Mother 10

Mother of 15 year old girl

Interviewer: OK, can you just start off by telling me a bit about yourself please?

Participant: Um, I’m 47, a mum of 3

Interviewer: Mhmm

Participant: Working, I’ve got two jobs

Interviewer: Mhmm, what do you do?

Participant: Um, err I work for a err, a charitable organisation called (name), I’m employed basically as a cleaner but the majority of my work is helping keep an eye on the residents and it’s all about promoting erm, independent living erm so obviously there’s not a warden at the place where I work but erm I’m like the eyes and the ears really.

Interviewer: OK, and how old are your kids?

Participant: I have (name) who is 25 and married and doing very well and I’m very proud of her. I’ve got (name) who has just turned 15, a week ago, who is a difficult child, challenging, but we’re coming out the other end after a very dark time. And I have my little boy (name) who is 7 and who is a delight.

Interviewer: OK, and is it (name of second daughter) who we are talking about today?

Participant: Yes, yes

Interviewer: OK, um can you just tell me a little bit about what you do in your spare time when you’re not working and looking after the kids and things?

Participant: Um, well it’s always very nice, we’re very lucky we’ve got a lovely network of friends. We socialise when we can afford it, unfortunately we’re not wealthy but we work very hard me and my husband erm. Yeah I mean we love going to see, we love gigs and music, we love going to festivals- we're going to (festival name) again this year

Interviewer: Oh that sounds really interesting

Participant: Our 12th, 15th (festival)- they all kind of blur into one. But we’re very happy.

Interviewer: OK so who’s at home, who’s at home with you?

Participant: Um, (eldest daughter) unfortunately doesn't anymore- she’s married and doing a PhD down in (location). I miss her very, very much. Unfortunately I don’t see her half as much as I would like to

Interviewer: That’s understandable

Participant: We’re very close despite the distance. So at home we’ve got myself and my husband (name) with (name of second daughter and son).

Interviewer: OK, so is it OK if we talk a little bit about (daughter’s) periods so when they started and things like that?

Participant: She was around 13 when she started. I thought they were gonna come for quite a while because she’s quite hormonally challenged erm so I knew when it was coming and err yeah she’s been having regular periods since then.

Interviewer: OK so she’s regular, she has a period every month?

Participant: Well she’s on the contraceptive pill and I found out a couple of times that she’s carried on taking it to miss a period which I’ve advised her… personally I didn’t want her to go on the pill because I thought it was far too young to interfere with your body’s system at that age but if you met (daughter) you’d understand that you can’t tell her anything. So erm yeah, she’s missed a few but she’s getting more regular. More regular.

Interviewer: So can you tell me about any pain or symptoms that she has?

Participant: She complains. But she’s erm, she’s, she’s quite dramatic so what we would call like maybe a mild period pain- I know it makes me sound really unsympathetic towards her but she’ll complain that it’s really bad when I know it’s just normal what we all go through fortunately.

Interviewer: OK, and is that just tummy pain or…

Participant: Well she’s told us she’s had ebola when she’s had it and that she’s had things like that (laughs) that it’s, it’s dramatized.

Interviewer: OK, so when she first started getting her periods did she get discomfort or tell you about discomfort straight away or did it take a bit of time to come?

Participant: No no she, I think she, she quite enjoyed the fact that they’d arrived and maybe, it was ‘the curse’ and that she was gonna milk it for all it’s got (laughs)

Interviewer: OK, OK. So um, what type of things does she do to relieve it?

Participant: Paracetamol, that’s all that can be done. Erm, my advice to her is just like keep clean. Rest when you feel like that. Maybe have an early night. Erm, hot water bottle. Chocolate... that always goes down very well

Interviewer: Uhuh, yeah

Participant: Err, it’s more the erm, the moods, that’s what’s quite challenging. And she’s, she’s bad enough without being hormonal so when the hormones do arrive it can be quite erm volatile.

Interviewer: Erm, OK and the moods, is that purely down to the hormonal things or is that as well because she’s in a bit of discomfort and she’s more….

Participant: I think it.. she just relishes the idea that she’s got a really good excuse to be angry and be grumpy.

