Participant 6

Duration: 30.03

Dysmenorrheic girl (16 years old)

Interviewer: OK, so if it’s OK (name), could you start off by telling me a bit about yourself?

Participant: What d’you mean about myself?

Interviewer: Erm so age, school year….

Participant: Oh I’m 16 and I’m in year 11 and so I’m doing GCSE’s at the moment, sort of preparing for those…

Interviewer: How’s that going?

Participant: Erm yeah it’s not too bad at the moment but I think at the moment it’s gonna get a bit stressful (laughs)

Interviewer: Laughs. Erm how about, what are you favourite lessons? What…

Participant: Oh, I like English and I wanna be like a journalist when I’m older yeah and I want to travel to Japan and go there for a bit yeah (laughs)

Interviewer: Oh cool. Erm and how about extra curricula activities?

Participant: Err I like to err, I like to play the piano and read and go out with my friends and that sort of stuff.

Interviewer: OK erm, so you live here, who do you live here with?

Participant: Um my mum and my step-dad and my two cats (laughs)

Interviewer: Laughs. I have two cats too.

Participant: Laughs

Interviewer: Erm so is it OK if I ask you a bit about the pain that you experience?

Participant: Mhmm

Interviewer: OK so, erm so when did your periods start?

Participant: Erm, I’d say, erm, trying to think hang on, when I was about 12, 12 yeah.

Interviewer: OK, erm and did the pain start straight away?

Participant Yeah erm I think it was worse yeah to begin with because, well partly because you’re not used to it as well so it seems like so much worse than it actually is yeah….

Interviewer: OK and where, where is the pain? Can you sort of describe it for me?

Participant: Erm you get it in your lower stomach so like where your womb and stuff is so you can just like get like back pains and obviously you feel tired and your body aches a bit.

Interviewer: OK and do you get any other type of err symptoms?

Participant: Well, you get really moody and really hungry (laughs)

Interviewer: Yeah (laughs). Any other physical symptoms or anything like that?

Participant: Err, no, just usually stomach pain and back pain.

Interviewer: Erm so can you tell me a bit about the intensity of the pain? (pause) Does that change at all over the course of the period?

Participant: It’ll usually begin even before you started it, and that’s the worst I think because it’s like your body is starting to… and then as it ends it’s fine. Usually yeah…..

Interviewer: OK so it’s worse then, does it then get gradually better?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK, erm how long does it normally last for?

Participant: Um, it varies like from, it can be like an hour but then sometimes it can be like for a couple of days really…

Interviewer: Do you get it every period or every other.. or…

Participant: No, it’s just every now and then I think, it’s better now than it was when I was younger.

Interviewer: Has that changed then? Did it used to be more frequent?

Participant: Yeah it used to be worse but now, yeah it’s not so bad.

Interviewer: OK and can you, can you also describe like the type of pain, like what, what it feels like… (pause) if you can.

Participant: It’s kinda like a really harsh kinda squeezing in your stomach and then your back just feels really throbby and achy.

Interviewer: OK and can I ask, have you got any un-related medical conditions or anything like that?

Participant: No

Interviewer: Erm.. so, do you notice any times when the pain is like worse or better?

Participant: Um it’s, it’s kind of worse when you’re more stressed out like you concentrate on it more but then when you’re kind of relaxed it, it doesn’t seem so bad.

Interviewer: OK, and erm can you tell me a bit about the treatment that you’ve had for your pain?

Participant: Because I started the pill which really does help like I think that’s partly the reason why it’s not as bad as it was and also there’s the like taking paracetamol and using hot water bottles and things like that and taking time off school usually kind of helps it a bit yeah…

Interviewer: Yeah, so do you find that the hot water bottles and things like that, are they effective when you use them?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK and what’s been the most effective thing would you say?

Participant: Erm, the pill definitely.

Interviewer: Ok, how long ago did you start taking the pill?

Participant: Erm (pause), I think I’ve been on it for about a year now yeah..

Interviewer: OK and when did you first go to the doctors about it?

