

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

00:00:00

SG Hello everyone! Welcome to "Shaped by Dog". I'm Susan Garrett, and today I want to talk about something that could very well save a dog's life. It could save a child, or possibly even you from getting a very serious injury from a dog.

And the topic is identifying what a dog is about to do based on all the cues they're giving you. This is an acronym I believe I heard first from the late Sophia Yin, and it is T.E.M.P. you need to take a dog's temp - T.E.M.P. now I stick an extra E in there. So T.E.E.M.P. But let's still call it T.E.M.P. because it makes such great sense.

00:00:55

When you approach a dog, the dog has a lot of ways of communicating what his intention is, how he's feeling, and the challenge is as human beings, we sometimes misunderstand or misread these cues.

Or sometimes these cues have been subdued so that the dog doesn't express them the way he would like to. So, I'm going to go over what are all the signs that the dog maybe communicating to you and how you put them all together in the end. Alright

00:01:35

T.E.M.P The "T" - tail obviously everyone says, "Oh look the tail's wagging, he's happy". Not necessarily. You've got to look at how is that dog's tail wagging. Now some dogs will wag their tail and it creates an entire body wag. That is a, you know, super happy dog or it goes like a helicopter in a circular motion that a lot of dogs will show different levels of happiness based on how that tail is wagging.

00:02:10

Some dogs may hold their tail up along their belly that you know you could say maybe they're cold but a lot of times that is a sign of anxiety, stress, lack of comfort with the situation or it could held very stiffly maybe in a stiff way above their back that could be them getting a little bit more territorial.

So, a wagging tail that's held low like between the hocks that's wagging kind of frantically, that's not necessarily a happy tail. That could be a nervous tail and that could lead to problems if you don't interpret that correctly.

So, a lazy wag back and forth with other signs is generally a pretty good sign that the dog is confident and happy with the situation.

00:03:08

Let's move on to the "E" the First "E" - "Eyes" and "Ears". Okay, so the dog's eyes. If you can see if they're just full round eyes, bright, alert eyes, that's a good sign. Eyes that you can see the whites of the eyes at the bottom, that's not a good sign.



Look at pupils, are they dilated, narrow, very, very small or they're very, very big? Obviously depending on the light, they may dilate but, narrowing of the eyes is a dog being more intent. But look at, are they darting side to side? Are they looking for an escape? Or are they staring?

00:03:56

Staring is often a sign that they are intent on a target. Or they're maybe looking or nervous at something. You also might look, sometimes you see the eyes are almost closed they're slit. That happens a lot when dogs are being submissive, and submissive is a dog that could be worried.

00:04:22

A submissive dog rarely bites but they could if put in a wrong situation. Some dogs might just avert their eyes they might not look at you at all.

00:04:36

Right so, take note of what those eyes. A dog that eyes are moving naturally just like a person if you're taking everything in, that's a pretty relaxed dog. A dog that has eyes are fixated is a dog that's got intent on possibly on pouncing and playing or possibly attacking. A dog that's darting might be a dog who's just not comfortable with the situation.

00:05:02

Now what about the dog's ears? So obviously dogs have different ear sets so like a Labradors got floppy ears where my Border Collies have perky ears. But both ear sets can show alertness and be held high on their head. So, they can be... they can... the muscles in the in the dog's skull allow them to rotate those ears in different positions. So, one up, one back, they're listening to something in behind. Or trying to take in something in behind. Up on their head, confident or maybe they are focused somewhere. Ears brought together pinned to the back is often a sign that the dog is worried, or fearful.

00:05:45

Now, they may be turned to the side in what they call "rose budding" where they're kind of turned in a little bit. That often is seen with the dog showing little slits of their eyes in a submissive posture. So, taking in the ears and if they're flat and plastered to their back of their head, that's not a comfortable or confident dog. So, you need to take in all of these things together.

00:06:17

Now that we've got the ears and the eyes, we're going to go on to the "M" which is the "Mouth", the dog's mouth. So, first of all from the mouth is their vocalizing. So, is there growling? Now, growling doesn't mean a dog is aggressive, a lot of dogs will growl in play. So, don't be concerned if when you're playing with your dog they start growling. That isn't automatically a sign of aggressive aggression. My dogs, they growl when they're happily engaging with me. However, growling with some of those other signs like, seeing the whites of they're eyes, are their eyes focused? Their ears pinned? Those three things - not good. That is a dog that is showing you discomfort.