Interviewer: OK, and is that with every period?

Participant: No, but the one she just had. And it was… I notice she’ll, she’ll go through towels… because she doesn’t dispose of them properly, sometimes I get to actually see and it’s not what I would constitute as a heavy period.

Interviewer: OK

Participant: Yeah. Although this last period she had a couple of weeks ago, which seemed to sync in with mine… so it was not a happy house (laughs) erm, she was quite heavy and I think it shocked her a bit and I was trying to explain to her that this is probably the way it’s gonna be… things are kicking in properly now.

Interviewer: Yeah, how did she, how did she take that? Can you tell me a bit about that conversation?

Participant: I, I can’t repeat a lot of it (laughs) of what she said but um, she, she, she was just very very difficult. Very very volatile. More volatile than she’s ever been and I was very erm, what's the word… sensitive cause I too was going through it and didn’t really need anyone shouting at me when I was trying to hold it all together so…

Interviewer: OK, so because it synced it was a particularly difficult time for both of you

Participant: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Well erm, can you tell me a little bit ab out… you said she was on the contraceptive pill. Did you go with her to the doctors?

Participant: No, she went all on her own. She went behind my back. Every time she has an appointment she doesn’t want me going with her.

Interviewer: OK, and how do you feel about that?

Participant: Well, I was very upset initially. But as I’ve learnt with (daughter) over many issues, there’s no point in getting myself to that state. Um, also if I show any sort of weakness then she’ll think that erm… well then she’ll acuse me of not going with her. I can’t win, I’m in a no win situation so… head down, mouth shut, get on with it (laughs)

Interviewer: OK, so can you tell me a little bit about erm.. has she ever been to the doctors or anything about period pain?

Participant: No, no.

Interviewer: OK, has she ever wanted to or mentioned that she would?

Participant: No

Interviewer: No, OK. And does she sort of manage it by herself or does she?

Participant: Yeah, yeah, yeah pretty much. Pretty much and I’m the one she’ll have a good shout at when she needs to or she’ll have a meltdown and a little cry and then we might have a little cuddle when she’s calmed.

(youngest child comes into the interview room): (name) when are you going to bed?. Mum takes child out and then comes back for the interview.

Interviewer: OK, so can you tell me a little bit about how it impacts on her life? You mentioned how you know she complains about pain and things like that

Participant: It just makes her a bit more whiney and a bit more difficult and you can give her a million pounds and it wouldn’t be good enough. You’ve just got to roll along with it, ride it along. Like many girls, they can get a bit unreasonable, a bit emotional. A bit fragile, a bit volatile (laughs). She’s like that anyway so it just enhances it.

Interviewer: OK and how about things like school. Does it ever impact on whether she’ll go to school?

Participant: Oh in the past it has been the best reason not to go to school even though I’ve explained to her that millions of women, even when they’ve got really chronic period pain which is awful, still have to go along and get on with it but she’ll see that as it’s, it’s a freebie day off. She has taken days off in the past. But she hasn’t, the last 6 months she’s been better because I think she’s realised that, that she’s flogging a dead horse really (laughs).

Interviewer: Ok, so when she’s asked for time off have you always said no?

Participant: Yeah, I’ve always been like that with all my children. They have to have a leg hanging off or something if they’re gonna have a day off.

Interviewer: OK, and how about… so when she does, when she does go to school and she’s sort of asked for a day off because of it, has she ever come home as a result of it?

Participant: No, I get phone calls, texts, “oh god I’m dying, oh god I’m awful” and then she’ll come home have a big smile on her face and tell me about what a good day she’s had so it’s, I take it, I know it sounds cruel but I take it all with a pinch of salt.

Interviewer: OK, and how about- does she talk to any teachers or anything like that about it?

Participant: No. No, she’s quite guarded.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

Participant: No, I just think she err, she just likes to exploit it when she’s at home.

Interviewer: OK. And how about things like PE- has it ever interfered with whether she would do physical activity at school?

Participant: Well, she didn’t really do a lot of PE lessons at school when she was there.

Interviewer: She’s not into PE or anything like that then?

