as playing hard to get. With this tactic, we appear to be disinterested in a person who likes us. Presumably, behaving as if we are unattainable will make the person like us even more.

The strategy of playing hard to get rests on sound theoretical principles. For example, cognitive dissonance theory (see Chapter 6) maintains that we come to value goals we work hard to attain (E. Aronson & Mills, 1959; Festinger, 1957). To the extent that this is so, a person who plays hard to get should be liked more than one who is immediately accessible. Psychological reactance theory can also explain why we are drawn to people whose affections are difficult to secure (J. W. Brehm, 1966). As discussed in Chapter 8, psychological reactance is an aversive psychological state that arises when people think their freedom of choice is limited. Because people commonly react to these restrictions by reasserting their desire for the forbidden object, people may be especially drawn to those who make themselves unavailable by playing hard to get.

Despite these compelling theoretical reasons, there is little experimental evidence that playing hard to get is an effective interpersonal strategy (S. S. Brehm, 1992). More often than not, people who fail to reciprocate our affections draw our ire rather than arouse our desire. We are, however, drawn to people who are hard for everybody else but us to get. This point was made in an investigation by Walster, Walster, Piliavin, and Schmidt (1973). In their study, male students participated in an investigation of dating preferences. The participants viewed the profiles of several women, and then decided which one they wished to date. Allegedly, each woman had already

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**FIGURE 11.5**

Liking for Another Person Who Evaluates Us Positive or Negatively

In this study, participants interacted with another person on multiple occasions. Participants were especially fond of someone who disliked them at first but later liked them after getting to know them better (see column 1), and especially disapproving of someone who liked them at first but later disliked them after getting to know them better (see column 4). This finding suggests that changes in evaluation are particularly powerful, especially changes that go from good to bad.