Participant: I think it was straight away when I started it actually, yeah pretty much like a year ago…

Interviewer: OK and what erm, what was it like that first time that you went? What happened?

Participant: Well we just spoke to the women and also because my periods used to be really heavy as well and I used to suffer from, suffer from like bloating and erm my skin wasn’t that good so she said well if you want to target all of it as well as the pain then you can just go on the pill and I just thought well… (laughs)… yeah.

Interviewer: OK so did that work straight away or did it take a bit of time….

Participant: I think it took like the first time to kind of see that there was a difference but yeah… yeah I did, it worked quite quickly…

Interviewer: OK and have you had any like examinations or investigations or anything like that?

Participant: No, no..

Interviewer: And erm what about, like if you, if you went to the doctors did they ever sort of explain why you experience the pain. Did they ever talk to you about it?

Participant: No they they don’t, they don’t really, you don’t really get- no doctor will really talk about it to you. It’s more when you have those, those weird like err puberty things that they explain it to you but doctors definitely… no… yeah…

Interviewer: OK and how do you feel about that? Do you feel that you would like….

Participant: It’s kind of annoying because you don’t know why, why it is until I was on some like, have you heard of tumbler?

Interviewer: Yeah

Participant: Well I was on that and it said why it happened and isn’t it like the uterus cutting itself off a bit, like that’s, that’s what it said on there and I was like well it kind of made sense now that I get it but, doctors don’t really say anything.

Interviewer: So it’s more from things like the internet than…

Participant: Yeah the internet rather than actual doctors…

Interviewer: Yeah so do you think it would have helped if they had explained to you a little bit more?

Participant: Yeah, definitely.

Interviewer: How about at school? Has there been any education into///

Participant: Not really the pain, just about what happens and that’s about it really.

Interviewer: And do you think, again, that would have helped?

Participant: I think that would have been better because you’re in school, it’s kind of better because you’re always there, kind of helps for them to talk to you about it…

Interviewer: OK, and maybe like before you…

Participant: Before you start it would be nice.

Interviewer: OK erm, have you tried anything else to relieve your pain other than the hot water bottles, paracetamol and pill?

Participant: Hmm… (pause)… no I think that’s about it yeah…

Interviewer: OK and how about erm coping with the pain so erm, is there anything that you do, within yourself maybe like erm distractions or exercise .. or anything, anything like that?

Participant: I think I just, just try not to think about it so, I dunno like, err I dunno, you just do things like, my normal things but it kind of helps to forget about it cause like just sitting still and being bored you don’t and then you focus on it more I think.

Interviewer: OK and how about future expectations- do you think that erm it will continue on in the same way or do you think it will get better….

Participant: Erm it won’t get better unless someone does something about it because it’s a really like, I dunno it’s a really like oh, I don’t, people don’t find it that serious I don’t think so, it’d be better if someone did something about it.

Interviewer: Have the doctors said anything about how they feel, whether they think it will carry on or…

Participant: No, no, not at all.

Interviewer: And again, how do you feel about that?

Participant: Even if they did say that it’s the fact that they might not do anything about it anyway so them saying it isn’t really doing anything so….

Interviewer: So you’d rather something to be done than….

Participant: Than say that they will do it and then they don’t sort of thing….

Interviewer: Yeah OK erm, so, how about other treatments, so you said about paracetamol- is there anything else that you, you, have you tried any medications or any other tablets?

Participant: Just like ibuprofen, which I think is just the same sort of thing….

Interviewer: Have you found any that is more, like better than another or…

Participant: Ibuprofen is better, it targets it a bit more rather than like round, I spose it, it kind of is stronger in a way.

Interviewer: OK so you’ve found that’s OK…OK. So can I ask a bit about how it affects your life? You mentioned that sometimes taking some time off school like helps it so erm have you taken a lot of time off school or…

Participant: Not recently but kind of during the middle of like, sometimes you just don’t feel up to it, it’s so draining and then you just feel like you’re gonna shout at everyone and then just taking some time off school just helps you to like relax about it and stuff and distract yourself rather than being sat in, sat in a lesson say and you feel bored and you’re trying to concentrate but the pain is just there yeah.

