Participant 12

Duration: 38.26

Mother of dysmenorrheic girl (16 years old)

Interviewer: OK, so could you start off by telling me a bit about yourself?

Participant: I am a teacher of dental nursing

Interviewer: Mhmm

Participant: So I spend most of my time with dental students working either in their own practice or teaching them the theory. I do very little past that so I’m working most of the time, I sort of do 4 days a week rather than 5, then the rest of the time I’m obviously at home looking after (daughter) and the home.

Interviewer: OK, so (name of daughter) is your daughter.

Participant: (name) is my only daughter yes, is my only child.

Interviewer: OK, how old is she?

Participant: She’s 17 next week.

Interviewer: OK so who’s at home?

Participant: My husband, myself, and (daughter).

Interviewer: Ok and what types of things do you do outside of work and in the home and things like that? Have you got any hobbies?

Participant: My semi-paid hobby is um contemporary embroidery so I spend my time making things and designing embroiderys and all kinds of bits and pieces. Some for commission and some just for fun. Um not always successfully- at the moment I’m rather busy so I don’t have much time but that’s the plan, that’s what kind of keeps me sane and keeps me out of mischief so we, we’re doing huge amounts at the moment um, (daughter) has some interesting issues that we have to work through so it’s rather quiet at the moment. Sometimes we go out and she’s still quite a family person, she’s still very much a home person so she’s just quite happy doing things with her parents which is quite strange for a 17 year old, normally I’d expect a 17 year old to be very independent and particularly not wanting to be with us. So we go out, she likes vintage things so we often go round the markets and pick up some vintage clothes and pick up some bits and pieces so those kinds of things.

Interviewer: That sounds nice. Sorry, you mentioned that (daughter) has got some issues that she’s dealing with. Erm, what…

Participant: She suffers, she’s had post-traumatic stress disorder and suffer from quite severe anxiety at the moment so generalised anxiety from an issue a few years back but it impacts on her daily life erm in many ways.

Interviewer: Is she receiving treatment for that?

Participant: She receives, at the minute we’re going through a second lot of CBT so we’re working very carefully with her erm CBT counsellor to try and get her to be a little less anxious about daily life.

Interviewer: OK. OK. So, sorry- how old are you?

Participant: 51

Interviewer: 51. So if it's OK, could we talk about (daughter)’s period-related pain?

Participant: Mhmm

Interviewer: OK so could you start by telling me about when she started her periods?

Participant: Her periods started, they’d be just over- about 18 months ago, she was late. So she was nearly 15. Now whether that was to do with the fact that she was severely underweight, I- we don’t know. I was late- I was nearly 16 so it could well be hereditary but it could well be the fact that she was severely underweight. Erm, not for any reason, not for an eating disorder reason, I think she just burns it up so quickly I don’t think I’ve ever seen a child eat so much food and never put an ounce of weight on. It wasn’t until we started to manage her post traumatic stress that she started to put enough weight on, she was only 6, she was under 7 stone. And so once we sort of got her past that 7 stone barrier then they started.

Interviewer: OK, OK um so can you tell me, when she started her periods- did the period pain start at the same sort of time?

Participant: Yes. The first one wasn’t so bad then the pain kicked in from there and it, it’s quite severe.

Interviewer: OK, and the pain is it always with her periods? Or does she have some without pain?

Participant: As far as I’m aware she says she always has severe pain and there’s none where, I think there’s been one or two where I thought it was settling a little bit because it wasn’t quite so challenging from a pain point of view- how much of that’s related to anxiety is something we’re still trying to unravel but to her it, it’s very severe.

Interviewer: OK, OK so can you talk to me a little bit about her symptoms so you talked about severe pain- is that just abdominal pain or…

Participant: It’s abdominal pain and she takes methanamic acid or she has been up till now because we had to get some intervention but it makes her feel sick- it’s very, very painful. And it’s usually the first couple of days and then it eases off but then the sickness kicks in after that and then she feels her sickest towards the end of her cycle.

