

To read this book is to embark on a healing journey. What a powerful, helpful, anchoring book. Because Carol is so present in her writing, I became more present to myself. This book not only strengthens our personal capacity for vulnerability but offers crucial tools to protect ourselves in both relational and societal contexts. Through her honesty and empathy, Carol speaks to everyone—from those navigating trauma to those living within systems of inequality. Her voice is a guide toward dignity, self-respect, and a renewed commitment to reality.

Michael Britton, Ed.D.

Vice President, International Psychohistory Association, Board Member of the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies Network

Vulnerability Protected is a well-crafted and intelligent study of the human experience of vulnerability. Carol writes with clarity, humor, and above all, a level of intimacy not often found in psychotherapeutic literature. She includes... her own personal journey, offering a courageous and compassionate example of emotional risk-taking. Her insights dismantle the negative associations tied to vulnerability—shame, weakness-- and instead present it as an essential part of our humanity.

Laura Beecher, PhD, Huntington, New York

Not only is Carol Smaldino one of the smartest and most perceptive people I know, but she is also one of the bravest. She has had the courage to explore the ways in which she is—in which all of us are—part of the dehumanizing trends of our time.

Sue Erikson Bloland, LCSW is the author of *In the Shadow of Fame: A Memoir by the Daughter of Erik H. Erikson*, Viking, 2005. Faculty, The Manhattan Institute for Psychoanalysis

Reading *Vulnerability Protected* feels like a personal conversation with Carol—a therapist who has walked this path herself. In a world where vulnerability is often either romanticized as a trendy badge of authenticity or dismissed as weakness. Carol Smaldino offers a refreshing and deeply nuanced perspective—one that acknowledges both the risks and the rewards of being truly open. She reminds us that vulnerability is neither a prescription nor a weakness—it is a complex, deeply personal experience that requires protection.

As a Compassionate Inquiry Practitioner, this book profoundly influenced my work and life, and I recommend it to anyone who supports others or seeks to reclaim their own inner truth. It also deepened my understanding of why clients hesitate to expose their vulnerability, and why some may even struggle to return to therapy if they feel they have revealed too much.

Yulia Polyakina

Compassionate Inquiry® Practitioner (Gabor Mate), International Arbitration Lawyer, Breathwork Facilitator

Vulnerability Protected explores ways our vulnerability helps and harms. Carol Smaldino's writing is at once personal and professional, working with ways vulnerability touches so many capacities, states, and moments. She helps us be more sensitive to ourselves as we navigate creative and/or destructive experiential waters. A therapeutic and consciousness-raising book.

Michael Eigen, PhD. His books include *The Sensitive Self*, *Flames From the Unconscious: Trauma, Madness and Faith*, *The Psychoanalytic Mystic*, and *The Challenge of Being Human*.

My heartfelt praise to Carol Smaldino and her beautiful dancing mind for her remarkable book, Vulnerability Protected, which explores vulnerability as a cornerstone of intimacy and genuine connection.

She argues that we must confront what she refers to as "the gift of disappointment", and she describes how we can grow from there.

Carol's refreshing honesty about her own life experiences adds a rich layer of authenticity and vulnerability to her work, allowing her insights to resonate deeply with readers.

Sharon Steinborn, MA, LMFT, Las Cruces, New Mexico

Vulnerability Protected is an extremely important book that delves into the profound exploration of vulnerability. Smaldino encourages us to face the lower depths of our emotions and to not turn away from confronting our fear, our trauma, and our grief. For it is precisely there on the journey through the landscape of inner darkness that we may discover and uncover places of greater depth and breadth of awareness.

Kevin Jennings, Intuitive Counselor, New York City

Vulnerability Protected invites readers on a profound journey into the complex, too often mischaracterized, and deeply human experience of vulnerability. Far from the idealized portrayals found in self-help literature, this book delves into the practical realities of what it means to be vulnerable.

Blending personal insights, cultural critique, and social reflection, author Carol Smaldino challenges us to confront the ways we hide behind grandiosity, conformity, or detachment to avoid the discomfort of being truly seen. By embracing vulnerability, we open the door to empathy, courage, and authentic connection.

Linda Hartling, PhD, Director, Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies
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