

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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SG Hey everybody. Welcome back to Shaped By Dog. I'm Susan Garrett, and today, we're going to do a deep dive on the art of what I think is one of the main reasons why I am a good dog trainer ... one of the main reasons why I believe I'm a great educator. And that is because I'm great at manipulation. Now, before you unsubscribe to this podcast and get yourself off any list that I'm may be sending you email from. I'd like you to consider, everyone out there is manipulating. It's just for how long and when that makes the difference.

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Stick with me on this, I promise you're going to embrace and love the idea of manipulation. The challenge is, our brain immediately goes to deception, when the word "manipulation" hits your ears and I need you to consider that what I'm talking about is, manipulation with an overarching set of core values. So, anytime I'm training or interacting with my dog or puppy or whoever it is, my team. My goal is to build their confidence, always. Deepen my relationship and trust, always. Help them to have an amazing life which means they can grow. I see for my dog that that amazing life means they get more and more freedom from me. Everybody is manipulating with their relationship with their dog. It's just, for how long and when it happens, and I'm going to give you more on that in just a second.

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I want you to consider though, I'm talking about, not manipulating the dog in that- like I've got a big meatball on and I'm going to drag you in- I want you to go where I want to go. That's a form of manipulation. What I'm talking about is manipulating the dog's environment which sets them up for more successful interactions and training with me.

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A fellow by the name of Cal Newport. He wrote this book, a book called "Deep Work", which is a great book, I'll put a link in the show notes to that. And he described that in today's era with all the distractions we have when working on a computer, we need to seclude ourselves away for 90-minute chunks to do that deep work, to really get exceptional work done. The only way to do it is to squirrel yourself away like a monk. And it's a great book and it [has] phenomenal insight. And the same is true when we are training anybody. And when I use the word "Training" really, I mean the word teaching, educating.

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So, let's say you wanted to- I've got my Jack Russel rescue dog and I'm going to teach him how to do a "Sit Stay". So, I'm going to take him off leash at a bunny farm and start to teach him the brilliance of how to sit and hold position for a cookie. How well do you think that's going to go for you? I think we all can agree, we're not going to get great behavior from that dog, with respect to the "Sit Stay". We're going to get great innate behavior in regard to "I see small animals; I can run and chase and hunt them"



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And so, at some level, everybody understands that we need to manipulate our dog's environment to set them up for success. So, manipulation of the environment means: decreasing sensory stimulation. So, decreasing what that dog can see, decreasing what that dog can hear or smell. Decreasing it so that you actually have an opportunity for success. And commonly in dog training we'll call this "distractions". We're going to decrease the distractions. So, if you have a child and you wanted to you know (going back to what we talked about in episode number 4 or 5 about getting a child excited about doing some housework) ... If you had the TV on and their favorite show was on the background, and somebody was in the kitchen making popcorn and you could hear the ice cream truck going by. The chances of getting the child excited about doing housework are now sliding down.

And the same is true when we're teaching or training anything or anybody or any animal. We want to manipulate the environment, so we minimize distractions. And that includes - so it's two parts when I talk about environmental manipulation - it's decreasing all the sensory output for that animal availability, and decreasing the area. So, if I wanted to teach a dog anything. I want to minimize the distractions by decreasing the area. Now, when I think about manipulation. I think way back, when I got into dog training. When I got my first dog that I was training for sport which was back in the 80's. I was told, I need to keep this dog isolated. Isolated from any other dogs so they couldn't learn how much fun other dogs could be.

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And that they had to learn that working with me was the best fun ever. Some people say you need to tether the dog to your waist whenever they're around the house. That's a great way of manipulating the environment. And some sport enthusiast took this a step further, really step far beyond what I would ever suggest. And they kept the dog either in a run or in a kennel and they only allowed that dog freedom was to work with you. So, their life was a life of confinement and the only time they got any kind of joy or reinforcement in their life was when they were working on the sport you wanted. Now, that - I'm not denying that that would produce results, but anything I do in the name of dog training - and I would encourage you to have that overarching umbrella of core values.

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What's really the most important to you? And I think if you're listening to this podcast and you resonate with the kind of dog owner that I am. What's most important is that your dog grow to be confident, they grow to have a deep relationship with you, and they grow to have as much freedom in their life as possible, and so those things aren't conducive with living their life in confinement. Now, one of the most misunderstood pieces of literature I've ever written was my first book "Ruff Love". And we'll put a link on the show notes for "Ruff Love". My mistake when writing Ruff Love, people say: "Don't you regret ever writing it?".

