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Transformational changes in health status: a qualitative exploration of healing moments

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Introduction

Dramatic self-change is a familiar concept within religious experience, and is recognised within psychotherapy and some fields of nursing.¹ However, it is rarely discussed within biomedicine and has been given limited consideration in wider health research, including healing research. In religious terms, dramatic change may take the form of religious conversion, described by William James as a transformation from unhappiness and conflict to a unified, energised self, which can be gradual or sudden; a journey or a moment.² In psychotherapy, 'quantum change' describes sudden transformations in someone's perception of themselves and their environment,^{3,4} transformations which have substantial beneficial effects on mental and physical health. Holistic nursing recognises unique connecting moments; caring-healing moments in which a healthcare practitioner is intensely present in a healing interaction with a patient.^{5,6} However, although dramatic change is part of the discourse in healing and complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), it has been little explored in other healthcare literature. These experiences may be overlooked because they are viewed as anomalous, but the evidence suggests they are not uncommon.^{7,8}

Healing can be defined in contrast to curing: Frank quotes physician Rachel Naomi Remen: "We thought we could cure everything, but it turns out we can only cure a small amount of human

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