

Selective Vulnerability

By Dr. Michael Obsatz – March 2024

It is important to express one's authentic self -- with wants, needs and feelings. But it is also helpful if one is careful about where, how, and with whom one expresses oneself.

There are safe places, and unsafe places. There are safe people, and unsafe people. The purpose of support groups is to provide safe places to be oneself. We can let it "all hang out" when and where we feel supported, accepted, and loved for our authentic selves.

Many of us have experienced saying, showing or feeling too much in the wrong places. We all know what it is like to be shamed, humiliated, blamed, harassed, and demeaned by others. We can learn from these devastating experiences who to trust, and how to determine who is trustworthy.

1. People who consistently show caring and support or worth trusting.
2. People who are willing to open up and be vulnerable with us are good bets to trust.
3. People who love themselves and have compassion and empathy for others can usually be trusted.
4. People who have been with us for a long time and are consistently caring and supportive are usually trustworthy.

The most significant rule about selective vulnerability is using strategic discernment about the above four characteristics.

It is a continuous learning process. The fruits of finding those we can trust are priceless, and worth the effort.