Interviewer: OK, so we’ve got the pain and the sickness. Has she got, are there any other symptoms that fall in line with that?

Participant: Not so much from a, a pain point of view, just she worries very much about the pain starting, she worries about erm being, they’re quite heavy so she worries about the physical signs of a period being there and it stops her from doing things that she would ordinarily do. I mean she’s having time off school, and she refuses to leave the house and she refuses to visit anyone so it’s all built up around that.

Interviewer: OK and that’s with every period?

Participant: And that’s with every period and is getting worse and I think it’s now getting worse because she now, she spends a week anticipating when it is, and that worries her and then it comes on and it’s the physicality as well as the little disturbance and it takes her a week to get over it.

Interviewer: OK, so this is 3 weeks…

Participant: 3 weeks out of 4

Interviewer: That it’s causing her a lot of anxiety and a lot of stress.

Participant: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: OK, just going back, how is her health generally? So other than the PTSD and the anxiety, generalised anxiety… has she got any medical conditions?

Participant: No

Interviewer: No, OK, OK so could we talk a bit about the treatments and the interventions that she’s had for, so you said she was on the methanamic acid- was that prescribed by doctor…

Participant: Yes we had tried the usual with the sort of over the counter medicines and it wasn’t, it wasn’t working so her doctor prescribed methanamic acid but we recently, last month took her back because that’s now not having as much of an effect but it also bringing its own side effects with making her feel sick so they popped her on one of the contraceptive pills to try and balance out her reactions. I don’t think she’s started them yet, I think she was waiting for, they went to a party yesterday, she was waiting for that. I think she was worried there was going to be some breakthrough bleeding and she didn’t want to go to a party if that was about to happen so I think, so we’ve got that intervention more for control of pain rather than contraception.

Interviewer: Yeah, what are hopes for the contraceptive pill? Do you think it’s going to make it better or….

Participant: I’d like to think so, I’d like to think it balances it out and eases off the pain so she doesn’t feel she has to, that she’s worried about it happening because unfortunately she’s got 40 years of it and if she worries constantly about it then it’s obviously it’s gonna upset her so my hope is that it just balances it out so she can cope with it.

Interviewer: OK, so when the doctor, was it the doctor that suggested the contraceptive pill?

Participant: Yes

Interviewer: OK so when they suggested that, how did you feel, how did you both feel about that?

Participant: Obviously I wasn’t in the consultation because (daughter) went in on her own because she’s post 16 so she was quite happy to talk about that herself. I would much rather she was comfortable with her daily life and if that’s what we have to do, then that’s what we have to do. I’m, I’m not worried, it’s maybe not the ideal thing but if it makes (daughter)’s life bearable then I’m fine, I don’t have a problem with it.

Interviewer: Why would you, why would it not be the ideal thing? If there are any concerns, do you mind explaining what they would be?

Participant: I think from a mums point of view, to put someone on the contraceptive pill so early and with the potential side effects of long-term use, as a person I can’t say anything because I did the same thing at 16 so I can’t, I can’t, no way can I say that (daughter) can’t do that but you think well what will happen if she is on it for however many times, does she really want to do it, cause it’s not really contraceptive based it doesn’t really matter if she misses one but are the expectations high, too high. So it’s just that kind of filling your body full of drugs that maybe, if you can manage in another way you don’t need to. But overriding I just want her to be a calm, happy young lady.

Interviewer: Yeah, that’s understandable. Can you tell me about how the doctor s are with her and how they responded when she went for period-related pain?

Participant: According to (daughter), she was very happy, they were very open with her and treated her like an adult and actually accepted what she said. She would only go and see a female doctor, which I think is understandable at her age

Interviewer: Yeah

Participant: and apparently the practitioner was very understanding, very open and believed what she said and didn’t say you know, buck your ideas up you just got to put up with it.

