

Mating effort

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Mating effort is the sum of energy and resources expended for the purposes of attracting and maintaining a mate. The amount of mating effort employed depends on the sex and reproductive value of the individual expending the effort, as well as the costs of expending that effort.

There is a finite amount of resources that one can devote to reproductive efforts. This is divided between mating effort and parenting effort. As one's parenting effort increases, one's mating effort must equally decrease. The balance of this tradeoff depends on the benefits gained by each type of effort. As biology limits the quantity of offspring a female can produce, regardless of how much effort she puts into attracting mates, the scale typically tips in favor of parenting effort for women. When women do engage in mating efforts, those efforts tend to be focused on the times which are most likely to result in conception, and with the mates who are of highest reproductive value (Gangestad et al. 2002).

Men, on the other hand, are not limited by biological constraints of reproduction, and so are more likely to allocate their effort to mating rather than to parenting. Even here, though, mating effort is not expended indiscriminately or to the exclusion of parenting effort. Like women, men invest more mating effort with mates of higher reproductive value. The type of

effort men invest, however, depends more on their own reproductive value. Men who are of higher reproductive value expend more effort on attraction and retention efforts that function by providing benefits to and enticing commitment from mates. Men of lower reproductive value, who may not have the resources necessary to provide benefits to mates, may focus their efforts on inflicting or threatening to inflict costs on potential mates (Starratt and Shackelford 2012).

SEE ALSO: Parental Investment; Parenting Effort

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FURTHER READINGS

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