FACT SHEET

When Strong Feelings Make Thinking Harder

Why a strategy can disappear when you are activated

You may notice...

- reacting before you have time to think
- losing track of what you wanted to say
- becoming more rigid
- having trouble seeing options
- forgetting coping strategies
- struggling to plan or problem-solve

Plan while calm

- decide what you want to say
- write down the main point
- rehearse a difficult conversation
- choose a pause signal
- decide when to step away
- plan how you will return

Practice access, not perfection

Knowing what to do in a calm moment and accessing it during strong emotion are different tasks.

Rehearsal can make a response more familiar and reduce how much has to be figured out in the moment.

Ask

What could I prepare before the next predictable difficult moment?

Strong emotion can make executive skills harder to access even when you know the strategy.