Interviewer: OK, that’s good, OK so what initially made her seek medical help? Did you want her to go, did she feel she needed to go and get help for period pain? Was it the heaviness as well? What was the initial cause for that?

Participant: I think, I think it was a bit of all of it really- she never likes to say anything until I push her. And it’ll get to the point where she’ll just withdraw on herself and say it’s fine, it’s fine, it’s fine- when it probably isn’t, so in a way it was probably me saying we can’t continue with this- I can’t have you in this much pain, this much distress- it will get better but at this time in her life, so it’s probably me saying and I think it was as much about the pain and the heaviness and me realising that obviously something was there and just encouraging her to go.

Interviewer: OK, so can you just talk to me a bit about if she’s had any other treatments, so you said about over-the-counter medication- is there anything else that she does to relieve the pain other than..

Participant: Well, we’ve used, we’ve used the usually analgesics so paracetamol, ibuprofen and those bits and pieces. She uses hot water bottles, we’ve done a bit of yoga so we had some yoga, my friends a yoga teacher so she gave us some exercises to do. Erm trying to get (daughter) to get up and do some exercise rather than curl up in a ball and try and do it that way, and that’s about, that’s the treatment we’ve done rather than the medication.

Interviewer: Do you find any of that helps at all?

Participant: I think it does, if I can get her up and get, the metanamic acid works better if she’s up and active so the physicality of walking around and doing something- but it depends on how, how, how she is as to whether she’ll do it. She just wants to curl up in a ball sometimes and hide.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK. Erm, do you know that cause of her period pain, do you know or does she know why she gets such severe period pain?

Participant: I don’t think we do, I don’t think we know particularly why. As far as we’re aware, there’s nothing physically causing it apart from the normal contraction of the lining and that’s why, but we don’t know if there’s anything else.

Interviewer: Has she had any examinations or anything like that?

Participant: No, no

Interviewer: OK, erm and what are your expectations for the future? I understand that might be difficult to….

Participant: (laughs) yeah where do I take it with this child. Ideally to get her into a regime where she can manage not to let it overtake her life, cause that’s what it’s doing.

Interviewer: Yeah

Participant: Christmas we weren't able to go anywhere because her period was due and then it arrived, whether, whether it’s just a catalyst for the rest of her anxiety, that’s not for me to know because pain is one where you can’t measure it, it’s her experience, it’s her pain, if she says it’s a 10 out of 10 I can’t argue that but it would be nice if we could get her to a point where she can manage it and live her life because the last month she had 3 days off school because of it

Interviewer: How do you feel about that?

Participant: you know, it’s sad that she, that that happens to her because she just feels desperate, just absolutely desperate, because normally she’s a lively you know, chatty young lady but it absolutely wipes her out. It obviously is painful- you can see it in her face but it’s wrapped up in so many things but it’s affecting her life in a big way.

Interviewer: How do you feel about, is she taking school off every month?

Participant: I think it’s not every month, it’s becoming that way, it’s becoming that way. We managed GCSE’s by, thankfully timing them, luckily the timing of them was OK and she knows that if she’s got to go in then she will, but it’s becoming easier just to say I can’t go in.

Interviewer: Do you worry about the impact of that on her….

Participant: Big style, bi, big style cause I don’t want that to happen because if it does then she might not do so well in her A-levels and she’s doing OK at the minute but she had to drop one because she just couldn't cope but also she’d like to do a part-time job but she won’t be able to if she can’t get up out of bed and go and do that job. And it’s a balancing act between how much do you push her to do it and then how much do you give her support and say this is exceptional and understand, it’s not one I’ve actually manage to succeed yet.

Interviewer: How are the school, do you tell them why she takes time off or…

Participant: The school are fine, I don’t know if (daughter) tells them but I’ve been into school with her permission, because I’m still convinced that most of it is wrapped up with the anxiety- whilst the pain is real I think if she wasn’t quite so anxious we could deal with it in a different way.

Interviewer: Yeah, so maybe if she didn’t feel so anxious, she could go to school?