00:07:02

However, growling may be absent because a lot of dogs are disciplined for growling - something you should never ever do. If your dog is not comfortable with the situation, they're unhappy. A lot of the times, they will growl. And it could be a low growl, could be a high "HRRRR" that ends up higher. there's different growls. But people mistakenly discipline that like "HEEY why are you growling at the



child!". Then they crack the dog, and you do that enough and the dog will lose their voice which you don't ever want to happen, because the dog growling is saying "I'm not comfortable with the situation please take me out of it." It's your responsibility to get them out of there.

00:07:43

Because if you removed the growl, all that dog has left is a bite. The growl is a great indicator to you, so you want to help condition the dog, so they are more comfortable in that situation but for now, get them out of it.

00:08:00

So, looking at the dog's mouth, are they whining? Whining could be that they are stressed or anxious. It could be overly excited as well. Are they barking? Barking could be happy. Barking could be alerting. Especially if its bark accompanying with growl "HRRRRRRRAW". That could be if it's a puppy, it could be that they're just using their voice and that they're happy. So, it's the combination of all these - the "T.E.M.P." brought together.

00:08:34

Alright, now let's look at the mouth. Are they showing teeth? So, a dog who is showing you a slit of their eyes, rose budded ears, and are showing you their teeth. They're being submissive. They're being...

You know some breeds will naturally do that when a stranger is approaching. Again, it's not good to approach any dog you don't know without asking their owner first, but a lot of submissive dogs are super happy to see people. Maybe not all people, maybe they're a little worried about children. You got to ask the questions to find out.

00:09:06

So, a dog that is lip licking, lip lifting, showing you their teeth and holding their teeth. Along with growling, pinning their ears, fixating their eyes – all bad signs. That is a sign that a dog is or may be about to strike. Right, so look at... what is the lips doing.

Are the lips relaxed and loose or are they pursed? If they're held back and pursed, the dog may be nervous.

So, people think that the dogs that bite are the ones that are growling and giving you all the signs. Dogs who are nervous are as likely and maybe even more likely to bite. If they're nervous and they can't get out of the situation, they're worried, their only defence is to nip.

00:10:00

Okay so, a nervous dog pulling back their lips and holding their lips back in a tight mouth is a dog who's showing you their great, great discomfort. As is a dog that a lick their lips.

So, lip licking could be a calming signal that the dog is trying to give another dog like, hey, they're looking away and they're lip licking and maybe even shaking - a shake off.

That could be... these are all signs that dogs give other dogs to try and defuse the situation. "Please can we all be friends here?". Lip licking can be a sign that the dog is nervous.

So, again taking that the dogs lip licking their lip, averting their eyes, pinning their ears and tail tucked – they're nervous, alright, give them their space.



00:10:54

Now the “P” of “T.E.M.P.” that’s the dog’s posture. So, is the dog relaxed with that low whole-body wag, their tails wagging and their bodies wag, and their ears combed up and confident. That’s a relaxed dog. And you can see that the body wave is initiated from the tail.

00:11:14

Now a dog that is stiff, their head up and fixed. Maybe even if you look at the hair on the back of the neck right around their shoulders and at the base of their tail might be up. They’re a dog who’s been triggered. That they’re maybe excited, they may be alarmed, they may be trying to make themselves big to protect themselves, but they are alerted to something.

00:11:44

A dog who is crouching and low with their tail along their back they’re maybe a little worried about something. Now again, you could look at certain breeds like whippets, Italian greyhounds, greyhounds, they would naturally carry their tail - often will carry their tail. Even some of my border collies might have their tail low between their legs. That doesn’t necessarily mean that they’re nervous. A cold whippet would definitely have their tail up between their legs.

00:12:15

But taking all these things into consideration. A submissive dog might crawl and maybe even turn their bodies sideways with their little frantic body wag. That is that they’re not confident and they’re not they’re there is not... and they may be slightly nervous but they’re showing you submission. Like I’m not 100% sure about this situation but I really, really would like to experiment with it.

00:12:47

A dog and so a dog may just flatten themselves to the ground if they’re not confident or if they are the least bit nervous.

