Participant 23

Duration 26:45

Dysmenorrheic girl (17 years old)

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

Participant: Um I’m from (location), err I work in (location) doing an apprentiship. I left school in November last year then, there’s not a lot to me, I’m not that interesting (laughs)

Interviewer: I’m sure you are, can you tell me a bit about your apprentiship, what you do?

Participant: Well it’s in a Nursery so I’m doing level 2 childcare and maybe just changing nappies and making them food and playing around with them, we have like a really structured routine in one room and in the younger room it’s a lot of just playing around and just doing anything. It’s quite active and it’s fun, I enjoy it.

Interviewer: What made you decide to go into that?

Participant: I’ve always wanted to do childcare since I was little, I was doing child development at school but it was boring, it was so different just reading about it to actually doing it like you can’t be told how to look after a child you need to practice it and that’s what we were doing and I didnt like it so I didn’t go.

Interviewer: OK, how long is your apprentiship gonna last for?

Participant: This one’s 15 months so it should end next February, January time and then I can do my level 3 but I want to do that somewhere else because it’s nice to get the experience at different nurseries so..

Interviewer: So how about hobbies and things you do in your spare time?

Participant: Yeah I go out with friends a lot (laughs) spend a lot of time staying over my friends houses and… I’m trying to say this so politely (laughs)

Interviewer: It’s OK you don’t have to worry about being polite, it’s fine

Participant: Yeah we just watch Netflix most of the time and then roll around the house doing random stuff, making fry ups in the mornings (laughs), that’s what we do, have a massive family breakfast.

Interviewer: That sounds lovely

Participant: It was fun

Interviewer: So are you OK to tell me a little bit about your periods, when they started and things like that?

Participant: Mine started when I was like 10 in primary school, then, it was alright cause I got to stay in at break times and the teachers would make me hot chocolate and I could get out of swimming and everything and then I had them until last November, then the pains with it were quite bad and so I went on the pill for it cause they were quite irregular as well and it made them more regular but more heavy and more painful and so in November I got the implant and then that’s just stopped them altogether. But when I got the implant I had a really long period, it was about a month long, that was, that was pain (laughs)

Interviewer: Was it painful for the whole month?

Participant: Yeah, like constantly

Interviewer: OK and was that in November did you say?

Participant: Yeah that’s when I got the implant

Interviewer: And have you not had any periods since?

Participant: Not since then, none at all

Interviewer: OK, did you start getting period pains when you were 10, when you first started or did it take a while to…

Participant: At first it didn’t start hurting straight away, it made me quite tired to be honest and then I think that’s why they let me stay in at break times cause I didn’t have to do anything and then like sort of secondary school, I started there and at around 12, 13 it started hurting a lot so yeah.

Interviewer: OK and what did you, how did you feel when it started to hurt so was it unexpected…

Participant: It kind of built up, it wasn’t like suddenly like ouch, it kind of built up for a while and I’d just take like ibuprofen or something to kind of stop it and at one point I was prescribed tablets for the pain but they didn’t do a lot so I just stopped having those. I couldn’t go out as much because obviously if you’re in pain you’re not gonna go out.

Interviewer: OK do you get any accompanying symptoms so even if it’s hormonal symptoms or skin…

Participant: Yeah spots on my chin, I get loads of spots on my chin when I come on my period like I still get them now like the sort of time when I would come on my period, I get a spotty chin and then I’d get like, oh I was gonna say something but it’s completely gone from my head, I get like really stress like my brothers would be there like ‘what is wrong with you what is wrong with you, why are you so annoyed’ and I was like I just am you’re just annoying me (laughs)

Interviewer: Yeah, how many siblings have you got?

Participant: I’ve got 2 brothers and a sister who is sleeping because she went out last night as well (laughs)

Interviewer: OK so erm who’s at home, do you live with you brother and sister as well?

Participant: I live with my sister, my brother, my dad, my mum’s in the other room cleaning up after my sister last night and my sister’s in bed, she works in (name of company) so, and my dad’s at work, he works like 24 hour shifts pretty much doing sleep in’s and stuff so, and one of my brothers lives just up the road and then the other one lives in (location).

Interviewer: Erm so, going back to periods and things like that, can you describe the period pain for me so, what it feels like, where it is…

Participant: It’s like just above your bumpa bit (laughs), it’s like a clenching feeling and you have to get into really weird positions to relieve the pain. I have my legs, pretty much legs over the back of the sofa and like rolled up in a ball sort of situation so it’s to like try and dull it a bit.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. What do you find helps to relieve it?