Participant: She’d still be in pain and she may well have to take some time off school but she could recover from it- she might be able to accept, and this is only suspicion I’ve got no proof but she might be able to accept that I know, when she wasn't so anxious last year she could cope with the pain. She understood that it would last a couple of days then wear off whereas now we’re on a 3 week cycle, a week before, the whole week is completely wiped out, she refuses to go anywhere and then the week after she’s worrying in case it’s gonna come back.

Interviewer: OK, yeah, OK. Could you- so we’ve talked about school and how it impacts on that erm, how about social events and things like that, how’s it impacted on that?

Participant: It just stops the whole thing

Interviewer: Is that for the 3 weeks or the one week?

Participant: When she’s physically on her period, she just won’t go out with friends, she won’t go and visit people, she won’t go and do anything but you can see it building up just it becomes a problem and it’s starting so while she will go out and she will do things, she won’t go out as comfortable.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK, and how does it make you feel when…

Participant: Extremely frustrated, extremely frustrated. I try not to lose my temper but it drives me insane (laughs). Only because I can’t, because her anxiety is so strong and she knows it’s totally irrational but there’s nothing you can do. So it’s just leave her behind and I feel guilty, or we go out and try and cajole her along and she just doesn’t cope so it, t’s having a big impact.

Interviewer: OK so if you do leave her behind, how does that affect your experience when you’ve gone out and perhaps had to leave her at home and you know she’s anxious and in pain?

Participant: It doesn’t make you feel, it isn’t a very nice experience and I worry about her, I worry about how, how sad she is because you’re never quite sure what reaction she’s going to have when she’s in the house on her own you know it’s quite a lonely experience and she knows she’s missing out on things which makes it worse so I don’t do that too often, I never go out and leave her for very long. I just try to come back and be there really.

Interviewer: And how about your husband? Does he feel the same as you do you think?

Participant: I think he’s probably more frustrated cause he’s got two of us who are having PMT constantly so I think he’s probably fed up but he tends to just, he’s very placid, he tends to just hide, he’s the good cop I’m usually the bad cop and he’s the good cop and he sorts her out a bit. She goes to him if she needs a measured response but no we, we’ve had to erm, it’s quite frustrating because we’ve had to erm go back to her being quite small where we have to have always one person at home rather than two so if it’s an important social event, he’ll often go on his own.

Interviewer: How do you feel if he does?

Participant: Sometimes I’m quite glad of it if it’s family and I don’t want to go (laughs) but at Christmas for example, he had to go to his parent because (daughter) refused to go which is highly unsual because all the family were there which is unusual and I had to go to places on my own as well and it becomes frustrating.

Interviewer: Do your family understand?

Participant: Some of them know, most of them don’t, most of them we haven’t gone there, some of them we’ve explained and they fully understand what’s going on.

Interviewer: OK, and with the ones who don’t know, when your husband or you go to events alone, does that ever cause any difficulties?

Participant: No, we just tell them she’s got a cold (laughs) just lie blatantly and actually they’re not very interested so it doesn’t matter.

Interviewer: Erm so you mentioned her friends, has it impacted on her friendships at all?

Participant: No, they’re lovely, they, they know she’s weird, they know that she’ll not, that there are certain things she won’t do but from a period point of view it does have a major impact on the way she’ll react with her friends. How much of that they know, I don’t know (inaudible).

Interviewer: Do you think it is easy for her to talk about her period pain with her friends or…

Participant: I don’t know, she’s fairly open- she’ll talk to me about it which I wouldn't have done with my mum so she talks to me about it but whether she will with her friends I don’t know.

Interviewer: OK, erm so does she, when it does affect her social life with her friends, and she might not go out during that week, does that cause any difficulty within her friendship group or anything like that? Has that ever cased her any anxiety?

Participant: I think it does, I think it does I think she feels she’s letting herself down as well as them and I think she gets a bit cross as well because quite rightly they just go off and do the things they want to do and she feels left out, I think it does.

