

Being Fully Present and Alive Supports Children in Experiencing All of Themselves

| VALENTE OROZCO, MSW, LCSW, RPT-S

My journey into play therapy begins with my own experience as a child. Growing up in a family where education and social justice were placed in high regard, and being the son of a college professor, I was routinely surrounded by intellectuals and messages on the importance of championing the rights of the less fortunate and underrepresented. At the same time, I was a creative and artistic young man. While the adults discussed matters of society, politics, and social issues, I felt more fully alive in my room listening to the Beatles and trying to figure out just how Jimi Hendrix played guitar like that. These early experiences initially led me towards music and education as potential fields of study.

With these experiences as my background, I entered college and became increasingly aware of the social issues of the world, in particular, the lack of voice and advocacy for children in society. The standards and expectations of our “adult” world seemed to support less and less of what I was learning about child development, my experience with my own daughter, and that with other children in my life. Passionate about advocating for children, I decided that a social work degree was the right professional choice to pursue.

After completing my formal education, I began my path to licensure. I was fortunate to have internship and work experiences with children all along the way. I joined APT and began attending various trainings in all different types of play therapy. Nearly ready for licensure, a supervisor of mine gave me *Windows to Our Children* by Violet Oaklander, PhD. It changed my life. I decided to train at the West Coast Institute for Gestalt Therapy with Children and Adolescents, the Pacific Gestalt Institute, and to undertake my RPT-S.

Completing my RPT and RPT-S were incredibly important in my work with children. Before I began my RPT training, I had worked with children for



CLINICAL EDITOR'S COMMENTS:

Valente Orozco shares how he discovered Gestalt play therapy and his reasons for becoming an RPT-S.

many years, and had never encountered another RPT! I began to spread the word about APT, the importance of demonstrating competence, and supporting the integrity of the play therapy profession the RPT/S credential affords for those of us who work with children. Earning the RPT and RPT-S exemplifies demonstrating a commitment to and the achievement of a high standard of practice for working with children. For trained and licensed professionals, obtaining the credentials represents a dedication to maintaining the necessary skills for responding to the needs of children and to supporting children therapeutically.

Practicing Gestalt play therapy has afforded me some of the most rewarding experiences of my professional life. Developing awareness, finding effective ways to meet needs, promoting self-expression, and genuinely BEING with one another are the processes through which I help children and their

families engage. Using play to develop dialogue with a child, finding just the right crayon or musical instrument to express oneself, can be just as meaningful – if not more – than using words alone.

There are moments with a child in therapy when I recognize my own playfulness and creativity from childhood come alive in the room. In Gestalt play therapy, the more we as therapists are fully alive in the work we do with our clients, the more support there is in the relationship for children to experience all of themselves. 🧡

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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