Participant: Doing exercise helped a lot, I used to go running but I don’t anymore cause that’s effort erm and just like running and stuff and like I’d be in school and be like I’m on my period and don't want to do anything and that’s when I first found out that exercise helps because we were doing trampolining at the time and my teacher was like get on the trampoline and see if it makes it feel better and so I did it, and I’ve done trampolining since I was really little so I knew lots of stuff erm and that did make me feel a lot better like moving around a lot. But at the same time the exercise makes it heavier so it works for a while but…

Interviewer: OK and how about the, the other symptoms, you said you get spotty and stress, is there anything you do to help those symptoms?

Participant: There’s nothing I really can do, I use facewash and stuff just like normally what you do when you get spots but and the being stress- there’s nothing you can do about that one except ignore everyone (Laughs)

Interviewer: And when you are feeling a bit stress is that because, is that hormones or is it cause you’re in pain and fed up…

Participant: I think it’s a hormone sort of thing cause it happens before you get the period, once I actually come on the period it doesn’t, I’m not too bothered about it then.

Interviewer: Can you describe to me the time-frame of the pain so does it start before you come on, of when you…

Participant: It starts a couple of days before I come on and then you come on and it’s like constant for like, I have mine for about a week and then so it’s pretty constant for the week pretty much and then there will be a bit of pain afterwards for a day or so then that’s it. You’re good for another 3 weeks.

Interviewer: OK so what other types of things did you do to relive it, so you if you had a tummy ache and not feeling very well, what kind of things? Do you use hot water bottles or hot drinks….

Participant: Well, I’d get like ibuprofen and stuff, just like pain killers and then I’d have like a bath or something just like comfort. Mum would make like hot water bottles and stuff, she’s good with it, then go to bed usually.

Interviewer: Do you find that any of those things worked? Are there any that you prefer to do and know that they would work?

Participant: the hot water bottle usually works and just stops the clenching feeling that you get so usually go with that unless it’s a hot day and you think I can’t do anything.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK so can you talk to me about any patters so were there any times when it would be particularly worse or better like was it the same, did it feel the same every month.

Participant: Yeah, there’s usually be a period… period with two different meanings, that’s weird….at the beginning of the period they’d usually start quite light then go really heavy and then lighten up again and then I’d be spotting again for a few days and then it would finish. And that was pretty much the same every month so…. Yeah

Interviewer: OK so you said you went to the doctor and got prescribed pain killers, can you tell me a bit about that so what led up to you deciding OK I’ll go to the doctors.

Participant: Well I was having, every now and then I’d have a couple of days off school because of it, because it was really painful for me and then that wasn’t helping in anyway so like GCSE’s and everything so that had to do something about it so went to the doctors and just told them all about it and they were like well we could put you on birth control or we can give you pain killers for it so I went on the pain killers for a while and then after that went on the pill so

Interviewer: OK so how did you find the experience of going to the doctors about it, were they quite….

Participant: At first it was embarrassing cause I weren't used to talking about it, it’s like only started really so it was kind of uncomfortable about it but after like the first couple of times talking to the doctors about it, it was fine and no trouble yeah. They don’t like make you feel under pressure or anything so it’s fine.

Interviewer: Did you go to the doctors appointment with anyone?

Participant: Yeah mum

Interviewer: Sorry can I just borrow some tissues?

Participant: Yeah that’s fine

Interviewer: (blows nose)

Participant: Yeah I’d go to the doctors with my mum and then when I went on birth control I didn’t go with anyone because I didn’t think my mum would like it but she was fine when I told her about it, she was like why didn’t you tell me sort of thing that was the only thing she was annoyed about, not saying about it to her.

Interviewer: When did you build up the courage to sort of tell her?

Participant: Well I never really told her, she was like cleaning my room, cause I don't do it and she like, she was like cleaning my room and putting stuff away in my drawers and stuff and she just came and said what are these and I was like they’re for my periods and she was like why, when did this happen and I was like a little while ago and she was like why didn’t you tell me about it and I was like I didn’t want you to be cross with me

Interviewer: OK and was that because your mum might have thought it was for contraception rather than periods?

Participant: That’s exactly what I thought, I didn’t want her to think I was sleeping around or anything so yeah.

Interviewer: Were you relieved when she was quite understanding?

Participant: Yeah, yeah,

Interviewer: OK so you trialled the pill for a while but it didn’t work, can you tell me about when you gave up on that and moved onto the implant?