Interviewer: OK so when you do go into, to school, you said about concentrating, does it affect your ability to actually do your work then if you can’t concentrate?

Participant: erm, um, maybe not with me but I’ve known a few people that, well when we did our mick exams they had period cramps when they were trying to do it and it would make them feel sick because they were trying to concentrate but it was there.

Interviewer: OK and erm so can I ask about erm, so when you did take time off school would it be like erm, would it be like the whole day or would it be like half a day, how long would you find that you’d need to take?

Participant: A day or two, mostly just usually a day.

Interviewer: OK and were the school understanding about it? How were they?

Participant: Yeah, they’d kind of like, they’d accept it, they’d kind of, you know if you do say, the teachers would usually say oh yeah that’s fine, I understand and things like that.

Interviewer: OK so they’ve been quite…

Participant: They’ve been quite nice about it yeah.

Interviewer: OK and have you ever been to like see, have you ever spoke to the school office or anything like that when you’ve been at school and you’ve experienced pain?

Participant: Yeah and you can ask for paracetamol but sometimes they don’t give it to you, even though you’re allowed to have it but they just don’t give it to you and it’s a bit, it’s a bit annoying cause sometimes you really do need it and yeah…

Interviewer: Do you know why they won’t?

Participant: I think it’s just the fact that they don’t let kids have it before lunch because they get scared that if they take the paracetamol and they say they haven’t eaten anything then they’ll like faint or something like that (laughs) but usually I’ll just ask, I’ll ask a friend if they have any and usually they do so…

Interviewer: Have you been in a situation where you’ve been to the office and they’ve said no and you’ve not been able to find anyone else?

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: And how does that sort of effect your day?

Participant: It kind of makes you angry as well and especially on your period, you kind of get a bit annoyed that they decided that they, you’re not allowed any and then, but then you kind of get over it and you’re just like OK I’ll power through the day today.

Interviewer: Yeah. OK. And erm, how do you find… so is everyone at the school quite, generally quite understanding?

Participant: Yeah so I say, if you, they do like, they are nice to you about it, they don’t just dismiss it.

Interviewer: OK, that’s good. So have you ever had any time off of PE or anything like that for it?

Participant: Yeah definitely. Erm, yeah cause the PE teachers, they’re, obviously because a lot of kids always try and get out of PE by saying stuff like that so if you were to go up to them and say I’ve got really bad period pains they’re like no you’re still doing it but then if you have a note from your parents, it somehow makes it, like you can give it to them and they’ll be like OK.

Interviewer: OK, so they’ll let you then.

Participant: Yeah but the thing is what if it just starts in the middle of the day then what are you gonna do- sometimes you can, like if you have a nice tutor. I have like this, like a woman one, like if you kind of say, she can write a note for you and usually, like if they’re nice then you can give then and then they let you off.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK does that always work?

Participant: Times when, yeah cause, times when they don’t. They don’t let you. They’ll just be like well you should, you should get the head of year to sign that and it’s just really ridiculous (laughs) sometimes.

Interviewer: OK and how would you feel if you would have to go to the head of year? How would you feel about having to go and do that?

Participant: It’s just silly, it’s just so silly. I, don’t know, it’s just… yeah it’s just really silly.

Interviewer: What would you do if they said you had to get the head of year?

Participant: I just wouldn’t, cause, like I wouldn’t want to make the effort to have to go and do that so I’ll the, I’ll do the PE but I wouldn’t put in any effort, I’ll just kind of…. (laughs)… yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, rather than going all the way…

Participant: Yeah

Interviewer: OK so how about any other daily activities, we talked about school but if you’re at home on the day that you’re, you’re on your period and you’ve got pain erm, would it affect the things that you, you’d normally do?

Participant: Um, yeah like you kind of don’t, you don’t move as much as you do, you kind of just sit a bit and just go on your phone or watch the TV, you don’t really feel like doing any homework and stuff like that and generally just eat more as well to like kind of seeing if you feel better if you eat more (laughs)

Interviewer: (laughs). How about, so, I dunno hobbies, you mentioned that you play piano and erm things like that, does it affect anything like that- whether you want to do it or whether you do it?

