

When Emotional and Physical Attraction Collide: A Clinical Case Study of E&P Mismatch in Courtship Behavior

Authors: Petrosova, Sonya; Alexander, Hakeem Ali-Bocas

Affiliation: Men's Dating Success & Attraction E&P Podcast

Abstract

This article presents a clinical case analysis of a common yet misunderstood courtship phenomenon: the misinterpretation of rejection-display behaviors between individuals of opposing E&P (Emotional and Physical) attraction types. Drawing upon the foundational work of Kappas (1987) on Emotional and Physical sexuality, we examine a real-world interaction between a high-Emotional male and a high-Physical female. The analysis reveals how the "phys-out" response—a subconscious, defensive behavior exhibited by Physical types when experiencing perceived rejection—can be catastrophically misinterpreted by Emotional types as malicious intent. We further explore the phenomenon of the "ethnic Emo," wherein social conditioning creates a deceptive outward Physicality masking a core Emotional orientation. Implications for therapeutic intervention, self-awareness in dating, and the value of the E&P model as a diagnostic framework are discussed.

Introduction

Interpersonal attraction remains one of the most complex and frequently misunderstood domains of human psychology. While considerable research has addressed attachment styles (Bowlby, 1969; Hazan & Shaver, 1987) and personality compatibility (Aron et al., 2000), comparatively less attention has been paid to the specific behavioral scripts that emerge when individuals of fundamentally different sexual-attraction orientations interact romantically.

The Emotional and Physical (E&P) sexuality model, developed by John Kappas and taught through the Hypnosis Motivation Institute (HMI), offers a distinctive framework for understanding these dynamics. Kappas (1987) proposed that individuals can be classified along a spectrum from high Emotional (Emo) to high Physical (Phys) sexuality, with this orientation shaped primarily by early caregiver modeling and formative experiences. Critically, the model predicts not only differences in sexual expression but distinct patterns in communication, conflict, and courtship behavior.

This article presents a clinical case study derived from a recorded conversation between the authors. The case illustrates a prototypical E&P mismatch scenario and serves as a vehicle for exploring the theoretical and practical implications of the model for men navigating contemporary dating environments.

Case Presentation

Subject A (male, "H"): A 47-year-old widower, highly educated, physically fit, and professionally accomplished. He presents as confident, articulate, and socially dominant in public settings—a martial artist, heavy metal performer, and public speaker. However, he self-identifies as highly introverted, slow to initiate romantic contact, and prone to intellectualizing emotional experiences. He reports a lifelong pattern of attracting women who eventually "act out" in ways he finds incomprehensible and repulsive. His late wife, Flor, was a notable exception to this pattern.

Subject B (female, unnamed): A colleague of Subject A, with whom he shared common intellectual interests (reading, writing, niche cultural pursuits). Subject A had categorized her platonically, even coding her contact name as "Fuzzy" (for "FZ," meaning "friend zone"). Subject B had demonstrated unambiguous romantic interest over an extended period, including proximity-seeking behavior, heightened responsiveness to his attention, and visible distress when he directed attention elsewhere.

The Critical Incident: During a social encounter, a third party—an attractive female coworker of Subject B—initiated a friendly conversation with Subject A. Subject B responded by immediately and loudly directing flirtatious attention toward another male present, a behavior she repeated on subsequent occasions whenever Subject A was present and other women approached him. Subject A interpreted this as a deliberate attempt to cause him emotional harm, describing the experience as analogous to a friend unexpectedly attacking him with a weapon. His response was to sever contact entirely.

Analysis Through the E&P Model

Classification of the Subjects

Using Kappas' (1987) criteria, Subject A presents as a classic high Emotional (Emo) type:

- Derives security from emotional connection rather than physical expression
- Processes attraction internally and slowly
- Reports being historically "oblivious" to sexual advances
- Requires direct, unambiguous initiation from partners
- Finds competitive or jealousy-inducing behavior repulsive rather than motivating

Subject B, based on behavioral evidence, presents as a high Physical (Phys) type:

- Expresses emotional states through externalized, demonstrative behavior
- Responds to perceived rejection with escalation of attention-seeking
- Uses triangulation (involving a third party) as a courtship or protest strategy
- Requires consistent external validation and visible indicators of interest

The Phys-Out Response

A central concept in the E&P model is the "phys-out" response. When a Physical type experiences sustained emotional deprivation or perceived rejection from an Emotional partner, they do not simply withdraw. Instead, Kappas (1987) describes a characteristic escalation of Physicality—loud, demonstrative, and often provocative behavior designed to force a reaction from the Emotional partner. The phys-out serves a dual subconscious function:

1. **Re-engagement attempt:** "If I make myself impossible to ignore, they will have to pay attention to me."
2. **Self-protective rejection:** "If I push them away forcefully enough, I regain control over the rejection."