Interviewer: Yeah. And how about the way she feels about herself? Does the period pain and how difficult and severe it is, does it affect how she feels about herself?

Participant: I think it probably does to some degree, she says she hates being a girl. I think it does affect her confidence in certain situations so yeah I think it does, I think it really impacts and her self-esteem goes down massively, ‘I can’t do this’, ‘I can’t do that’ , ‘I can’t cope’, ‘I’m not a very nice person’, this that and the other and when she stops and she then when it’s over the young, bright, vibrant girl is back out again and she’s back, she’s back on again.

Interviewer: And how is that for you to see that…

Participant: It’s nice but I dread walking on egg shells, I dread, I dread it big style because it’s nice to see he, I know nobody could be happy all of the time but it’s nice to see her and her, her mood just drops instantly, you can see it, you can see the change in her so yeah it’s nice when she’s on form and being herself.

Interviewer: OK, so how about future plans and family holidays, things like that? Does it impact on if you went for a trip or to stay somewhere and it would fall around that 3 week gap in the month- how would that affect it?

Participant: It’s difficult to plan, erm and becoming increasingly difficult because as soon as I say shall we do this, shall we do that, ‘maybe’, ‘I’m not sure’, ‘yeah’, and we can’t plan. The summer last year, there was a point in May where there was a point in question, we were meant to be doing something, her period started ‘I’m not gonna do it’, and it’s just so challenging so it impact on everything we do trying to work out, so if it’s early she goes into meltdown, if it’s late she goes into meltdown- she’s got it down to the hour. I don’t know obviously what she’s said but she’ll say ‘this is early I wasn’t expecting it, why is it always at the end of the month when all of the things happen’, so it is a real, she is really focussing on it.

Interviewer: Yeah, it’s become quite a, yeah focus.

Participant: Mhmm

Interviewer: OK, does that impact on how you and your husband plan things as well?

Participant: Yeah we just don’t, we don’t.

Interviewer: How do you feel about that?

Participant: I think I’m at the point where to be honest I’m so used to it I don’t really give it much of a second thought but it’s hard to plan. I don’t know how many times we’ve tried to book something and we’ve lost money on tickets, we’ve lost money on.. you know we just have to forego things and things in going away with school we’ve had to pull away and it, it impacts on everything.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK so it financially impacts you as well?

Participant: Yes and that’s only money, it doesn’t matter in the long run but I know it annoys (daughter), it upsets her as well because we’ll say you know we’ll do something and she’ll say ‘yeah, yeah, yeah’ and then we know that 3 weeks is just, well certainly that week she just refuses to do it.

Interviewer: So does she find it distressing to, not let you down but…

Participant: Yeah of course she does. Yeah she finds it very distressing to tell, because obviously that’s something else which she’s now got to say ‘I can’t do’.

Interviewer: OK, so has that impact, you say that the periods have got worse over time, has that impact got worse as well?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK so everything…

Participant: Just everything now at the point where we pull it apart is something for someone more qualified than I am to do that because I really don’t know how much of that is her physical pain or emotional attachment to that and how she relates to that, I really don’t know.

Interviewer: And erm, you said she’s having CBT at the moment, have you discussed that with her counsellor?

Participant: Now she’s post 16, unless (daughter) gives me permission I have no choice in and she doesn’t want me to do that yeah and of course I could if I wanted to but to drop her trust would be more, more detrimental than just letting her work through it

Interviewer: OK so perhaps if she did give you permission, would…

Participant: I’d be happy to go and say look this is causing a problem, but unfortunately her counsellor is a bloke so I do not feel at 16 that she can open that up, I think she’s still trying to build trust with it. Although the physical symptoms are definitely there, she’s not, she doesn’t have the most (unidentifiable word) in the world but you can see when she’s in pain she’s as white as a sheet, she looks like a little ghost.

Interviewer: OK

Participant: I know it’s quite sad really isn’t it, being female we kind of get on with it but in a way we don’t really have to, why should she be suffering, it’s really hard.