Participant: Yeah kind of cause it’s, it’s too much effort so you just don’t do it, you just feel really, you just want to sit and lounge about, you don’t want to, you don’t wanna do stuff like that.

Interviewer: Yeah so how, so if you, if you don’t, if you say you know you don’t want to go and do that- does that affect friendships, how are your friends about that? If you say you know I just want to sit in today…

Participant: Um, like sometimes they, they’re a bit, if you’ve planned something with them and you say that and if it is to do with period pains, they do still are a bit like oh thanks cause they’d do it for you cause like even if they’re in pain on their period, they still come and like go out say if you wanted to so you kind of feel like, feel a bit like you, you have to not say that, you just can’t really.

Interviewer: So has there been times when you have said?

Participant: erm yeah like, the times when I have done it, they’re a bit like oh, but then they’re not annoyed about it, they’re just like OK yeah.

Interviewer: So if you do still go out anyway, does it affect the time that you have, does it you know, do you still have a good time?

Participant: mmm yeah I tend to have a good time cause obviously I’m with my friends, I’m always happy with them if that makes sense I, obviously I’ll be a bit tired but I won’t be that, enough to say something bad or whatever.

Interviewer: OK, and you mentioned that they can be quite heavy so erm, you said that it changed with the pill a little bit erm when it was quite heavy, did that affect whether you wanted to go out, or whether you could…

Participant: Yeah it just felt kind of, you feel a bit gross really and you just don’t wanna go out and you feel like, and, embarrassed because it’s like there and you’re jus, like if it’s light it’s kind of as if it’s not there and you don’t worry about it as much but then if it’s heavy you just feel embarrassed really.

Interviewer: Yeah, so do you think that’s more erm, that would be more likely than the pain cause…

Participant: Yeah definitely so…. (pause)

Interviewer: OK, so you talked about some other symptoms, you mentioned bloatedness….

Participant: mhmm

Interviewer: And erm just you know, feeling quite tired… does that affect what you would normally do?

Participant: Yeah, like I just don’t want to get up, I just want to stay in bed yeah and that’s partly the reason why I go off school because I’m more tired and you know, gr… and yeah that’s about it.

Interviewer: And so is it that more than the pain that would make you take times off school or…

Participant: I think it’s both, sort of both at once like usually if it, so if I’m feeling tired I will most, most likely go into school but then if there is pain as well, I will stay off school sort of thing.

Interviewer: And how about family life and things you do as a family?

Participant: Um, like, erm yeah, like obviously like if it’s your mum, like your parents, and to my sister because my sister’s quite a stress person and like she’ll do something and I’ll get really upset about it and I’ll start crying sort of thing and like, I think I’m like that with my parents as well like I get really emotional.

Interviewer: Is that always around the time of your period then? Does it always sort of coincide?

Participant: Yeah like together, yeah I think it’s more like before it starts in a way and then your like, later you just get used to it and…. Yeah (laughs)

Interviewer: Yeah, OK, and how about family activities, stuff that you do together, does it impact on anything like that?

Participant: Mmm, well if I’m, kind of if I’m in pain I just wanna like say eating, I dunno, like being, being together is kind of like your pain, your pain is irritating so if they were to say something to you, if feels worse and you just get, I dunno you don’t really, you just want to stay in bed as I said before so you don’t really do much with them as well.

Interviewer: And how does that make you feel at the time?

Participant: Well I don’t really do much with my parents but say, say around Christmas time, when you do like, the Christmas tree and things like that, if I was, if I was on my period and I was in pain, I would be a bit, it would, I dunno it would just make it kind of sad cause you wouldn’t be able to do that, you’d just want to, just not want to get up and dos stuff like that.

Interviewer: That’s understandable. Erm and how about things like family holidays and stuff like that? You know like planning for stuff in the future, does it impact on that, on what you plan for?

Participant: What d’you mean like?

Interviewer: So erm, if you booked say like a family holiday and then would you, would you be thinking about it….

