

Speaker Key

SG Susan Garrett

Transcript

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SG Isn't that just awesome music. Shout out to the DogsThat power couple Chris and Gladys for putting that music together. I just love that intro music. Hey, welcome to Shaped By Dog. I am Susan Garrett. I have a question. Have you ever been in a situation, maybe you were at a seminar and you're there to learn and you suddenly feel like, overwhelmed and you can't really take anything in?

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You know, our dogs go through the same thing. And there is a reason for that. I'm going to talk about that today. I'm also going to read for you a chapter from a new book that I'm writing. Yeah. It's a little scary for me to read this because it's like bearing my soul kind of a true-life story.

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Change the names. All right. We're going to jump in, and I want to talk about a little bit of psychology. And for some of you, this may be a complete review, for some of you it might be really new. Now you may or may not have heard of the pyramid of human needs. So, a Russian, psychologist discovered it.

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I don't know when, 50 years ago. Maslow, Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Now this was put together for humans, but a lot of people have studied it in relation to dogs, I'm going to take, give you my take on this as well, how it applies to dogs. Just want to share with you a little bit about this pyramid. So, if you're listening and not watching, there's, it's a pyramid with five layers.

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All right. If you need the graphics, come and watch on YouTube, come and watch this episode of Shaped By Dog. So, at the bottom layer, that's our physiological needs. The need for water, the need for food, the need for shelter, for reproduction. These are the basic needs that, it's survival mode.

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It is, you know, we need this to keep going as a species. And at the very, very top of the pyramid is what he described as self actualization. And that is really finding who you are and really digging into learning more, following your passion and becoming who you were meant to be. All right. So, I believe there's some parallels and a lot of people you can Google, you know, Maslow and dogs, and you'll see a lot of other people's opinion on this as well.

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Above the psychological needs, it is the layer of safety. And you know, that is the obvious. We need to protect our self from physical danger, and we need to avoid physical danger. But it also is psychological safety. We don't want to put ourselves in harm's way.

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So, let's just shift a little bit about dogs and talk about those first two layers. Physiologically, a dog needs to have all of those things, food, water, et cetera. And then above that is they don't want to put



themselves in harm's way. Although I believe that with some dogs, the second and third layers could be rotated.

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So, the next layer is social needs. That's our, our need to belong as humans. Our need for family or community that makes us, that we are a part of something bigger than ourselves. And in the online community, in our [DogsThat](#) community, we have an amazing, amazing community. And I got to tell you, even though I lead this community, they've been a great resource.

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All of you who are listening, who are part of the DogsThat community. That was where I went to, a little over a year ago when my husband passed away. It was that online community that I would read their ongoing journeys and it really helped me progress through my grief.

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So, social belonging is super important. It's one of the necessities that we have in life. And when I think about this, when you go through these layers, some dogs, they would risk their own selves just to keep that bond with humans. They're pack animals.

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So, the social needs, obviously the needs for safety. Some dogs would forego their need for safety just to be with us. So maybe those second and third layers possibly could be flipped for our dogs. But again, physiological safety, the need for food, water, the safety needs, staying out of harm's way and then the social needs, the needs to belong.

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The fourth layer is what he described as esteem needs. That's, the drive to feel confident. To believe in yourself and that you're valuable and that you have something to contribute, your own self respect, or self esteem. And you would say, well, how do dogs have that?

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If you go back to a [previous episode on temp. T.E.M.P.](#), the dogs will show us when they have that self belief and self esteem and confidence in whatever we're asking them to do. So, it's very, very obvious with our dogs. Now, the next layer is, the top of the pyramid, is self actualization. And that is again where you're learning and you're growing and picture yourself, you have an interest in dogs.

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So, you go to a dog training seminar and if you went there and you hadn't eaten in a couple of days, how well would you be able to take in what that presenter would be saying? Well, obviously not very well at all. And I'll tell you the same is true of dogs.

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I once taught a private lesson. I was down in Florida and I taught a private lesson with, this is going back probably 25 years ago. And I taught a private lesson with a woman with a young 10-week-old Border Collie puppy. And this puppy was frantic. And you know, you could say, well, border collies, you know, they're crazy.



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Yeah, no, this puppy was abnormally frantic, and it was snapping at food and she said, well, that's just the way he is. And after about five minutes, I said, tell me about your day. Like, when do you get up? When do you feed him? And she said, no, no, no, no, I've read your posts.

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And I use the food, his food as he gets while he's training. And so, then I probed a little more. I said, do you have a set ration you give him every day? And then you break that into training. And she said, no, I just take some food and I train with them. And I said, well, how do you know he's getting enough groceries for this wee puppy growing up?

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It's super important that yes, train with the food you're going to give your dog. That's a great way to go about life. But I always leave a little bit either to give a dog before and with a puppy like this, I would feed him maybe a third of his morning rations before I would be going to train him.

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Because again, if his physiological needs have not been met his ability to function, to learn to self actualize, to take things in, is going to be severely, severely restricted. So, super important that you recognize it, you know, if your dog's in class and they're not able to function, check out those five levels below, and that will take, takes us to story I wanted to tell.