Participant: She’s not into school. Not really… she doesn’t go to mainstream school.. she goes to erm, it’s erm err a career unit, an educational unit that she goes to for children who maybe struggle with mainstream school. And she.. she did knuckle down last year finally but unfortunately it was too little too late and her card was already marked and they weren't prepared to accept her back into the next term which is…

Interviewer: That must have been difficult.

Participant: It was, it was awful. It was the fact that she had pulled her finger out and she had been trying and I think she felt quite sort of um, demoralised by it really. And me and her dad, we know all her faults but we will always also defend her and it wasn’t fair. It wasn’t fair. But I had to explain to her that it, it was out of our hands. She’s done so much damage that there was nothing more we could do about it.

Interviewer: OK and was that through behaviour at school?

Participant: Yeah, not attending school, her behaviour at school, language, she’s aggressive erm but a lot of that was down to the type of people she was hanging around with and not making friends wisely. Fortunately she'’ gently manoeuvred away from these people who were a terrible influence and we’re noticing a big difference at home. She’s still, not great but nothing as bad as she was.

Interviewer: OK, OK. Erm, can you tell me a bit about her social life and things like that. So would she, if she was on her period and how she was feeling would she ever not go out with her friends or…

Participant: Yeah, I think there’s been a few times yeah when she just can’t be bothered with it and I think she just wanted to sort of curl up and you know, sleep it away.

Interviewer: Yeah. Em OK, and how about family activities. So if it was like Christmas or…

Participant: No, no it doesn’t effect anything like that unless she was in a mood but as I’ve explained she doesn’t necessarily have to be hormonally induced to put her in a mood.

Interviewer: OK, OK and erm, OK can you tell me a bit about so like her hobbies and things. Has it ever… has she got any hobbies or anything like that?

Participant: Well, she… not really. Like I say, she’s not your, your average girl erm I mean it would be very hard for her to, the first secondary school we sent her to. We sent her to there specifically because it was a performing arts place and she’s always been quite a performer and a fantastic singer and we really thought maybe she would flourish in a place like that. Unfortunately it was not the right decision. Even though we did it with the best intentions.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Participant: Unfortunately it didn’t work out. Erm, then she befriended not so pleasant friends who she seemed to be drawn to and that’s her social life, that’s her activities, that’s what she wants to do. Now she’s got a slightly nicer bunch of friends, they’re into car meets and car shows and stuff but they all seem to be a better influence on her. They’re a bit more grown up as well and I think that’s what she needs.

Interviewer: That’s good. So erm, can you tell me how it impacts on your life so if (daughters name) is complaining of a bit of discomfort and is hormonal, she’s on her period… how does that impact on your life?

Participant: It’s horrible, horrible. When she’s feeling really rotten and really miserable then it’ll be vented, especially at me erm and that’s the way it is but we’re so used to it now we just get on with it. We don’t fight against it. Erm yeah just try not to take it personally anymore like we used to.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. OK. And how about if she’s, yeah if she’s at home and she’s erm being difficult

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: How does that impact on sort of family relationships?

Participant: Oh it can, it can just cause a terrible atmosphere in the house and it, it’s upsetting especially for (her younger brother), he finds it, because he’s very good natured and he doesn’t like upset and he doesn’t like arguing or rows or any kind of sort of bad atmosphere erm so he’s the one I get upset for because he doesn’t understand all that, especially when it does come down to like if it’s hormonally provoked.

Interviewer: So it’s difficult to explain.

Participant: Yeah, yeah course it is, course it is

Interviewer: Are you the main person that she talks to about her periods

Participant: Yes, no she wouldn’t talk to her dad, she’d talk to me

Interviewer: Can you talk to me about maybe why that is?

Participant: I think she gets quite embarrassed like with boys or men and she’s very close to her dad so I, I’d like to think- especially when she gets older I think she will go talk to her dad about anything, they’re very you know but when it comes to things like that she gets a bit embarrassed

Interviewer: Yeah, so it might be easier to talk to mum

Participant: Yeah, I think so, I think that’s a maturity thing as well

Interviewer: And how about friends? Does she talk to her friends about her periods…

Participant: I think so, when, she’s got a couple of nice friends that I approve of, some of them I don’t but the ones, they’re the ones that I don’t mind coming into our home and I’ve heard them having little girly discussions and things like that. That’s quite normal I think.