Participant: Oh, yeah, sometimes, like cause I’m on the pill I manage to get it so that, I’m not on it when I’m on holiday because it’s just, it ruins, it ruins it cause you just feel like say you go somewhere hot and you wanna wear like, you wanna wear like a nice like bikini or you wanna wera this new dress and you just don't feel confident and stuff and you just don’t wanna do it.

Interviewer: Yeah I understand. And how about before you were on the pill, so, did you think about that when you booked the holidays, was it on your mind or did you not worry about it until you got to the…

Participant: I think it was when I, obviously cause I, I wasn’t that regular, that I wouldn’t know if it got to sort of around the time I’d be a bit, sort of, do I take it or do I not. Usually it would be fine like I wound’t… no actually, there was a time when I went to (location) and I was erm, I think I was on the pill but I was really bad, sometimes I would miss one, and I missed it twice in a row and then I ended up being on my period, and then I had nothing, and it was kind of frustrating because my mum, I, I was like mum, mum, what do I do do I go and get some or do I jjist wait and then I did, it’s just kinda, and I just wanted to be at home like cause I felt, and it was painful as well cause it was right at the start and I just wanted to go home.

Interviewer: How did that, how did you feel about that on holiday?

Participant: Oh it made me really like annoyed and I just, yeah it made me not wanna do, like do anything and yeah, a bit like annoyed at myself for like not being more cautious of when I was taking it (laughs). It’s so annoying (laughs).

Interviewer: (laughs). So erm, going back to the doctors and we were talking a bit about the pill- how did you feel about going onto the pill for the period pain?

Participant: Yeah I was kind of happy to cause it, it would be a more erm, I’m trying to think of the word, a more like long term approach to it apart from just taking like paracetamol and it did help so I’m really happy with that so…

Interviewer: That’s good. So does it impact on how you feel about yourself at all?

Participant: Yeah, definitely. You know you, ergh, you feel like really, just really self-conscious, really , and obviously when you’re on your period you’re really like meant to you bloat around a bit so you feel bigger and then you look at yourself and then you get upset about it (laughs) yeah…

Interviewer: Yeah, and how about, does the pain make you feel any different about yourself?

Participant: I dunno, because it, hmm, I’m trying to think like, well I dunno cause the pain kinda makes you feel a bit like tired, like cause it does, pain just does make you feel tired and then you kind of just, I dunno when you’re tired you get, you get all emotional as well so it’s 2 ways, it’s kind of like a gradual, not the pain itself but what it makes you feel sort of thing.

Interviewer: OK and how about erm, has the impact changed? You said that you, when you first started getting the pain you weren't really sure how to, you weren't really expecting it to be how it was and to happen every period or whatever it was…erm, so has the way that you’ve coped with it, has it changed at all as your got older and as you’ve had it more?

Participant: Err, well to begin I kind of used to start, used to take paracetamol like as much as you needed to for it but then kind of as I got a bit older I, I dunno I, I used, I think there was a point where I used like hot water bottles most of the time and then I think as I got older I started to not really, to not really do anything about it and it wasn’t as bad but it still was there, I dunno why I just decided not to do anything about it until I went on the pill. Yeah.

Interviewer: OK, and when you first did, when you did feel that it was a bit unexpected and things like that, how did you cope with it then sort of in yourself? How did you feel about it then, compared to how you feel about it now?

Participant: I was really like, a bit scared, I was kind of like, cause it was hurting and you’re like, you’re kind of like why does this happen? And obviously now I, I kinda know it’s fine but obviously you don’t really get told about the pain, you get told that you have pain but you don’t get told why it’s like that and it just makes you a bit scared that you don’t know, you’ve never experienced that sort of pain before.

Interviewer: When you did sort of feel scared, what would you do to make yourself feel better?

Participant: I think I just, that was the point where I’d take a lot of time off of school and stuff because I’d, I didn’t know how to cope with it in school and, as it was worse when I was younger, yeah that was why, I took the time off.

Interviewer: Yeah, and how did you feel about taking time off for it?

