



REVIEW

SANDPLAY: WHAT IT IS & HOW IT WORKS WITH GITA MORENA, PHD

Reviewed by LaVon Bobo
Sunnyvale, California

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*LaVon Bobo, MS,
MFT, CST-T is a
Teaching Member of
Sandplay Therapists
of America and the
International
Society for Sandplay
Therapy.*

*Gita Morena, PhD,
MFT, CST-T is a
Teaching Member of
Sandplay Therapists
of America and the
International
Society for Sandplay
Therapy. She is
Research Editor of
the Journal of
Sandplay Therapy.*

Gita Morena, a certified sandplay therapist and teacher, has created a DVD which can be helpful for those wishing a little glimpse into the world of sandplay. "Sandplay is a way of expressing yourself without words," Dr. Morena states from the outset in her introduction, fully aware of the challenge this in itself can present. The tremendous value placed on words and the rational mind will have to be set aside to fully embrace the nonverbal path sandplay offers. Dr. Morena further explains how silencing the conscious mind allows expression of the unconscious, ultimately making healing and transformation possible.

An initial session with a young woman allows us to observe Dr. Morena simply and skillfully introduce her client to sandplay. Her well chosen concluding words speak to the client's unconscious (a practice Dora Kalff recommended in her 1985 workshop entitled "Sandplay of Inner Awareness") about the nonverbal nature of sandplay. "When you're finished we'll look at it together," Dr. Morena says in reference to the

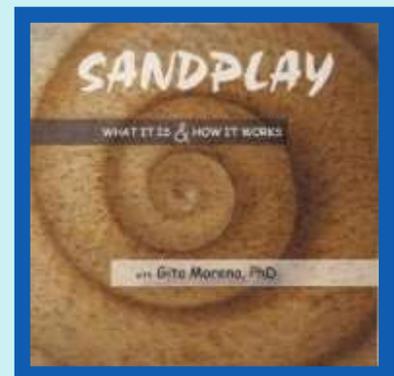


image that will emerge from the client's movement of sand and selection and placement of figures. Dr. Morena then steps aside, subtly but purposefully discouraging verbal interaction, to become the witness to the woman's sandplay creation.

Once the sandplay is completed Dr. Morena rejoins her client, asking "how was this for you?" Again her words are well chosen to elicit an experience rather than an explanation. She does not suggest that her client *tell* about her sandplay. I recall Dora Kalff remarking, in a private conversation, "what goes from head to head stays in the head," intimating meaningful experience is necessary to bring about movement and change.

At one point, referring to a particular figure, the client says "I don't know what it is." While this remark might have easily baited an explanation from a less experienced therapist, Dr. Morena simply acknowledges her client's awareness while remaining silent. She knows, as the woman continues on her sandplay journey, it will be her experiences rather than any mental understanding that will offer meaning and the gifts of healing and transformation.

Inspiring testimonials from two former clients, both a man and a woman, conclude the DVD. Transparent about the issues which brought them into therapy allows appreciation for the transformative influence sandplay has had in their lives. The man in fact relates that viewing the powerful images in the sandtray led him to write poems about his experiences. "Live from the heart not the head," essentially echoing the wisdom of Dora Kalff, comes from one he shares. It occurs to me that in concluding with poetry, which itself could be said to bridge the conscious and unconscious, Dr. Morena allows us to yet more fully appreciate the value and depth of the sandplay journey.