Interviewer: Yeah. How about her older sister? Does she ever talk about stuff or would she ever talk about stuff like that with her?

Participant: Hmm, I think she’d like to, but she builds up such walls with people and she’s a very proud girl, very stubborn girl and I think she, where she thinks she’s always seeing weaknesses in people, she’d see that as a weakness, if someone was allowing her to… she would think that her sister would be looking at her being a bit weak. Whereas we keep trying to tell her that’s not a weakness, it’s a quality.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK.

Participant: I think she will, when she’s older, in time. She’s only just 15. It’ll come.

Interviewer: Yeah, and what type of things from your own experiences did you talk to her about period pain and things before she started her periods?

Participant: Yeah I’ve always, always talked. I mean she will ask me erm anything related to women’s stuff, any, she will come to me and speak to me about things so I know that if she was worried about anything she would come and tell me.

Interviewer: And what type of things did you tell her to expect coming up to it?

Participant: It’s, it’s not the end of the world, it can make you feel a bit grotty, it can make you feel a bit tired, a bit icky, but it happens to every woman and it’s part of being a woman and part of life and in a way it’s great because when it happens it means you can go on in the future and have children. So it’s just your body doing what it’s meant to do.

Interviewer: Have you noticed any change since she started the contraceptive pill? So like, in sort of her discomfort or…

Participant: No, not at all

Interviewer: So it’s been the same?

Participant: Yeah, pretty consistent

Interviewer: Yeah. Does it impact on her life in any other way so her self esteem or how she feels in herself?

Participant: It’s hard to tell with (daughter)m very hard but then sometimes I think when she is being volatile it is because she’s feeling a bit bad about herself and she eats a lot.

Interviewer: Is that more around period time?

Participant: I’d say it’s a good excuse but then we’re all guilty of that, because that’s when I can have my chocolate cheesecake when mine come and mine are high days and holidays now so I make the most of my chocolate (laughs)

Interviewer: (laughs) so can I ask how it affects your life at all? Are there any other ways that it affects you?

Participant: Um, like I said only the moods but then she can be like that without it whereas it, maybe… if I know she’s got a period then I can accept it a lot better and it’s easier to walk away because I know when I’ve felt like that where… but (daughter) doesn’t know how to filter what’s coming out. Where some of us will want to go and cry, she will go and rant at someone and normally me.

Interviewer: OK. So it’s more difficult for you. How does that impact on your relationship with her?

Participant: It’s very up and down, very up and down but it’s getting a lot better and she has been very loving lately. It’s taken me by surprise how loving she can be but it’s lovely you know I, we have a lot more nicer times.

Interviewer: That’s good. So you said that the last time she had a period she was a lot heavier. Did she experience more pain then as well?

Participant: Yeah I think it was the heaviness of it that took her by surprise. And I could see, as I said I saw the evidence and it was what, it’s normally what I would experience whereas before it’s what… mine started off heavy and were heavy all the way through my entire life whereas she started off with a little stream and now it’s getting more. But then next month of whatever it could go back to being light again…

Interviewer: OK… so yeah is there any ways that you cope with you know, the stress levels cause you mentioned that she can be quite sort of moody and grumpy around that time.

Participant: I take myself off to be honest, especially if it’s during the week. I shower (younger brother), put him to bed, get myself showered, get him settled, and if she’s lurking about waiting to be like a little troll (laughs) I go up to my bedroom and I watch telly upstairs.

Interviewer: So just come out of it

Participant: Well sometimes she’ll come find me in there and still have a go at me b ut I can try (laughs)

Interviewer: OK, OK,

Participant: Until I get my escape pod (laughs)

Interviewer: (laughs) yeah, OK. Erm, does it ever impact on her sleep?

Participant: No, not that I’ve noticed.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that you would like to talk about today about (daughters) periods?

Participant: There’s nothing really outstanding that’s coming to mind. I think she’s had a prett easy ride

Interviewer: And is that in comparison to what you’ve experienced?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK, thank you very much, is OK if I stop the recording now?

Participant: Of course it is