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Well, I know that it has helped a lot of people with their dogs. But, it's a very thin book and so, I didn't think I needed to detail the overarching core values of what we really want is an amazing family pet who has freedom in their life. And that your dog will be in confinement when you can't supervise them. Now people thought I meant like some of those old performance sport dog owners that the dog's got to have no joy in their life other than when you're around. You know, confinement should be, obviously, when you have a puppy, they need to be in an ExPen or a crate and not have all these available



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options for chewing and getting into trouble until they've learned the good choices that allow them to get those freedoms and the options. That's what manipulating an environment for success is and rules are in anything in life can be destructive towards relationships if they don't have some sort of moral, ethical groundwork that involves or that lays down the goal of having a brilliant relationship.

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It doesn't matter what kind of creature that we're talking about. So, I'm hoping at this point you could see - Alright, I can see where manipulation of an environment could be successful so how could I do that with my dog? For me, one of the easiest things when I get a new puppy or a rescue dog in is I'll do training in one of three ways; Number one could be on a leash, so I'll just keep that dog on a leash so that the area that they have access to is limited by the extent that they can go out on that leash and-but, if I am training that dog on a leash and my other dogs are wandering about, I haven't really eliminated all the distractions in the environment. So, if I choose to train on a leash, I need to make sure that the other dogs aren't running around outside, that there isn't aren't outside things that they can hear that they - the other dogs are probably in another room. When the dogs get better, I might put all my dogs say, in the Hot Zone on dog beds and they get each a turn. But for that new puppy, If I'm going to train on a leash, I need to eliminate all the other dogs in the environment.

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Number two thing that would be my go-to is If I have a gated community for that puppy where I have an ExPen set up. I might go inside the ExPen, again, all of my other dogs need to be somewhere else so they're not a distraction. Minimize all the outside distractions. My third and one of the most common - It's going to be a little weird to you - common things that I do to manipulate the environment for my dog/my puppy when I'm training is, I go into the bathroom.

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I call it crapper training. And the reason I go into the bathroom is that it's a small area that a puppy can be off leash, so they have the freedom to choose what ever it is they want to choose. I want to empower my dogs. I want them to know that, you know what you're in control of all the great things in your life. And so, they have this small bathroom now you could say, I'm going to close of the kitchen, and I can train in the kitchen. They have a lot of big areas that they can investigate in, in the kitchen. Which is going to cut into your training time and also lower their focus for you. Get into a bathroom.

When we built this house, I actually designed a bathroom downstairs so that it would be great for dog training, true story. So when you get into the bathroom you need to make sure that if you've got like a bathroom brush, a toilet brush, a garbage with tissues, all those things need to be picked up so that you've got the floor and there's a porcelain toilet there. There's really very little to stimulate that dog or to distract them away from what you're going to do. And then number 2 most important guiding thing, or I guess it's number 3 if I have decreased as much as possible any kind of stimulation, distraction. Decrease the area. Number 3: You've got to have something of value that's going to captivate the dog.

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So, you want to do your dog training by layers and the very first layer that I add is the distraction of food. Because, I need to train with food. But I don't want my puppies or dogs to be so focused on the food that they can't focus on what we're doing together and so the first layer that I put in is the game "ItsYerChoice". ItsYerChoice is a super easy game and all it sets the dog up to do is you make a good choice and reinforcement comes to you.



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If you would like to learn more about [ItsYerChoice](#) we have it ... It's part of our Recallers program but we also have it broken out in a small summit that we invite people to from time to time join in on any of you who are watching this on my blog, or on YouTube, or listening on the podcast we're going to include a link on the show notes. Where you can actually get a backdoor into learning "ItsYerChoice" in a very fun environment. The idea is whenever you're manipulating an environment, success needs to be super obvious.

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Super obvious. So, if you were going to teach a child to make their bed. Number 1, the task can't be overwhelming. You've manipulated the environment cause the bed's in their bedroom. Ideally, there's not a lot of - you don't have a TV on in that bedroom, you don't have a tablet available, the dog isn't running around being goofy, it's just you and you might have made - you know you're going to say, "Hey let's make the bed" - you make the bed and the last thing that your kid has to do is just place their pillow on top and then they made the bed. It's a small task, you celebrate, you run out, you do something really reinforcing. And then your child, every day, sees making the bed as something that's great to do.