Participant: I didn’t really mind cause, when I first started school wasn’t as important as it is now so, I felt like I could take time off and, and it did kind of work cause it made, yeah it obviously made me feel less stressed than when I’d be in school and, and having it and then being at home was nicer.

Interviewer: OK, and erm, how about things like erm your relationships because you said about like with your sister you know, like sometimes you’d cry and whatnot, erm but how about your other family relationships, has it affected any of those do you think?

Participant: Hmmm I think it’s mainly, yeah my siblings because like they’ll, cause like when, cause I’m the youngest one I’m used to getting taken like, I dunno like, taken like the mickey out of and so it would make me, if they would, then I would feel like they were all ganging up on me and I’ll be on my period and I’ll be all emotional and I’d get upset about it but it’s only temporary sort of thing cause like it’s brothers and sisters so… but at the time, you feel really, like they’re all against you (laughs).

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Erm do you, erm other than that err like about your social support, your other family members- can you talk to them about it?

Participant: Hmm you can talk to your friends about it but the thing is they’re not really, they’re not very sympathetic because, they, they can like empathise with you but they’re not sympathetic because they go through it as well and some of them go through it much worse than me so I try not to talk about it because I have like some of my friends that always go on about it and so it’s not as bad as that so…. I dunno yeah.

Interviewer: OK, and how about family here and so you’ve got your mum and step dad that you live with here, do you find that you can talk to them about it?

Participant: No I’m just like, I just kinda get the paracetamol myself, I don’t really, well when I was younger I would talk to my mum more about it but I wouldn’t talk to her about it, I’d just be like oh I have period pains, I feel sick can I take time off school so yeah I didn’t really get, I don’t really talk to them about what it is that, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, does it help you talking to people or do you….

Participant: It is nice to find new ways of coping with it rather than, but I don’t like, all I need kind of would be one person to tell me why I’m having it but then you need people to, cause obviously like your friends, you can always ask them oh what do I do, what’s good, cause I never used to use ibuprofen, I never, never really, well I did when I was younger but I never properly heard of it but then when my friends was like, oh you can try this it’s better than paracetamol and then I did so it’s kind of…..

Interviewer: Erm, so other than your mum, stepdad, erm, your brothers and sisters, friends, is there anyone else that you go to for a bit of support or comfort or anything like that.

Participant: Erm, when you kind of, sometimes a lot of people, well not a lot of teachers but teachers that, like my tutor cause she’s really nice and she’s really caring about all of us so she can tell if you’re looking down and then she’ll come up to you and then you’ll tell her about the pains and stuff and then she kind of gives you advice like oh you should go to the medical office and get some paracetamol or like drink some water and stuff like that which is nice, I think that’s the only other person really.

Interviewer: Yeah, OK and can I ask about so we talked about different types of relationships with people, how about any like girlfriends or boyfriends or anyone like that…

Participant: You kind of feel less confident so you don’t want to, and cause it feels, obviously cause boys kinda find it gross sort of thing so you don’t want to talk to them about it at all, you don’t even want to mention it cause it’s really embarrassing, you just wouldn't (laughs), maybe if you did actually have a boyfriend and they obviously cause they care about you they’d understand but boys in general are just kind of like, you wouldn’t want to talk to anyone unless they were, unless they were kind of like, it sounds really bad but like the gay ones you could talk to but that’s about it.

Interviewer: Yeah OK so you woulnd’t want to open up about it to them…. OK so can I just ask lastly about coping and stuff like that. Is there anything else that you wouldn’t, that you find helps you to deal with that or that reduces the impact of it on different things?

Participant: Drinking hot drinks can sometimes like help and like, like going to the toilet (laughs), going for a poo kind of helps cause it doesn’t feel so like pressurised on your stomach I suppose and…. Um yeah I think that’s about it really.

Interviewer: Um, is there anything that we’ve not covered that you’d like to talk about?

Participant: No, no, yeah that’s fine.

Interviewer: Ok, well thank you very much.

Participant: That’s OK

Interviewer: What you’ve said has been really helpful and interesting and um yeah is it OK if I stop the recording?

Participant: Yeah