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And I thought rather than telling it, I'll just, you know, read, and this hasn't been to an editor yet, so it may need to be changed. But I'm going to read this chapter that I've prepared for a book that I'm writing. I'm going to read it directly to you. The names I've changed, just to protect the woman I'm talking about, but it was an important part of my history.

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Okay, in the fall of 2001, I was teaching my 107th, I took track of those things, 107th dog training workshop of the past five years. I was running on the fuel of knowing I was making a difference in the lives of dogs and I was working on the fact that my ego was getting stroked every time I got asked to once again, teach at a far away country. I was looking forward to that particular seminar because it had a lot of my regulars attending. Regulars, being people who, if I was teaching anywhere within a reasonable driving distance from where they lived, I could count on them being amongst the intenders, eager to listen to me, preach the good word of reinforcement-based dog training.

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One of those regulars was Dr. Donna Torque. Now Dr. Donna was a 50 something gray haired, introverted. That's important to the story. Introverted dog lover. Her PhD in psychology gave her an understanding of the science that I taught at my workshops. Well, beyond many of the less scholastically decorated students.

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However, as I found with many higher learned folks, the practice of getting the knowledge from their head through to their hands and down that leash to their dog was not always an elegant process. Now I



recognize that's a generalization. But I can only think the reason that I've observed this many time is that if you go back to Matt Malcolm Gladwell's book 'Outliers', he talks about mastery requiring 10,000 hours.

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So, for academics, those 10,000 hours are spent reading and researching and crunching stats and finishing degrees. While those of us actually working on applying the science of behavior modification, we spend those same hours handling dogs and, and learning about the impact of the decisions we make and adjusting what we're doing.

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All with a leash in our hands. Knowing that, there were times when Dr. Donna made less than ideal decisions as a dog trainer. Regardless of the fact, she was shy to the point of often blushing. Donna was always super happy when she greeted me anytime we met. That particular fall day was normal because it was, was more, she was more happy.

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It actually than normal, because she was introducing me to her latest boxer puppy. This was Donna's fourth boxer. So, she knew the breed super well. And Donna was beaming with pride as she informed me that this one would be raised the Susan Garrett way entirely. I really didn't know what the Susan Garrett way was.

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I'd never really heard how I trained dogs be referred to in that way, but I got it. Now, my workshop started at nine o'clock and on the first day I usually arrived at 8:15 to set up my training environment and get the vibe of the students as they came in. At 8:30, I had the pleasure of being introduced to Rocky. Donna's rambunctious and perpetually curious eight-month-old boxer puppy.

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He had the look in his eye that told me, yeah, he was game for anything. And dogs, they tell no lies. Rocky's bouncing exuberance shared with me that Donna had indeed attempted to raise him the Susan Garrett way. This dog was oozing with confidence and oozing with joy and passion.

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However, Rocky shared a secret at that moment. A secret I'm sure Donna had wished remained hidden from me. Rocky's flailing at the end of his leash and constant noncompliance with anything Donna asked him to do shared with me that Donna's application of our program was more than a little flawed.

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That Donna had once again missed the mark on some of the more important puppy fundamentals that I taught. In short, Rocky was a bit of a hot mess. As I watched him straining at the end of his leash, I was silently wagering to myself. How long it would take for Donna to catch him? Should that leash like break and Rocky gain his ultimate freedom.

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Cue the dramatic foreshadowing music, because I was about to find out exactly that it was three hours into the first of our two-day workshop when I first asked the participants to get their puppies out of their



crate. We were going to do some work. Now these puppies had just spent whatever time it took them to ride to the workshop with her in their owner's car.

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And the better part of the morning resting up in the crating area. Needless to say, these puppies were ready to do something. Rocky was no exception. As Donna attempted to play our foundational crate games, Rocky spotted his opportunity. And before Donna could get a leash on him, he bolted to freedom.

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He was now in a full gallop around the room, dodging every outstretched hand that tried to nab him. It was actually kind of an impressive display to see how this adolescent puppy could maintain a full gallop at the same time, steal a half a bagel and its accompanying cream trees from a banquet high table.

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And then Rocky managed to, as he was gulping down this, I guess second breakfast, he did a fly by near his own crate and grabbed one of his favorite toys out of Donna's overstuffed training bag. Now he was a whirlwind. And it was obvious he had very well learned to ignore all commands of "Rocky come" or "Rocky down" when he was in this state.

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He was savvy enough not to get tricked into the promise of "mommy's got a cookie" or the squeak of a squeaky toy to allure him. Nope. Rocky was on a mission to use up every bit of his pent-up energy before he conceded to being caught. Now, the only time he slowed down, during, it was like 12 minutes. The only time he slowed down at all was to play bow in front of the other captive puppies as if to taunt that he had Houdini like skills, and they didn't.

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As luck would have it, another participant was able to grab Rocky's collar while he paused a moment too long while refueling at her dog's water bowl. Donna at this point was well beyond unsettled. When Rocky was handed over to her, she nervously said, good boy, good boy. And proceeded to stop him full of cookies. At which point I said, what the heck are you doing? And why do you think he needs all those cookies?