Interviewer: I can imagine, does your husband find it hard as well to see her like in pain?

Participant: I think he probably does, I think he doesn’t like to see her like that but he just disappears and he just says, yeah we’ll cope with it and off he goes (laughs).

Interviewer: Yeah, you’ll cope with it

Participant: Yeah, I’ll cope with it (laughs), I’ll deal with it, I scream, she screams then off he hides (laughs).

Interviewer: (laughs)

Participant: He goes into the study and shuts the door- pretends he’s working he’s not, he just puts his headphones on and pretends he’s working but he’s not (laughs)

Interviewer: Trying to get away from the women in the house?

Participant: Yeah (laughs)

Interviewer: OK so, we’ve talked about how it impacts on your social life and your ability to plan things, but how about your things that you do around the house? You said she, when she is in pain, she’s housebound really during her period so does that impact on what you do housework wise or anything like that- your normal daily living?

Participant: No we just kind of, I think generally we just kind of get on with it, she’s um, she’ll either be in her room or on the sofa watching TV or whatever so no, we try to just go to work and do what we have to do.

Interviewer: OK and um, have you had to pick her up from school or anything when she’s been in pain?

Participant: No, no, no she goes, if she goes to school she sort of hangs around but no, never had to go and collect her no.

Interviewer: OK and how about erm relationship between you and your husband so if you’re, if you’re both worrying about (daughter) or you’re feeling distressed because she’s in pain or she’s feeling anxious, does that impact on your relationship and how you guys cope together?

Participant: Usually yeah, usually it does. We just kind of ignore each other and focus on (daughter) and try to get her to, we have a different approach. I’m tough and impatient and my husband’s carry on so generally we scream and shout and my husband’s laid back.

Interviewer: How about your relationship and your husband’s relationship with (daughter) if she’s very distressed by her pain or panicking. Does that impact on your relationship with her and how you enjoy your time together?

Participant: Yes because I end up, it’s like walking on eggshells where we don’t know what to say for the best. If I say something she’ll fly off the handle so it, it is very difficult so I tend to fly I tend to lose it and then she'll go to him and he’ll go to me so we kind of have that little circling the way round but it does, it’s a shame but I don’t know as female I just think ‘for goodness sake we’re female we have to deal’, I know I want it to be the best it can but I don’t want it to impact on your life because you’ve got so much life to live and if this is gonna carry on for however many years we have to find a way through it. (my husband) will give her sympathy and I will think (daughter) you have, we have to do something, we can’t allow that to ruin your life which is what it is at the minute. I don't want to slap her round the head and say for god sakes get on with it but sometimes, and how we have to find a way to manage it.

Interviewer: Yeah. I understand. How do you, you mentioned about going to your husband but how do you cope with, you mentioned that you feel stressed and you worry about her so how do y9ou cope with that, for you?

Participant: Probably one too many glasses of wine. Um and I’ll walk away from it, I sometimes just have to get out and just walk off and do something, go back to textiles and try to do that, because, I, I dunno I just walk away where I can.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Participant: And just literally try to think right I need to be out of here and if I can just get up and walk out.

Interviewer: Do you find that the textiles thing, that that can take your mind off…

Participant: Yes it does yes, I kind of try and drift off into that and try and just chill. Just try to say it really isn’t important, none of this is important, but it is to her, it’s very hard.

Interviewer: Yeah. So, can I ask is there anything else that you would like to talk about that you do or that you feel like you would like to share about (daughter)’s pain or your feelings and your….

Participant: No, I guess you must just think my goodness you’ve opened up a can of worms on this one but it is particularly, but it’s just sad for (daughter), it’s just so distressing and what, whatever the reason for that is, her pain is obviously very real cause I can see it in her face, but whether the anxiety is part of the fact that it’s so bad is, I don’t know, I just wish we could find a way of managing it.

Interviewer: OK… is it OK if I stop the recording?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: Thank you