Participant: Well, I went on the implant last November and for a few months before that the pill wasn’t really doing a lot so I was just like taking it whenever I remembered really, I used to have an alarm on my phone to remind me when to take it but it didn’t really do any good so I just took it whenever and it didn’t change anything really so I went back to the doctors for a pill review and they said have you thought about other forms of contraception and I was like no not really and then they asked if I wanted the implant and they gave me a leaflet about it and said everything it does and like well it’s for 3 years so and then they said you’ll either have regular periods or none at all and that sounded better so I was like yeah I’ll do that and then 2 weeks later I got the implant so.

Interviewer: OK and you’ve had no periods…

Participant: None at all no

Interviewer: OK and is that no pain at all as well?

Participant: No pain, I still get spots when I should be, the sort of time, frame I would come on but I don't get like so moody and I don't get the pains from it so it’s alright.

Interviewer: Good, good, can you tell me a bit about the impact that it had on your life when you was getting pain so you mentioned you had a bit of time off school so can you just tell me a bit about that?

Participant: I would feel a bit detached every couple of months or so and just avoid everything erm and that would like, obviously it impacts on like your school and everything that you’re working with, cause it was sort of GCSE sort of time so it was like I couldn’t really afford to miss days off school and stuff so it was like just getting me behind with school and stuff but after like getting the tablets for the pains, it helped and I’d go to school and stuff like that but I didn’t, I couldn't go swimming or anything, I don't have a swimming costume anymore so I don’t do that (laughs), I couldn’t do that with school or anything so like it was annoying but like yeah…

(mum walks into room)

Mum: Hello, I’m (name)

Interviewer: Hello name, I’m Polly.

Mum: Would you like a cup of tea?

Interviewer: That would be lovely thank you

Mum: Sugar

Interviewer: Yes please, I’m naughty and have 3

Mum: strong?

Interviewer: Yeah, builders tea

Mum: Builders tea… (laughs and walks out)

Interviewer: Thank you. OK and how about when you did go to school, did it impact on how you concentrated on your work or anything?

Participant: Yeah I was really distracted a lot of the time and not paying much attention and then being moody and stuff, the teachers would snap at you a lot and just snap back it’s fine, just kind of a bit of back and forth between the teachers and they were like ‘you’re not usually like this’ and like well things change.

Interviewer: Did you ever explain to them why you were feeling like that?

Participant: No you can’t, it’s not very easy talking to teacher about that cause it’s quite uncomfortable feeling and stuff so I didn’t really want to tell them.

Interviewer: Did you talk to any teachers about it?

Participant: I went to the nurse before, the school nurse was the person that told me I could get a prescription for the pains, for it. So she was the person I spoke to, she said you’ve been having a fair bit of time off you need to kind of sort your act out a bit so I told her what was going on and she was like you can get some prescription pain killers and stuff and things like that so I was like yeah

Interviewer: OK and were you taking time off every month for the pains?

Participant: It wasn’t every month, it was like every couple of months, it made me tired cause it kept me up a couple of times and like just made me stress and I refused to go pretty much, like it’s only down the road but I refused to go cause like school uniform isn’t comfortable to wear when you’ve got your period and everything so I didn’t. I didn’t want to go so I didn’t go.

Interviewer: OK was your mum and dad OK about you taking time off or..

Participant: Not really but there’s not a lot they can do about it if I’m in bed and like I’m not getting out of bed, I’m not going, there’s not a lot they could do. I’d usually lay in till dad had gone to work and then be like ‘mummy I’m so ill’ (laughs)

Interviewer: Yeah, erm what was it about school, other than the uniform that was like really unappealing about going?

Participant: You just have to go and sit there and there’s nothing you can do, you can’t be comfortable or anything, you can’t talk to anyone and when I was on my period I’d usually get like migraines as well and so I didn’t want to be there and I’d have to wear my glasses all day and it’s just annoying. It’s not a comfortable situation to be in and you’re like yeah like feeling you kind of feel like you get smelly with it like, if you use period pads and stuff and you’re having to change all the time and you sit in the toilet and you’re like people must think I’m eating crisps in here or something when you’re getting changed and you’re always paranoid about it leaking or something and it’s, it’s not a nice situation to be in.

Interviewer: And did you talk to your friends about it so if you were having a bit of a bad day and you went into school and had a tummy ache, did you ever ask your friends for paracetamol or anything?

Participant: Yeah, always, always asking for paracetamol and stuff but I didn’t like be like oh I’m in so much pain and stuff cause they’d just be like ‘you’re doing my head in, it’s annoying’ (laughs).

Interviewer: OK so they would give you pain killers if…

Participant: If they had it they would

Interviewer: OK and how about things like social life, you said you like to go out with friends and spend time with friends and like did it ever impact on whether you could do that or whether you felt like it?