Critically, the phys-out is rarely conscious. As Petrosova notes in the recorded dialogue, "She never picked up that bat. In her mind, she was defending herself with all her might."

The Emo Misinterpretation

The high-Emotional individual processes the phys-out not as a distress signal but as unprovoked aggression. Subject A's "baseball bat" analogy is instructive: he assessed the behavior not by its effectiveness (it failed to make him jealous) but by its perceived intent (he believed she tried to hurt him). This represents a fundamental cognitive distortion characteristic of high Emos—the assumption that emotionally expressive behavior is deliberately and maliciously targeted, when in fact it may be a reflexive, subconscious defense mechanism.

Differential Diagnosis: Why Jealousy-Induction Fails on Emos

A significant applied insight from this case is the failure of jealousy-inducing tactics on high-Emotional individuals. Prevailing popular dating advice—often derived from Physical-centric social norms—frequently prescribes "making them jealous" as a courtship strategy. The E&P model reveals why this catastrophically backfires with Emo types. While a Physical man might respond to jealousy provocation with competitive arousal and increased pursuit, an Emotional man experiences revulsion and withdrawal. The strategy that Subject B employed, which may have succeeded with a Phys male, instead accelerated the dissolution of any potential relationship.

The Ethnic Emo: A Subtype Analysis

A distinctive feature of this case is what the authors term the "ethnic Emo"—an Emo individual whose outward presentation mimics Physicality due to cultural, professional, or survival conditioning. Subject A, raised in a Trinidadian household with culturally specific masculine expectations, developed a highly performative Physical exterior: martial prowess, stage performance, sartorial flamboyance, and public speaking dominance.

This creates a unique and highly confusing attraction dynamic:

1. The Physical exterior attracts high-Phys women who perceive a matched partner.
2. The relationship begins with apparent compatibility based on surface-level cues.
3. As intimacy develops, the core Emo nature emerges—withdrawal, slow processing, non-initiation.
4. The Phys woman experiences this shift as rejection or deception, triggering the phys-out response.
5. The Emo man experiences the phys-out as inexplicable aggression, confirming his need to retreat.

Petrosova identifies this pattern succinctly: "Everything that you are achieving is what you set out to achieve, whether or not you know it or not."

The Exception: E&P Congruence

Subject A's marriage to his late wife, Flor, provides an instructive counterexample. When asked whether Flor might have been a low Emo—and therefore a more congruent match—Subject A confirmed the hypothesis through the description of their "parallel play" dynamic. They could share space, engaged in separate activities, with minimal verbal exchange, while maintaining deep connection. This quiet, enduring intimacy is characteristic of Emo-Emo pairings and stands in stark contrast to the dramatic push-pull of Emo-Phys dynamics.

The E&P model posits that congruent pairings (Emo-Emo or Phys-Phys) generate less interpersonal friction, while mismatched pairings can produce either creative tension or destructive conflict depending on the participants' self-awareness and willingness to adapt.

Therapeutic Implications

Several clinical lessons emerge from this case:

1. The Primacy of Early Definition

Subject A's failure to explicitly define the relationship—despite internal clarity that it was platonic—created an information vacuum that Subject B filled with hopeful interpretation. For high-Emo individuals who process slowly, the discomfort of early direct communication must be weighed against the greater harm of prolonged ambiguity.

2. The "Twinkie" Principle

Petrosova introduces the concept of incremental, authentic behavioral adjustment versus "doping"—the wholesale adoption of an inauthentic persona. Small, sustainable changes made from intrinsic motivation ("I do this because this person is part of me") succeed where dramatic, extrinsic changes fail and breed resentment.

3. Self-Awareness as Prevention

The case underscores the value of the E&P model as a psychoeducational tool. Understanding one's own orientation and recognizing the behavioral signatures of the opposite type can prevent the cascade of misinterpretation, phys-out escalation, and traumatic rupture observed here.

Conclusion

This case study illustrates the clinical utility of the Kappas E&P sexuality model in decoding otherwise baffling courtship failures. The phys-out response—when understood correctly—transforms from inexplicable hostility into a legible distress signal. For men navigating contemporary dating environments, particularly those with high-Emotional orientations or ethnic Emo conditioning, fluency in the E&P framework offers a path toward more intentional partner selection and more compassionate interpretation of partner behavior.

Further research is warranted on the prevalence of ethnic Emo presentations, the efficacy of E&P-based psychoeducation in improving relationship outcomes, and the neurobiological correlates of Emotional versus Physical sexuality.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dr. Hakeem Ali-Bocas Alexander, Men's Dating Success & Attraction E&P Podcast.

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