Decay, Transformation, and Growth: Meaning-Making Processes of Patients With Acute Leukemia Within the First Year After Diagnosis or Relapse

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Finding meaning in life events is embedded in human nature (Frankl, 2011; Richer & Ezer, 2000; Skaggs & Barron, 2006). Particularly when facing negative events that challenge the existing construction of the world, individuals attempt to integrate their experiences (the ones of order and the ones of stress) in a new, meaningful reality through a search for meaning (Bonanno & Kaltman, 1999; Davis, Wortman, Lehman, & Silver, 2000; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Josef & Linley, 2005; Lepore & Helgeson, 1998; Neimeyer, 2001; Park, 2010; Taylor & Gollwitzer, 1995). Finding meaning in or making sense of adverse events has been shown to increase subjective well-being (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005) and subsequently enhance resilience, creativity, and distress tolerance (Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008).

The integrated meaning-making model by Park and Folkman (1997) frequently is used in the context of illness (Lee, Cohen, Edgar, Laizner, & Gagnon, 2004; Park, 2010) because it provides operational definitions for the model’s different components. However, available evidence still is limited in amount and quality. Therefore, whether meaning-making during illness differs according to the stage, type of illness, and treatment trajectory remains unclear. In the context...