Participant: Yeah you just didn't, didn't really, I just didn’t really feel like it at the time and didn’t really want to go out and do stuff but sometimes I’d make myself and leave really early and just be like I just want to go home and it’s like in the summer, last summer, it was a really good summer, like near enough every single day and so I just didn't really, I just didn’t really.

(Mum walks in with tea)

Interviewer: Thank you so much

Mum: Biscuits?

Interviewer: I’m alright thank you

Participant: Can I have a drink please? Lemonade please

(mum leaves)

Interviewer: OK so when you didn’t feel like going out or you wanted to go home early, how were your friends? Were they understanding…

Participant: Well most of the time they were like yeah just go um but there were a few times when everyone was getting together and like ‘why aren’t you coming’ and I just don't feel like it and it’s like well ‘just come out, you’ll feel like it after’ and no I won’t, I won’t and it was like, it just put a bit of tension in it cause like they thought you weren't doing it because you didn’t want to rather than because you didn’t want to because you were in pain sort of thing.

Interviewer: OK and how did that make you feel when that happened?

Participant: It was annoying and really quite stressful and then err, but it gets sorted out quickly cause our lot, we don’t hold grudges, we talk about things straight away like we don’t keep it in or anything so it was resolved easily.

Interviewer: OK so you said you don’t really like swimming when on your period and kind of don’t really want to do much, you like to sleep or find a good position, like do, did it affect whether you could do PE? Did you ever not want to do it or…

Participant: Yeah I would just sit on the side and say I don't want to move and didn’t want to get up and run around, it wasn’t appealing so I didn’t want to do it but then, thinking about doing it and then doing it- you don’t want to do it but then after you do it you feel better but it’s just that first bit where you’re like it hurts then later on you’re like ‘I feel better’.

Interviewer: Yeah, that’s good. So when did you find out that going for a run helped it and stuff like that, when did you start doing that?

Participant: Um it was (cousin) who helped me start running, cause she was doing her marathons and everything then she was like training for them and she was like ‘you should start running’ and I was like I could try that and so I started doing it and then do it like, just cause I was really stress one time and it like calms you down and stuff and that’s when I found out it helps with the pains and stuff really.

Interviewer: OK and so do you, you don’t do that anymore you said?

Participant: I got to the gym, but not for period pains or anything cause I don't get em anymore.

Interviewer: Ok and how about like family activities or anything, say it’s coming up to like Christmas and you’d be on your period or birthdays, you know what I mean anytime you would spend with your family and things like that, did it ever impact on that?

Participant: We don’t really do a lot our lot so it was um, it didn’t really impact anything like we, we’d have family over and stuff, we go see family but you’d be more excited about the fact that it’s Christmas or your birthday or something so you’d just get over it sort of thing.

Interviewer: OK and say if you were going to go away or school trips or anything like that you know, has it impacted…

Participant: Yeah going to the beach and stuff with family, I remember going and being like I can’t get changed or anything cause it’s not convenient so I didn’t have the best of times it was uncomfortable the whole holiday and everything and then didn’t do a lot. I was alright, it wasn’t that bad.

Interviewer: OK can you tell me, did it ever impact on how you felt about yourself so like you self-esteem or…

Participant: Well getting spotty and stuff I’d get self-conscious with it erm I don’t want to see anyone and I don’t want anyone to see me like mountains on my chin or anything…

Interviewer: I understand

Participant: It’s just going to the toilet as well and feeling like I change really regularly in case it started to come out or anything and getting really paranoid about it and sit in the toilet like ripping these things open and you’re like this is so noisy. Yeah that was quite worrying for me…

Interviewer: OK and how about like, would it ever impact on what you would do day-to-day, anything you’d normally get on and do?

Participant: Well to be fair, like weekends and stuff I wouldn't get dressed, I’d just be in pyjamas all day and have a bath or something. I’d just lay on the dofa all day and be comfy like, I wouldn’t really go out and do anything so…. Yeah

Interviewer: OK so it would kind of cause you’d be less like mobile…

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK is there anything else that you want to talk about that we haven’t covered, like any other impact that it’s had or anything you want to mention what you think is a good way of coping with it or anything that makes you feel better or anything that doesn’t make you feel better?

Participant: I dunno, erm, alcohol helps (laughs) that's the explanation for everything with us lot (laughs) but yes just actually doing something, don't worry about like thinking, to actually go and do it just makes you feel better but that’s all I can think of.

Interviewer: Well that’s absolutely fine, is it OK if I can stop the recording?

Participant: Yes that’s fine

Interviewer: Fantastic