But a dog that gets stiff, their leg’s stiff, their tail’s stiff, they walk stiffly. A lot of the times they are... have been triggered and they may or may not be about to strike. So, you can take any one of these “T.E.M.P.” indicators and say “AHA! I know what’s going on here.”

00:13:22

But when you see the big picture, so a dog that’s growling but that they got a body wag to the side, they’re averting their eyes to the side, they have those rose budded ears, they’re wagging their tail low. They are, they might be growling but growling up “HHHRRRAA” that they’re not entirely sure.

You’re not gonna rush in and pat that dog. But you don’t have to be worried that they’re going to lunge and attack you, not that any dog will. You know, dogs who are mentally sound, which is 99% of the dogs out there, that they don’t have a brain disfunction are going to give you these signals in a predictable way.

00:14:09

Now, a dog that is sore may give you a growl just because maybe they’re arthritic and they’re sore and they want to be left alone right, so you need to take all of these... the information the dog’s giving you.

Remember, dogs can’t talk to us, but they can communicate. So, they can communicate with these body parts that allow you to know what they’re thinking.



00:14:41

Now an extreme you might smell something, so a dog who is really worried may express their anal glands and create this stench. The worst thing that you can do, is not believe what the dog is communicating with you. You want to give them their space you want - our number one goal is to help that dog be confident. So, to review never approach a dog without asking their owner first.

00:15:15

Teach your children to never approach a dog without asking their owner first, and if the owner says, "hey it's cool" and you see a combination of some of these signs. Maybe, you know, say "oh thanks but I'm just gonna toss a treat to your dog is it alright do you have a treat that I could toss your dog" so let's help build that dogs confidence but let's not push the issue.

00:15:40

I've seen some people who know their dogs are nervous, but they think by making people pat them or asking people to pat them, that's going to help the dog. It's something in science we call flooding but, flooding rarely works and it can often backfire. A better thing to do is to keep that dog a distance away from their stressor where you can reinforce them yourself if you own the dog that's showing signs of not being confident or comfortable.

00:16:07

You can reinforce them with playing or with tossing cookies, but if they show you any of these signs if your own dog is showing, believe them they're communicating, they're asking for your help and as their owner our number one job in life is to help deliver them that confidence, help them to be more confident. And let me say one more time never ever discipline a dog who's growling. The dog is telling you, is communicating, something very clear to you. As their owner you need to get them out of that situation, take note, go to a trained veterinarian behaviorist and ask them for help if you don't know the next steps to take

00:16:55

That's it today for "Shaped by Dog" and please leave me a comment and let me know how you're enjoying the podcast. Please rate, give us a rating and share the podcast with your friends. And this one in particular share with every person you know who either has a dog or who has children. That's it for today, we'll see you next time.

Resources

[Vlog: Dog Body Language, Fear and Aggression](#)



About Susan

A world-leading educator of dog trainers, Susan is also one of the most successful agility competitors of the last three decades. She has won multiple Gold Medals at National or World Championship events with every dog she has ever owned over the past 30 years. Susan was one of the very first dog trainers to share knowledge online when she opened her "Clicker Dogs" website many years ago. Susan has helped hundreds of thousands of people enjoy a great relationship with their dogs through her workshops and keynote speaking around the world, award winning books, DVDs, magazine articles, blog posts, podcasts, free dog training and dog agility video series, and online dog training programs.



A natural teacher and an entertaining speaker, Susan is world renowned for her dog training knowledge and practical application of that knowledge. Her understanding of how to apply science-based learning principles to both competitive and family pet dog training has been pivotal in changing how dogs are trained.

Susan is now helping many thousands of dog owners in 82 countries have the best relationship possible with their dogs. The real joy for her comes from bringing confidence to dogs and their owner through playful interactions and relationship building games that are grounded firmly in the science of how animals learn.



Meet Us Online

- Website <https://dogsthat.com>
- Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/SusanGarrettDogAgility/>
- Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/SusanGarrettDogsThat/>
- TikTok <https://www.tiktok.com/@susangarrettdogsthat>
- LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/dogsthat>
- Pinterest <https://pinterest.ca/dogsthatcom/>
- Twitter <https://twitter.com/susangarrett>
- YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/c/DogsThat>
- YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/ClickerDogs>

