

# **Anomic aspects of recovery from cancer.**

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## **Abstract**

A cancer diagnosis is universally regarded as a traumatic event. Many equate it with a 'sentence of death'. But an increasing number of cancer patients are being cured. An exploratory study involving intensive interviews with recovered cancer patients indicated that the positive experience of being cured is often mixed with negative elements, including: (1) the withdrawal of the intensified social support which accompanied the diagnosis and early treatment; (2) ambivalence about the discontinuation of treatment; (3) anxiety about recurrence of the disease; (4) adjustment to permanent disabilities resulting from the disease or its treatment; (5) the need to resume life-oriented modes of thought after a successful adjustment to the ideal of death; (6) anger at perceived inadequacies in the handling of treatment; and (7) confusion about feelings of depression when the objective situation has improved. Durkheim's concept of anomie originally referred to a societal condition engendered by either positive or negative change. Srole and others adopted the term 'anomia' to refer to the social-psychological correlate of this condition, i.e. anomie as experienced by the individual. The present research suggests that the concept of anomia, and specifically, the anomia of good fortune, may be useful in studying the rehabilitation of cancer patients.

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