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I bellowed this across the room at Donna. It silenced everyone and drained all of the blood from Donna's face. She stammered and tried to tell me how, another trainer had said she should reward everything her dog did. Now remember the Maslow's laws.

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Donna was embarrassed by this. So, was she actually thinking about doing good dog training once she caught her dog and she started stuffing pup, cookies? And really, likely not. But I was relentless. I remembered, I reminded her that she had a PhD in psychology and that she above anyone else understood how reinforcement worked.

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It was at this point that I saw the first tear slowly finding its way or the corner of Donna's now red brimming eyes. So as if the embarrassment of her puppy wasting 12 minutes of everyone's time wasn't



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You, Your Dog, Maslow and Lizard Brain

enough, Donna was in publicly dressed down by someone she held in the highest regard. Now back at that time in my life, the battle between empathy and ego was always present and mostly ego one.

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I must admit sometimes that battle does rear its ugly head with me today. But at that point, my ego was triggered by her saying, well, another trainer told me to do this. And so, I, but I still continued at Donna. I'll be with a little less fire and brimstone to my tone.

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I then felt I needed to explain why everything she was doing right then was wrong. And Donna, she was a trooper. She stood still and attempted to listen. However, as anyone who has had their lizard brain and that's what's happened, our need for safety and our insecurity gets triggered. When that gets triggered, she wasn't really listening. You know, she could stand there and, and, and maybe attempt, but she wasn't really hearing. The stress hormones were now flooding her body and that would have prevented any cognitive thought to have gotten through that day.

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Now, desperately trying to hide that damning tears that were welling up in her eyes, Donna thanked me for my input very politely, the best she could. And then she put her puppy away. She came back up to me on break and apologize just one more time and she then mentioned that, she'd made the decision not to work Rocky, for the rest of the morning. That he likely was a bit tired and she needed to process everything that had happened.

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That was the last time I ever got a chance to speak to Donna. She chose not to come back to work the second day of my workshop and she never signed up for another in-person workshop with me again. Now I'd like to tell you that that event magically transformed me as a human being. How from that day forward, I was the best, both most empathetic teacher that I could be and that I only ever taught with kindness and compassion, respect from that moment on, but that would be a lie.

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However, I can tell you that it was that event that planted the seeds of knowledge for me. That my interaction with Donna was the foundation of me learning a very valuable lesson. My life shifting lesson that I want to share with you is this. It's not possible to help any animal, human or otherwise when you're judging them. It doesn't matter if it's a dog, a child, a co-worker or a loved one.

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It's impossible to bring out the best coaching you have for that animal, if you're sitting in judgment of them. And your judgment will trigger their safety and security needs. So, their ability to take in that coaching is going to be severely hampered. That was one of many ways that dog training transformed me as a person. It's the foundation of critical thinking that led me to continue training, to write this book, to start this podcast.

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And if you're open to it, adopting the simple lessons that I'm sharing, while you train your dog, will have a deeply profound impact on the rest of your life as well. And on the people in your life. It started with a simple ripple yet before you know it, we're all changing the world by changing the way people interact with their dogs.



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Now, if that happens to you, if you get into an environment, where you feel the instructor is not meeting your needs, that they are, their approach is too harsh, I want you to think of, I mean, ideally you have a conversation in a less emotionally charged environment with that instructor. But I want to share a lesson from Terry Orlick's very great book, 'The Zone of Excellence'.

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And in that book, he says a great student takes the coaches feedback and applies it. Regardless of how that feedback is given a great student takes that coach's feedback and applies it. So, when your lizard brain gets triggered, just try and take a deep breath.

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Think of the feedback, the key lesson, and just apply it. And then when everybody's emotions calm down, take a time and a quiet moment and share with whoever that is, whether it be a partner, a spouse, a co-worker, your boss, whoever it is, share with them, how you would like feedback to be delivered to you.

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And it's important that you get it in that way, that supports all of those layers of human needs in order that you can flourish as a student at the top. And it's true of our dogs. So, go back and listen to that podcast that I did on TEMP. When you see your dog showing you stress, evaluate. Is it stress because they're having fun and engaged? Or is it stress because you've been overwhelming them?

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What you're asking of them is too much. And adopt the way you're coaching your dog. That's it, for another episode of shaped by dog. In a future episode, I'm going to share with you what maybe could have been different about this situation. But for now, I just like to thank you for the great reviews and positive feedback you're giving about this.

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If you haven't left review, please do so. And if there's something you'd like me to address in an upcoming episode, please put it in the comments as well. Thank you. And we'll see you soon on another episode of Shaped By Dog.

Resources

[Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs \(Wikipedia\)](#)

[Shaped By Dog Podcast Episode 4: T.E.M.P. \(Tail, Eyes/Ears, Mouth, Posture\)](#)

[Vlog: Where Is Your Dog On The Circle Of Fun?](#)

["Outliers" by Malcolm Gladwell](#)

[Terry Orlick's Zone of Excellence](#)



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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