

Play 'hard-to-get' to find a committed partner

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Playing 'hard-to-get' is a sound evolutionary strategy to get a good partner and even test their commitment, researchers say.

According to a new study, playing hard to get tests the commitment and quality of any would-be mate.

For the study, the researchers identified 58 different hard-to-get strategies used, from on/off flirting and being snooty to using voicemail to intercept calls from potential partners, The Independent reported.

"Playing hard to get might be one way that people - women in particular - can test their prospective mate's commitment and to manipulate their prospective mates to obtain what - or whom - they want," said the psychologists, who carried out the study.

"We revealed that the more unavailable a person is, the more people are willing to invest in them. It seems as though your grandmother's advice might be true - absence may indeed make the heart grow fonder," they said.

In the study, the researchers carried out four separate projects involving more than 1,500 people, looking at playing hard to get as a mating strategy to see how and why it works.

The men and women were quizzed about what tactics they used, how often they employed them and which strategies were the most effective.

Women used the tactics more than men.

Researchers believe it could be because women are trying to learn more information about a potential mate as they have more to lose in terms of pregnancy or it could be because men fear they might lose out on sexual opportunities by overplaying the tactic.

"Because a woman risks more in her sexual relationships than men do - pregnancy costs - she should want a mate who has higher value and is unlikely to leave her saddled with an offspring," the report said.

Appearing highly self-confident was the top-ranked tactic, followed by talking to other people and, third, withholding sex.

Several tactics were used more by women than men, including sarcasm, withholding sex, sounding busy, teasing, flirting with other people, using the answerphone and turning down the first few dates.

Men playing hard-to-get used only three of the tactics more often than women - acting snooty or rude, saying all the right things but not calling and treating others like shit.



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The researchers, from the University of Western Sydney and Singapore Management University, said that the goal of this behaviour was to secure a high-quality mate who was willing to commit.

The study was published in the European Journal of Personality.