm spending a lot of time thinking about things that have happened to me and the things about me that I like and dislike. The major thing I dislike about me is the fact I still get tetchy, haven't grown out of it since the age of two; and I'm sometimes argumentative just for the sake of it.

Q: And, when you think of - did I interrupt you?

A: No, no, carry on.

Q: No, I was just gonna say, when you think of others, do they have - do elements of that image - do others have elements of that image of you? Does their image coincide with you or -

A: Well, RON had this really bizarre image of me. I mean, as far as I could glean, he saw me as just -

Tape change

- ROSS thinks I'm great, says I'm really... He laughs at me in a nice sort of way.

Q: Yeah.

A: Quite good. I've had a lot of positive feedback lately so -

Q: Quite good, did you good.

A: I think my sister thinks I'm a bit of a nut. She thinks I'm a bit immature for my age - this is my younger sister.

Q: (laugh) The only one you had in fact.

A: Yes. You see, I'm quite - I'm quite - I'm quite an independent person. I found that I really - I've clung onto my independence for as long as possible until now it's become impossible for me to maintain my independence. Or it hasn't. Happily, I mean. I don't have to anyway. And I think I'm quite strong, and I think I've achieved a heck of a lot over the past year, so I actually think I'm quite an interesting person (laugh).

Q: I think so. Yeah.

A: But I'm really -

Q: - more to come, sort of thing.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: I hope so.

Q: Well, it's been very interesting talking to you. Do you think - one of the other things we ask people to do is if they would be interested in keeping a diary for us for a short while, just a couple of months or something like that.

A: Yeah, okay.

Q: Could you handle that?

A: Yeah, I could do that. I always used to.

Q: Let's see, where did I put this diary - here it is. It's just - I put the number in there, but that's just so we know who it's coming back from. There'll be no other indication of who you are or -

A: Right.

Q: ... envelope... So if you just keep it for a couple of months and then send it back to me.

A: Yeah, what sort of things do you want in it?

Q: Well, your thoughts, your feelings; what you're actually doing, your sexual activities if any.

A: As from now, not likely.

Q: That sort of stuff. I mean, that - all the sorts of things that we've been talking about today we'd be interested in.

A: Right, okay.

Q: Well, thank you very much, that's -

LJH37 - notes on interim section (when the battery ran out):

She did not like the idea of safe sex presented in a pack she had come across because it suggested using a condom for oral sex. She thought ugh, that would be horrible, the taste of the rubber etc.. She really enjoys oral sex, having it done to her when it is done well, and not given up because it is taking too long, or they get bored. She also enjoys doing it to men and having them come in her mouth because she feels she is in control. She enjoys the pleasure of giving pleasure, finds it pleasurable herself. Finds it erotic. She does not like it if they push it in themselves, however, and make her gag. But she threatens to bite it off if that happens.

Oral sex she had discussed with first boyfriend, they had decided to try everything they could think of except anal sex (his idea that they should not). She thinks she is broadminded, would not eliminate it out of hand, but she had tried it with boyfriend no. 2 and did not like it. It hurt. In fact, he did it to her, she was not expecting it, did not like it. She does not exclude the possibility of trying it again in the future, but not something she is particularly keen to try again.

Orgies. She felt she might like to try it sometime, but would have to be in a context in which she felt comfortable, unthreatened. She had suggested it (partly joking I think) to boyfriend no. 2 when she was sleeping with him and flat mate, but he was not keen. And she had spoken to a male friend of hers who had taken part in one and felt it was more difficult to get excited in the context of an orgy than usually, since you were not involved with the person/people (or at least he had not been in the orgy he took part in).