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Let's go to if you are a team leader like myself. Big mistake that I made, the very first person that I've ever hired, I apologize to you Melissa. I didn't set her up for success, because I didn't know what that looked like. So, I just hired her and said yeah, there's a lot that's got to get done because I want to change the world for dogs so, have at it. And pretty much that was my job description for her. Today, when someone joins our team, we have something called SOPs that are guideline to success that it shows them how easily they can achieve success.

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Now, when you make the path super clear, success isn't just - it's obvious and inevitable. And that's what we want for our dogs. That success is obvious and inevitable. You're manipulating the environment but always leaving the element of choice in for the dog. So, if we go back to making a child's bed you might have allowed them, you know, said: "Here's how we're going to make a bed" part one, part two, part three, and you do everything. And then the final thing is make a big deal final places we put the pillow on and celebrate.

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And then the first time you ask them to do it, you're going to say, maybe put the pillow perpendicular instead of putting it parallel to the headboard and say, what do we have to do the fix that? They can fix it and then boom! Success is obvious and inevitable. That's what we want when we're manipulating an environment so that the animal that we're working with can see success clearly. We've eliminated distractions from the environment. We've gone in with a high value reinforcer, so that the dog wants to engage with us.

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And, success is inevitable right? And as I've said, for me, it starts with ItsYerChoice, and ItsYerChoice, as I've said there's a link in the show notes here, but it starts with putting a high, high value food in your hand. And you eliminate the distractions. You might play this on leash, you might play this in crapper



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training. I like to just sit on a chair and anchor my arm to my knee and when the dog sniffs at my hand - I don't move my hand. So, here's a thing that people do, you've got to remember as I talked about in earlier episodes, dogs can shape us. And here's a great way they do – you're carrying a big meatball in your hand and the dog grabs at the hand. What do you do? Yeah, you put your hand above your head.

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Because you want to get the food away from the dog because you don't want them to eat your meatball. And so, the dogs learn, well dogs are prey driven so their prey moves, they're going to try and chase it. And they're going to start, maybe jump up and try and grab it above your head. Rather, what we're doing with ItsYerChoice is teaching them: I'm not going to be moving in response to you moving. That my arm is anchored the big meatball is there and I need you to ignore the meatball in order to earn the meatball.

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So the dog is learning their choices creates what they want. What we have to remember is everybody who owns a dog is manipulating the environment. The difference is when you're doing it and for how long. So, I choose to keep the dog's environment small when I first get them as a puppy or a rescue dog and grow it when they make good choices.

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Why would they make good choices? Because we set them up for success by manipulating the environment. For example, our rescue dog Tater-Salad - when they came to us he had horrible behavior, he would run away, he would play keep away, he grabbed something you couldn't catch him - and by setting him up for success through many frequent training sessions throughout the day, keeping him in an ExPen so he couldn't chew the furniture. Keeping him on leash when we took him outside but doing a lot of off leash work when we could set up an environment that was safe, like a fenced environment or in our training building. That has turned him into an amazing dog that we could completely trust.

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So, you can manipulate the environment early, with the overarching core values of your goal being to give that dog all the freedom as possible. Or you could do what most people do, is that get a puppy or rescue dog and "Oh I love dogs, I'm not going to control them, I'm not going to keep them in a manipulated environment and let them have the life of leisure like Disney told us, they all make good choices" and what ends up happening is the dog sees squirrels, or other dogs in the environment, or cats, and they start running off, and they ignore you, and they don't come when they're called, and they do destructive things.

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And so, you end up having to keep them on leash at every park. You end up not being able to trust them and put them in a small room every time you leave. Or you, having to manage the environment by putting the garbage on the kitchen table every time you go out. By saying "Susan, I believe this it sounds amazing and embracing manipulation not as deception, but as a tool that allows to develop love and trust" .. short environmental manipulation when you first get that dog and Tater-Salad it was less than a year, when I get a puppy, it's much, much faster because they don't have the history of poor behavior that Tater-Salad came with.





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Manipulate the environment, don't allow them to learn the rehearsals of inappropriate behaviors like Tater did. Which means, they only learn the rehearsals that are good and by time they're 4 or 5 months old they have a lot of freedoms. By the time they're six-months-old they have even more. And by the time they're a year old, they're every bit as trustworthy as any one of my older dogs. That's it for today, I hope you look at embracing manipulation in a different way, and I'll see you next time on Shaped By Dog.

Resources

["Deep Work" by Cal Newport](#)

["Ruff Love" by Susan Garrett](#)

[Learn how to play the "ItsYerChoice" game in the ItsYerChoice Summit](#)



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.



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