

Brighter Spirits

Child Life Services

“Minimizing the anxiety of being in a hospital helps children cope better and heal faster.”

— Mary Beth Jones, Supervisor, Child Life Services

Juan Flores, 10, Lindsay

A young boy anxiously glances around his Hospital room. Nervous about his upcoming surgery, he wishes he were home, playing with his friends and sleeping in his own bed. Suddenly he begins yanking out his IV.

“But you need that,” says a Child Life Specialist at Valley Children’s gently. “It delivers medicine to your body and the nurses won’t have to poke your arm so much.”

Using an iPad and a medical doll, the specialist begins to review with him exactly what will happen before, during and after surgery, and why the procedure is necessary. Like oncology patient Juan Flores, 10, who uses medical play to cope better with his procedures, the boy hugs her, feeling relieved that although his parents can’t be in the operating room, a nurse will be with him the entire time, especially when he wakes up. The specialist also helps the boy’s parents and older sister cope with their own concerns.

“You’re good at explaining things at my son’s level and reducing stress,” says the mom. “We’re so glad the nurse called you. You made a difference.”

Working with various members of the medical team, our nationally certified Child Life Specialists wear many hats. If a child refuses to swallow medication, hides under the bed, needs comforting during a procedure, or any other situation calling for emotional, physical or educational support, Child Life Specialists respond.

In brighter spirits, the boy heads to The Robert M. Shapazian Child Life Center to get help with his homework and draw his favorite superheroes. He sees the same Child Life Specialist chatting with another patient whose pet dog recently passed. “She’ll make it better,” he says. “She did for me.”

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